The FDRs: A Most Extraordinary First Couple

presented by

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Visiting “the Roosevelts” in Hyde Park NY
Franklin Delano Roosevelt
1882 - 1945

- Franklin was the only child of James Roosevelt, 53, and his 2nd wife, Sara Delano, 27, of Hyde Park, New York.

- FDR was born January 30, 1882 after a difficult labor. Sara was advised not to have more children.

- His father died in 1900, when FDR was 18 years old & a freshman at Harvard.
Anna Eleanor Roosevelt
1884 - 1962

- Eleanor, the oldest child & only daughter of Elliott Roosevelt & his wife Anna Rebecca Hall, was born in NYC on October 11, 1884.

- The Roosevelts also had two younger sons, Elliott, Jr., and Gracie Hall.
Two Branches of the Roosevelt Family Tree

- Claes Martenszen van Rosenvelt arrived in New Amsterdam about 1649 & died about 1659.

- His son Nicholas Roosevelt (1658 - 1742) was the common ancestor of both the Oyster Bay (Theodore) & Hyde Park (Franklin) branches of the family.
The Roosevelt Family Lineage

Claes Martenszen Van Rosenvelt emigrated from the Netherlands to New Amsterdam (now New York City) in the late 1640s & died about 1659

Nicholas Roosevelt (1658 – 1742)

Jacobus Roosevelt (1724 – 1776) (brothers) Johannes Roosevelt (1689 – 1750)
Isaac Roosevelt (1726 – 1794) (1st cousins) Jacobus Roosevelt (1724 – 1777)
James Roosevelt (1760 – 1847) (2nd cousins) James Roosevelt (1759 – 1840)
James Roosevelt (1828 – 1900) (4th cousins) Theodore Roosevelt (Sr.) (1831 – 1878)
(1) m. 1853 Rebecca Howland (1831 – 1876)
(2) m. 1880 Sara Delano (1854 – 1941)

James Roosevelt (1882 – 1945) (5th cousins)
Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882 – 1945) (5th cousins, once removed)
m. 1883 Anna Rebecca Hall (1863 – 1892)

married in 1905 to

Elliott Roosevelt (1860 – 1894)
Anna Eleanor Roosevelt (1884 – 1862)
Elliot Roosevelt, Jr. (1889 – 1893)
Gracie Hall Roosevelt (1891 – 1941)
Eleanor’s Tragic Childhood

- Her mother (who called her “Granny”) died when Eleanor was just 8 years old after contracting diphtheria.
- Her younger brother Ellie died a few months later.
- Her beloved father (who called her his “Little Nell”) died before she turned 10.
Eleanor’s Family Ties: Uncle Teddy & Aunt Bamie
After a secret engagement, Eleanor & Franklin were married
March 17, 1905
Major changes in the Roosevelt household between 1906 & 1916:

- ER bore 6 children, a daughter & 5 sons, although one son, the first FDR, Jr., died in infancy.
- FDR was elected twice (1910 & 1912) to the NY State Senate. The family lived part time in Albany.
- FDR attended the 1912 Democratic Convention where NJ Gov. Woodrow Wilson is nominated.
- Wilson won & rewarded FDR in 1913 with a prized position: Assistant Secretary of the Navy.
- ER hired a young woman to help with her official duties.
A Roosevelt Family Portrait, c. 1916
(from left: Elliott, FDR, FDR, Jr., James, Eleanor holding John & Anna)
The Assistant Secretary of the Navy, World War I
Soon, life brought trials & challenges:

- Lucy Mercer, 1918
- Defeat in a national election, 1920
- Polio: “FDR’s log cabin,” 1921
ER, her social secretary Lucy & FDR
The 1920 Democratic Ticket:
Gov. James M. Cox of OH & FDR
Post Polio: FDR Recuperated in Warm Springs, GA
1924 - 1928
Their marriage endured; 
ER kept FDR’s name alive in NY state politics

- With Louis Howe’s help, Eleanor became active in the Women’s Division of the NY Democratic Party.
- She met many accomplished women, including Nancy Cook & Marion Dickerman.
- In 1927 ER began teaching classes at Todhunter School for Girls in NYC – American history, literature & current events – and she encouraged lifelong learning.
Val-Kill & Stone Cottage

- ER & her new friends enjoyed having picnics by a small stream called Val-Kill on the Roosevelt estate.

- FDR offered to build a cottage there so that they could have their own place, which they named “Stone Cottage” away from Sara’s home, “Springwood”.
Their marriage changed & a new political partnership had formed

Per Geoffrey C. Ward, Historian, FDR biographer & victim of polio:

“I think they found life apart easier than life together. Both of them had causes to which they could devote themselves. They would come together periodically and then float apart again.

