

*Robert S. Strauss*



IN HONOR OF THE MEMORY

OF

*Robert S. Strauss*

OCTOBER 19, 1918 - MARCH 19, 2014

— DALLAS —

MONDAY, MARCH 24, 2014 — 11:00 AM

TEMPLE EMANU-EL

8500 HILLCREST ROAD, DALLAS, TX

— WASHINGTON —

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, 2014 — 11:00 AM

WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL

MASSACHUSETTS AND WISCONSIN AVENUES, NW

WASHINGTON, DC

AKIN GUMP STRAUSS HAUER & FELD LLP



ALAN D. FELD

ROBERT E. RUBIN

THE HONORABLE JAMES A. BAKER, III

R. BRUCE MCLEAN

VERNON E. JORDAN, JR.

RABBI DAVID STERN

JIMMY CARTER

WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON

GEORGE W. BUSH





## ALAN D. FELD

Now it can finally be told. Unlike those of other public figures, we are not bound to keep the papers of Bob Strauss secret for 100 years. First secret to be released - Despite all of his protests to the contrary, Bob was one of the kindest, most sensitive people I've ever known. He worried about his family, his partners and even people that he didn't like. For instance when he was being considered as Ambassador to the Soviet Union, a so-called friend of his wrote an op-ed piece in opposition, but Bob later hired that person's granddaughter in Moscow to his staff because she needed a job.

Next, the word "sum-bitch" will be returned to the public domain for all to use, but nobody will ever use it as well as Bob. The many stories of Bob's prowess on the athletic fields of Stamford High will be enhanced. High school and college transcripts will be amended, and he will be valedictorian of every class, which is the least we could do for a man with his grades. This new and improved image of Bob will still include his famous toast to his swimming pool in Dallas. We shall amend the results of every race at Delmar to reflect that he picked the winning mount, though this will put him in conflict with Helen, who actually did win most of the time. We will not

disclose the numerous careers of young people that Bob helped launch because, strange as it seems, it would embarrass him.

Recently, I got an email from my good friend Governor Mark White. He credited Bob's advice to him as then—Attorney General of saving Texas from civil rights litigation. His email went on to say, when Bob discovered that Mark's two young sons, age 10 and 8, were in D.C., Bob took them on a personal tour of the West Wing, and when the boys cast a covetous eye at Jimmy Carter note pads in each chair of the cabinet room, Bob said, "Take'em all—we won't be here next week, and the next guys won't want them."

One thing we will not change is Bob's devotion to this country and his contribution to civil discussion between disagreeing parties. As Bob said "Civility does not have to be something that only old men recollect." Many years ago, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. said that a man should share in the action and passion of his times or be judged not to have lived at all. Well, Bob, you certainly you certainly pass the test in "spades."



ROBERT E. RUBIN

I first met Bob Strauss in 1972. This is an enormous gathering, and that seems to me to speak to how special he was to each of us personally and about all that he accomplished. And, as my wife Judy said the other day, Bob changed our lives.

Bob, as the renowned and highly-regarded Finance Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, was raising money for Democratic House and Senate candidates in the 1973 elections. I had long wanted to get involved in Democratic politics, and arranged to meet Bob. We sat together for a little while, and then Bob said that he would like me to help him raise money, that he thought I looked good on paper, but that that didn't mean I amounted to much. I thought that was a rather odd way to ask someone for help. But, just like everybody that Bob dealt with outrageously over so many decades, I did exactly what he wanted. And, that began a real and wonderful friendship that continued through the decades up to the end of his life. In the first brief meeting, Bob also gave me some advice about engaging in politics and public affairs that I returned to frequently in later years, that I passed on to others, and that reflected the insight and wisdom that made Bob such a major figure in the life of our country for so long.

Unique is a terribly overused word. But, that said, Bob really was unique, both as a human being – with his warmth, his very special sense of humor, his fundamental integrity, and so much more – and as a master in getting our always-complicated political system to work. He was a loyal and committed Democrat, but he was respected and trusted on both sides of the aisle. And, he symbolized how people can disagree on policies and politics but maintain civility and work together to move forward effectively.

Our political system has obviously changed a lot since the days when Bob was most engaged, but I have often thought that if Bob had been active in today's environment, his unique qualities just might have enabled him to make a real difference

The commentary since he died rightfully describes Bob as one of our nation's major political figures of the second half of the 20th century. But, all that notwithstanding, I can't think about Bob without smiling, and I would imagine that is true of all of us.

