

John Roosevelt Boettiger
154 Ferncroft Road
Wonalancet, New Hampshire 03897

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For Dr. Joseph Plaud

Dear Dr. Plaud:

I am happy to describe and authenticate the Roosevelt items now in your possession.

1). The collection of memorabilia presented to FDR's and ER's grandchildren

This unique and authentic collection of memorabilia from the White House years of my grandparents, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt, was carefully assembled by Dr. William Emerson, director of The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park, one copy for each of the living grandchildren of our beloved grandfather and grandmother. There were a few more of us in 1989 than are pictured in the famous photograph included herein, taken at the White House on Christmas 1944, but not many more. No other copies exist other than those given to me and my first cousins, the children of my mother Anna, ER's and FDR's first child and only daughter, and those of my four uncles, James, Elliott, Franklin, Jr., and John.

I wish I had been able to attend that family reunion, but had obligations elsewhere. I had organized the first two family reunions of the descendants of "the Hyde Park Roosevelts," in 1980 and 1984, respecting the time-honored presidential time frame of four year intervals. 1984 was the centennial year of my grandmother Eleanor's birth, and the whole family was invited on that occasion to a state luncheon at The White House by then-President Ronald Reagan. I vividly recall, on that occasion, having extemporaneously to cope diplomatically and courteously with Mr. Reagan's earnest remark to me that, had my grandfather lived to complete his fourth term of office, he would have seen the wisdom of contracting the federal government and its proliferated social and economic programs, much as he, President Reagan, was seeking to accomplish in 1984. No wonder, perhaps, that in the luncheon to follow, one of my eyeglass lenses fell into my bowl of cream of cauliflower soup.

In any event, the 1989 family reunion was a historical turning point for the Roosevelts. Although the book of memorabilia from the White House years was presented only to the grandchildren of FDR and ER, it was the first reunion to include both the Hyde Park Roosevelts and the Oyster Bay Roosevelts, the descendants of a progressive Democratic President Roosevelt and the descendants of an earlier progressive Republican President Roosevelt.

It is fair enough to say that, while my grandmother's uncle Theodore Roosevelt, who had given her away in marriage, had been an early and enduring model for his young cousin

Franklin. But one must add that in the years to follow there was little love lost between members of the two branches of the family. Eleanor actively campaigned against the (unsuccessful) bid for governorship of New York State by her Republican cousin Theodore, Jr. Alice Roosevelt Longworth, President Theodore Roosevelt's irrepressible and often notorious daughter (he once remarked, "I can take care of Alice or I can take care of the nation; not both.") came to publicly practice adept but rather cruel caricatures of her cousin Eleanor, who was already transforming the role of First Lady with unprecedented humane effect.

So it was no small occasion in the summer of 1989 when the two sides of the family gathered together at Hyde Park. The outdoor settings on the lawns on which we used to play as children, as well as the lively dinners, were friendly—but there remained an underlying sense of some tension, a tendency to gather in one's own more familiar circles of family. It was the two remaining patriarchs, my Uncle Elliott and P. James Roosevelt (President Theodore Roosevelt's cousin) who broke any remaining ice the last evening. They had, to everyone's delight, been exchanging humorous war stories (both had distinguished records of service in World War II). Then they got into a mock competition as to which one of them had the more serious wound. Elliott decided the only conclusive proof was in demonstration, and he proceeded to unbutton his jacket and pull up his shirt and undershirt. His startled cousin could not but do likewise. Both came out winners, for they brought the house down. Subsequent family reunions have always included both branches of the Roosevelt family.

I felt this personal note of reminiscence an appropriate accompaniment to a collection representative of the White House years of my grandparents, part of which my mother Anna and her young son Johnny spent living in The White House while my father served in the Army overseas.

2). The Havilland dish

This lovely and ornate butter dish of exquisite china I kept as a small memento, having donated the rest of the very large set to The Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site in Hyde Park, New York. The U.S. Park Service, which presides over the home we children used to call "The Big House," changes the china around the dining room table periodically, and this set appears in rotation. During my grandfather's presidency the set was more commonly used, because of its formality and its donation as a gift of state from the government of France, at The White House.

The dish, as representative of the larger set, is of distinct historical significance. On its underside, along with its distinguished Havilland provenance, is the following inscription in graceful gold script:

*Au Bon President de la Paix
Franklin Delano Roosevelt
1937*

The leaders of France knew, in 1937, that Hitler's aims included the domination of the whole of Europe. They also knew, in that year before the active outbreak of war in Europe, that a successful containment of Nazi ambitions for *Lebensraum*, for what Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain a year later in Munich called "peace in our time," must include an active commitment of the United States. They knew Franklin D. Roosevelt as a man of peace, as perhaps the most effective leader of his nation since Lincoln, and also as a man convinced, against the isolationists of his day, that if one is to secure peace one must be prepared for war.

