

The Real
Calvin Coolidge

A First-Hand Story of His Life

Told by People
Who Knew Him Best

And Edited with Comment by

Grace
Coolidge

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Calvin and Grace Coolidge

The Real Calvin Coolidge

Around the name and fame of our men and women who have gained prominence in their fields of activity we are wont to weave legends and gather stories, some of which are true, some of which are founded upon fact, many of which are pure fabrication. Usually they serve to illustrate a characteristic trait so aptly that they gain strength by repetition and continue to be told with variations from generation to generation.

There are so many stories typical of Calvin Coolidge which are known to be true that it seems worth while to collect and set down a few of them as told by men and women who knew him personally and came in contact with him in various ways throughout the period of his active life.

Among the stories which might reasonably be attributed to him but which did not originate with him, there is the one about sin which I have heard repeated many times. It is such a good story that it is almost a pity to refute it. According to the story, the President had returned from attending church service on a Sabbath morning when I had remained at home. I inquired what the sermon had been about, and his reply was, "Sin." Then my question, "What did the minister say about it?" and the reply, "He was agin it."

The telling never fails to bring forth a hearty laugh, and I happened to be present the first time that the President heard it. He laughed mildly and remarked that it would be funnier if it were true.

There is the story of Senator Borah and his horse, which has been credited to Mr. Coolidge. This originated with Robert M. Washburn and is characteristic of his ready wit. He and Mrs. Washburn were calling on Mrs. Harlan Stone on a Monday afternoon at-home day for the wives of the Justices of the Supreme Court. The conversation had turned to Senator Borah and a speech

which he had made recently upon the floor of the Senate. Mr. Washburn made the remark that Mr. Borah enjoyed playing a lone hand; and he liked to ride horseback but could never fully enjoy the practice since it involved cooperation with the horse. This story amused Mr. Coolidge, and I have heard him repeat it, but always with the proper acknowledgment.

As an introduction to the personal reminiscences which follow, I shall recount an instance which occurred during the summer of 1905, about two months before our marriage.

Mr. Coolidge had come to Burlington for a few days' visit, and I asked him to go with me to the home of a college friend who lived eight miles out in the country. Rather reluctantly he consented, for it was never easy for him to make social calls. This was before the days of automobiles. There were perhaps one or two electric carriages in Burlington. Our only means of transportation was a horse and buggy from one of the local livery stables.

Mr. Coolidge made his preparations with extreme care. Wide silk shoe laces were coming into vogue, and he procured the widest, shiniest pair I had ever seen, inserting them in his patent-leather oxford shoes with precision. He wore a dark-blue serge suit, new and perfectly tailored, and a black derby hat. At the last moment he placed a whisk broom in the back of the carriage. This is all so characteristic that I am recounting the story in detail.

Arriving at the home of my friend, Mr. Coolidge assisted me from the carriage at the doorstep, then drove the horse into the back yard and hitched him to a large ring in a corner of the barn. Every move was so deliberate that even now, as I tell it, the impression comes again, as it did then, of a small boy performing some hated task because his mother has asked him to do it as a favor to her. The hitch rope secured to his entire satisfaction, he took the whisk broom from the back of the buggy and brushed the dust and horsehairs from his clothing. Then, all spick-and-span, he rejoined me, and we entered the house. Introductions over, we seated ourselves, he on the very edge of a large sofa in the parlor. My friend was normally a talkative person, but our conversation upon this occasion was halting, and we received no assistance from the man on the sofa. Not one word did he utter and when, at last, he could bear it no longer, he arose and said simply, with one of

his best smiles,

"We'll be going now."

While he went to get the nag my nonplused friend exclaimed, "My land, Grace, I'd be afraid of him!"

As we drove homeward I protested: "Now why did you act like that? She thinks that you are a perfect stick and said she'd be afraid of you."

Laconically came the reply, "She'll find I'm human."

I do not hesitate to say that I was a little "put out" at the time, but I have since come to understand. He realized that I was, in a way, putting him up for display, and he made every possible preparation to present an appearance which would do me honor. Beyond that his natural shyness would not permit him to go, and he would not make a pretense of enjoying the position in which I had placed him.

From this point in this collection of personal reminiscences of Calvin Coolidge, my part is similar to that of a toastmaster presenting the speakers, as I shall here present those who have been good enough to contribute, offering brief comments of my own and an occasional narrative as brought to mind by the context.

Our first contributor, Governor Alfred E. Smith, I had met briefly when he came to the Willard Hotel to pay his respects to the new President, who had hurriedly returned to Washington after the death of President Harding. I had not met Mrs. Smith, and I eagerly awaited their arrival upon the occasion mentioned by Governor Smith when they came to lunch with us at White Pine Camp in the summer of 1926.

Mrs. Smith and I took little part in the conversation, but we were interested listeners. Governor Smith was in his usual good form, and the President responded with unwonted alacrity. They discussed problems of common interest and experiences, and it seemed to me that their minds ran along parallel lines in many instances.

President Coolidge, Salesman

By ALFRED E. SMITH
Former Governor of New York

My first intimate contact with Calvin Coolidge occurred in 1929 when he, Julius Rosenwald, and I were selected as a committee of three to dispose of \$6,500,000 under one of the most peculiar wills that ever came into a surrogate's court. It was the will of Conrad Hubert, an inventor. Under its provisions we were to decide upon worthy charitable institutions, for the distribution among them of his estate.

In the course of our deliberations a Jewish home for children was proposed as one of the beneficiaries. The man who was representing it, appearing before our committee, said to me: "By the way, Governor, you know So-and-So—he's deeply interested in the home. You know him well—you play poker with him."