A few years after I left Treasury, Bob sent me a letter. The first sentence said that you may be the dumbest person I ever met in business. And, then he immediately asked me to do something for him, which I did right away.





This was vintage Bob Strauss. And, it came with a twinkle and a spirit that made being on the receiving end of Bob's outrageousness a privilege to be cherished and remembered.

Finally, one more story. Many years ago, when I was still at Goldman Sachs, Bob called and suggested that Goldman retain a well-known but irreversibly disgraced New York figure. Bob said that this fellow could do us a lot of good, though we both knew that was inconceivable. What was really happening was that Bob was trying to help an old friend, even though that person could never again be helpful to Bob. I have never forgotten that. Bob cared about people, and that was one of the many reasons he was held with such widespread regard and respect. In fact, if anything, he could be too trusting sometimes, but he was protected

by his savvy and shrewd colleague and executive assistant, and friend to so many of us, Vera Murray, who knew Washington as well as he did, and had no illusions about anyone.

I had lunch with Bob in his apartment at The Watergate about three months ago. And though he had been having his ups and downs for quite some time by then, he had the radiant look in his eyes and the spirit that I had experienced from the first day we met. And, he provided a good deal of common sense about politics and the Washington of today. That was the Bob Strauss I had known for over 40 years, and that was the Bob Strauss who will remain vividly in my mind for the rest of my life.



## THE HONORABLE JAMES A. BAKER, III

We meet here this morning in God's house to remember Robert S. Strauss.

You know ladies and gentlemen . . .

Some enter politics to accumulate power.

Others because politics provides them with the opportunity to implement policy.

Still others are drawn to that blood sport just for the pleasure of living in a world of adrenaline-fed intrigue.

And then there was Bob Strauss. Raised in the hardscrabble of West Texas, this son of Depression-era general store owners got into politics for all of it – the power, the policy and the pleasure . . . and for many other reasons, as well.

Learning his craft in the brass-knuckles world of Texas politics, Bob became the very shrewdest of political operators, a power broker with few peers, and an adroit diplomat who could be trusted during critical points in America's history.

But most importantly, Bob Strauss was – and remains – a symbol for the brand of bi-partisan bridge building that our country desperately needs today . . . especially in this city.

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Bob was as smooth as silk, developing close ties with every American President from Lyndon Johnson to Barack Obama.

This Democrat was so good at nurturing relationships that he became a confidante to Nancy Reagan. Or as President Carter put it after losing to her husband: "Bob Strauss is a very loyal friend – he waited a whole week before he had dinner with Ronald Reagan."

Bob revived the Democratic Party after its landslide loss in 1972 by chairing Carter's successful presidential campaign four years later. And then, he served as America's trouble shooter in the Middle East immediately after the historic Camp David Accords.

He later became the our last ambassador to the Soviet Union during the final throes of the Cold War -- and then our first ambassador to the Russian Federation.

The last two assignments were partly the result of a typical Strauss wisecrack -- one he'd made to George H.W. Bush. The two of them were adversaries. But they were also friends. Strauss told President Bush that he had voted against him in 1988 and would do so again.

Not easily offended, President Bush felt it important to demonstrate to Soviet officials that political opposition should no longer be considered treasonous in their country. It should



be viewed instead as “loyal opposition,” to use a British phrase.

That was Bob – our “loyal opposition.”

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Bob could make you laugh at his sharp wit and cringe at his acerbic tongue – often at the same time. He was particularly irreverent during Gridiron Club dinners.

About President Carter he said: “He prayed a lot. But in fairness, I guess you would, too, if Billy was your brother.”

About the second President Bush he said: “George W. thought that “Fettuccini Alfredo” was the President of Italy.”

And about me he said: “Jim doesn’t understand a lot about the Jewish heritage. He thinks that a ‘matzo ball’ is a ‘social event’ . . . and that a ‘yamaka’ is a ‘duck call.’

After the implosion of the Soviet Union, Bob and I went to Kazakhstan to visit President Nazarbayev, who invited us to take part in an “eastern style” sauna. We had no earthly idea what an “eastern style” sauna was.

