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Congressional Record - Mansfield on Tom Eagleton

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TOM EAGLETON

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, this past week, a Senator has been in a pressure chamber of public attention. The restless lights of a searching press have played on every recess of his life. His health, habits, and history have been examined from every conceivable angle. What was found, Mr. President, was little more than what was told with candor by the Senator himself at the outset. That, in itself, reveals a great deal of the caliber of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. EAGLETON).

We might well ask ourselves, within the Senate and without, who among us could have stood up at all under an ordeal of this kind? Let alone with his decency and dignity. Let alone with his unfailing sense of humor.

Perhaps, Mr. President, it takes an experience of this kind and a response such as has come from the Senator from Missouri to remind us that men and women in public life are not gods but humans. Sometimes, Mr. President, I think too much is asked of those who dare to offer themselves for election to the highest offices of the Nation.

In the ruthless search to find out everything about one Senator, it is to be hoped that, as a nation, we may have found out a little more about ourselves. Perhaps out of this harrowing experience, on the part of one American there may come a degree of humility on the part of the rest of us.

Pride is a word which I do not often use. If I do so now, it is because the reac-

tions of the Senate in this situation have kindled in me a great deal of pride. There were no wolves in this Chamber; there was no political blood lust. There were only human beings here, fully cognizant of their limitations. From both sides of the aisle, there has come only restraint, decency, understanding, and support for the Senator from Missouri in this situation.

Senator EAGLETON needs no praise from me, but he has my respect. He was a dedicated and able Senator when he entered this pressure chamber a week ago: He emerges from it as a Senator who towers in courage, strength, sensitivity, and wit. Whatever else, his comportment during this distressing episode reflects an immense credit on the people of his State, the Senate, and the Nation