The Roosevelts remained very fond of one another. I think that’s the way that they made their marriage work.”
By 1928, FDR’s back in politics & running for Governor of New York, as he did again in 1930...
...and for US President in 1932 when he defeated the incumbent, Herbert Hoover

November 8, 1932
The country had elected a president who could not walk – the 3 known photos of FDR in a wheelchair.
FDR & offered his “New Deal” programs to try to move the nation out of the Great Depression

In just the first 100 days of his administration, FDR created an array of “alphabet soup” agencies to address the many problems faced by the country:

- CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps)…
- AAA (Agricultural Adjustment Act)…
- TVA (Tennessee Valley Authority)…
- PWA (Public Works Administration)…
“A new outhouse”

This Federal Art Project poster shows a giant fly with this caption: "Outwitted by community sanitation -- community sanitation planning keeps flies away from deadly disease germs with the ... modern approved sanitary privy."
Social Security, 1935
Today a hope of many years standing is in large part fulfilled. The civilization of the past hundred years, with its startling industrial changes, has tended more and more to make life insecure. Young people have come to wonder what would be their lot when they came to old age. The man with a job has wondered how long the job would last.

This social security measure gives at least some protection to thirty million of our citizens who will reap direct benefits through unemployment compensation, through old age pensions and through increased services for the protection of children and the prevention of ill health.
Although a “reluctant First Lady”, ER served as FDR’s eyes & ears as she traveled about the country.
AP reporter Lorena Hickok, who became ER’s close friend & confidante early in her White House years, encouraged her to hold press conferences -- *for female reporters only*.

She also suggested ER write a newspaper column which was syndicated by between 40 & 90 daily US newspapers over the next 26 years.

ER “dashed it off on planes, trains car & ships,” sometimes even typed it herself & only missed five days in all those years – just after FDR’s death.
The 1936 Election: FDR & Garner vs. Alf Landon & Frank Knox

November 3, 1936

- Landon, the Governor of Kansas, won just 2 states.
- “As goes Maine, so goes Vermont.”
- The Democrats won over 98% of the electoral votes & about 61% of the popular vote.
- Knox, a newspaper publisher from Chicago, later served as FDR’s Secretary of the Navy during most of WWII.
FDR’s 2nd Inauguration,
January 20, 1937

- FDR was the first President inaugurated on January 20th, per the 20th Constitutional Amendment.

- The Vice President was sworn-in outdoors on the same platform with the President, another first.

- The Roosevelts hosted around 600 guests for a buffet luncheon at the White House in the state dining room and East Room. They served hot coffee, sandwiches, and cake.
War Clouds on the Horizon

- Adolph Hitler had come into power in Germany in 1933 at almost the exact same time as FDR began his presidency.

- As of 1939, one after another of the European countries fell to Germany, leaving England, holding on for dear life.

- Winston Churchill communicated repeatedly with FDR, trying to secure the USA’s support & much needed warships and other supplies.
Foreign issues began gaining more importance than domestic ones.

- New Deal projects like the one in Arthurdale WV, a resettlement community for poor coal mining families (a pet project of ER’s), began to lose favor.

- ER’s efforts to promote anti-lynching & other civil rights legislation were delayed – FDR needed the support of Southern legislators in his efforts to deal with the deteriorating situation in Europe.

- ER, Marion & Nancy built a factory in Hyde Park where local farmers could learn a new skill & to build furniture, a venture they called Val-Kill Industries.
“The Arsenal of Democracy”

- As early as 1940, FDR called upon the country in a fireside chat to supply its allies, as well as build up its own defenses, with planes, tanks, guns & ships.
- Steel & aluminum were denied to producers of items “nonessential” to the defense effort.
- American businesses had to be convinced they could make money, so the “cost plus” guarantee was devised.
Wendell Wilkie runs for the Republicans in 1940

- Wilkie, a corporate attorney for a power company was nominated for President by the Republican Party.
- His running mate was Charles McNary of Oregon, a US Senator & Minority Leader.
The 1940 Democratic Convention

This is no ordinary time, no time for weighing anything except what we can best do for the country as a whole.
Many “firsts” for ER as First Lady

- Among them:
  - First to hold press conferences
  - First to write a syndicated newspaper column
  - First to testify before a Congressional committee
  - First to address a major political party convention in person
  - First to hold – and lose – a government job
  - First to be a radio commentator
  - First to earn money as a lecturer

FDR chooses Henry Wallace for his VP in the 1940 election, November 5, 1940
FDR began to prepare the country for war: 
State of the Union address, 
January 6, 1941

- “Lend-Lease Program”
  - The US would remain neutral but would provide “ships, planes, tanks, (and) guns to democracies to help in the fight against totalitarianism.

