

2009 RECIPIENT ELEANOR ROOSEVELT FOLLOWING IN HER FOOTSTEPS AWARD

SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY CLINTON

On a bright, blue day more than 340 *Honoring Eleanor Roosevelt* donors gathered for breakfast in the Delegates' Dining Room at the United Nations to fete Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Co-chairs of the event Georgie Gatch and *Honoring Eleanor Roosevelt's* founding chair Claudine Bacher presented the Secretary with our Following in Her Footsteps Award to great applause.

It was a distinguished group both on the stage and in the audience. Representatives Carolyn Maloney and Jerry Nadler, former Mayor David Dinkins, Gloria Steinem and American Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten joined supporters to honor Secretary Clinton for her



Laura Roosevelt to recall Val-Kill and read her poem (see page 7). Rabbi Joshua Boettiger, great grandson of Mrs. Roosevelt, spoke about his father's memories of Val-Kill and also quoted wonderfully appropriate verses from the bible (see page 6). Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, newly appointed to fill Secretary Clinton's NY Senate seat, introduced the Secretary who then accepted the award from Claudine and Georgie and spoke eloquently about Val-Kill and women's rights.

After the ceremony, Secretary Clinton remained to greet donors on a splendid day in New York City.

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efforts on behalf of women, children, health care reform, and international peace—all areas of great concern to Mrs. Roosevelt.

Carol Hillman, chair of *Honoring Eleanor Roosevelt*, welcomed the audience and introduced Bobbie Greene McCarthy, Director of Save America's Treasures, who hosted the proceedings. She introduced Mrs. Roosevelt's grand daughter



Secretary Clinton with Bobbie Greene McCarthy and Gordon Travers



Carol Hillman and Riva

FROM
CAROL HILLMAN
CHAIR

Dear Friends of Val-Kill:

As we continue through this recession, I am reminded of a wonderful line from Jerold Panas (consultant in philanthropy)—“Our mission is not in recession.” We still have much to do to preserve Eleanor Roosevelt’s legacy through our work at Val-Kill, and you remain a key part of the mission. In many ways it has been a challenging half year for our band of volunteers.

In February, our dear friend Myrna Baylis, a stalwart supporter and Massachusetts Committee Member, passed away. Her husband Carl continues to support our work. Myrna’s interest and investment will be missed, and she will be remembered for her commitment and her enthusiasm.

Sadly, I report that, although you will continue to see her sitting by me in the familiar picture above, in April my husband Howard and I lost our dear companion Riva, who (like Fala) spent many happy days romping around Val-Kill and sitting in on meetings at the Park Service headquarters. She, too, will be missed as she was a loyal friend to our mission in her own way.

On a much happier note, you will read in this issue about the wonderful event that we held in New York City honoring our founder, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Claudine Bacher and Georgie Gatch presented her with *Honoring Eleanor Roosevelt’s* Following in Her Footsteps award before a capacity crowd of 340 donors at the United Nations.

We are exploring new partnerships and new approaches to achieving our mission. Among these are “Friendraisers,” which several of our MA committee members are hosting. These are dinners or receptions designed to introduce new potential donors to our organization. While they are not fundraisers this year, they are designed to encourage those who become educated about our work and wish to support it with their personal involvement and charitable contributions.

Early in the spring we held two exciting and interesting meetings with the director and staff of Facing History and Ourselves. Facing History is working on a new curriculum for students focusing on ER and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Because of our own extraordinary connections to ER’s legacy, we are continuing our discussions to see how the two organizations can be mutually supportive. Our first collaboration was on a letter to the Boston Globe reminding it that ER was instrumental in bringing Marian Anderson to sing at the Lincoln Memorial. Our letter was in response to an article on the anniversary of this event in which the Globe reporter, unfortunately, neglected to note ER’s role.

We continue to talk with our partners at the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic sites to see how we can be more collaborative in our support of the Park Service there. We’ll keep you posted on progress.

