

President	Franklin D. Roosevelt
Chronological Order	32
Life Span	1882-1945
Home State	New York
Elected	1932, 1936, 1940, 1944
Political Party	Democratic
Vice President	John Nance Garner (1st and 2nd terms), Henry A. Wallace (3rd), Harry S. Truman (4th)
First Lady	Eleanor Roosevelt Roosevelt
Children	5 sons, 1 daughter
Physical Attributes	6'2" tall, brown hair, blue eyes, crippled by polio at age 39
Undergraduate Education	Harvard College (History)
Military Service	Assistant Secretary of the Navy during WW I
Profession	Attorney
Other Political Offices	Governor
Nickname	FDR
Family Lineage	Dutch, French-Dutch, English
Religious Affiliation	Episcopalian



- Biographical Notes
1. Encountering Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill once observed, was like opening one's first bottle of champagne: a heady experience. FDR's lively personality charmed not only heads of state, but ordinary citizens as well. During his twelve years in office, he established an unusually close rapport with the American people, because they felt that he understood them and cared about them. Ordinary citizens, traumatized by hard times, credited him with making positive changes in their lives, saying "He saved my home" or "He gave me a job." When Roosevelt suddenly died in April of 1945, many Americans could not imagine another president in the White House.
  2. FDR was one of America's greatest presidents because he successfully led the country through two major crises: the Great Depression and World War II. He was self-confident, charming, gregarious, and, most of all, courageous. British philosopher Isaiah Berlin noted, "He was one of the few statesmen in the twentieth century, or any century, who seemed to have no fear of the future." Lyndon Johnson said, "He was the one person I ever knew – anywhere – who was never afraid."
  3. FDR's political heroes were Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. He knew TR well since they were related (fifth cousins) and were both from the New York City area. He was impressed with TR's progressive attitude towards big business and his "Square Deal" for the American people. FDR served as Wilson's undersecretary of the Navy for seven years and shared Wilson's internationalist perspective on foreign policy. FDR called TR "The greatest man I ever knew." He followed TR's career path to a remarkable degree: the New York State Legislature, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Governor of New York, and President of the United States.
  4. FDR was born in Hyde Park, New York, which is 85 miles north of New York City, to James and Sara Delano Roosevelt in 1882. James was a widower when he married Sara in 1880; he was fifty-two, and she was twenty-six. Sara was tall, beautiful, and sophisticated. The Roosevelt family was wealthy, and the Delano family was even wealthier. Both James and Sara grew up on estates on the Hudson River. James graduated

from Harvard Law School and became a financier who spent most of his time as a country squire, enjoying the outdoors, leisure activities, and the income from the companies that he owned and operated.

Franklin's birth had been difficult – Sara was advised not to have any more children – so he was an only child. He grew up in a privileged, carefree environment of comfort and security on the family estate, Springwood, at Hyde Park on the Hudson River.

James' and Sara's greatest gift to FDR was his remarkable self-confidence. As a young boy with no other children to play with, Franklin became his father's constant companion with whom he rode horses, hunted, fished, and sailed. Sara later commented that

Franklin never knew what it meant to have the kind of respect for his father that is composed of equal parts awe and fear. The regard in which he held him, amounting to worship, grew out of a companionship that was based on the ability to see things eye-to-eye and his father's never-failing understanding of the little problems that seem so grave to a child.

For her part, Sara organized Franklin's home-schooled days, orchestrating one successful activity after another. But things changed drastically in 1890 when James had a heart attack that left him semi-invalid. From this point on, Sara was the dominant force in young FDR's life.

Through his outdoor activities with his father, FDR came to feel at home in the woods and on the water. He appreciated the importance of natural resources and conservation, something his New Deal programs reflected. Two governesses, one German, and one French, helped home-school him, and he became fluent in their respective languages. Franklin was sent to the Groton School, a boarding school in Massachusetts, at age fourteen.

5. Throughout life, FDR loved ships and the sea. His maternal grandfather, Warren Delano, made his fortune as a China trader shipping opium (legally) on clipper ships throughout the Orient. His paternal grandmother's family, the Aspinwalls, dominated the shipping industry in New York for a time, first with clipper ships, then with steamships. They hauled passengers and cargo from the East Coast to the West Coast (and vice versa) by connecting their two steamship lines with the Panama Railroad, which they pioneered.

When FDR was nine, his father bought a sailing yacht (with an auxiliary engine), the fifty-foot *Half Moon*, and sailed it up to the family vacation home on Campobello Island off the Maine-New Brunswick coast. As soon as he could see over the tiller, FDR took turns at the helm, and over the years he became an expert yachtsman by piloting the *Half Moon* in the treacherous waters off Campobello Island.

6. FDR's family was Episcopalian, and his religious faith provided one of the sources of his unflinching optimism. Deep down he possessed quiet confidence in the divine purpose of the universe. He was convinced that however bad things might be at the moment, they were bound to come out all right if he remained patient and put his faith in God. His wife Eleanor once asked him if he believed everything he learned in church. He replied that he never really thought about it: "I think it is just as well not to think about things like that too much."

7. In 1900, James Roosevelt died and left an estate worth approximately \$14 million in today's dollars. Franklin and his much older half-brother James R. ("Rosy") Roosevelt each got a trust fund; Sara got most of the estate, including Springwood. Two years earlier, Sara had inherited \$28 million in today's dollars upon the death of her father.