- The Four Freedoms -- everywhere in the world:
  - Freedom of speech & expression
  - Freedom of every person to worship God in his own way
  - Freedom from want
  - Freedom from fear
FDR’s 3rd Inauguration,
January 20, 1941

- Rare home move footage shot by Anna’s Roosevelt Boettiger’s husband, John, shows FDR slowly “walking” to the podium, with the help of his son James, to be sworn in for a historic third term by Supreme Court Chief Justice Charles Evan Hughes.

Inauguration Day 1941 Details

- This was first and only time a President was Inaugurated for a third term. (The 22nd Amendment to the Constitution limited Presidential terms to two.)

- President and Mrs. Roosevelt hosted 1,200 guests at the White House for a buffet luncheon consisting of tomato soup, salad, beef, ham, tongue, cake, ice cream & coffee.
ER & the Office of Civilian Defense

- FDR created the Office of Civilian Defense in May 1941 with the authority to meet a wide range of needs:
  - protection of the civilian population,
  - maintenance of morale
  - promotion of volunteer involvement

- ER took an unsalaried position as Assistant Director & worked along side Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, Mayor of NYC & it’s director, to head up efforts to promote volunteer participation.

- She served just five months before resigning her position due to heavy criticism in February of 1942.
The Bombing of Pearl Harbor,
December 7, 1941
Agriculture Secretary Wickard’s Notes from FDR’s Cabinet meeting, December 7, 1941

Through it all the President was calm and deliberate. I could not help but admire his clear statements of the situation. He evidently realizes the seriousness of the situation and perhaps gets much comfort out of the fact that today’s action will unite the American people. I don’t know anybody in the United States who can come close to measuring up to his foresight and acumen in this critical hour.

As I drove home I could not refrain from wondering at the fates that caused me to be present at one of the most important conferences in the history of this nation.
FDR’s “Day of Infamy” Speech, December 8, 1941

- The speech to Congress was brief – only about 500 words – yet memorable.

- Note the black armband FDR was wearing in mourning for his mother, Sara, who had passed away three months earlier.
  
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=endscreen&v=lK8gYGg0dkE&NR=1

- Three days later the US was also at war with Germany & Italy.
December 8, 1941

- After listening to FDR’s speech, ER flew to the West Coast to try to quell public hysteria about a possible Japanese invasion.

- While traveling from San Diego to Seattle, she called for tolerance toward Japanese Americans & the maintenance of civil liberties -- not a popular position.
Converting the peacetime economy to a wartime one...

- While new plants were being built, older plants were producing weapons:
  - A merry-go-round factory made gun mounts
  - A stove manufacturer began producing lifeboats
  - A corset factory was made grenade belts
  - A famous NY toy concern converted to making compasses
  - A pinball-machine maker made armor-piercing shells
"Old Doctor New Deal didn't know 'nothing' about legs and arms. . . So he got his partner, who was an orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Win-the-War, to take care of this fellow. . . And the result is that the patient is back on his feet. He has given up his crutches. He isn't wholly well yet, and he won't be until he wins the war. And I think that is almost as simple, that little allegory, as learning again how to spell 'cat.'
Rationing became a way of life along with new fashions

- Consumer goods like cars, tire & gasoline were strictly rationed, as were many food items like butter & sugar
- In order to save fabric for uniforms, men’s suits were fashioned with no cuffs & narrower lapels
- Women’s skirts were shorter & no longer pleated
- Even bathing suits were styled differently
- ER set an example & wore heavy black cotton hosiery rather than silk stockings
- Women rebelled, however, when due to the rubber shortage, talk of curtailing girdle production started
- So there was a special dispensation for girdles since women needed them to work efficiently to help win the war!
To play or not to play?

**FDR, WWII & Baseball**

- "I honestly feel that it would be best for the country to keep baseball going," he wrote Baseball Commissioner Landis in what has become known as ‘the green light letter’.

- FDR said, “There will be fewer people unemployed and everybody will work longer hours and harder than ever before. And that means that they ought to have a chance for recreation and for taking their minds off their work even more than before."
Throwing out the first pitch

- Shown here in 1934, FDR threw out a record eight ceremonial “first pitches” during his presidency.

- Baseball continued through WWII even though most of its players, including some future Hall of Famers, traded their baseball cleats for combat boots.
ER’s concerns about Democracy at Home

- “Unless America builds democracy at home – a society that guaranteed to everyone the right to vote, a quality education, equal access to employment, and justice in the courts, then the gruesome sacrifices of war will be in vain.”

