Elenor Roosevelt Essay, Research Paper

Eleanor Roosevelt was the daughter of Anna and Elliott Roosevelt, who was President Teddy Roosevelt’s younger brother. She was born in New York City on October 11, 1884. Her mother died when she was eight and her father passed away when she was ten. Her grandmother sent her to boarding school in England, and this turned a shy, awkward girl into a lady with accomplished social graces. She returned to America for her debut and met distant cousin Franklin Roosevelt at a party. They were married in 1903 and during the next eleven years, Eleanor gave birth to six children, one of whom died in infancy.

After serving in the New York State Senate, Franklin Roosevelt became Assistant Secretary of the Navy in 1913. During this time Eleanor learned what Washington expected of political wives at that time. In 1918 Roosevelt developed pneumonia, and Eleanor, while assisting with his mail, discovered letters revealing an affair between her husband and her personal secretary. Franklin Roosevelt was offered a divorce by his wife, but he realized the effects to their children, his mistress, and his political future would be devasting, so he initiated a reconciliation. While Eleanor continued to help her husband politically, things were never the same after that. She distanced herself from her domineering mother-in-law and began her own agenda. This was the beginning of her devotion to causes benefitting victims of poverty, prejudice, and war.

In 1921 Franklin had been playing with his children at his newly remodeled New York home, Hyde Park. That night he went to bed with a fever; no one knew right away that he had polio. Franklin Roosevelt would never walk again without the aid of heavy leg braces, crutches, or a cane. Because the main means of mass communication was radio, and because the press looked the other way, Americans were not aware of the extent of his illness.

When she became First Lady in 1933 Eleanor Roosevelt understood social conditions and needs better than any of her predecessors. She became the first president’s wife to hold press conferences on her own, give lectures and radio broadcasts, and she even wrote a daily syndicated newspaper column, “My Way.” Historians later regarded her as the most influential First Lady of the 20th century.

Americans got to know Hyde Park well. Its small office on its terrace became the summer White House. Many dignitaries were entertained at dinners here. In 1939 Roosevelt deeded Hude Park to the nation as a National Historic Site. In 1940 the Frankin D. Roosevelt Library adjacent to the house was dedicated. The Roosevelts began using the new office in the library, and frequently brought items from their home to be included in the library’s archives.

President Franklin Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945, after serving as president longer than anyone else. Eleanor returned to a cottage at Hyde Park. At the request of President Truman, she began her service as an American spokesman at the newly formed United Nations. She resigned in 1953 when Eisenhower became president, and traveled the world giving speeches on behalf of the American Association for the United Nations until her health worsened. Eleanor Roosevelt died November 7, 1962, and is buried next to her husband at Hyde Park.