8. FDR graduated from Harvard in three years with a degree in history. The seminal experience of his college days was his work on the daily student newspaper, the *Harvard Crimson*. He joined the staff his freshman year, and from his sophomore year onward, he often spent four to six hours per day preparing the paper for publication. He even stayed a fourth year at Harvard, taking graduate classes, because of his election as managing editor of the *Crimson*.

This experience helped him establish excellent relations with the press corps when he became president. He held two press conferences per week during his first seven years in office and a total of 1,020 during his presidency. He did not address the press from a podium during these conferences because of his disability. Instead, he sat at his desk, and the reporters gathered in close around him. He explained his policies and pending legislation, made announcements, and answered questions. Because of his experience on the *Crimson*, he knew what the reporters needed and gave it to them when he could. The columnist Heyward Broun called him "the best newspaperman who has ever been President of the United States." Once when a

reporter just missed getting on the presidential train, FDR wrote his copy for him until he could catch up.

FDR continued to have good press relations during World War II. He had only two wartime rules for reporters: (a) their information must be accurate, and (b) it must not aid the enemy. Government censorship during World War II was light compared to World War I because Roosevelt remembered how the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918 had alienated large parts of Wilson's liberal base. FDR was playing the long game – he was already thinking about what would happen after the war – and he wanted the press on his side.

9. After Harvard, FDR attended law school at Columbia University. Midway through his third year at Columbia, Franklin passed the New York state bar exam and dropped out of law school. He went to work for a prestigious Wall Street law firm that specialized in corporate and admiralty law and stayed there for three years.

In 1905, Franklin married Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, the daughter of Theodore Roosevelt's brother Elliot. Since Elliot was deceased, President Roosevelt gave the bride away. After Franklin and Eleanor exchanged vows, TR slapped FDR on the back and said, "Well, Franklin, there's nothing like keeping the name in the family." Then he hurried into the next room for the reception and held forth for an hour and a half. The newlyweds were largely overlooked because Teddy was the center of attention. But as they left, one of the guests commented on how handsome the bridegroom was. Another guest answered, "Surprising for a Roosevelt."

10. In 1910, FDR was encouraged to run for the New York State Senate by the Democratic Party. The district, which included Hyde Park, encompassed three counties stacked one on top of the other on the eastern bank of the Hudson River. No Democrat had won the seat since 1856, and the Republican incumbent John F. Schlosser was a well-known attorney and a seasoned campaigner who had won the last election by a 2-to-1 margin.

Nevertheless, FDR decided to run. He rented a fire engine red, open top Maxwell touring car and traveled around the district at the dazzling speed of twenty miles per hour. One day the car accidentally struck and killed a dog. There were no witnesses, but Franklin insisted upon stopping, finding the owner, and paying him five dollars to replace the animal. This episode earned him the nickname "Honest Franklin," and Honest Franklin won the election, 15,708 to 14,568.

11. In 1911, New York did not choose its U.S. senators by popular vote; the state legislature chose them. Since the Democrats had won both houses, and since a Republican senator's term was up, the first order of business when FDR arrived in Albany was to select a Democrat for the U.S. Senate. The New York State Democrats just had to agree on who.

Tammany Hall's wily boss Charles Frances Murphy chose William F. "Blue-Eyed Billy" Sheehan, a wealthy and corrupt Manhattan corporate lawyer. Most Democratic legislators, including future presidential candidate Al Smith and future New York mayor Jimmy Walker, voted for Blue-Eyed Billy. But Honest Franklin did not. He emerged as the spokesman for a group of twenty-one Democratic reformers who blocked Sheehan for three months and sixty-four ballots. At that point, Murphy proposed a less objectionable candidate and FDR's group approved him.

12. The Blue-Eyed Billy episode caught the attention of Louis Howe, a reporter for the *New York Herald*. Howe was diminutive, unattractive, asthmatic, and reeked of smoke and booze; but he was smart as a whip, hardworking, and extremely loyal. From 1911 into the mid-1930s, Howe was FDR's closest political advisor. He ran his successful re-election campaign for the New York State Senate, his 1920 vice presidential campaign, and kept FDR's political career alive as he recovered from polio. Howe ran Roosevelt's successful campaign for governor of New York in 1928 and laid the groundwork for his 1932 presidential landslide. Howe and FDR's longtime secretary Missy LeHand were the only two people who could tell Roosevelt "no" when he was about to make a mistake.

Howe was the person who got Eleanor Roosevelt interested politics. During the 1920 campaign, Franklin went on a month-long train tour across the country, and ER was the only woman on the train. Howe drew her into the campaign by showing her drafts of speeches and eliciting her reactions. Once they were back home in New York, Howe introduced her to women's groups, helped her write speeches, and coached her on public speaking techniques. His cardinal rules were: "Have something to say. Say it. Then sit down." Eleanor later called Howe one of the most influential people in her life.

