

## Franklin Roosevelt shines even today

Tuesday, Jan. 30, is an important day for those of us who were children during the depression. It's Franklin D. Roosevelt's 114th birthday. Most people know Roosevelt today only out of books or old black and white newsreel clips, or soundbytes that resonate with that magnificent voice "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself..."

It's hard to describe to those born since 1945 how great this man was to the children and adults who endured the depression. He brought us through the toughest situation this country had been in in the memory of the oldest citizen. He made tough, controversial decisions, and we cheered him on. He set up works projects that put millions of citizens back to work, doing constructive things, many of which continue to benefit the nation 60 years later.

A rich man, he fought for us when we cherished every nickel and held on to every dime.

In millions of modest homes, shacks, even wooden-floored tents in migrant camps, two pictures hung on the wall. One was a treasured family portrait, often dating from better times. The other was of Franklin Roosevelt, the man who was fighting our fear and despair. Because of him there was hope. We listened to his words in fireside

### The Reactor

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chats that cheered a nation that needed every encouragement possible. Families gathered around the radio to hear his magnificent voice and his encouraging words.

When the nun came into the school library that afternoon in April, 1945, and told me FDR had died, I felt as if someone had punched me as hard as possible in the pit of my stomach. Her words knocked the wind out of me. This man had been my president, my hero, for all the years I could remember. Even today I can tell you most of his cabinet officers. That's not true of today's, nor has it been for a long time.

Bill Clinton is no Franklin Roosevelt. There are few homes, modest or otherwise, where his portrait hangs in the place of honor. But there is a lesson to be learned in our comparison.

Much as he was loved, and he was re-elected overwhelmingly in 1936 against a fine Republican governor

named Landon, Roosevelt was also hated by a lot of people. They were a vicious lot, in many ways. When I think of those who hated him and opposed him and belittled him, Roosevelt looks even better as I look back. His greatness shines brighter against the dark background provided by his enemies.

As Bill Clinton is badgered by his enemies, as they tear at his reputation and his goals and his ideas, as they do their best to smear and blacken his name, I realize that, while Clinton will never be a Roosevelt, his enemies are doing their best to provide him with the darkness he needs to shine his light to best advantage. Only when we realize what the Gingriches are can we truly appreciate Clinton. It's unlikely he'll ever be higher than the second or third tier of presidential greatness but his enemies are as dangerous to the nation as were those of Roosevelt.