But after quite a few vodkas and 20 minutes in the heat, Nazarbayev picked up a large bundle of eucalyptus branches and began thrashing me on the back and legs. He said that he did that in order to open up the pores and increase the therapeutic benefits of the sauna.

After witnessing this, Strauss bolted from the scene.

Once outside, he jokingly told our security detail: “Damn. Get the President on the phone. His Secretary of State is buck naked and he’s being beaten by the President of Kazakhstan.”

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Above all, though, Bob was a pragmatic centrist – a one-of-a-kind wise man.

“Civility,’ Bob once said, “does not have to be something that only old men recollect.”

“Whether you are in politics or in the press, it should be the standard of behavior.”

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And so, ladies and gentlemen, I can just imagine the scene when Bob met our creator, who greeted him with a simple question. It is, of course, a question that each of us should ask ourselves from time to time.

“Would you have done anything differently while you were on earth?” the creator wondered.

And Bob responded exactly as he did in 1993, when a reporter asked him the same question.

“I don’t have any regrets about anything in my life,” he explained. “I liked the whole damn deal.”

Well, Bob. We not only liked you – we loved you.

The whole damn deal!

And we really do miss you!

But we’ll see you on the other side!



R. BRUCE MCLEAN

We are gathered here today in this house of God to celebrate the full and amazing life of Robert S. Strauss. He was our beloved friend who lived life as fully as a man can. His life has run its course, and what a life it was. There was only one Bob Strauss, and there will never be another.

For all of Bob's accomplishments, he was first and foremost a family man. A big brother to Ted, a devoted spouse to Helen, a father to Robert Jr., Rick and Susan and a doting grandfather. He was a great patriot. An exceptional public servant, a great lawyer and an extraordinary partner. Today we are all gathered his family, his friends, his colleagues and his partners—to remember a man who touched all of us in special ways.

Bob had a quick wit and a sharp tongue. In the days following Bob's passing, I heard from my friends from all parts of the country. Each message was essentially the same—an expression of condolence for our loss and their favorite Strauss story. Everyone who knew Bob, even casually, had their favorite Strauss story.

After forty years of being his friend, his law partner and his student in the subjects of leadership and life, I have plenty of Strauss stories myself. All of my

stories would require modification of their content to be told on this occasion and in this venue.

More than twenty years ago, our firm had determined to take a serious look at opening an office in Brussels, Belgium, the Washington, D.C. of Europe. Our partner Dick Rivers and I got the assignment to scout out Brussels. After poking around a bit, the word got out, and Strauss was contacted by a self-described mover and shaker in Brussels by name of Willem Vande Velde. Something about him captivated Bob, and Bob set a meeting for Dick and me to meet him at the Grand Hotel, the preferred hotel for D.C.'s European set. Bob's attraction was evident on appearance alone. Vande Velde was aristocratic. He was tall, silver-haired and elegant. He carried a gold-handled cane, wore his coat draped over his shoulder like a cape and had a refined European accent to his otherwise-flawless English.

Both Dick and I agreed that something seemed not quite right about this guy. We went back to Strauss, explained our reservations, to which Bob replied, "Which fool put you two sons of bitches in charge? You don't know anything about class because you don't have any."



Chastised, Rivers and I left Strauss' office and made our plans to go to Brussels, where we were met by Vande Velde and treated to a tour of the city in a chauffeur-driven limousine. We ate at the finest restaurant in Brussels and were subjected to a torrent of name-dropping and puffery about influence in the city.

When we got back to D.C., we went to Strauss with the same concerns, got a stronger response that is not repeatable here and, so, Rivers and I slinked out of his office licking our wounded pride. We thought the best ploy we had was to use Strauss' client AT&T to get the scoop.

Two weeks later, we were told that Vande Velde was no good. He made his fortune as an arms dealer in Africa, had no influence in Brussels and association with him would be a disaster for our firm.

Rivers and I dreaded going back for the third time. I was the junior guy, so I got to do the talking. When I got done passing on the intel from AT&T, Strauss looked me without blinking an eye or cracking a smile and said, "I TOLD YOU THAT SON OF A BITCH WAS NO DAMN GOOD."

A few weeks later, after we announced the opening of the Brussels office, I asked Vera Murray if it would be okay if I told that story at a partners meeting. She said "Of course, and no one will laugh louder than Bob." She was right, and that was Bob Strauss.

