

Citizen Should Hear Constitution Story, Speaker Says

"Any citizen of the United States, man or woman, should at least once a year remind himself of the story of the Constitution of the United States," Judge Lawrence T. Harris told the Eugene Rotary Club Tuesday. Harris, speaking of "The Importance of the Constitution in the Life of the Nation," then proceeded to outline the history of the nation's constitutional framework.

"That document is the foundation that sustains the entire superstructure of the nation," Harris explained.

He told of the first sparks of the new nation's life under the Continental Congress. Harris also explained the background of the Articles of Confederation and finally the adoption of the Constitution in 1789.

The years 1780 to 1789—when the Articles of Confederation were in effect—was a period of "contest and controversy" between the colonies of the free continent, Judge Harris said.

He added that none of the free states had votes to enforce rules or regulations, and none of them

were working together for a unified nation.

A fatal weakness of the Articles, he continued, was the lack of judicial agencies. Another defect was the "utter lack" in Congress of power to regulate commerce between the states.

Harris also spent some time explaining the formation and membership of the constitutional convention. Of the 65 members elected from the several states, only 55 actually attended any of the sessions in Philadelphia.

Ten of the 55 were absent when the Constitution was signed.

Three others refused to sign. Thirty-nine actually placed signatures on the document.

"The 39 made it possible for the nation, known as the United States, to come into existence and remain in existence," Harris explained.

"From a small nation we have grown to be a power. Our influence is felt in every civilized country on the earth's surface."

Harris cited the progress that has been made through a Constitution that permits freedom of movement, education and personal advancement.

"Under it, all alike are guaranteed life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," Harris concluded.

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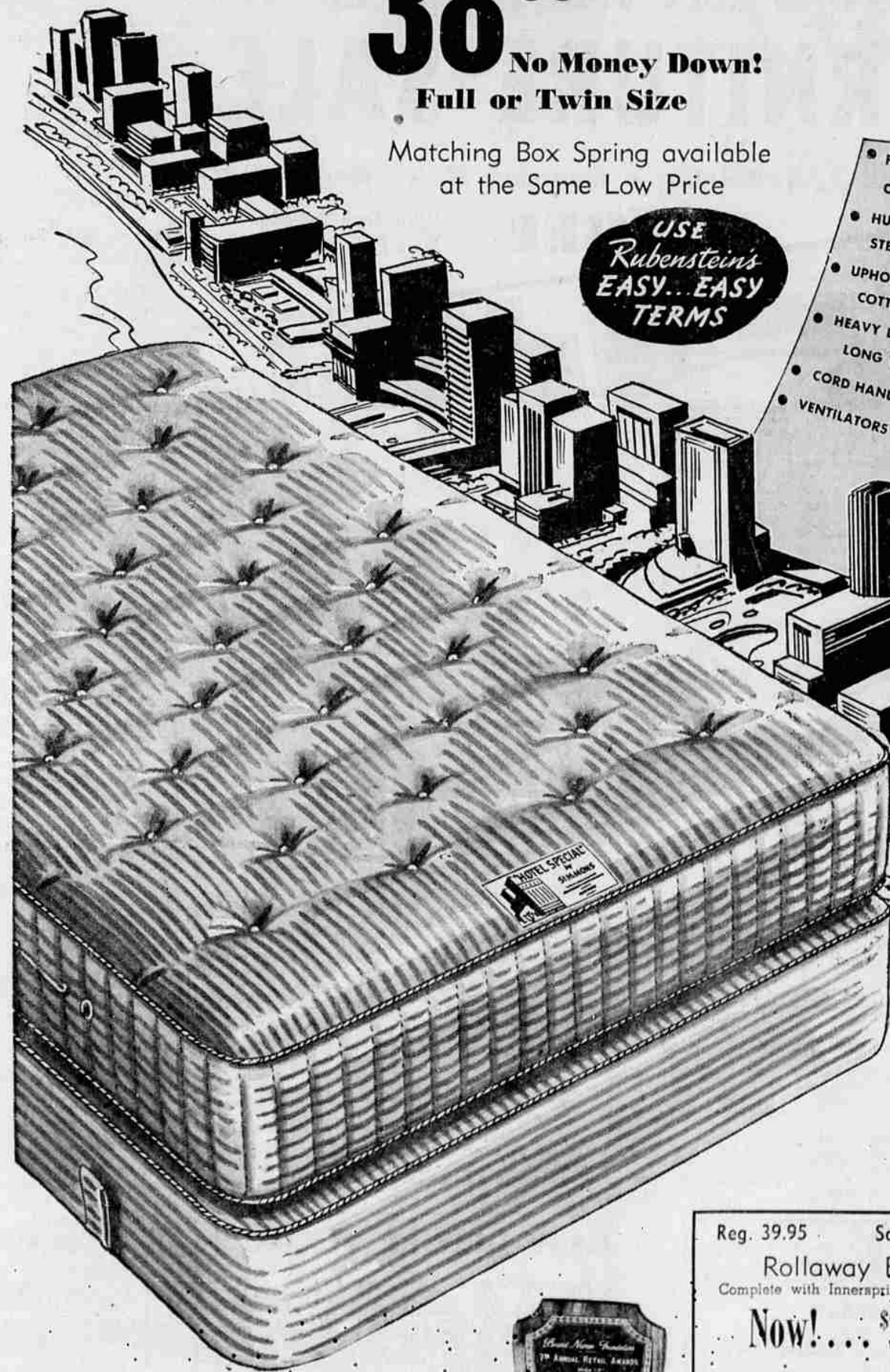
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