



## Max M. Kampelman Papers

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## **A SYMBOL OF GRACE AND CIVILITY**

**BY MAX M. KAMPELMAN**

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David Abshire is a cherished friend, but I accepted the invitation to stand here before you tonight not out of friendship alone. I do so out of immense appreciation for David's new book, an immensely vital message, which deals constructively and wisely with the most serious internal political problem facing our democracy today – the lack of civility in our body politic. David's essay is short in the number of its pages, but long in its wisdom, historical perspective and prescription for the future.

My role is to introduce David to you tonight – a strange assignment given the reality that he is well known to all of us. I suppose that is probably why David asked me not to go beyond a minute -- sixty seconds. Regrettably my watch is not functioning properly, but even if I spoke rapidly about David as our President of the Center for the Study of the Presidency, as the Founder of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, when I first met him, and as the Founding Editor of the Washington Quarterly, my time would be up. My assistant noted

nearly 50 awards, prizes, scholarships, and doctorates since his graduation from West Point. In scholarship, he reached the top, In government, he moved from being an Assistant Secretary of State to joining President Reagan's cabinet in charge of getting him out of trouble.

Let me, therefore, close this inadequate introduction by noting the greatest accomplishment and award of his life: his ability to persuade the lovely and highly talented Caroline Sample to become his wife!

Ladies and gentlemen, David Abshire!

**ADDITIONAL REMARKS**  
**MAX M. KAMPELMAN**

Thank you David for your presentation and for calling me back to make comments of my own. I do have some related experiences to share:

C-Span is currently broadcasting a 30 year old interview with my former boss and friend, Hubert Humphrey. Last weekend I heard him discuss his role as the Senate floor leader in 1964 for the stunning civil rights legislation unexpectedly presented to the Congress by Lyndon Johnson who had tragically just assumed the Presidency.

Humphrey and Johnson had both come to the Senate in 1949. Johnson -- a Texan who was crowned as a leader by the Southern conservative wing of the

Democratic Party in the Senate -- and Humphrey from Minnesota whose speech at the Democratic Party Convention led to a walkout by the Southerners, and who had also just assumed the chairmanship of the liberal Americans for Democratic Action (ADA). Suffice it to say, without here going into detail, that both saw the strength of working together as friends and partners -- a partnership which for me illustrated the "power of civility." I say this as I recall Johnson asking Humphrey on the Senate floor whether he could get his "Bomb Throwers" in line for a scheduled vote and Humphrey responding with, "Don't worry about my good liberal friends. It's your fascist Neanderthal friends that I worry about!"

Humphrey, in the radio interview, asserted that the civil rights legislation would not have been enacted over Southern opposition were it not for the help of the Republican leader, Senator Dirksen of Illinois. He publicly at the time credited Dirksen for the legislative success and, at Dirksen's suggestion, did so in Chicago as well, in spite of criticism from the Democratic leaders in Illinois. A symbol of grace and civility.

I was also reminded of a meeting with Humphrey requested by an ADA leader who was severely critical of Humphrey's support of a number of Eisenhower proposals to the Congress. I could see Humphrey getting hot under the collar, interrupting and saying "I don't know who your President is, Joe, but my President is Dwight Eisenhower and if I have the opportunity to help my

President in a manner consistent with my conscience, I will be proud to do so.”

That ended the meeting. Civility in a democracy? I think so.

This experience was very much in my mind in early January 1981 when Al Haig, Secretary of State designate, phoned me in my law office to say that President Reagan wanted me to continue with my role as ambassador and head of The American delegation to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), an assignment I had unexpectedly received from President Carter the previous year and from which I resigned, as all ambassadors do, following Carters' election defeat. Of course, I would serve – a 10 year relationship with President Reagan began which I would cherish.

This brings to my mind a special event. During a short break in my European negotiations, at a session with Secretary of State George Shultz, I incidentally suggested an initiative the President might consider taking. It was not central to our discussion. The Secretary responded that he had made a contrary suggestion to the President the previous day. We proceeded to discuss other matters. At the end of our discussion, Shultz, surprisingly, went to a phone and came back to say that he had made an appointment for me with the President for the next morning at 9am. “The President should hear your suggestion,” he said, but he could not join me at the meeting because he had a breakfast on the Hill.

When I walked into the Oval Office the next morning, I could see there was a staff meeting in session. The President graciously explained, "George thinks I should hear an idea that Max has." I certainly had never thought that a random thought in a conversation with the Secretary would reach this level, but I proceeded. When I finished, Jim Baker spoke up and said, "George made a contrary suggestion earlier in the week." Baker agreed with Shultz. Ed Meese agreed with Baker as did one or two others who spoke up. The President, apparently concerned about a disappointment I did not feel, then said: "Max, don't pay any attention to any of these fellows. Not a one of them was ever a Democrat!"

I also recall being in the Oval Office and listening to one side of a telephone conversation with Speaker Tip O'Neil – two tough Irishmen cussing each other out and obviously friends. The President initiated the call as a way of thanking him for guiding me in my effort on the Hill that day to support an appropriation for 23 MX missiles. The Speaker opposed the appropriation himself, but did give me some suggestions. "It's about time you acted like a patriot!" was the President's opening greeting.

Our country is today politically divided. That in itself is a healthy by-product of a democratic society. We have a duty to see to it that the intensity of the political process does not overcome or blind us to the strength that comes from

our national commitment to the shared fundamental principles of our democratic society. It is that spirit, symbolized by Dave Abshire's essay and career that we must revive. Today, David's vehicle for his wisdom and patriotism is the Center for the Study of the Presidency and I was pleased and honored when he invited me to be a part of it.

Ladies and gentlemen, our problems of today are real and serious, but our roots and values are strong. We will overcome. I have no doubt that the values and judgments of our society will continue to provide the guidelines that will strengthen our country as we together dedicate ourselves to spread the principles of human dignity, tolerance, civility to those in our world not now blessed to enjoy the virtues of democracy.