Bob often said that the three most important things in his life were his family, his country and his law firm, in that order. What he was able to accomplish in those three areas was really extraordinary. He has a wonderful family, his accomplishments in public life speak for themselves—Treasurer and then Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, where he rebuilt the Democratic Party in the wake of the Chicago convention of 1968, and the disastrous election of 1972, in which George McGovern won only his home state of South Dakota, Massachusetts and the District of Columbia. The pundits said that the Democrats would not elect another president in the 20th century, but under Bob's leadership, Jimmy Carter won in 1976. He served in Carter's cabinet as Special Trade Representative and negotiated the landmark Tokyo round of the GATT. He was the President's Special Envoy to the Middle East peace negotiations which produced the Camp David accords. He was Carter's inflation czar but only briefly—Bob knew how to get out of a burning building. His public service was not limited to President Carter. He was asked by President George H.W. Bush to be Ambassador to the Soviet Union, which was then coming apart at the seams. By the time he presented his credentials, he became the first Ambassador to the Russian Republic, where he was a huge success by using a style that was not exactly the norm among career diplomats.

And, of course, there is the success of the law firm that he founded. He achieved what he always had set as a goal—to build a great law firm in one gen-



eration. And for that, his partners and colleagues at the firm will be forever in his debt.

The truest measure of a great man is his legacy. His greatest legacy is the wonderful family that he and Helen nurtured. They knew him as a devoted husband, a loving father and grandfather, and a caring brother.

His legacy lives on at the firm he founded, for it was Bob who forged the best parts of our firm. He set the tone. He inspired us at every turn. He lived our firm culture. When he started the firm in 1945 with his FBI buddy Dick Gump, it was 50/50 all the way. That is how they started, and that is how it ended between Bob and Dick. It was a true partnership and an equal partnership. No squabbling over money or credit. It was two guys who started a great firm and who shared its benefits through more than 50 years together.

That legacy of sharing, partnership, excellence, integrity, loyalty, commitment and compassion are what we, the partners at Akin Gump, try to live up to every day. We at Akin Gump Strauss Hauer and Feld LLP have a special obligation to keep the torch that Bob has passed burning brightly. We are the living symbol of Bob's greatness, and that is a blessing and a burden that we embrace with love and affection for our founding partner.

He was famously asked what he liked about his public career and his life. Bob's reply was "the whole damn deal." We at the firm, if asked what we liked about Bob Strauss, would say the same thing, **THE WHOLE DAMN DEAL!**

We love you Bob, and we love everything about you. We will miss you every day, now and forever.



VERNON E. JORDAN, JR.

On behalf of the Strauss family, thank you all for coming. Even in death, Bob Strauss still draws a crowd.

Thomas Jefferson once said, “It is the trade of lawyers to question everything, yield nothing, and talk by the hour.”

Though Bob would surely have considered Jefferson’s sentiment a . . . limited view of lawyering, he certainly would have agreed with that last point—talking by the hour.

In fact, the first thing Bob said as he took the podium as chairman of the 1972 Democratic National Convention was not about Nixon or McGovern or party unity. It was, and I quote, “Is this mike on now? You know, I am a fellow who likes to talk, and I sure would like to get these mikes on.”

Bob Strauss lived his whole life with the mike on. Happily. Proudly.

It’s what made him such good company. It’s what made him such good copy.

Talking to Bob could get you into trouble, though—if you weren’t careful.

In June 1976, immediately before the New York Democratic presidential primary, Strauss tried to get me to personally endorse Jimmy Carter for president.

I was not allowed to do so, given the 501(c)3 status of the organization where I worked.

A few years later, Strauss cornered me again, saying, “I hear you are talking to New York law firms,” which I acknowledged. Strauss said “I have two responses—one, the New York law firms do not need you. Two, my law firm does need you, and you should join Akin Gump.”

So since January 1982, I have been honored and privileged to be Bob Strauss’s law partner, brother, friend and mentee. It is one of the most rewarding and fulfilling relationships of my life.

Others can and have spoken about Bob Strauss the institution. The last of the Washington wise men. “The president’s favorite trouble-shooter,” David Broder once called him during President Carter’s term.

Former Speaker of the house, Jim Wright famously toasted him thusly: “It’s an honor to have with us a close friend of the next president of the United States—whoever the hell he may be.”





