A tribute to HHH: the steady warrior

By William Lasser

When those of us in society shun the varieties and late teens become politically aware, American politics was dominated by Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, and America itself was torn by racial conflict. Only the Vietnam War had not yet ended, but its leadership positions, however, were able to retain a sense of justice and commitment. To many of the late 1960s, Lyndon Johnson was Hubert Humphrey.

In terms of prestige, demonstrations and social unrest, Humphrey was the countervailing force to American politics, a man who gave us some indication as we began to understand what was going on around us that politics could be helpful in more than to kill them, or draft them, or arrest them. Along with George McGovern, Eugene McCarth, Robert Kennedy, and others, Humphrey gave us hope, a vying sense of optimism which could scarcely be found elsewhere.

There is a temptation to glory those who have power, but the Romans had a saying that "nothing but good shall be said about the dead." and by large we stick by that maxim. Rarely, however, are accolades as sincere as those of Robert L. Dole, who was sworn in as vice president by a sense of loyalty to Lyndon Johnson to remain silent about his faults, it could be said with complete truth, that Humphrey always liked to see the "little man," that he was at his best when he supported movements long before such a political position was particularly fashionable, and that throughout his career he attempted, with both success and with failure, to unite rather than to divide.

The late 1960s were difficult times for Humphrey also, of course. Humphrey might have opposed the Vietnam War, but he was vice president by a sense of loyalty to Lyndon Johnson to remain silent about his faults, it could be said with complete truth, that Humphrey always liked to see the "little man," that he was at his best when he supported movements long before such a political position was particularly fashionable, and that throughout his career he attempted, with both success and with failure, to unite rather than to divide.

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