

Alben William Barkley

(1877-1956)

Known affectionately as “The Veep” both during and after his years as vice president of the United States, Alben William Barkley also served as a U.S. representative and senator from his home state of Kentucky. Born near Lowes, in Graves County, Barkley was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1912 after serving as prosecuting attorney and judge in McCracken County. He remained in the House until his election to the U.S. Senate in 1926.

A staunch Democrat who was much beloved for his humor and goodwill, Barkley was Senate majority leader from 1937 through 1947 and minority leader from 1947 to 1949. As Harry S. Truman’s running mate, he was elected the 35th vice president on the Democratic ticket in 1948. Following his term as vice president, Barkley returned to the Senate, where he represented Kentucky until his death in 1956. His years in the Senate exceeded those of any other Kentuckian.

son of Kyösti Kallio, a popular Finnish president, Kalervo Kallio studied art in Helsinki, Paris, and Rome. He gained early recognition for his portrait busts, including one of Jean Sibelius, the great Finnish composer of “Finlandia” and other tone poems on national subjects.

Kallio came to the United States in 1949. That year he won an international sculpture competition for a memorial bust of James Forrestal, the nation’s first secretary of defense, for placement in the new military headquarters building, the Pentagon. Washington, D.C., became Kallio’s permanent address. Alben Barkley and a host of American notables sat for him, including former Presidents Herbert Hoover and Harry S. Truman, scientist Albert Einstein, and labor leader John L. Lewis. Praising Kallio’s talent for producing dramatic likenesses, *Time* magazine wrote of the sculptor in 1951: “Petrified history, not self-expression, is his province, and he commands it well.”¹

In 1957 the Senate formally commissioned a portrait bust of Barkley for the Vice Presidential Bust Collection. When the bust was unveiled on April 29, 1958, Lyndon Johnson, then Senate majority leader, spoke in remembrance of “The Veep.” His words also might have applied to the artist who commemorated the vice president. Said Johnson, “He had the rare gift of looking into the heart of his fellowmen.”²



Jane Hadley Barkley unveils the bust of her late husband at ceremonies held at the Capitol, 1958.

(Reprinted from *The Washington Post*, April 29, 1958, by permission of the D.C. Public Library)

Alben W. Barkley

Kalervo Kallio (1909-1969)

Marble, modeled 1957, carved 1958

27 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 25 x 14 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches (70.5 x 63.5 x 37.8 cm)

Signed (under subject's truncated left arm): Kalervo Kallio

Commissioned by the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, 1957

Accepted by the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, 1958

Cat. no. 22.00035