13. FDR supported Woodrow Wilson – not his cousin Teddy – for president in 1912. At the 1912 Democratic

National Convention, Franklin befriended Josephus Daniels, a newspaperman from Raleigh, North Carolina, and a fellow Wilson supporter. When Wilson was elected, he chose Daniels to be secretary of the navy, since Daniels' father had owned a shipyard. But Daniels knew nothing about ships, so he desperately needed someone who did to be his assistant secretary. Daniels offered FDR the job, and Roosevelt replied immediately, "How would I like it? I'd like it bully well. It would please me better than anything in the world. ... All my life I have loved ships and have been a student of the navy, and the assistant secretaryship is the one place, above all others, I would love to hold."

Franklin served as assistant secretary of the navy from 1913 to 1920. During World War I, FDR was in charge of procurement for the navy. This experience was invaluable to him when he became president. When Churchill asked him for ships and supplies before the U.S. entered World War II, FDR knew where and how to get them; when industrial production had to be ramped up after Pearl Harbor, FDR knew what to do; and he learned how to get appropriations bills through Congress by watching Daniels.

FDR's procurement efforts were so successful that two weeks after America entered World War I, President Wilson called him to the White House. When he got to the Oval Office, Gen. Hugh Scott, the Army chief of staff, was waiting with Wilson. The president greeted Roosevelt and then said, while barely suppressing a grin, "Mr. Secretary, I'm sorry, but you have cornered the market for supplies. You'll have to divide up with the Army."

14. Franklin and Eleanor grew distant during World War I. FDR put in long hours at the Navy Department, and ER kept busy with her volunteer activities. During the summers, Franklin stayed in Washington, and Eleanor took the children to the family's vacation home on Campobello Island.

After the birth of John, their sixth child, in 1916, Eleanor and Franklin decided not to have any more children, and Eleanor adopted abstinence as their method of birth control. That was common at the time – the Episcopal Church (as well as the Roman Catholic Church) forbade the use of contraceptives. Her sons later commented that ER probably knew no other birth control methods because her shyness precluded her from seeking the advice of a doctor or female friend.

As a result, shortly after John's birth, FDR began an affair with Lucy Mercer, ER's young, beautiful, part-time social secretary. The relationship continued until September 1918, when Eleanor accidentally discovered some of Lucy's love letters to FDR. Eleanor offered to give Franklin a divorce, but he chose not to accept her offer because divorce would mean ruin for him. Voters would shun him. His boss at the Navy Department, the Bible-thumping Josephus Daniels, would fire him. And, worst of all, when his mother Sara found out, she told Franklin that she would disown him – cutting him off without a cent – if he and Eleanor divorced. So Franklin did the sensible thing: he broke things off with Lucy and stayed with Eleanor.

From this point on, Franklin and Eleanor maintained separate bedrooms. But as damaged as the relationship was, it also stabilized. The whole episode got Franklin's attention, and he no longer took his wife for granted. For her part, Eleanor felt free to develop her own opinions on politics and policies, and Franklin grew to respect them. A marriage – in conjugal terms – may have ended, but a political partnership was born.

15. Even though FDR had not yet held a statewide elective office, he received the Democratic nomination for vice president in 1920. The Roosevelt name and the fact that New York had the most electoral votes were significant factors in his winning the nomination. Also, Tammany Hall's Charles Francis Murphy wanted FDR to be vice president to get him out of New York state. FDR campaigned hard, but the public was tired of the stress and drama of Wilson's last two years and resoundingly elected Republican Warren G. Harding president. The campaign benefitted Roosevelt by allowing him to build up political contacts all across the country.

16. FDR contracted polio in 1921. Initially, the disease devastated his body: it paralyzed his limbs, thumbs, and toes, and his back was so weak that it could not support a seated position. Told that his upper body had the highest likelihood of recovery, he endured punishing exercises to salvage and remake his chest, shoulders, neck, arms, and back. Hour after hour he pulled himself up on a set of rings attached to a "trapeze-like contraption" above his bed, slowly and painfully strengthening his muscles until his upper body resembled that of a boxer or wrestler. With his now powerful arms, he could push himself into a sitting position and manipulate a wheelchair. His legs, however, remained paralyzed for the rest of his life.

As he contemplated a return to politics, FDR realized that people who felt sorry for him because of his immobility wouldn't take him seriously as a candidate. So, with great effort, he taught himself to walk with heavy braces on his legs while using a cane with one hand and holding onto another person with the other. In an act of self-restraint that seems remarkable today, members of the press never mentioned or

photographed him being carried upstairs, being lifted into or out of automobiles, or using a wheelchair to get around. Consequently, most Americans didn't realize that he was paralyzed.

Many people believed that his battle with polio made him a stronger, more resilient person, including FDR himself, who said, "If you had spent two years in bed trying to wiggle your big toe after that anything would seem easy." His struggles helped him empathize with people who had suffered hardship.

17. In the summer of 1924, a friend told FDR about Warm Springs, Georgia, a tiny rural town where eighty-six degree mineral water bubbled up out of the ground year round, water that was said to have therapeutic properties. Roosevelt went and found the water astonishingly buoyant. He discovered that his unbraced legs would hold him upright in the water and that he could move around by thrashing about with his arms.

FDR loved Warm Springs and used two-thirds of his personal fortune to buy a small hotel next to the springs and turn it into a rehabilitation facility for polio victims. He also built a small, primitively furnished house there. From the fall of 1926 to the fall of 1928, FDR spent well over half his time in Warm Springs. Eleanor hated almost everything about Warm Springs (too segregated, too poor, too southern, etc.). Most of the time it was just FDR and Missy LeHand in Warm Springs.