And Strauss had the usual Washington power wall, where he'd hang signed photos from those presidential pals of his. Like the one from President George H.W. Bush, his longtime friend. "Bob, you call that chili? Just kidding, it was, as you modestly said, the greatest. – George"

Commenting on those relationships and the results they got, one journalist wrote that Strauss "always radiated an ability to mend the fence, quash the indictment, seal the deal."

And all that was true.

Of course, there were also less charitable assessments. Like the former Texas Senator Ralph Yarborough who once claimed "that his vocabulary [was] insufficient to fully describe his estimate of Robert Strauss."

But Bob Strauss is best described by his own definition of himself: "A centrist, a worker, a doer, a putter-together."

He had, in his office, a leather sign, alongside photos of his beloved wife, children and grandchildren. It was a gift from Averell Harriman and it said, in gold letters, "It can be done."

More than anything else—that was Robert Strauss's true belief—the belief that it can be done.

This grandson of an actual horse-trader had an unshakable faith in the art of the possible. He had faith in people and the relationships and goodwill

he built with them, whether that person was a businessman from across the world or a politician from across the aisle.

He had a profound and abiding faith that, as he once so eloquently put it at a gridiron dinner, "Civility does not have to be something that only old men recollect." He believed that every problem, no matter how difficult, had a mutually agreeable solution.

In my church we often sing "If you ever needed the Lord before, you sure do need him now." Well, if we ever needed men like Bob Strauss in Washington and the world, we sure do need them now.

Bob Strauss was a true American who believed deeply in democracy and the free enterprise system. And he believed that the highest form of service was public service.

Whenever presidents called on him—as they often did—he was forever responding with the altruism of Isaiah: "Here am I, send me."

He was asked to revive a Democratic party so divided and downtrodden that they were days from having the phones shut off.

Bob restored the party's financial footing, and ran the 1976 convention so smoothly that Coretta Scott King and Governor George Wallace agreed to share the same stage.





He was asked to get an impossibly complex trade bill through Congress. Strauss knew it could be done.

At one point during negotiations with the Europeans, he drew up a list of desired American agricultural concessions...writing it out on a nice tablecloth at Geneva's Intercontinental Hotel. When the maître d' angrily confronted him, Strauss pulled out his wallet, bought the tablecloth, and gave it to his dining companions.

By the way, that trade bill passed: 395-7 in the House, 94-6 in the Senate.

President Bush asked him to serve, at the age of 73, as U.S. ambassador to a Soviet Union on the brink of collapse. Strauss responded, "Here am I, send me."

However, it should be noted that Strauss's idea of diplomacy involved serving Boris Yeltsin homemade nachos. And Ambassador Strauss once mischievously invited Richard Nixon to dinner at the ambassador's residence ... the same night he was hosting Kay Graham and Ben Bradlee.

But for all that he achieved in his career, the ultimate accomplishment of Strauss's life—second only to his beloved family—was the law firm that bore and still bears his name.

Washington has many monuments to many great men. Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, FDR, King. And right off Dupont Circle, at 1333 New Hampshire Avenue, there is the Robert S. Strauss

Building and Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld. The house that Strauss built.

All of us at Akin Gump are here because of him. Strauss founded the firm, he led it, he authored its value system. He grew it from nothing into something special.

In 1945, when Strauss and his FBI buddy Dick Gump founded the firm, they had no reputation, no clients, hardly any legal experience. Only one of their offices had room for proper furniture. They flipped a coin to see who'd get it; not for the last time, Strauss got the better end of that deal.

They'd run down the hall and ask a nice lawyer by the name of Henry Akin—not yet a part of the firm—"does this look like a good contract? Does this even look like a contract?"

But they became better lawyers, and brought on new clients, and expanded to new cities. Today, nearly 70 years later, Bob Strauss and Dick Gump's little Dallas law firm has more than 800 attorneys in 20 offices, from Abu Dhabi to Moscow to San Francisco to Singapore to New York.

For years, Strauss and I have had offices next to each other. In more recent years, we called our wing "the elder hostel."

And it was there that I had the privilege of getting to know the Bob Strauss that not everyone saw.



The Strauss who once asked me to check up on a lawyer to whom he had read the riot act, just to make sure the man wasn't permanently scarred.

The big-shot who supported those who worked closest to him. Vera Murray and Kathy Ellingsworth and Tony Robinson were treated like his own family. Their mutual respect and loyalty knew no boundaries.