Without smiling or even looking up, Mr. Coolidge asked, "Is that why he needs the money?"

Contrary to what most people believe, Coolidge was not a cold man, although his invariable calmness might have caused such an impression. And he had a very real sense of humor.

I recall an occasion when Mrs. Smith and I were invited to visit the President and Mrs. Coolidge at Lake Osgood. While the four of us were out in a motor boat, the President and I got to talking about waterways, and I told him I would like to sell the Erie Canal to the Federal Government. It was costing New York State a lot of money, but it would be a good buy for the Federal Government as part of a ship canal from the Great Lakes to tidewater.

Mr. Coolidge said he had heard some talk about the project. After a while our conversation got around to the measures we had been taking in the state to assure an adequate water supply to the vast growing population of New York City. I pointed out that some day the state would be faced by a serious problem in supplying water to the people of New York.

The President looked at me with a twinkle in his eye and said, "Why don't you sell *them* the Erie Canal?"

\$3.25 A Word!

By RICHARD H. WALDO
Syndicate Editor and Publisher

In 1928 I asked Mr. Coolidge to write for the newspapers of the nation through the McClure Newspaper Syndicate. He listened carefully to my proposition, which included the offer of a guaranty of \$3000 a week and a monthly settlement on balances due under an arrangement allotting sixty percent to him and forty percent to the Syndicate. His declination was put in such a way that the door was left open.

Many later conversations resulted in his deciding, in April, 1930, to start on the first of July of that year. He told me in 1932 that the reason he changed his mind was that the leading banking house in New York—his most trusted advisers—had told him that the depression was over, and he would have the advantage of the rising tide of prosperity if he waited.

"They seem to have been mistaken," he said.

Nearly a hundred newspapers subscribed at the highest prices ever paid for a feature. It was headed, "Calvin Coolidge Says." The New York *Herald Tribune* headed the list at \$900 weekly. Eight Hearst newspapers paid \$2000 a week collectively. The extra monthly settlements came to \$47,045; making a total of \$203,045 for fifty-two weeks' work.

Mr. Coolidge agreed to write some one hundred and fifty to two hundred words daily. Topics were to be entirely of his selection. The dispatch was to be filed at the Western Union telegraph office at Northampton—or wherever else he might happen to be—not later than 3 p.m., six days a week. He was never late, and the average for the year's work was one hundred and ninety-eight words a day. He was intent on giving full value and on not having telegraph tolls paid by the newspapers on more than the agreed maximum.

A former Associated Press executive acted as secretary to Mr. Coolidge during the syndication period. It was this man's job to make suggestions as to phrasing and the use of words, after typing

Mr. Coolidge's pencil-written dispatch, which was usually prepared the night before. It was rare for any one to make acceptable suggestions as to the topic of the day.

Calvin Coolidge Says:

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NORTHAMPTON, Mass., June 30.—We need more faith in ourselves. Largely because of some decline in trade we have set about finding fault with nearly everybody and everything. We are told the President is wrong, the Congress is wrong, the Supreme Court is wrong, and the Cabinet departments, the Federal Reserve Board, the chain stores, the power companies, the radio and even the religious bodies, all are wrong.

Yet our government, our physical properties and our industries have changed very little from a year or two ago, when people were fairly content. We have the same country, in charge of almost entirely the same people, with substantially the same laws and administration. The most casual consideration shows us that this whole structure could not turn sour over night. But our estimate of it has changed.

Our country, our people, our civil and religious institutions may not be perfect, but they are what we have made them. They are good enough so that it has been necessary to build a high exclusion law to prevent all the world from rushing in to possess them.

My countrymen, it is time to stop criticizing and quarreling and begin sympathizing and helping!

CALVIN COOLIDGE

*The first of Mr. Coolidge's daily articles which
was published July 1, 1930*

The thought originally presented to the President was that after he left office he could be a leader to the bewildered people of a nation that was about to experience a terrific depression. It was never possible to get his agreement that such a condition would confront the country, and he chose to write on no subject which

had to do with problems of government. More than once he said, in response to urgent suggestions that he deal with the steadily darkening conditions:

"I won't do it. I refuse to be Deputy President."

But he was a very lonely man. The failure of his successor to consult with him at all, and the consciousness that close contact of political friends with him would not be well received at the White House, made for a certain disturbance of mind, though it gave me an opportunity to develop a friendship that was the rarest and most valuable I have ever known, and to become acquainted with that loveliest of First Ladies, Mrs. Coolidge.

The morning of Mr. Coolidge's sudden death I had received a letter from him confirming an appointment for our usual monthly evening together a few days later. On the day of the funeral in Northampton I sat with the men from Washington who knew his extraordinary worth. Among the last of that group, I stood beside the coffin. I have never seen such weariness in a face. It was no further shock to hear what one of his most intimate friends later told me—that no other man was ever quite so glad to go as was this former President whose fine Americanism, great abilities, and unfailing integrity in every relationship had been understood by all too few.

Mrs. Coolidge comments:

While Mr. Coolidge was writing his daily articles, it was Mr. Waldo's practice to come to Northampton for a conference on the night train from New York, arriving in time for an early breakfast. These were pleasant occasions for Mr. Waldo and me, but Mr. Coolidge was frequently a little impatient with our inconsequential conversation and in a hurry to leave for the office, where they could get down to serious business. He usually left the table before we had finished the meal, to appear a few minutes later with his hat and coat on. With a nod of his head he would indicate to Mr. Waldo that he was ready to leave. Many of our conversations were left hanging in the air without a period.