Those grateful leaders of France could not have known in 1937, on the occasion of this gift, that their country would be overrun by Hitler's armies only three years later, nor that the long and costly battle to free France and defeat Germany in the world war to come, would demand the unprecedented leadership of the man they honored. It was leadership whose weight ultimately cost him his life, as the lives of so very many other men and women. But the 1937 inscription upon this plate stood the test of time; for my grandfather died that day, April 12, 1945, in Warm Springs, Georgia, knowing that the battle for a lasting peace, for the United Nations, would be won.

3). FDR's last wristwatch

This gold wristwatch made by Tiffany & Co. was given by my father, Col. John Boettiger, and a small number of his newspaper colleagues and friends, to President Franklin D. Roosevelt on the occasion of the president's birthday, January 30, 1945. Neither those who made the gift, or he who wore the watch with pleasure and gratitude, knew then that it would be FDR's last living birthday, that he would die, an exhausted but triumphant leader, first of this nation's most demanding war, then of the framework of peace to follow, on April 12 of that same year, less than ten weeks later.

My father, John Boettiger, was a longtime newspaper reporter and publisher who served with distinction in the U.S. Army, in North Africa, Sicily, Italy and Germany. He returned home in late 1944 to his wife, my mother, Anna Roosevelt, the president's oldest child and only daughter, who was serving at her father's right hand in The White House during those last eventful years of his life. After my father left for the war, she and I moved from Seattle, Washington to The White House, where we lived until my grandfather's death.

This wristwatch, with its inscription of affection and respect on the back, was thus given by a grateful son-in-law and his closest friends, who knew the president well and admired him as a man, as a political craftsman of unprecedented skill, as a leader of his nation and the cause of freedom in war, and as an architect of the peace. They loved him; soon after their gift, they mourned his loss as they celebrated the victory for which he and countless others gave their lives.

When my mother gave me her father's last wrist watch, the one he may have worn when she accompanied him to the Yalta Conference, indeed, that he may have been wearing

when he died, I chose not to replace its already fraying leather band. The faint darkening indications of sweat on it are his, their faintness mute testimony to how short the time he had to wear it.

4. Anna Eleanor Roosevelt's Childhood Hymnal

This small leather bound and clearly well used Episcopal hymnal was given to my mother, Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, first child and only daughter of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt. (Anna Eleanor is a name with a long pedigree in our family; my niece is the fourth in direct line of succession, after her great-grandmother Eleanor, her grandmother (my mother), and her mother (my sister).

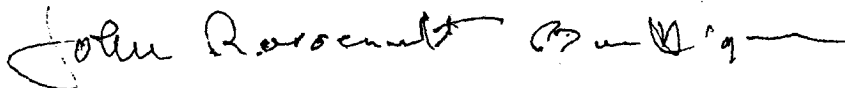
A notable characteristic of my mother's hymnal is that it contains only the hymns' words, not their music. In those days, one was expected to be so familiar with the hymns that a brief introduction by the organ was sufficient to remind parishioners of the music.

The hymnal was a gift to my mother, on the occasion of her confirmation, by her parents. She wrote her name on the fly leaf in a child's penciled hand. The Hyde Park Roosevelts were devoted members of St. James Episcopal Church in Hyde Park, in whose tree-shaded grave yard my mother is buried with other members of the Roosevelt family. My grandfather Franklin Roosevelt was proud to be a lifetime vestryman of St. James. In those days prominent families had their own pews marked by a small brass plaque. The Roosevelt's was, as I recall, third from the front on the left as one faces the altar.

St. James exists now, in 2003, as much the same small well-proportioned church it was when my mother was a child. It survived a major fire, and suffered significant damage to roof and woodwork, but was restored impeccably. There are stone markers commemorating my grandparents, my grandfather's father, James Roosevelt, and a lovely stained glass window dedicated to my great-grandmother, Sara Delano Roosevelt.

I often accompanied my grandmother Eleanor (we called her Grandmère) to Sunday morning services at St. James in the years following my grandfather's death. When my mother died at the age of 69 in 1975, I carried this hymnal, along with the urn containing her ashes, to her grave site.

Sincerely yours,



John Roosevelt Boettiger