

A Kind, Unrelenting Spirit

By Nicole Evans

Enduring a sorrowful childhood, which left her with little or no self-confidence, she might have been expected to become a timid, shy and heartbroken woman. Surprisingly, as a young adult, Eleanor Roosevelt grew into a confident, brave and unstoppable “First Lady of the World.” Throughout her adult life, she did what she could to aid those in need. Although she faced numerous obstacles, she learned to stand on her own two feet with confidence.

Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, who was named after her mother, began her sorrowful childhood on October 11, 1884. Because she shared her mother’s name, she was always called Eleanor, but she grew up feeling her mother was ashamed of her because she didn’t share her beauty. Throughout Eleanor’s life, the hardships of others touched her deeply. Tragically, when she was only 7, her mother died, and Eleanor was sent to live with her strict grandmother. Three years later her father, who Eleanor was very close to, also died! Eleanor was as sad as could be. Mourning and alone, she had few things to look forward to besides her yearly visits with her favorite uncle, Ted. When she was 15 years old she attended Allenswood, a school in England, which she later described as the happiest years of her life. Apart from these few joys, Eleanor’s childhood was an unusually sorrowful one.

Looking forward to her 18th birthday, Eleanor dreaded her coming-out party, although it turned out to be a turning point in her life. It was there that she met Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a fifth cousin. They began spending more and more time together and then, to the modest young lady’s surprise, he proposed to her in 1902! Because Franklin’s mother thought they were too young, they waited until March 17, 1905, before they were married. Over the years Eleanor gave birth to six children, but tragically one of her sons died as a baby. Franklin was first elected to public office in 1910, when he became a state senator. Suddenly, he was struck with polio, which left him paralyzed, but he did his best to keep it a secret. In 1928 Franklin was elected governor of New York. Because of his disability, Eleanor toured prisons, orphanages and factories, and then reported to Franklin so he could pass laws to help the unfortunate. In her early adult years, Eleanor was learning to stand her ground.

In 1932, when Franklin ran for president of the United States, his wife became the first lady! Together they continuously fought for better working conditions in factories, and during World War I Eleanor joined the Red Cross. She was happy because she liked the feeling of being helpful. The Roosevelts endeavored to end the Great Depression, and by 1940 the government had provided a stunning \$16 million to Americans who needed assistance. While traveling all over the U.S., the first lady earned the nickname, “Eleanor Everywhere.” She supported soldiers during World War II, and stood up for black people, even after a death threat from the Ku Klux Klan. Winning the favor of Americans everywhere, Franklin won the presidential election four times before he died at age 62. Even after he died, Eleanor still traveled around the world. Sadly, she died of a blood disease on November 7, 1962, but she had become, and would be remembered as, the “First Lady of the World.”

As you might have guessed, Eleanor Roosevelt was an amazing world-changer. Overcoming a childhood filled with sorrow, she still grew up to be a brave, confident person who noticed peoples' hardships, addressed them as if they were her own, and readily did her best to turn them around. From her time at Allenswood all the way to her death she was helping others, whether it meant traveling hundreds of miles or only a few. She did what she could to assist those in need, and she did her best!

Bibliography

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