The man who loved his tables at Duke Ziebert's and The Palm, but got up every morning to make breakfast for Helen.

The charmer of every woman he met, who couldn't wait to get home every night to the wife he worshipped and the martini they shared.

He absolutely loved Helen.

For six decades, Strauss was constantly, insistently, urgently saying to her, "Helen, how do I love thee? Let me count the ways. I love thee to the depth and breadth and height my soul can reach, when feeling out of sight for the ends of being and ideal grace. I love thee with the breath, smiles, tears, of all my life! And, if God choose, I shall but love thee better after death."

That was not the Strauss you saw on Meet the Press or in the pages of the Post or in the smoke-filled rooms of the convention.

The man from Stamford had a big heart. And he helped a lot of people. Not just in the ways that were

public, like the Strauss Center for International Security and Law or the endowed chairs at the medical center at the University of Texas.

There were countless acts of quiet generosity covering the difference when his DNC staff's medical premiums rose...putting millions into the firm retirement fund from which he had excluded himself... paying a former employee's way through business school, asking in return only that one day the young man do the same for another.

Mixed in with all the bluster and glib remarks, there was a refreshing sentimentality to Strauss.

Like at a corporate board meeting when he leaned over and said, "Vernon, look around this room. It was not intended that we should be here—a Jew from Texas and a Black from the Atlanta housing projects. I wish my parents could see me here sitting next to you."

Strauss remained conscious—and amused—that the son of a dry goods store owner had come all this way. Bob was the warmest, kindest, most caring blowhard you've ever met. He was also honest, thoughtful, and unfailingly loyal.

That's how I remember him.

A friend, a mentor—a mensch, if I may use that word.



When he left the DNC, Strauss said—in his typically modest way—“I’d hate to be the guy who’s got to follow my act.”

But the truth is, nobody ever could. And nobody ever will. We shall not see the likes of Robert S. Strauss again.

He has fought the good fight, he has finished his course, he has kept the faith.

And after 95 long and astonishingly productive years, Robert Strauss has closed his last deal,

negotiated his last merger, served his last president, hired his last Law Review editor, flattered his last secretary, given his last interview, bet on his last horse, drunk his last martini, shared his last holiday dinner with the family he adored.

Reflecting back on his life, Strauss would often say he liked “the whole damn deal.” We liked it too—and we are honored to have shared it with him.

Washington—and the world—will not be the same without Robert S. Strauss.





## RABBI DAVID STERN

When Bob Strauss and his brother Ted were young boys growing up in Stamford, Texas, Stamford did not have a rabbi, so their mother Edith decided to engage the rabbi from Wichita Falls to travel to the house to give the boys private lessons in Hebrew and Jewish studies. This arrangement lasted for exactly one visit – though it was not a long visit. Apparently the initially confident rabbi went up to the boys’ room, and about twenty minutes later was offering his flustered goodbyes to Mrs. Strauss as he headed for the door.

It seems that the rabbi had done his best to give a dramatic rendering of the Exodus story to capture the boys’ attention, replete with Moses’s staff, Pharaoh’s chariots and the parting of the Sea. Apparently Bob asked if that were really how it had all happened, and the rabbi assured him it was. At that point, Bob declared his enthusiastic wonderment, the only problem being that he expressed this wonderment with a phrase beginning “Well I’ll be a . . .” and concluding with some rather colorful language which I shall not quote in these hallowed halls. We don’t know if the rabbi actually quoted Bob back to Mrs. Strauss as he headed for Wichita Falls. We just know that the rabbi never showed up in Stamford again. Leave it to Bob Strauss to one-up the Exodus.

We honor a man today whom neither that rabbi nor this, nor any of us, could ever forget. He could twist an arm or cuss into a phone with the best of them. But we miss him today not only because we miss his irreverence, his sense of humor, his back-room smarts and every-room charm. We miss him because he represented a patriotism that was about solution and resolution -- not about partisan posturing and rigid ideologies, but about getting things done for the good of the nation.

He knew and taught that too much emphasis on winners and losers in any deal – in a bank boardroom or on the floor of Congress - would yield stalemate rather than progress, and breed ill will rather than cooperation. He advised his protégés that when they had the upper hand, they should always consider some way to preserve the dignity of the other side – and that when they seemed to be on the short end of a negotiation or a vote, it was always possible to make one more call, to work one more connection, to shore up the relationships that Bob Strauss always understood came first.