Living in Warm Springs had a profound effect on Roosevelt. Up until that time, he had lived a life of wealth and privilege, but now his neighbors were poor farmers struggling to get by. From these people he learned what it meant to be without electricity and running water; for children to be without shoes and adequate clothing; for a simple grade school education to be beyond one's reach; and what it meant for a bank to fail.

FDR took these lessons with him to the White House. He knew first hand – better than any Ivy League economist could tell him – what the New Deal programs would mean for folks like his neighbors in Warm Springs.

18. After three years of convalescence, FDR returned to politics by campaigning for Al Smith for president in 1924; he nominated Smith at the Democratic National Convention. Smith recruited Roosevelt to run for governor of New York in 1928, and FDR ran a vigorous, progressive campaign that earned him a narrow victory. As governor, he increased public works, backed reforms in agriculture and welfare, increased the regulation of utilities, and extended workman's compensation. FDR won re-election in 1930. When the Depression hit, he instituted programs like the Temporary Relief Administration to help people who were affected.

19. At the 1932 Democratic National Convention, the nomination for president required 774 votes. On the first ballot, FDR had 666 votes, Al Smith 201, and John Nance Garner of Texas, 90; several favorite-son candidates divided the rest of the votes. There was very little change during the next two ballots, and some feared that the convention might deadlock. At this point, Roosevelt's representatives cut two deals. First, to get Texas' votes, they promised that FDR would choose Garner as his running mate. Second, to get California's votes, they promised William McAdoo, Woodrow Wilson's son-in-law, veto power over the appointments for secretary of state and the secretary of the treasury. FDR won on the next ballot. In his acceptance speech, he proclaimed, "I pledge myself to a New Deal for the American people."

20. During the 1932 presidential campaign, FDR exuded optimism and vowed that, unlike President Hoover, he would relentlessly seek solutions to the Great Depression. He said, "The country needs and, unless I mistake its temper, demands bold, persistent experimentation. It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, *try something*." Roosevelt defeated Hoover in a landslide, 472 to 59 electoral votes.

The Democrats also won big in the Congressional elections: they gained 97 seats in the House and 12 seats in the Senate. The totals for each party in the House were: 313 (D), 117 (R), and 5 (Farm-Labor). The totals in the Senate were: 59 (D), 36 (R), and 1 (F-L).

21. "The presidency is not merely an administrative office. ... It is preeminently a place of moral leadership," FDR once said. No event of his administration demonstrated this idea more forcefully than his first inaugural address on March 4, 1933. On that day, the country was three years into the Great Depression, with more than one-quarter of the workforce unemployed and hunger haunting cities and rural areas alike; banks had been closed in thirty-eight states and were operating on a restricted basis in the rest. Yet on that gray March day, using phrases such as "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself," FDR rallied the country with a performance as much a sermon as a speech. His first "fireside chat" on March 12, which reached a radio audience estimated at sixty million, reassured Americans that the banks were sound – and they believed him. Roosevelt's restoration of hope and confidence was perhaps his most significant contribution to American life

in the 1930s.

22. FDR took two actions immediately to ensure the reopened banks were sound. First, on March 6, he declared a four-day national banking holiday that kept all banks shut until Congress could act to provide new legislation to help them. During this time, the federal government inspected all banks and decided to reopen those already sufficiently solvent, reorganize those in trouble that could be saved, and close those beyond repair. Second, he submitted to Congress legislation that led to the Emergency Banking Act of 1933. The act allowed the twelve Federal Reserve Banks to issue additional currency to healthy banks, allowing them to reopen and meet every legitimate request. Congress passed the bill on March 9, and the new currency was sent out by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to every part of the country.

23. FDR's "Fireside Chats" were a series of thirty radio addresses he gave to the nation from 1933 to 1944. The first ten chats focused on the economy and reassured the listeners that the nation would recover from the Great Depression. The later conversations discussed various aspects of World War II: the progress of the war, the diplomatic efforts, and the home front. The chats were enormously successful. He often began by saying, "Good evening, friends," and he spoke in everyday terms as if he were merely having a friendly conversation with the listener. The chats attracted more listeners than the most popular radio shows.

24. In FDR's first one hundred days in office, he used his large majorities in the House and Senate to push through Congress the five major pieces of legislation that were the centerpieces of his New Deal for the American people: the Emergency Banking Bill (EBB), the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) bill, the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) bill, and the National Industrial Recovery Act. In particular, the combination of his inaugural address, a national banking holiday (which he imposed), and the EBB enabled confidence to flow into the banking system, and when the obligatory closure ended most banks, given a certificate of health by the EBB, were able to reopen and trade normally.

The Democrats gained nine seats in the House and nine seats in the Senate in the 1934 midterm elections, which gave them huge majorities in both houses. As a result, in 1935 FDR was able to pass a second set of New Deal programs that included, amongst other things: the Works Progress Administration, which provided work for three million Americans; the Social Security Act; and the National Labor Relations Act, which put the authority of the federal government behind the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively.

25. In the 1936 presidential election, FDR defeated Republican Alf Landon in the largest landslide in American history, 523 to 8 electoral votes. Landon won only Maine and Vermont. Roosevelt won the popular vote 60.8 percent to 36.5 percent. In the House races, the Democrats won 334 seats, the Republicans 88, the Progressive Party 8, and the Farm-Labor Party 5. The Senate results were 75 (D), 17 (R), 2 (F-L), and 1 (P).

