

**Aaron Kramer**  
**THE DEATH OF PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT**

*When displayed from an upright or horizontal mast,  
the flag is flown at half-staff, it was pointed out,  
but never with the blue field down,  
as that signifies a signal of distress...*

The news caught millions headed homeward  
in the evening rush hour.  
It spread like wildfire through crowded railroad terminals,  
through Times Square, filtered into bars, theaters  
and eating places.  
Passengers left busses and trolley cars.  
They came up out of the subways to put the question.  
Wherever a shopkeeper turned his radio-speaker  
toward the street.  
“I HAVE A TERRIBLE ANNOUNCEMENT TO MAKE.”

The President had been expected to attend  
a barbecue on the grounds in the late afternoon.  
When he failed to appear, it was assumed  
that something serious must be wrong.  
In front of a fireplace  
in the Little White House  
here atop Pine Mountain  
having gone to Warm Springs  
on March 30<sup>th</sup>  
for a three-week rest.  
Come to think of it  
he hadn't been looking well  
ever since he got back from Yalta  
He'd lost a lot of weight.  
His face was gaunt and gray.  
His hands trembled so  
that he had trouble  
putting cigarettes into his long black holder  
and lighting them.

It was a good thing, everybody thought,  
that he was going to get away  
for a rest.

*A black crepe bowknot  
either with or without streamers  
is placed at the fastening point  
in a case of national mourning...*

In Washington crowds assembled outside  
the White House gates  
as the word spread through the warm April afternoon;  
in Ottawa a hushed House of Commons;  
at Independence, Missouri, people disappeared  
from the streets.

A man at Flatbush and Caton Avenues, Brooklyn,  
wiped his eyes with a handkerchief.  
When asked for his name he replied:  
“Just say Humanity.”

*The blue field always must be uppermost  
and at the observer's left  
it was pointed out last night  
at the Navy Public Relations Office.*

Twenty-five thousand furriers  
halting work at 3 p.m.  
jammed Seventh Avenue between 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Streets.  
Profound consternation was caused  
in Santiago, Chile,  
and the national emblem will be lowered  
on all public buildings;  
“A great disaster!” said Georges Bidault,  
the French Foreign Minister;  
“Oh!” gasped the maid of Charles de Gaulle.

A silent, distressed Moscow  
this morning heard the radio announcement;  
peasant women wept and soldiers wept;  
tiny particles of podery snow were falling  
from the overcast early morning sky.

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QUESTION: What did President Roosevelt mean to you  
personally?  
Place: Times Square.

ANSWERS:

Lew Haas, Businessman, Riverside Drive:  
“He was the guiding light of every fair-minded man.”  
Natalie Strong, U.S. Navy:

“I have an awful let-down feeling. He was a wonderful man.”

Nick Tsagarakas, Chef, The Bronx:

“We have lost the greatest man that ever lived.”

Miss Mary Calderoni, Counter Girl, 72<sup>nd</sup> Street:

“I felt that something good had passed out of my life.”

John Edward McCarroll, Merchant Marine:

”He was the saviour of an enslaved world.”

*Never the blue field down.*

Despite the death  
despite the death of  
despite the death of President Roosevelt  
the United Nations Security Conference  
will open in San Francisco on April 25<sup>th</sup>.

Buoyant and confident:

“We will prosecute the war on both fronts, East and West,  
with all the vigor we possess to a successful conclusion.”

At 7:09 o'clock tonight

under the favorable portent of fair weather

in a ceremony lasting not more than a minute

and looking straight ahead through his large round glasses

Vice-President Truman, standing erect

two hours and thirty-four minutes after.

*Never the blue field down.*

While to the tone of drums, muffled drums,  
the funeral procession left the Little White House  
here atop Pine Mountain, a mahogany casket,  
a copper-lined casket, in a black hearse;  
and silently watching, their faces grave,  
at each country store and village the people were out.  
To the White House and Hyde Park,  
on the long, last journey,  
across the hushed southern countryside,  
the body was borne,  
the body of Franklin Roosevelt,  
the body of Franklin Roosevelt.

*Never the blue field down.*

(Every word of this report was taken from the New York newspapers of April 13 and 14, 1945.)