In many ways Mr. Coolidge enjoyed writing those articles, but he did feel hampered by the limitations which expediency placed on him. At first he prepared them in advance, but soon came to writing them in his study the evening before they were to be sent out. During the last two months of the year that his contract ran he counted the days to the end, and was like a boy let out of school when the last one was on the wires.

Calvin Coolidge Says:

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NORTHAMPTON, Mass., June 29.—At times we can be thankful for what is behind us. For nearly two years the world has been going through a readjustment period. There has been a world-wide economic depression which no business skill has been able to prevent, followed by political revolutions in many countries which no statesmanship found it possible to restrain. Both France and politics have been seeking a more stable equilibrium.

In spite of heavy losses and a good deal of concealed suffering, public and private charity have not failed to provide ample relief for our people. We have been free from public disorder. No one doubts the stability of our government. However severe the pressure, however great the danger, the patience and the courage of the nation have been greater. We have had a demonstration of the great financial resources and of the strength and character of our people. Whatever excesses they tolerated in the time of prosperity, in the time of adversity they stood firm. They have shown a reserve power sufficient to master their difficulties. Nothing has been able to shake their faith in their political and social institutions. A country which has met this test in this way is worthy of confidence.

CALVIN COOLIDGE

*The last article in the series, Calvin Coolidge Says,
which appeared June 30, 1931*

Andrew W. Mellon, as everybody knows, served as Secretary of the Treasury under three Presidents, a record to be envied. I knew nothing of the conducting of affairs in the Executive Offices or in the Executive Departments, considering that they lay outside my province. If I had manifested any particular interest, I feel sure that I should have been properly put in my place. At any rate I had my hands full discharging the duties of the position to which I had not been elected.

There had been times when I protested against further advancement up the political ladder. My natural inclination was a little more domestically inclined. In spite of my protestations, Mr. Coolidge delighted in saying to those who seemed interested in my reactions to public life,

“She has kept me running for public office ever since I married her.”

When Blame Was Praise

by ANDREW W. MELLON

Former Secretary of the Treasury

I have always felt that those who did not know Mr. Coolidge well failed to appreciate some of the fine and very human qualities which he often showed his friends. He was far from being the cold and unimaginative person he was pictured, although he had his own dry, New England way of showing it.

I remember one occasion in 1922, shortly after I went to Washington, when Mr. Coolidge gave me proof of this. I was being attacked in the Senate by a certain demagogic Senator never noted for his restraint in the use of language. I forget now what it was all about, but he was one of the first to discover the sweet uses of publicity to which I could be put as an object of attack by any self-constituted friend of the people, such as he imagined himself to be.

Thinking I had not yet become inured to the rigors of public life, Mr. Coolidge stopped me one day after Cabinet and said,

“Don’t let what Senator —— said about you in the Senate today bother you.” He added dryly, “I consider an attack from such a source a commendation.”

Mr. Coolidge had a true sense of values in all the relationships of life. He knew, better perhaps than any other man of our time, how limited was the amount of good and how unlimited the amount of harm Government could do by constant interference in business and in men's affairs outside the scope of its authority.

Mrs. Coolidge comments:

If I remember correctly, the two instances to which Mr. Bernard Baruch refers in his opening paragraphs below are the only times when I met him. My acquaintance with him is slight, but I am well acquainted with the taste of his wild turkeys, thanks to Admiral Grayson and other friends of Mr. Baruch who hunt game upon his preserves in one of our Southern states.

His Silence and His Thrift

By BERNARD M. BARUCH

*Adviser to Presidents, former Chairman of the
War Industries Board*

Although I had heard my beloved friend, Dwight Morrow, speak frequently of Calvin Coolidge, he did not stand out from the vast number of people in Washington. So little did I know him at first, that at a luncheon given by Mr. and Mrs. Edwin McLean, I found myself at the same table with a very quiet little man, and asked the lady sitting between us who he was. She said,

"The Vice President."

He appeared so much younger than his pictures. He was the type who would always look less than his years. He did not engage in the conversation, but he had a sly, amused look in his eyes that was in no way portrayed in his countenance.

The next time I saw him was in the White House, where I dined with him. Besides the President, Mrs. Coolidge and Mrs. Stearns were there. The President was much preoccupied, but became very companionable upon the appearance of a big collie. Addressing his remarks to the dog, he made many amusing comments on the political situation in the House and Senate.

After dinner, while I was talking to the two ladies, Mrs. Coolidge remarked that the President wanted me. I looked down the hall and saw him standing in front of the study door with a box of cigars under his arm, motioning with his head for me to join him. On entering the room, he lit the fire himself, opened his box of cigars, and asked me if I would have a "see-gar." He pronounced it rather as a Southerner or Westerner would.

I remarked that the scene in the study was very familiar to me, and pointed to a little chair that I had occupied on the extreme end of the so-called Wilson War Cabinet. He said,

"You are just as welcome here now and in that chair as you were then."

The immediate warmth and friendly spirit of the man was something which I had not expected to encounter.

Then, to my utter amazement at his directness, he said, "I want to talk to you about the railroad situation."

And he did all the talking. From that topic he proceeded to the agricultural question, and the tariff, and the tax problem, which was under consideration in the Congress at the time. Although I can do my share of talking, I found that at the end of each dissertation I had to interrupt to say,

"Mr. President, in order that the record may be clear as to what I think, please let me say this."