The 1936 election marked the birth of the "Roosevelt Coalition," a unique alliance of big city bosses, the white South, farmers and workers, Irish Catholics, Jews, and African Americans that would dominate American politics for the next generation. Part of his success is attributable to the fact that, unlike many people of his social class, FDR never discriminated against Irish Catholics or Jews. He loved the rowdy political meetings of the Irishmen of Tammany Hall, and James A. Farley was his top political operative for many years. Also, at a time when the Jewish population of the U. S. was two or three percent, approximately fifteen percent of Roosevelt's appointments were Jewish.

The most surprising thing about the 1936 election was that, for the first time since Emancipation, Blacks voted Democratic. They did not do so because Roosevelt was at the forefront of civil rights – he was not – they voted for him because they had suffered the effects of the Great Depression more than any other group and appreciated the relief that the New Deal provided.

26. Such an overwhelming victory carried with it the seeds of hubris, and this indeed turned out to be the case. By the end of 1936, the Supreme Court had declared New Deal legislation unconstitutional in seven of the nine cases that had come before them, and this infuriated Roosevelt. In response, he came up with a plan to "pack" the court by adding some new justices, which he could appoint. Congress saw through his plan and rejected it.

In reaction to the court-packing plan, a new conservative coalition of Northern Republicans and Southern Democrats arose in Congress. In the 1938 midterm elections, Roosevelt tried to purge his party of conservative members by supporting their opponents in the primaries. This attempt failed, and the conservative coalition gained strength and served as a constraint on FDR throughout the remainder of his presidency.

27. Some economic problems persisted into FDR's second term. Most historians believe that Roosevelt's economic policies, while beneficial, did not fully get the country out of the Great Depression – only the increased production demanded by World War II did this.

28. At heart an internationalist, FDR chafed throughout the 1930s at the limits (such as the Neutrality Acts of 1935-1937) placed by Congress on his ability to respond to the increasingly dark news coming from Europe and the Far East. At the same time, ever the pragmatic politician, he realized that he should not allow himself to get too far out in front of public opinion.

29. With the fall of France and the Battle of Britain in 1940, Roosevelt finally persuaded Congress and the American people to build up America's defenses and aid the Allies. Congress voted large sums for defense, and the nation instituted its first peacetime draft.

In the summer of 1940, when Great Britain desperately needed destroyers to protect their island, Churchill wrote to FDR, asking him for "50 or 60 of your oldest destroyers." He emphasized the urgency by adding: "Mr. President, with great respect, I must tell you that in the long history of the world this is a thing to do now." FDR shrewdly came up with a deal that allowed him to bypass Congress: fifty "surplus" destroyers in exchange for leases on a series of naval bases from Newfoundland to the West Indies.

30. Roosevelt strongly felt that Nazism posed a threat both to civilized values and the security of the United States. Therefore, despite reservations about violating the two-term tradition established by George Washington, he accepted the Democratic nomination for president in 1940 because he felt that he could do more than any other candidate to help resist the Nazi tide in Europe. The American electorate agreed, and he easily defeated Wendell Willkie, 449 to 82 electoral votes.

FDR spent Election Day at Hyde Park and rode the train to Washington the following day. When he arrived at the White House, a congratulatory message from Winston Churchill was waiting, one that gives a glimpse into the remarkable friendship that was developing between the two leaders.

I did not think it right for me as a Foreigner to express my opinion on American politics while the Election was on, but I now feel that you will not mind me saying that I prayed for your success and that I am truly thankful for it. ... Things are afoot which will be remembered as long as the English language is spoken in any quarter of the globe, and in expressing the comfort I feel that the people of the United States have once again cast these great burdens on you, I must avow my faith that the lights by which we steer will bring us safely to anchor.

31. In December 1940, an even more urgent crisis arose: Great Britain was almost bankrupt and could no longer pay for the war materials they had been getting from the U.S. This put Roosevelt in a bind because Congress had passed legislation that required that all transfers of war materials must be on a "cash and carry" basis.

FDR knew he had to crack this problem and that to do so, he needed to get out of the White House. So he took a ten-day Caribbean cruise, accompanied only by three members of his staff and Harry Hopkins, a close advisor and friend. By day, the five men fished; at night, they played poker and watched movies. There were no briefing books, no touching of political bases, no discussion of the problem at all – just FDR relaxing and running the problem in the back of his mind.

At the end of the cruise, FDR had the solution: the Lend-Lease Plan, whereby the U.S. would lend Great Britain whatever it needed, at no cost, and the British would repay the U.S. by giving back what it had borrowed, or something equivalent, when it could.

When he got back to Washington, Roosevelt had to justify the plan to the American people since it would require the approval of Congress (which it later received). He did so at a press conference by using an analogy:

Suppose my neighbor's home catches fire, and I have a length of garden hose four or five hundred feet away. If I can take my garden hose and connect it up to his hydrant, I may help him to put out his fire. Now, what do I do? I don't say to him before that operation, 'Neighbor, my garden hose cost me \$15; you will have to pay me \$15 for it.' No! I don't want \$15. I want my garden hose back after the fire is over.