He never wanted to paint an opponent into a corner, but as his brother Ted says, he did always seem to be holding the brush. He was a principled pragmatist. Bob Strauss had plenty



of dirty words in his vocabulary, but he never regarded compromise as one of them. He was a brilliant strategist who had the mental agility, political horse sense and big-picture perspective to recognize that it's possible for opposing ideas to have merit.

The rabbi from Wichita Falls may have failed in his mission, but Bob Strauss ended up with some of the Talmud in him, the great sixth century compendium of Jewish law and lore which features multiple perspectives on every page and every problem, and always honors and records minority opinions. A lifelong Democrat who served as wise counselor to decades of U.S. Presidents of both parties, he called himself “a putter-together” – and in today's climate of toxic political polarization, how urgently we could use his even-keeled savvy and deep sense of service.

He did it all with a relentlessly positive outlook. When asked what he liked most about his life, he famously answered, “The whole damn deal.” He taught his kids that whenever someone asked how they were, they should find a way to answer positively – because nobody wants to be around a complainer, and other people won't pay attention to your troubles anyway.

But more important, his positive outlook meant that no challenge was too great, no problem too complicated. The greater the obstacle, the more energized he seemed to become. And of course, that positive outlook was part of his magnetism – the same magnetism that got him elected president

of the Baptist Young People's Organization in Stamford, until it was determined that as a Jew, he might not be quite right for the job. It should be noted that Bob also served as a distinguished President of Temple Emanu-El in Dallas, where by all accounts he was a much better fit.

But for all his public accomplishments, Bob's relationships were at the core of his being. He was a remarkably loyal friend, and his family was the heart of his life. He and Ted shared a bond which simply transcends description. There were no two better story-telling brothers in the whole State of Texas – and no two closer brothers anywhere.

He adored Helen, and their six decades of shared love and shared life, shared consultation and shared adventure were a source of the deepest sustenance to him.

Whatever heights he climbed in public prominence, he always made sure his family was along for the ride – from bringing his kids to political conventions to having his family join him on a cruise on Anwar Sadat's yacht down the Nile; from asking and quoting Helen's opinion on matters of the day to staying in touch with his children no matter where he or they might be in the world. He said that the money paid for those long distance calls was the best money he ever spent.

How blessed you all are to have Bob Strauss stories be your family stories – from one generation to the next – family stories of love, of laughter, of generosity and the highest moral standards; of



integrity and tolerance and living life with a sense of honor and joy. How blessed you are to have all those memories of Del Mar – the beach and the races and the concentric circles of family and all those meals where the chief topic of conversation was what to have for the next meal.

As Bob was more and more limited by illness, in typical straightforward fashion, he let his family know that whenever his time would come, he would be ready. He assured them that he was comfortable and at peace, grateful for the wonderful life he had lived. In good Strauss matter of fact style, he would say, “I’m not hungry and I don’t hurt.” Readiness is all. And Ted may have summed it all up best in these words about his brother: “He loved life and life loved him. It was a good match.”

That Exodus story that Bob Strauss one-upped some eighty years ago in Stamford is the same one we Jews told again at our Passover tables just ten days ago, just as we will tell it again when Passover rolls around next year. We will once again tell the story of the difference a leader can make in people’s lives. We will once again tell the story of resistance to oppression, of the dignity of all people, of the precious gift of freedom. And we will sing, and we will laugh, and of course, we will talk about the food.

So maybe Bob Strauss didn’t need that rabbi from Wichita Falls after all. Maybe he had the story in his heart all along – leadership and dignity and laughter and freedom. The story in his heart

that we all carry as people of faith: the reality of injustice, even now; the outcry for freedom, which we pray we might heed in our own day; the passage, never simple, through seas of challenge to the redemption that awaits on the other side.

That horizon of redemption and hope is the promise of this sacred season for us all: Democrats and Republicans, conservatives and liberals, Mayflower descendants and the newest immigrants to these shores. That light of freedom is a beacon that shines with American splendor. That’s the hope and that’s the beacon and that’s the stubborn story of possibility that the kid from Stamford, Texas carried right into the corridors of power, and made this nation better for it. Bob Strauss had the story in his heart all along - the way that we will all now be privileged to carry his story in our own, with the deepest sense of gratitude and honor.

