

A Tribute to Maureen Corr 1917 - 2009

by
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Maureen Corr was born in Armagh, Northern Ireland on April 26, 1917 and was brought to the United States by her sister in 1943. While in New York City, living with her sister Margaret and her brother-in-law, she attended the Grace Institute where she learned typing and shorthand. Maureen lived in the same apartment on West 72nd Street since coming to NYC in 1943.

Frustrated working in a medical office and feeling it was time for a new job, Maureen applied to an employment agency. Little did she know she would end up working for Eleanor Roosevelt! In 1950, Maureen joined ER's office staff as Malvina "Tommy" Thompson's assistant. Upon Thompson's death in 1953, Maureen became ER's personal secretary.

I first met Maureen in Washington, DC when she attended the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial Dedication in 1987. Marge and Les Entrup's children -- Gary, Barbara, and Janet came with a group from Hyde Park to the Dedication. Marge and Les worked for Mrs. Roosevelt at Val-Kill, and Maureen knew the family.

The Town of Hyde Park Historical Society had an "Eleanor Roosevelt Knit-In" on April 27, 2008, and I invited both Maureen Corr and Doris Muller Wheeler, two of Mrs. Roosevelt's former secretaries to come. They had worked together many years ago, and hadn't seen each other in over 40 years. Each of them spoke at the Knit-In about working for Mrs. Roosevelt. At that time we celebrated Maureen's 91st birthday as it was just the day before the Knit-In on April 26th. We were also happy to meet Maureen's niece Geraldine Slevin.

Maureen invited me to visit her in New York City, and on May 21, 2008 my friend Pat Rolff and I went to visit her. We soon realized that all those stairs to the fourth floor probably kept Maureen in good shape all these years! We could imagine going grocery shopping and carting them up all those stairs! Maureen told us you could be born on her street, live here all your life, buy anything you needed, and die here...this street had literally everything!

Maureen often traveled with Mrs. R, where she continued as her dedicated personal secretary until Mrs. Roosevelt's death in 1962, she told us lots of stories about traveling with Mrs. Roosevelt. Maureen told us many stories and showed us several photos on her walls. There was one in particular that she told about -- a trip to Egypt where Mrs. Roosevelt was offered a camel which she had to graciously decline, saying that she had no place for it in Hyde Park.

Another story was about the time they were in Paris, and Mrs. R wanted her to visit her family in Ireland. She told Maureen to please call her to let her know when she arrived safely. As there were no telephones in the majority of homes there, Maureen went to the Post Office and asked the postmaster to please place a call to Mrs. Roosevelt for her. The postmaster didn't believe her until he actually got Mrs. Roosevelt on the line! Mrs. Roosevelt wanted to make sure Maureen arrived safely, which showed how concerned she was for her safety.

Maureen also told the story about when Mrs. Roosevelt was released from the hospital towards the end of her life, and an ambulance took her home to her apartment. Mrs. Roosevelt was upset as she told Maureen she forgot to thank the stretcher bearers, and would she please quickly go out to tell them before they left. When Pat Rolff and I visited Maureen two months before she passed away when she was in a hospice center in Riverdale, I jokingly asked Maureen if she thanked the ambulance personnel for the ride from the hospital to the center...and she smiled and said, "Yes, I remembered." We both knew the meaning of this kind deed.

Maureen Corr was an amazing lady who touched the lives of many people, and it was a pleasure to have known her. I will always remember her with a smile on her face and a twinkle in her eye. Maureen was at the right place at the right time and was very fortunate to become secretary to our friend and neighbor, Eleanor Roosevelt, First Lady of the World! They are now together again.

Donations may be made in memory of Maureen Corr by calling the Eleanor Roosevelt Center at 845-229-5302 or returning to the website and select "Invest in ERVK."