Churchill was stunned when he heard the announcement of the plan. He told Parliament that Lend-Lease

was "the most unsordid act in the history of any nation." Lend-Lease was extended to include Russia when it entered the war against Germany. Under the Lend-Lease Act, the United States provided fifty billion dollars in military equipment and supplies to the Allies during the war.

32. Roosevelt responded to Japanese aggression in China and Southeast Asia by imposing economic sanctions on Japan, including an embargo on iron, steel, and oil in 1940-41. Japan responded by executing a sneak attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, which Roosevelt called "a day which will live in infamy." The United States entered the war the next day.

During the war, FDR was an outstanding commander-in-chief because, time after time, he made tough decisions that turned out to be the correct ones. When we entered the war, he decided that we should focus our attention on defeating Germany first, then Japan. In 1942, when the American chiefs of staff wanted to invade France from England, he decided that the Allies were not prepared enough to do so and ordered an invasion of North Africa instead. At the Tehran Conference of the Big Three (FDR, Churchill, and Stalin) in November of 1943, he sided with Stalin against Churchill in favor of an invasion of France from England in the spring of 1944 (Operation Overlord, a.k.a. the D-Day invasion). He funded the Manhattan Project, which led to the development of the first atomic bomb. The bomb shortened the war significantly and saved American lives.

33. During Christmas time in 1941, Winston Churchill came to visit FDR at the White House for a few days – and ended up staying for three weeks. The British prime minister, his valet, and his two secretaries all moved into the family quarters on the second floor of the White House, and the Monroe Room next to the President's study was turned into Churchill's "map room," which showed the current wartime strategic situations on land, in the air, and on the sea.

The morning after his arrival, Churchill called Alonzo Fields, FDR's butler, into his bedroom. "Now Fields," he began, "we had a lovely dinner last night, but I have a few orders for you. We want to leave here as friends, right? ... I must have a tumbler of sherry in my room before breakfast, a couple of glasses of scotch and soda before lunch, and French champagne and 90-year old brandy before I go to sleep at night."

Churchill was a night owl, and he and FDR began talking, drinking brandy, and smoking cigars until 2 or 3 a.m. every night; they genuinely enjoyed each other's company, and each had no one else who truly understood the pressures that they were under. Eleanor, whose father and brother were alcoholics, fumed and complained to FDR that Churchill was having a bad influence on him. Roosevelt came right back at her, saying that she need not worry because it was not his side of the family that had the drinking problem.

One morning, Roosevelt had the idea to use the name "United Nations" to refer to the 26 nations opposing the Axis powers. He was so excited that he had himself immediately wheeled from his bedroom down the hall to Churchill's bedroom. FDR arrived just as the Prime Minister was emerging stark naked from his bathtub. FDR apologized and said that he would come back later. Churchill said that was not necessary because "The Prime Minister of Great Britain has nothing to conceal from the President of the United States!"

34. The first time FDR met Joseph Stalin – at the Tehran Conference in November 1943 – Roosevelt became frustrated by his inability to connect on a personal level with the Russian leader. FDR had traveled halfway around the world in large part so that he and Stalin could get comfortable with each other – and it wasn't working. So, on one of the last days of the conference, Roosevelt went to Churchill and told him he was going to try something to break the ice.

Roosevelt later described what happened subsequently in the following way:

As I sat down at the conference table, I began to tease Churchill about his Britishness, about John Bull, about his cigars, about his habits. It began to register with Stalin. Winston got red and scowled, and the more he did so, the more Stalin smiled. Finally, Stalin broke out into a hearty guffaw, and for the first time in three days, I saw the light.

I kept it up until Stalin was laughing with me, and it was then that I called him 'Uncle Joe.' He would have thought me fresh the day before, but that day he laughed and came over and shook my hand. ... From that time on our relations were personal, and Stalin himself indulged in an occasional witticism. The ice was broken, and we talked like men and brothers.

The participants all gathered to celebrate Churchill's sixty-ninth birthday after the major decisions of the conference. After many toasts, Stalin rose to speak. "I want to tell you, from the Russian point of view, what the United States has done to win the war. The most important things in this war are machines. The United

States has proven that it can turn out 8,000 to 10,000 airplanes per month. ... The United States, therefore, is the country of machines. Without the use of these machines, through Lend-Lease, we would lose the war."

35. More than any other president, before or since, FDR had the foresight to select outstanding military commanders and give them the freedom they needed to succeed. His Joint Chiefs of Staff gave him good advice and handled their branches of the service beautifully. In the Pacific, he chose General Douglas MacArthur to command the Army over War Department objections, and Admiral Chester Nimitz to command the Navy despite weak support from more senior admirals.

One of FDR's toughest decisions was whom to choose to lead Operation Overlord. General George C. Marshall, FDR's most trusted military advisor, was the obvious choice – he had earned the honor – but Roosevelt felt he needed Marshall in Washington to oversee the war as a whole. He told Marshall, "I feel I could not sleep at night with you out of the country." Roosevelt chose General Dwight D. Eisenhower instead, and Ike did an outstanding job.

36. During the war, FDR masterfully mobilized American industries, which produced the ships, planes, tanks, etc. that were needed. Right at the beginning, he laid down very ambitious targets, targets that most military commanders thought were unreachable. However, he brought industry and government together in such a way that these targets were not only fulfilled but in several cases even surpassed.

