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Merle Miller Speaking

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MORRIS (1/21/76) -- Merle Miller, author of Plain Speaking, an Oral Biography of Harry S Truman, will speak at the University of Minnesota, Morris Friday (1/23).

Miller will appear at 8:15 p.m. in Edson Auditorium to speak on his book. The lecture has been lauded as "a superb portrait of a feisty President. Miller has brought an American original to life."

It is fitting that Miller should have been the biographer to produce Plain Speaking. A small town boy himself, he spent hundreds of hours in conversation with Truman from 1961 to 1962. He spent months in Truman's home town of Independence, Mo., speaking to those who had known the President before, during and after his stay in the White House.

His lecture program, in addition to discussing seriously, but not solemnly, many of Truman's decisions such as dropping the atom bomb and firing Gen. Douglas MacArthur, also shares some of Truman's assessment of more recent politicians such as John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford.

Miller has been in and out of Washington since just before the Second World War, when he was the youngest correspondent since Mark Twain. Like Twain, he has never mistaken solemnity for seriousness.

In the last several years he has spent most of his time traveling the country talking to politicians about Truman and more recently about Lyndon B. Johnson, the subject of his forthcoming oral biography. Many of the politicians he talks to think they might someday be President and usually compare themselves favorably with Truman, and increasingly with Johnson, who Miller feels will be re-evaluated upward by history.

Miller talks in his lecture about some of these contemporaries, comparing them with Truman and Johnson. His judgements are never quite the same as those of the presidential aspirants, but audiences often find them amusing.

Miller's lecture will be the fourth event this year under the Performing Arts Series. Admission for non-subscribers is \$2 at the door.

The next event in the Performing Arts Series will be pianist James Tocco, who will appear in concert at 8:15 p.m. Feb. 3 in the Humanities Fine Arts Center Recital Hall.

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(M:13;B1:6;E:11)