And, finally, on ER’s 125th birthday on October 11 at Val-Kill we’re cheduling an official dedication of the exhibits we funded. Please plan to join us to celebrate the occasion at the site. We all need the inspiration of Mrs. Roosevelt to remind us of why this work is so important at this time.

As always, we are grateful for your continued support in these difficult financial times, and we welcome your thoughts and suggestions. We hope you will visit Val-Kill and take inspiration from the place ER called home.

Warm regards,

Carol

*Honoring
Eleanor Roosevelt*
A Project to Preserve Her Val-Kill Home

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Claudine Bacher, Founding Chair

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**THE VIEW
from Val-Kill Cottage**

Judith Ross Morris, Editor & Designer

We welcome your comments.
chillman96@verizon.net

Visit our website:
www.honoringeleanorroosevelt.org

WHAT WOULD ELEANOR DO? Plant a Garden, Write a Blog

By Carol Levine



About two dozen elementary school students helped First Lady Michelle Obama break ground on the first day of spring for a garden on the White House grounds.

Photo: Win McNamee
Source: Kansas City Star

Michelle Obama has planted the first vegetable garden at the White House since Eleanor Roosevelt's patriotic Victory Garden in World War II. There is another example from the Roosevelt era that she might follow.

In today's lexicon, Mrs. Roosevelt might be called the nation's First Blogger. For 26 years she published *My Day*, a syndicated column in which she wrote about her life as the President's wife, a mother, an indefatigable traveler, and later as an advocate for human rights, especially in international affairs. Her columns, which appeared six days a week from 1936 to 1962 (8,000 in all) combined personal details with cogent and sometimes casual commentary on her experiences and reflections.

Presidential fireside chats have been replaced by the Internet/Twitter/Blackberry/YouTube media. The thirst for direct contact with the President and his family is, if anything, even greater. If Michelle Obama were to write an up-to-date version of *My Day*, she would reach billions of people instantly. Young people especially would eagerly await her thoughts. What would she write about? Anything and everything. The public looks to her for insights on balancing family and official responsibilities, how young people can serve their communities, conserving energy—not just fashion trends and toning tips.

Eleanor Roosevelt wrote about momentous events (the attack on Pearl Harbor, the invasion of Poland by the Nazis, the Supreme Court ruling on segregated schools in *Brown v. Board of Education*), and on themes like discrimination, women's rights, education, and how ordinary people managed in difficult times. In her position she met a lot of famous people, and wrote about their encounters. But she also wrote about family life, people she met as she traveled, what she was reading, exhibits she had seen, and just about everything else.

She also had a bit of advice for future First Ladies. Reflecting in 1960 about her life in the White House, she said, "With so many people around a President who say 'yes' to everything he says, it is fun sometimes for the family around him to say 'no' just for the sake of devilment—but that should be a private family relaxation."

So, Mrs. Obama, let us know how your garden is growing and what else is happening in your day.

Ms. Levine is Director, Families and Health Care Project at United Hospital Fund, New York, NY.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Needs You!

Volunteering is an American tradition that has made immeasurable contributions to communities, organizations, and special places throughout the country.

The Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites offer many ways for people to get involved: present

guided tours, conduct trail hikes, maintain trails, and do so much more at the Home of FDR, Eleanor Roosevelt's Val-Kill and the Vanderbilt Mansion. There's also a lot of work to be done with organizations that support the parks.

To learn more about how you can get involved contact our volunteer coordinator: Margaret_Laffin@nps.gov



FOLLOWING IN HER FOOTSTEPS AWARD



From left: Nancy Feldman, Carol Hilman, Heidi Spiegel, Barbara Mehlsack, Ruth Brown



Adele Block and Claudine Bacher



Former NYC Mayor David Dinkins, Rep. Carolyn Maloney



Laura Roosevelt



Senator Gillibrand greets a donor



Lia Poorvu, Henry Elsesser, Jacqueline Togut

2009 RECIPIENT HILLARY CLINTON



Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and Sally Minard



Jo Anne Simon, Ricki Lieberman, Deborah Slaner Larkin. Tonio Burgos and Anne Hess in background