Eleanor was tremendously helpful in this effort. Since travel was such a chore for FDR, ER served as his eyes and ears on the home front. She traveled to plants all across America, encouraging the workers and then reporting back to Franklin. At this time, he had a basket next to his bed specifically for Eleanor – she would drop off her reports and articles she thought that the president should read.

37. Women played a prominent role in FDR's life. First, of course, had been his mother Sara, who shaped him as a boy and continued to have an enormous influence throughout his life because of her strong personality. Then there was Eleanor, who blossomed from a timid bride and insecure mother into one of the twentieth century's most significant public figures, the conscience of the New Deal and a standard bearer for postwar liberalism and human rights. FDR's devoted secretary, Missy LeHand, lived at the White House, shared his sense of humor, and generally performed (with Eleanor's blessing) many of the duties of a surrogate wife. His daughter Anna enjoyed an especially close relationship with her father. In 1944, after Harry Hopkins moved out of the White House, Anna stepped in and served as FDR's unpaid assistant. Roosevelt was the first president to appoint a woman to a cabinet position when he chose Frances Perkins to be secretary of labor.

Perkins, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, Secretary of Agriculture (and later Vice President) Henry Wallace, and WPA administrator/presidential advisor Harry Hopkins served all twelve years of Roosevelt's presidency. They formed the heart and soul of the New Deal and performed admirably during World War II.

38. In mid-March 1944, Anna Roosevelt Boettiger, FDR's daughter, confronted the president's personal physician, Vice Admiral Ross McIntyre, about her father's health. McIntyre was annoyed and said FDR was fine, but when she persisted, he agreed to send FDR to Bethesda Naval Hospital for a complete checkup. At Bethesda, Dr. Howard Bruenn, a cardiologist, noted that his patient's "face was pallid" and "there was a bluish discoloration of his skin, lips, and nail beds," which meant that he was oxygen-deprived. Bruenn's diagnosis was that the president was suffering from "acute congestive heart failure," specifically "left ventricular heart failure." (The left ventricle is the pumping chamber.) Bruenn later told an interviewer that the president's condition was "God-awful." Without treatment, he could die at any time.

Bruenn had been ordered by Dr. McIntyre, his superior, not to inform the patient of his diagnosis, and FDR did not ask about it. But he must have known he had a heart problem. After all, he was examined in the electrocardiograph department, and Bruenn was a cardiologist. Bruenn made extensive recommendations to McIntyre, including immediate bedrest, a reduced work schedule, dietary changes, reduced smoking, and taking digitalis. McIntyre implemented some, but not all, of these changes. These measures prolonged FDR's life by roughly one year.

39. In the summer of 1944, in addition to his role as commander-in-chief of the war effort, FDR had to decide whether to run for a fourth term. It was not an easy decision because he knew that, given his poor health, there was a good chance he would not be able to complete the upcoming four-year term. He decided to run five days before the Democratic National Convention. The decision was based on his belief that he was the best man to carry the war to its conclusion and lay the foundation for peace.

FDR decided to drop Henry Wallace, his sitting vice president, from the ticket because his ultraliberal

views offended party professionals and conservative Democrats whose support he needed. FDR and his advisors, including several big-city bosses, debated the pros and cons of several VP candidates and concluded that Senator Harry Truman of Missouri would hurt the ticket the least.

Given the precarious state of FDR's health, it is surprising that the primary criterion in selecting a running mate was the electability of the ticket instead of the candidate's potential ability to be president. Truman was not the best qualified – FDR's friend James Byrnes was. But Byrnes had changed his religion from Catholic to Episcopalian when he married and was a Southerner with segregationist views. His nomination would alienate Catholics and Blacks, which might cost the ticket key states. Truman was selected and performed well during the general election campaign. FDR defeated Republican Thomas Dewey 432 to 99 electoral votes.

When FDR died in April 1945, Truman was ill-prepared to be president. He had been vice president for less than three months and was not a significant player in the Roosevelt administration. Truman had met with Roosevelt only twice as vice president, and nothing of consequence was discussed. He had no foreign policy experience and no foreign policy advisors of his own to call upon for help. Truman did not know Churchill or Stalin. He did not know Averell Harriman, the U.S. Ambassador to Russia. Truman did not know his secretary of state more than just to say hello. And now he had to preside over the conclusion of World War II – a huge foreign policy challenge.

40. During the 1944 presidential campaign, FDR did not show great interest in the contest – he was busy with the war – until the GOP started attacking him.

He attacked back with a humorous anecdote at a speech that he gave to the Teamsters Union. He said, in a mock-serious tone:

These Republican leaders have not been content with attacks on me, on my wife, or on my sons. No, not content with that, they now include my little dog, Fala. I don't resent attacks, and my family doesn't resent attacks, but Fala does resent them. You know Fala is Scotch, and being a Scottie, as soon as he learned that the Republican fiction writers in Congress and out had concocted a story that I had left him behind on the Aleutian Islands and sent a destroyer back to find him – at a cost to the taxpayers of two or three, or eight or twenty million dollars – his Scotch soul was furious. He has not been the same dog since. I am accustomed to hearing malicious falsehoods about myself ... but I think I have the right to resent, to object to, libelous statements about my dog.

The audience went wild, laughing and cheering and calling for more.