When I had stayed as long as I thought I should, I started to leave, but he wanted to talk on, and I was delighted to hear his views, and to see that he was so much more human and so much more a companion than I could have believed from the stories I had heard.

And then, as I was saying good-bye to him, he made a remark which perhaps explained why Mr. Coolidge had the reputation of being a silent man. He had asked me to take a certain position that I said he should reserve for some of his prima donnas who felt they should be recognized. He cackled, kind of—an evidence that he was boy and man like the rest. Evidently I had an amused look in my eyes, for he asked,

"What are you smiling at?"

I said: "Mr. President, you are so different from what people say you are. My smile indicates both amusement at that and

interest—and, I hope, friendliness.”

He seemed to be very pleased. Then I added,
“Everybody said you never say anything.”

“Well, Baruch,” he replied, “many times I say only ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to people. Even that is too much. It winds them up for twenty minutes more.”

The next time I saw him was on a Sunday morning when he asked me to stop over on one of my trips South. He met me in the large room just off the elevator on the second floor. There was a fire in the fireplace. After discussing the matter he had in mind, the subject of disarmament came up. In the course of his remarks he went into one of those well-known Coolidge silences. He looked into the fire, took a couple of puffs on his cigar, and finally said,

“If the people want to fight, they will fight with broomsticks if they can not find anything else.”

Shortly afterward he asked me to serve on the George Washington Bicentennial Commission. I went to the second meeting, a very large one, held in the Crystal Room. Numbers of people spoke about this thing and that thing. The President sat behind a little table facing the committee, which was seated in a great semicircle. After considerable time had been taken up by the speakers, and as he turned his head from one end of the semicircle to the other, he gave me an almost imperceptible wink. I was not quite certain of it a first, but each time his eyes passed mine I could see that innuendo-like wink, with just a crinkle in the corner of his eyes. I thought it was a physical defect, but found on inquiring that this was not so. I knew then that it was mischief or something akin to it. This was confirmed some time later—how much later I do not remember—when, referring to the occasion, he said,

“That meeting had *some* speakers, didn’t it?”

It was only later, after he had retired from the Presidency, when we both became members of the National Transportation Committee, that I saw developed and let loose the human qualities in him that had crept out on each occasion with me. During the committee meetings he handled everything with such rare good taste and judgment, and with so much consideration for everybody, that he won the real affection of us all.

One day Governor Al Smith said, “Mr. President, did you know that the rooms you are occupying now were once occupied by The Association Against the Prohibition Amendment?”

Without batting an eye the former President said, “Well, I guess we can fumigate them!”

The high regard in which he held Al Smith and which Al Smith held for him, was very pleasant to the other three on the committee. Every meeting became an occasion we all remember. Many people thought this sweetness and great consideration, as shown in his latter days, were due to his approaching illness, but my contacts with him in other matters made me believe that he always was the human being—very shy, but always considerate of his associates.

I never heard him say anything about himself. He was entirely impersonal, never talking about his relationship with any one. Of course he did have ideas about thrift and the value of money, and what it meant to wrest a living from the hard hills where he was born. He knew that people there had to fight for an existence and store up for the future, as he and his forefathers had done for so many years.

After one of the committee meetings we were discussing current economic and social conditions in general when he said to me:

“You know, I don’t understand what all this means. It is very confusing to me.”

Then I said: “Well, it is confusing to a man like me, too, because as a boy I had to live through the Reconstruction period, when we had a very unkind Government over us. We had to fight our way out; and up in Vermont you had to fight your way from under very serious economic and social difficulties. It is pretty hard for men who had to do this to think that the Government should mother us too much.”

Before I knew him I had thought of him as a politician. As I got to know him better I commenced to think of him as Dwight Morrow had told me about him. He and Dwight Morrow had some similar characteristics. The main difference was that Morrow talked, and loved to talk, and was always charming in his conversation. You loved him immediately when you saw him. One admired his brilliancy, his great heart. Calvin Coolidge was shy,

said nothing, but yet had all the human qualities Dwight had. That is undoubtedly the bond which held them most strongly.

It may be that my views regarding Calvin Coolidge were colored by the confidence he seemed to have in me, or perhaps it was the backing he gave to those with whom he was associated as Chairman of the Committee. Each letter to me made me feel I had to work harder. Here is a paragraph from a letter written in Northampton:

"It is hard for me to make decisions up here when I am out of touch with things. I thought we came to the conclusion that it was not wise for us to interpose in these emergency measures. One way is to approach this subject with entire candor and interpose wherever we think we have an opinion. Another way is to proceed more diplomatically, avoiding positions that would probably be ineffective, and looking to securing the largest result in the end."

This was in reference to my desire to get upon the statute books a bankruptcy act facilitating the quick reorganization of the railroads. After I had advocated this at one of our meetings, he made a characteristic Coolidge remark in opposition, saying,

"In families where there has been a hanging, they do not like to have anybody around twirling a rope."

As an evidence of his sense of humor, I quote the following from a letter written on October 27, 1932:

"I shall go to New York on the Tuesday afternoon of Election Day and could attend a meeting Wednesday morning from nine to eleven, or in the afternoon from two o'clock to nine o'clock. I mistrust that you and Governor Smith will be rather tired on Wednesday morning, at which time I shall be glad to extend to both of you my sincere sympathy."

I quote another characteristic Coolidge viewpoint as to expenditures of the committee.

"It is necessary to watch people in Washington all the time to keep them from unnecessary expenditure of money. They have lived off the national Government so long in that city that they are inclined to regard any sort of employment as a Christmas tree, and if we are not careful, they will run up a big expense bill on us. I hope you are checking them up to see what results they are getting, either by personal contact or letter."