Congressman Jerry Nadler



William vanden Heuvel



Jim Freund and Fred Bacher



Gloria Steinem



Howard Hillman, Jeanette and Herb Spiegel, Carol Hillman



Betsy Cohn



Judith Hope (right) and Senator Gillibrand



Trudy Mason, Sally Green, Claudine Bacher

AWARD CEREMONY SPEECH

Great grandson, Rabbi Joshua Boettiger



It's a privilege to be here this morning as we remember Eleanor Roosevelt, and as we honor our Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton

What I have learned most about my great grandmother comes through my father, John Boettiger, whose relationship with the woman he called *Grandmère* deeply influenced and guided his life. He still calls her his senior mentor and teacher, even 47 years after her death. They really became close when he was a young adult studying at Amherst College, and he would stay with her here in New York City during his breaks. For a time they were both serving on the Board of the American Association for the United Nations, he as the student representative. When I asked my Dad if there was a particular memory from that time that most stood out for him, I expected him to share something reflecting Eleanor's social justice work or some project they'd worked on together. Instead, he told me this story of an encounter with his grandmother after coming in to her apartment late one night after a date, and finding her still awake, working at her desk. He paints an amazing portrait of Eleanor: sitting in a soft light, returning her correspondence by hand (she was famous for her fastidious capacity to keep on top of her letters), Gregorian chants

playing in the background. And he remembers her asking him to sit for a while with her on the couch – and the two of them staying up late into the night talking about my father's father – who had died when my Dad was only eleven. This was a neglected topic in the family, as in those days no one else had really been able to broach this topic and speak about that loss, and it was Eleanor of all people who was able to raise it with my father, telling him stories of who his father was, and listening to his memories.

I'm moved by this story – which I'm truncating here in the interest of time – on many levels, but I share it because we all know about Eleanor's commitment to her calling in a public way; her commitment to, in her words, 'always being useful.' But because this level of emotional sensitivity and openness to tender and difficult issues was something that didn't come naturally to her in any respect, it was something she continually worked on and cultivated within herself. She was always growing, always curious – so much so that she could be the family member in her later years who was able to hold this piece with and for my father.

If anyone ever had a spiritual calling, Eleanor Roosevelt did. She had this capacity to be tirelessly and truly empathetic. I've heard so many accounts from people who have told me, I met your great-grandmother once – I was a bellhop, or a busboy, or in the service, or a student – and she stopped and asked me about my life and really listened. People who met her felt seen in her presence.

Eleanor spent her whole adult life working for justice and democracy. Standing here at the UN, I'm thinking of the central and pivotal role she played in chairing the committee that was able to ratify – just over sixty years ago – the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the

world's first international bill of rights – and the remarkable courage and vision she exhibited in that process. And my father always says that his grandmother never lost sight of the fact that individual human lives were at the heart of that work.

As a great grandson who never knew her, it's hard to know from what vantage point to speak. It sounds too pat to say that I have been inspired by her, as that didn't happen in a direct way. I can say only that the more I learn about her, the more I am moved by her journey. As a rabbi, I see Eleanor as living her faith in the broadest and most complex sense of what a faith can be: something that encompasses doubts, fears, and obstacles and still manages to choose action, reaching, risking. Still choosing life. Her life and legacy were nothing less than a modern response to the call of the prophet Isaiah, which we read in synagogue every Yom Kippur, where the prophet exhorts us in no uncertain terms to walk the walk: feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the stranger. My great grandmother would have connected with the words of Rabbi Israel Salanter: "My neighbor's material needs are my spiritual needs."

I want to close with the prayer of St. Francis, which my father says she kept by her bedside:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light.
Grant that I may not
So much seek to be consoled as to console.
Not so much to be understood as to understand.
Not so much to be loved as to love.