- For ER, the challenge of WWII was to defeat fascism overseas while extending the benefits of democracy at home to everyone regardless of color, creed, sex or religion.
FDR’s prayer about his wife:

“Dear God,

Please make Eleanor a bit tired.”
During WWII, ER volunteered for the American Red Cross

- She traveled over 25,000 miles, flying to the Pacific arena to inspect hospitals, visit her sons and boost the morale of the troops in the South Pacific – Australia, New Zealand, Guadalcanal, Bora Bora, Fiji, Samoa, New Caledonia & Christmas Island.

- She walked, bed by bed, through hospital wards, asking each serviceman his name & if she could take a message home to a loved one for him.

- She lost 30 pounds during the trip & donated all of the proceeds from “My Day” to the ARC & AFSC.
ER tells the troops a joke, 1943

- As a Red Cross volunteer during WWII, Eleanor visited troops in the South Pacific.

- She is shown here, visiting a Naval hospital near Pearl Harbor.

- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTCzIWN0p-s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTCzIWN0p-s)
“With almost sixty years of hindsight, Roosevelt’s silence [about the plight of European Jews] seems a strange lapse in the record of a President who normally spoke to Americans on grave world issues with courage, candor and foresight. That lapse is underscored by Roosevelt’s lateness in pushing his officials to save Jewish refugees and his reluctance to seriously entertain whether bombing Auschwitz might save some of Hitler’s intended victims without postponing victory in Europe.

Casablanca Conference with Churchill, February, 1943
Teheran Conference,
November 1943
Cairo Conference,
December 1943
D-Day & FDR’s prayer,
June 6, 1944

http://www.history.com/speeches/franklin-d-roosevelt-delivers-d-day-prayer#franklin-d-roosevelt-delivers-d-day-prayer
The Second Quebec Conference,
September 1944
FDR & “the informer”

- Fala, a Scottie, was a gift from FDR’s cousin, Margaret “Daisy” Suckley, in 1940.
- His full name was Murray the Outlaw of Fala Hill.
- Wherever FDR went, usually so did Fala.
- Fala’s Secret Service code name was “the informer” since it was obvious FDR was on a train if Fala was being walked when it stopped.
- Fala became an issue in FDR’s 1944 re-election campaign.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqt7b9veFo8
Thomas Dewey & John Bricker vs. FDR & Harry S. Truman
November 7, 1944
FDR’s 4th Inauguration at the White House, January 20, 1945
Inauguration Day 1945 Details

- FDR was the first and only President sworn in for a fourth term; he had a simple Inaugural ceremony at the White House.

- At the height of WWII, FDR's fourth Inauguration was simple and austere with no fanfare or formal celebration following the event. There was no parade because of gas rationing and a lumber shortage.
FDR & ER posed with their grandchildren on his fourth Inauguration Day, January 20, 1945
Soon after the Big Three met at Yalta, February 1945
In March, FDR left for his “Little White House” in Warm Springs GA to try to recuperate...
FDR’s Last Photo and his “Unfinished Portrait” by Mme. Elizabeth Shoumatoff, a friend of...
Lucy Mercer Rutherford
FDR’s Funeral, April 1945

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Swy07ewx-ds
FDR chose to be buried in Springwood’s Rose Garden in Hyde Park NY, where he hoped ER would be buried one day, too.
Franklin Delano Roosevelt
January 30, 1884 – April 12, 1945
ER & the Post War Years: “The story is over.”

- Although ER said this to reporters after FDR’s death, in December, 1945 she was named by President Truman as a member of the US’s first delegation to the United Nations.

- She was elected chair of the Committee that drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted on December 10, 1948.

- For her work as a UN delegate & later a respected stateswoman she became forever known as “First Lady of the World”.
Eleanor Roosevelt had outlived FDR by 17 ½ years when she died at her home in NYC on November 7, 1962.

Three US Presidents (plus a VP who would become President just 13 months later) & their wives attended her funeral in Hyde Park.

As FDR hoped, ER was buried beside him in the Rose Garden at Springwood.

Fala was buried nearby, too, in 1952.
Anna Eleanor Roosevelt
October 11, 1884 – November 7, 1962
Honoring Eleanor Roosevelt
October 11, 2012
And so today we honor the memory of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt – a most extraordinary First Couple!
Any questions?

Thank you for your attention!

Jeri

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Recommended Reading


Reference Works


Electronic Resources

- The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project
  http://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/

- The Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum
  http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/
You are welcome to stay and watch “Close to Home.”

- This 15 minute film was produced by Honoring Eleanor Roosevelt to share her story.

- It is used by the National Park Service to orient visitors to the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site in Hyde Park NY, the only such site dedicated to a former First Lady of the United States.

- Copies are available today for $15 each.