In the words of the biblical Book of Proverbs, Robert S. Strauss – zecher tzaddik livracha – may the memory of the righteous always abide for blessing. Amen.





## JIMMY CARTER

Bob Strauss is a national treasure. A patriotic American, he served both Democrats and Republicans with equally good advice and candor, often using words you don't hear every day in diplomacy. An ardent leader of the Democratic Party, he was just as effective in working with Republicans, and was often a bridge between the two parties when important national issues were at stake.

Not only did he serve ably in several positions during my administration, Bob knew the importance of image in our Capitol. For instance, he used my White House Briefing room for his own briefings – whether I approved or not – because he knew that location would improve anything he had to say.

Yes, my friend Bob Strauss understood how to be in the news. But more importantly, he understood the hard work, perseverance, and commitment it took to get a job done well. As my U.S. Trade Representative and Special Envoy to the Middle East, he did the heavy lifting behind closed doors and in personal meetings to move our country forward. And sometimes he even deserved the headlines his work generated.

When he joined my administration he had to have a parking space inside the White House grounds. I had a special space set aside and labeled for his car. He then explained that because he had to make emergency trips to Capitol Hill he needed flashing lights and a siren installed in his car. My staff looked into it and conferred with the DC authorities. They were told in no uncertain terms that only police, fire trucks, or ambulances could have flashing lights and sirens on the vehicles. Bob pressed everyone on the importance of his unfettered transportation. Finally the DC fire chief told Bob the only way he would get what he wanted was a direct written order from the President of the United States. To which Bob said, "I'll be back in an hour." I'm sure it was under an hour, and I'm not sure it was my signature.

Bob was not used to the frugal policies I brought to Washington. When he was told we wanted him to fly coach, he came to me to explain in his own respectful, but creative and memorable way, why he needed to be an exception. I was glad to make an exception for Bob Strauss because he was, in fact, exceptional.

Bob brightened the lives of all who knew him, with his incisive wit and broad knowledge of life in America. On our birthdays, anniversaries, or when major news stories broke, we could always count on his phone call to share his friendship or to analyze developing events. For all of his wisdom, good humor, frank advice, and friendship, what I will always remember about Bob Strauss was his devotion to his beloved wife Helen, his children and grandchildren, and his long serving staff. That caring, love, and loyalty are the key traits that made him a unique person and brought us all together. Bob Strauss will be missed.

Rosalynn and I extend our condolences to his family, knowing that their memories of life with Bob will soften their sorrow over his passing.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jimmy Carter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.





WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON

April 23, 2014

To the Family and Friends of Bob Strauss:

I wish I could be with you today to honor and celebrate Bob's extraordinary life and legacy. I offer my condolences to Robert, Richard, and Susan; to his grandchildren and great-grandchildren; and to all those who had the good fortune to know him.

Bob had a sharp mind, a quick wit, a keen understanding of people, and an unparalleled sense of how to get things done, from Dallas to Washington to Moscow. He enjoyed every phase of his life and he never turned down the chance to serve or give sage advice. He was a genius at telling you something you needed to hear but didn't want to and making you like it.

Bob was one of the greatest chairmen the Democratic National Committee ever had. He played an enormous role in rebuilding and reshaping the Party after the Republican landslide in 1972, and in supporting President Carter during his term. But he was equally trusted and respected on the other side of the aisle, as his close friend Bob Dole and both Presidents Bush can confirm. We were all deeply grateful for his friendship and his service.

My favorite Strauss line is that every politician wants voters to believe he was born in a log cabin he built himself. But, as Bob said, it ain't so. He knew that no one makes it far without the support of others. Few have supported so many as well as Bob Strauss did. I'll never forget him. I cherish every encounter and phone conversation we ever had.

Hillary and I join you in saluting a remarkable man for a life of love, friendship, and patriotic service.

Sincerely,

*Bill Clinton*



GEORGE W. BUSH

April 23, 2014

Laura and I join you all in honoring the memory of a fine American – and more significantly, a great Texan – Robert Strauss. Bob lived an extraordinary life and made profound contributions to our Nation. He was a wise man and a straight shooter with a keen wit. He was a trusted advisor to Presidents of both parties – including me. I was always grateful for his insights, and I will miss him. Laura and I send our sincere condolences to Bob's family and all those who were fortunate to call him a friend.



