

## From Los Alamos to the Everglades – the Fifth Truman Legacy Symposium

Key West : June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007 marked the beginning of the Fifth Annual Harry S Truman Legacy Symposium hosted by the Little White House of Key West, the Truman Library of Independence, Missouri and the National Archives headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia. The event was sponsored by Historic Tours of America, The Spottswood Companies, a Key West development firm, John D Evans Foundation and the Monroe County Tourist Development Council. As usual, the stars turned out for this nationally acclaimed event. All events were open to the public

A scholarly workshop was held on Friday afternoon at the Waterfront Playhouse on Mallory Square. This event was sponsored by the National Archives and explained the vast records available to all citizens at the National Archives ([www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov)). Representatives from the Presidential Libraries, the Army Corps of Engineers and the Regional offices of the National Archives examined the development of the atomic bomb, the creation of numerous dams that provided a source for hydroelectric power and irrigation and the dedication of the Everglades National Park in December 1947 by President Truman.

Friday night's opening reception featured tours of the Little White House and an opening address by former EPA Administrator and two term New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman who spoke of the critical need for water. Too often, we in the US regard clean water as a third world problem, but Mrs. Whitman pointed out "40% of our streams and waterways are not fishable, drinkable or swimmable". The environment should be everyone's concern and even little changes in our everyday lives can make huge differences. China and India are just beginning their industrial development and are much like the US in 1900. As they increase their pollution, we must reduce ours if we are to survive.

Saturday, June 9, we gathered at the Tennessee Williams Fine Arts Center on the campus of Florida Keys Community College. President Truman's grandson Clifton Daniel and great granddaughter Aimee Daniel represented the Truman family. Former Congressman Ken Hechler (D-WV), one of the last surviving Truman staff members, brought insights into what it was like serving on the President's staff.

Dr Karl Brooks of Kansas University brought a collection of environmental historians and scholars to show many policies were adopted in the post war years of President Truman that directly led to the passing of the Clean Air and Clean water bills in the 1970s by President Richard Nixon. It was interesting to note Ken Hechler was serving in Congress when these bills finally became law.

Dan Kimball, the superintendent of Everglades National Park, explained the current \$11 billion Everglades Restoration Project, the largest project ever attempted by man to repair the damage done in the 1920s and 1930s when draining the Everglades to create farms and towns was Florida's biggest goal. Suzanne Ponzoli who served as the attorney who fought the sugar industry for control of fertilizer runoff and won was one of a panel that discussed environmental law and its administration.

The conference concluded with an address by award winning Time Magazine columnist Michael Grunwald. Mr. Grunwald wrote *The Swamp: The Everglades, Florida and Politics in Paradise*. Grunwald writes a compelling narrative of the history of the Everglades from the first European explorers, through settlement, the Indians, the boom and bust of Florida and its politics and now the restoration. Anyone interested in Florida, politics or the Everglades should read this book.

This year's conference was videotaped and will be re-broadcast on PBS television. The presentations of our conferences are edited and published by Truman State University Press. The first volume entitled *The National Security Legacy of Harry S Truman* has been released.. It is available online at [www.Trumanstore.com](http://www.Trumanstore.com) or through national book sellers.