\$1,000,000,000 For Prohibition

By THEODORE ROOSEVELT

'Soldier, Explorer, Former Assistant Secretary of the Navy

After Mr. Coolidge's election I went to see him, very much concerned about the question of Prohibition. I urged him to go before Congress and say:

"Gentlemen, I have sworn to uphold the Constitution and laws of the United States. Among these laws is that on Prohibition. It is not enforced. In order even to make a good effort to enforce it I must have a billion dollars a year. I urge, therefore, that you raise by a special tax labeled for the enforcement of Prohibition this sum."

It was my opinion that by so doing the President would bring matters to a head and we would have a show-down.

He was sitting behind his desk. When I got through with my statement, he said:

"Colonel, never go out to meet trouble. If you will just sit still, nine times out of ten some one will intercept it before it reaches you."

Mrs. Coolidge comments:

Colonel Theodore Roosevelt is well qualified by inheritance and experience to offer suggestions to a President of the United States. Though he was young when his father occupied that position, I have no doubt that he gave him advice upon various matters. It does not surprise me that the counter-advice which he received from President Coolidge when he recommended that he ask the appropriation of a billion dollars made an impression upon him which has remained.

Mrs. Dwight Morrow and I are under the same impression that Mr. Morrow and Mr. Coolidge were not intimate friends while they were at Amherst College. Each had a profound respect for the other and recognized his ability, but Mr. Coolidge did not make friends easily. He was too shy to go the proverbial halfway.

Mr. Morrow joined a college fraternity, Mr. Coolidge did not. I am led to believe that the opportunity was not given him from a letter which he wrote to his father in the spring of his last year at his preparatory school, Black River Academy. The letter reads:

“Dick Lane thinks he and I had better go down to Amherst some time this spring to see about getting me into a society there, the societies are a great factor of Amherst and of course I want to join one if I can, it means something to get into a good society. At Amherst they don’t take in everybody. I may not get a chance to join but Dick thinks I can if we scheme enough.

“Of course to learn anything it will be necessary for me to associate with those who can teach me something. I have not the training of a man from a school like Saint Johnsbury, Saxton’s River or Phillips Exeter, but I hope I have the ability yet to receive it, though not having it would cause me some embarrassment.”

In his senior year Mr. Coolidge was one of group of students who formed a chapter of Phi Gamma Delta. He refers to this in another letter to his father dated at Amherst, January 20th, 1895.

“The term will cost me more than I expected when I came back. Being in a society will cost considerable, I cannot tell how much perhaps \$75. though not all this term. This expense would naturally come at the beginning of the course but did not in my case. I know you must be short of money this winter and I am perfectly willing to pay this extra expense myself. I will send you an order on the Rutland Trust Company and you can send my book over and get the money for me.”

A Little Girl’s Sore Finger

By MRS. DWIGHT W. MORROW

Wife of the late U.S. Senator and Ambassador to Mexico

My husband used to take delight in telling a story of his early college days at Amherst when he and Calvin Coolidge went to the same boarding house for their meals. They had found the cheapest place in town, where they paid something like \$3.00 a week. Probably that was why hash was served frequently.

Whenever hash appeared, young Coolidge had a formula that he went through very gravely, never varying it and never smiling. It seems that the landlady had two pets, a dog and a cat. As her favorite dish appeared Calvin would ask,

“Where is the dog?”

The dog would be called in.

Next, “Where is the cat?”

The cat would be brought in. Then and only then would Calvin help himself to hash.

When I first knew Mr. Coolidge, I must say I was not so much impressed as Dwight had led me to expect I would be. We had gone to a reunion of the class of ’95, and had been seated with Mr. and Mrs. Coolidge in the bleachers at a baseball game. It was terribly hot, and none of us could have been very comfortable. But Mr. Coolidge was particularly silent and seemed to do very little to conceal his discomfort. After the Coolidges left, I said to my husband,

“I don’t see how that sulky, red-headed little man ever won that pretty, charming woman.”

My husband said: “Don’t be too hasty, Betty. We’ll hear from that man Coolidge some day.”

“Yes,” I replied, “we’ll hear from him—but we’ll hear from him through *his wife*.”

I couldn’t have known then that my husband and I would both be right.

All through those early years Dwight spoke of him as having great power in reserve. While he was Governor, but before the time of police strike, we were on our way through Boston, and called upon the Coolidges at the Touraine. My daughter, Anne, a little girl then, was with us.

Later, on the train to New York, there was a group of people in our drawing room, and the conversation turned to Governor Coolidge and his political future. My husband said that in his opinion Mr. Coolidge had real Presidential possibilities. The men present disagreed emphatically—said he was too quiet and lacked all the usual political assets of cordiality and personality.

“No one would *like* him!” one of party said.

At this point little Anne broke into the serious discussion. She

held up a finger that had a bit of adhesive tape on it over a little cut. "I like Mr. Coolidge," she said. "He was the only one who asked about my sore finger!"

My husband, quite pleased, of course, looked at his friends and said, "There's your answer."

A good illustration of the so-called Coolidge taciturnity occurred on the *Mayflower*, the only time I was a guest on board. It had been a delightful party over the week-end, with the Secretary of State and Mrs. Kellogg among the guests. At dinner I was seated at the President's left, Mrs. Kellogg at his right. Mr. Coolidge talked very little. I didn't mind. I knew his ways. I made no particular effort because I saw that he simply wasn't going to talk. Mrs. Kellogg, however, tried very definitely to overcome his quiet. I wasn't surprised that she had no success.