OVER 340 DONORS & GUESTS



Attendees in the United Nation's Delegates Dining Room



Bobbie Greene McCarthy, Georgie Gatch, Claudine Bacher, Hillary Clinton, Carol Hillman

“...We can all follow in Eleanor’s footsteps...We each, today, have both a special opportunity and an obligation to carry the message of our country’s idealism and values... The America that inspired the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the America that we love and treasure, is still the shining hope of the world...”

Secretary Hillary Clinton

Laura Roosevelt, grand daughter of Eleanor, wrote and recited this moving love poem at the award ceremony. For those who couldn’t attend, we happily present it here.

Dwelling Place

*I live within you,
you within me, ours
a home where dreams converge,
minds entwine, thoughts
meander through airy rooms.
This house we share —
fortress shielding,
mosque, cathedral sanctifying—
has windows clear
as inspiration,
a pond outside
where peepers
and bullfrogs call. They,
and birds on the wing,
sing to each other,
longing for union.
In the kitchen, we
dine on love, served
on the earthenware of hope.
Evenings, we stoke
the fire in the hearth,
unclothe ourselves
in conversation, exploring
where we have been, and how
we have come to sit here,
sheltered, warm,
together, and at last, complete.*

My Day

17 JANUARY 1962

By Eleanor Roosevelt



The President has asked for certain stand-by powers with which to deal with recessions. It is high time such authority was granted. We not only lose a great amount of wealth each time there is a business recession—and idle plants and idle men bring about loss in production—but we come out of each recession with a larger number of unemployed. And this mounting number of unemployed is one of the serious drags on our economy.

The President's suggestion for tariff reform obviously is aimed at greater production and greater employment, and his proposals which are now before the Congress are aimed at giving economic stability at home and greater confidence in the world that we are mature enough to understand the changing world in which we live and to change with it.

We can ill afford the losses which the recessions of the past have forced on us. We want to face the world with a strong economy, and it is essential we preserve it.

It is not only in our economy that changes must come, as they have come in other areas of the world, but also we have to accept social changes. This, very often, we are slower to do, for they touch our lives more closely sometimes than do the economic changes.

Many of us have been watching the controversy over the Cosmos Club in Washington, D.C., where recently an application for membership of an Assistant Secretary of State, Carl T. Rowan, was turned down by the admissions committee. The public has learned that two adverse votes will prevent the acceptance of a new member, and nobody will ever know who cast those two votes in the case of Mr. Rowan.

Undoubtedly, applicants have been denied membership before, but what has brought this case into prominence is that in a time of changing social values the construction put on the refusal of membership is that discrimination because of race was the cause. This type of discrimination is going to be wiped out in this country. It may be a slow and bitter process, but then again it may hap-

pen fairly quickly and easily. The recent annual meeting of the Cosmos Club declared unequivocally that religion, race, color or national origin should not be the cause of rejection of membership in the future....

Such a resolution as passed by the Cosmos Club was needed, but the fight against prejudice is not yet over, for it will have to become an accepted part of our honorable dealings with one another as human beings that this discrimination cannot be practiced even when it is hidden in the depths of our individual knowledge alone.

This change will not happen overnight, but the mere fact that the vote against discrimination was overwhelmingly large in one private club is a most encouraging thing. I think it means that we are beginning to wake up to the fact that we cannot stand against basic changes in the world—whether they are economic, moral or spiritual.

Greatness and leadership shows in knowing when the time has come to accept such changes and be, in reality, as free as we like to believe we are.

NOTE: This is an excerpt. To view the complete text and other My Day columns, please visit www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/myday. World Copyright, 1962, United Feature Syndicate Inc.

All correspondence:

Carol Hillman
Honoring Eleanor Roosevelt
287 Kent Street
Brookline, MA 02446

**DO ONE THING
EVERY DAY THAT
SCARES YOU.**

Eleanor Roosevelt

Honoring Eleanor Roosevelt

A Project to Preserve Her Val-Kill Home

An Official Project of Save America's Treasures at the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

All donations made payable to "SAT/National Trust" with "Val-Kill Cottage" on the memo line are 100% tax deductible.