

WHITE HOUSE "MISSY"

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No, you do not easily spot Missy—hating long names, blonde Anna Roosevelt Boettiger pinned the sibilant nickname on her father's secretary, Marguerite Alice Le Hand, back in 1920, when she started to work for the President. You will not necessarily meet her if you have business at the White House or with the President. But if you are drawn within the real Roosevelt circle, you will swiftly become aware of her.

"Missy—to do this, F. D. R." Across Missy's small, plain desk pass thousands of chits, letters, memoranda with this notation in the President's firm and slanting hand. What he wishes her to do may be almost any sort of task touching upon his vast range of interests and responsibilities, and it is almost certain to be genuinely personal and completely confidential.

Missy writes all the President's private letters and, doing so, turns a phrase that is authentic Roosevelt. Missy does the accounts, pays the bills, balances the check-books.

She gets let off the President's income-tax return because he enjoys solving that Chinese puzzle by himself, but he turns it over to her to type for him. Missy gets the duns from the children when their allowances are overdue.

Missy is a collector by proxy and helps keep track of the stamps and marine prints and old manuscripts and rare books that are the President's pride. Missy buys many of the Christmas presents handed out by F. D. R., and makes helpful suggestions to cabinetiers and other close friends who want to know what they can give the President that he will most enjoy. Missy helps select his new photographs. Missy answers the innumerable queries about Warm Springs.

Missy arranges for the many little acts of kindness that imposing Mrs. Sara Delano Roosevelt thinks "my boy Franklin" should certainly have time to do. Missy campaigns with the President, up and down and across the country, and it's Missy who says when there has been enough politicking for one day.

Missy lives at the White House. In Mrs. Roosevelt's absence, Missy presides at the tea table, okays the menus, tells when and where they are to be served.

But to list what Missy does—wide as is its range—is to circumscribe her field far too narrowly. No one except his family knows Franklin Roosevelt better than she does; since 1920 she has worked for him, since 1928 she has made her home with the Roosevelt family.

—Doris Fleenor