The next morning, knowing the President's punctiliousness, I tried my best to be on time at breakfast. My recollection is that only the President and Mrs. Coolidge were at their places.

As I opened the door the President was saying to Mrs. Coolidge, ". . . And where are my two fair ladies?"

Mrs. Coolidge answered, "Exhausted by your conversation of last evening!"

And finally, here are two stories that might go together because they are both about costumes and what they stood for: one, a cowboy outfit, and the other, a dinner coat. These two incidents seem to show Mr. Coolidge as having been inconsistent at least once. But when his motives are understood, I believe his attitude in both cases is logical.

During a Christmas vacation when John Coolidge was at the White House, home from school, he said to his father at breakfast one morning: "I'm going out to a tea dance this afternoon. I'll be late for dinner and I won't dress."

After a moment of silence his father said, "You will remember that you are dining at the table of the President of the United States and you will present yourself at the appointed hour properly clothed."

Now of course everybody knows that when Mr. Coolidge said that, he was referring impersonally to the exalted office that he held, and not to himself.

Because he always thought in terms of the importance of his position, his friends were baffled when he permitted himself to be photographed in a cowboy uniform given to him while the summer White House was in the Black Hills. Several people close to the President asked my husband to speak to him about it, but he declined. At last, a man or a group of men were induced to bring up the matter. They entered their protest as tactfully as possible.

"But I don't see why you object," said the President. "The people here have sent me this costume, and they wouldn't have sent it unless they expected me to put it on. Why shouldn't I have my picture taken with it on to please them?"

"It's making people laugh," said his friends.

"Well, it's good for people to laugh," said the President.

And I believe that, even supposing he did not want to wear the costume, he was really doing it out of courtesy and consideration for those who had offered him a gift.



President Coolidge wears a special ceremonial headdress to mark his becoming Chief Leading Eagle in Deadwood, South Dakota.

Mrs. Coolidge comments:

While we were in the Black Hills of South Dakota in the summer of 1927, it was the President's custom to receive delegations from various organizations. A group of Boy Scouts were his guests upon one occasion. They presented him with a horse and saddle and cowboy outfit: chaps, shirt, belt, hat, boots, spurs—all the paraphernalia dear to a cowboy's heart.

With the light of youthful enthusiasm in his eye, the young spokesman who had made the presentation looked up at the President and said,

"Now, Mr. President, we'd like to have you put them on and have your picture taken with us."

A man must needs have had a heart of stone to have turned down that eager plea. The President said not a word but turned and mounted the steps to the Lodge, reappearing a few moments later in the guise of a cowboy in full regalia. He even went so far as to mount the horse. The cameras clicked; the boys went into paroxysms of delight; the horse pranced. And all the time I believe he knew that he was making those boys happy at the cost of future criticism from friends who would remonstrate with him for appearing to act a part in order to curry favor with our summer neighbors.

He had gained experience of all that when he was Governor of Massachusetts. I think he refers to it in his Autobiography. It had to do with the frock which he was accustomed to wear when he was in Plymouth. He felt the change in air when he went up among the hills, and this old-fashioned woolen frock, the material for which his grandmother had woven, kept him nice and warm.

When he was Governor, the news photographers came to Plymouth to take some pictures of him performing the varied farm duties to which he had been accustomed in his youth. He wore the frock and the high leather boots which he was also in the habit of wearing. When the pictures were published, criticism developed, and his friends protested that the world at large thought it was all for effect. After that he hung the coat way in the back chamber closet and set the boots on the floor beneath it. He could never be prevailed upon to get them out again.

The statement by Dr. Hubert Work that follows leads me to say regretfully that I did not have an opportunity to become well acquainted with the members of the President's Cabinet. But it was my privilege to be closely associated with their wives, and it was the custom for them to have tea with me informally in the drawing room on the second floor of the White House once a month. Together we discussed subjects of interest to social Washington, and tried to find a solution for some of the insoluble problems which have confronted Cabinet hostesses since Martha Washington's day.

I remember one occasion when we were particularly merry. I think that the end of the social season must have been just around the corner. One of the Cabinet ladies had a slight cold, and into her bag she had tucked one of her husband's handkerchiefs. While she was telling a story I saw her put her tea napkin in her bag. A little later she withdrew it, and I observed a look of surprise upon her face as she discovered it was a napkin and not the handkerchief. With the intention of providing a little amusement at her expense, I spoke to her by name, saying,

"You may as well bring it right out into the open—I saw you putting it in your bag!"

The joke was turned on me when she held it up. Several holes were displayed, to cry shame upon my vigilance as a housekeeper.

Why He Did Not "Choose to Run"

By HUBERT WORK

*Former Secretary of the Interior, Postmaster General,
and Chairman, Republican National Committee*

Calvin Coolidge's personal character was without flaw. After seven years' association, five under him, I can not recall one incident which would detract from my cherished memory of him as the clear-thinking, just, and able statesman.

I have little patience with those who would give, at this late day, the impression that Calvin Coolidge expected renomination in 1928. I have many reasons for believing I had his confidence. A few days after the "I do not choose to run in 1928" was given out, I said to him,

"You would be renominated without opposition, and would assuredly be reelected."

He said: "Yes, I believe I could be. But ten years is too long for one man to be President. People would tire of him. Four years more in the White House would kill Mrs. Coolidge."

It should be recalled that months after his return from Rapid City, he stated to the Republican National Committee, "The time has come when you must look for my successor."

Even then a few "die-hards" insisted he was still available, unwilling to believe Calvin Coolidge either honest or sincere. Yet women members of the committee left that meeting in tears.

