

33. *Harry S. Truman.*

Democrat.

Senator from Missouri.

Only president from Missouri.

The “S” in his name didn’t stand for anything. (Recall that coincidentally Ulysses S. Grant also had no middle name, just an S.) Truman didn’t even use a period after the S in his name until after he was President. The editors of the Chicago Style Manual convinced him that not using a period was improper grammar and would set a bad example for American youth.

Vice president for only 82 days who assumed the presidency after the death of FDR.

Only president of the 1900s who didn’t attend college.

He could not afford college and applied for admission to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and although he passed the written test he failed the physical exam due to his poor eyesight. He joined the Missouri National Guard, passing the eye exam by memorizing the eye chart.

Veteran of World War I.

He learned about the super-secret (at the time) atomic bombs only after being sworn in as President and approved of their use which led to the Japanese surrender.

First President to have a nationally televised inauguration.

First President to have a code name by the Secret Service.

Famously had a "Buck Stops Here" sign on his desk, symbolizing ultimate responsibility.

First President to have a bowling alley in the White House. It was installed April 1947 in the basement of the West Wing funded by Missouri friends as a birthday gift. He was not an avid bowler and it was used mainly by staffers.

One term President by choice, the others being James Polk, James Buchanan, Rutherford B. Hayes, Calvin Coolidge, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Joe Biden.

He formally established the U.S. Air Force by signing the National Security Act of 1947.

He tried and failed to get universal health care.

Survived an assassination attempt in 1950 during his second term. It was carried out by militant Puerto Rican pro-independence activists Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola while President Truman resided at Blair House during the renovation of the White House. Both men were stopped

before gaining entry to the house. Torresola mortally wounded White House Police officer Leslie Coffelt, who killed him in return fire. Secret Service agents wounded Collazo. Truman was upstairs in the house and not harmed.

Financially perhaps the poorest President. In 1953 he and his wife went on a frugal vacation, a time before ex-presidents had any pension or security detail. They were instantly recognized wherever they went, and learned that an ex-president is anything but a plain, private citizen.

It wasn't till 1958 that Congress granted former presidents pensions, which was after Truman had sold off his farm to make ends meet.

At the age of 81 as an ex-president became the first person to have a Medicare card, under the Lyndon B. Johnson administration, which was designed to provide health care insurance for Americans over the age of 65.

Consistently ranked as a top-tier U.S. President, typically in the top ten, based on surveys of historians and political scientists.

“You know that being an American is more than a matter of where your parents came from. It is a belief that all men are created free and equal and that everyone deserves an even break.”