41. At the Yalta meeting of the Big Three in February 1945, Roosevelt got Stalin to agree to enter the war against Japan after Hitler was defeated and to accept to the structure of the postwar United Nations organization FDR was proposing. Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin also agree to divide postwar Germany into four zones, one each for the United States, Great Britain, France, and the U.S.S.R.

The nature of the postwar government of Poland was a very contentious issue at Yalta. The members of the prewar government of Poland had relocated to London during the war, and Churchill wanted them to be able to return home and run for re-election. Stalin, however, wanted a Polish government sympathetic to the U.S.S.R. because Poland was the corridor through which Napoleon and Hitler had invaded Russia. Furthermore, at the time of the Yalta meeting, Stalin had a million soldiers in Poland. Stalin agreed to allow Poland and other Russian-occupied countries "to create democratic institutions of their own choice," but – as Churchill predicted – he reneged on that promise after the war.

42. The United Nations was FDR's idea. It was similar to Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations, but FDR's approach differed from Wilson's in two key respects. First, Wilson allowed the League to be tied to the Treaty of Versailles. As a result, his allies – especially the French – demanded vengeful treaty clauses as their price for joining the League, and he had to agree to their demands. FDR – who had been in Paris as assistant secretary of the navy during Wilson's negotiations – did not make this mistake with the U.N. Instead, he laid the groundwork for the U.N. in discussions with Churchill, Stalin, and Chiang Kai-shek of China well before the end of the war and refused to tie the U.N. to a peace treaty.

Second, Wilson neither consulted with members of the Senate – who would have to confirm the treaty and the League – nor had any senators on his negotiating team. Consequently, the main objection that senators had – that the U.S. would, in some cases, be required to defend other nations – was not properly vetted before the League was presented to the Senate, and the League was rejected. In contrast, when the United Nations Conference began work on the U.N. Charter, FDR chose members of Congress from both parties for

the American delegation to the conference, including Senators Tom Connally (D - Texas) and Arthur Vandenberg (R - Michigan). The Senate confirmed the U.N. Charter by a vote of 89 to 2.

43. On his way home from Yalta, FDR stopped at the Suez Canal to confer with King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia. The visit had two goals. First, the president sought to establish a friendly personal relationship with the king because of Saudi Arabia's vast oil reserves. Second, FDR wanted to convince Ibn Saud to support the establishment of a homeland for Jews in Palestine.

Roosevelt achieved his first goal. Ibn Saud remarked that he and FDR were like "twin brothers," each dealing with disabilities (FDR's polio; Ibn Saud's leg wounds from battle) and bearing the burden of being a head of state. Ibn Saud complimented FDR for having a "reliable wheelchair." FDR responded that he had two wheelchairs, "which are also twins," and asked whether Ibn Saud would accept one as a personal gift. "Gratefully," responded the king, "I shall use it daily and always recall my great and good friend."

Roosevelt failed to achieve his second goal. The king said that the Arabs would rather die than tolerate a homeland for Jews in Palestine and that the U.S. and its allies should force Germany to cede territory for a Jewish homeland. When FDR dangled the possibility that the U.S. might assist with irrigation and other agricultural improvements in Palestine, Ibn Saud responded that he would not accept such improvements "if this prosperity would be inherited by the Jews." Roosevelt backed down and assured the king that "he would make no move hostile to the Arab people" and that the Allies would make no decision on Palestine without first consulting both the Arabs and the Jews.

44. FDR died on April 12, 1945, three months into his fourth term, when a massive cerebral hemorrhage struck him at his house in Warm Springs. The next day, the *New York Times* wrote:

Men will thank God on their knees, a hundred years from now, that Franklin D. Roosevelt was in the White House, in a position to give leadership to the thought of the American people and direction to the activities of their government, in that dark hour when a powerful and ruthless barbarism threatened to overrun the civilization of the Western World.

When the government's daily list of wartime casualties was published, the first entry was Roosevelt, Franklin Delano, Commander in Chief.

45. From the time Lyndon B. Johnson entered Congress in 1937, FDR took a special interest in him, and, eventually, LBJ became his "point person" in Texas. FDR helped Johnson obtain federal loans to bring electricity to the Texas Hill Country, and LBJ raised massive amounts of cash in 1940 that helped elect a Democratic majority in the House and re-elect Roosevelt.

On the day FDR died, *New York Times* reporter William S. White found a teary-eyed Lyndon Johnson in the Capitol. With his jaw quivering as he spoke, Johnson poured out his grief:

He was like a daddy to me, always. He always talked to me just that way. He was the one person I ever knew – anywhere – who was never afraid. Whatever you talked to him about, whatever you asked him for, like projects for your district, there was just one way to figure it with him. ... You can be damn sure that the only test he had was this: Was it good for the folks?

46. Some critics try to portray FDR as a left-wing ideologue because of his New Deal programs. But in fact, he was not an ideologue; he was a flexible, pragmatic politician. He once had the following conversation with a reporter.

Reporter: "Are you a communist?"

FDR: "No."

Reporter: "Are you then a capitalist?"

FDR: "No."

Reporter: "Are you a socialist?"

FDR: "No."

Reporter: "What is your philosophy, then?"

FDR: "Philosophy? Philosophy? I am a Christian and a Democrat – that's all."

See the next page for a list of references.

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