About that time I said to the President, "Now that you have eliminated yourself as a candidate for reelection, I wish to support Secretary Hoover."

He replied: "You have the right to support whom you please, but don't let your Department become a political headquarters. You would be criticized by other candidates, though they are using their Senate offices. Your door is always open; you can't stop men from walking in, but don't make appointments to meet politicians there."

How wise that was!

Later, as Chairman of the Republican National Committee, I regularly advised with him campaign policies and progress, usually at his request. His interest was unflagging for the success of the Party.

Not for one moment did I suspect he regretted his refusal of what otherwise would clearly have been a unanimous renomination. Calvin Coolidge was not capable of subterfuge or double dealing.

Though internationally respected, the real Calvin Coolidge was known to relatively few people. Sparing of words, of quick perception, faithful to friendships, he was a most engaging conversationalist when alone with one he trusted. In mixed company he was a silent, attentive listener. He never promised, but always performed, and was a dependable support to his Cabinet ministers. He was a master executive, always through them, never around them, holding them responsible for their portfolios.

He was quick in decisions, which rarely erred in accuracy. When

a Governor of Alaska was to be appointed, the President asked for my recommendation. I introduced a young man who had no thought of my purpose, but had been fifteen years in that territory as Chief of the Lands Division of the Interior Department. Much as an attorney examining a witness, the President astounded us both with his knowledge of Alaska and its resources. Later he requested a formal application for the appointment of George A. Parks as Governor of Alaska.

His ability to appraise men quickly on the first interview seemed uncanny. His sense of subtle humor was keen. When discussions were rife on overproduction in agriculture, I recalled for him the philosophy of a Pennsylvania farmer of Civil War times who said,

"My family never eats potatoes, so I plant only enough each year for seed."

Another little story on merchandising appealed to him. When a "back pension" came to an improvident Civil War veteran, he opened a grocery in his parlor. A customer called for two pounds of sugar but was refused because,

"I have only two pounds and don't want to be out."

These anecdotes he would have me repeat to others on occasion.

Many anecdotes have been recited, for amusement, or to illustrate his terseness of speech. Those which might pique or embarrass are fabricated, being foreign to him. Sensitized to kindness, he was not given to reprisals. I never knew him to speak ill of any one.

Mrs. Coolidge comments:

Occasionally, when the boys were small, Mr. Coolidge would take the family to Rahar's Inn for Sunday night supper. This was a rare treat for the youngsters. They had the run of the place, as Mr. Rahar was always the genial host to all his guests, young and old.

In our simple mode of living finger bowls were not the order of the day. Young Calvin's first experience with one was at his initial supper at Rahar's. A thin slice of lemon floated upon the water. Calvin looked up at his father, pointed the finger bowl, and asked him what it was for.

"To drink," his father told him.

Whereupon he took it up and drank.

Nice Custom

By RICHARD J. RAHAR
Proprietor of Rahar's Inn, Northampton

For seven years before he was married Calvin Coolidge boarded regularly at my place. After fifty-one years in my business, in and out of Prohibition, I find that some of my best memories go back to those early days when intelligent moderation in people's drinking habits was the usual, and not the unusual, thing.

A number of men who had finished at Amherst and were getting their start in the world used to come here for their relaxation. They were all well behaved, Mr. Coolidge particularly so. Of course they tell stories about him, some of which were made out of whole cloth. Maybe two stories, the false and the true, will give some idea of Calvin Coolidge as I remember him.

Only lately I heard the fake story repeated. Mr. Coolidge was supposed to have ordered two drinks regularly every day—at noontime and at dinner. At that time a drink used to cost ten cents. One day the bartender told him that prices had gone up to fifteen cents each, or two for a quarter. Mr. Coolidge had put down a dime, as the story goes, but now he picked it up, replaced it with a quarter, and said,

"I'll be in for the other drink tonight."

That isn't so, because he never took a drink in the daytime, and very little at night. Maybe he would have a cocktail at dinner with one of his cronies and a glass of beer throughout the course of the evening, but that was all.

One night after dinner he passed the office desk as I was putting away two five-dollar gold pieces. He asked some question about them, and I told him that I made a little custom of giving Mrs. Rahar, for her personal use, any gold coins that came in.

"Nice custom," he said, and went on.

Two of his closest friends boarded in the inn at the same time—Earnest Hardy, a classmate and Richard Irwin, afterward district attorney and judge. At the end of the month the three appeared together at the desk to pay their bills. That made me suspect something. I did not have long to wait for the answer. Each of

them plunked down five five-dollar gold pieces! Seventy-five dollars in gold!

Yes—Mrs. Rahar got it.

Mrs. Coolidge comments:

Whenever the President learned that Mr. Skinner was playing in Washington, he had an invitation sent to him to come to the White House for luncheon. It was I who usually bore the brunt of conversation upon similar occasions, but when Mr. Skinner came, I could sit back and listen. He and the President had a common interest in the Green Mountain State and swapped many stories of their boyhood there, talked of the ways and customs of its people, of their hardihood and perseverance.

Later, when Mr. Skinner bought a home in Woodstock which he called "Meandering Water" after an early name of the river which flows by his back door, he and Mr. Coolidge became summer neighbors, and—Woodstock being only twelve miles from Plymouth—we passed many pleasant hours with him and Mrs. Skinner.

A Depression Even More Depressing

By OTIS SKINNER
Actor, Manager and Producer

Not the least among the qualities of the many-sided Calvin Coolidge was his Yankee wit and quiet humor. It lay side by side with his patriotism.

His idealism and love for his native state were not so widely known, but they found impulsive utterance in his impromptu Bennington speech at the time of the disastrous Vermont floods—words that rank in simple tenderness with Lincoln's address at Gettysburg.

About two years ago in Woodstock, Dr. Malcolm Goodridge of New York delivered an address on the National Economy League and the abuses of the bonus bills at Washington. During his address he quoted twice from President Coolidge's utterances: once while in office, from his message vetoing the bonus, and the

other from a letter to Admiral Byrd. The meeting took place in one of our village churches not generally used for secular occasions. Each one of the Coolidge quotations was received with a ripple of applause. While the audience was emerging from the sacred edifice, a virtuous lady protestingly remarked to my wife,

"Mrs. Skinner, I *don't* like to hear applause in a church!"

The following day we went to Plymouth, and I told Mr. Coolidge about the applause for his sentiments and the criticism of the conscientious lady.

"No," he commented quickly, "I suppose 'twould have been better if they'd said, 'Amen.'"

When the last Presidential campaign was agitating the country, the Coolidges were luncheon guests at one of our Woodstock summer homes. In discussing the coming election Mrs. Skinner cried out:

"Oh, Mr. Coolidge, I wish it were you that we were to vote for in November! It would be the end of this horrible depression."

The blue Coolidge eye twinkled. "It would be the beginning of mine," he said.

Mrs. Coolidge comments:

Mr. Roy West, who became Secretary of the Interior after Dr. Work resigned to accept the chairmanship of the National Republican Committee, was our guest in Northampton at the time Mr. Coolidge was making plans to build an addition to the Plymouth homestead.

A day or two before his arrival I had stopped for tea at a little tea house in the hills and had an opportunity to inspect some of the household arrangements to which people in the country are obliged to resort when gas, electricity, and sewerage are not available.

My report to Mr. Coolidge was of interest to him, and at his request I made arrangements with the hostess of the tea house to bring him to see her household equipment. He invited Mr. West to accompany us. The tea room had been closed for the season, but the hospitable lady insisted upon serving tea, with the result that we all went into the kitchen to lend a hand with its prepara-

tion. A gay, informal hour we had together. Mr. Coolidge being in particularly high spirits. He inspected everything in the house and came away with many new ideas of which he took advantage in the plumbing, lighting, and cooking conveniences in the house in Plymouth.

I seldom press an electric button and observe the flood of light without a glance at the row of kerosene lamps on the shelf over the kitchen sink. I think of those who lived there in bygone years, of what they would say if they could return. I believe it would be something like this:

"We always got along all right with what we had."

The President and the Flowers

By ROY O. WEST

Former Secretary of the Interior

In the summer of 1928 I visited the President and Mrs. Coolidge at their camp on the Brule. One morning I drove the President almost forty miles to Superior, Wisconsin, where the executive offices were temporarily located. In the outskirts of the city, assembled on the sidewalk, we saw five or six little girls. As we approached, they stopped their play and waved enthusiastically and deferentially to the President. He lifted his hat, smiled, and bowed to them. With his respect for his great office and his impersonal attitude toward it, this exhibition of regard for it in children impressed the President and he remarked:

"Those little girls will be there this noon when I go back. They are there each morning and noon when I pass. They will tell their grandchildren that they spoke to the President as he went to and from his work."

As is generally known, President Coolidge was fond of dogs. It was his custom to look after Rob Roy, the collie, and Tim, the chow, when he ate. The President's dining room at the Brule was not far from dense woods, in which there were many porcupines. One noon the President, Mrs. Coolidge, and I were at our fish course when the President observed that Mrs. Coolidge's Tim was missing. The dog was a favorite with the President, and he said:

"Where is Timmy? I hope he hasn't run off to the woods again. The other day he chased something into the woods and got his nose filled with porcupine quills."

The butler and waiters had no idea where Tim was. The President adjourned the luncheon at one, and, going in different directions, we all hunted Tim. The Secret Service men were called, and a wide and thorough search was on. Presently a Secret Service man wig-wagged from the woods that he had found Tim.

When Tim appeared, the President greeted him kindly, upbraided him for his wandering, and then gave him a plate of food, pleased that Timmy had escaped porcupine quills and skunks.

President Coolidge was a regular attendant at Sunday church services. When he was on a vacation in the country, pastors of a number of strong city churches, with wealthy congregations, urged him to attend their services. He declined, saying:

"I do not shop around as to churches. I attend the church that is nearest. Just now it happens to be a weak little country church, with a young, inexperienced preacher, but it is the nearest, and I will continue to attend it."

President Coolidge's sense of humor was highly developed, but this unobtrusive characteristic was not generally known.

Before my appointment to the Cabinet I was at times the only guest at the White House. One evening as such a guest I joined Mrs. Coolidge, as usual, in her sitting room a few minutes before the dinner hour. I noticed that the room was exceptionally decorated with beautiful flowers.

In a few minutes the President entered. Without sitting, he looked intently about the room; he turned from Mrs. Coolidge, and in a solemn voice but with a trace of a smile and with a humorous twinkle in his eyes, he said to me,

"Mr. West, what do you think of a wife who deceives her husband?" He eyed Mrs. Coolidge tenderly, viewed the flowers, and again turned to me. He gravely said, "Mr. West, what do you think of a wife who keeps from her husband the fact that it is their wedding anniversary?" Then, without pause, he formally announced, "Dinner!" and with measured step, led the way to the dining room.

Thus we quietly celebrated the intimately happy day.