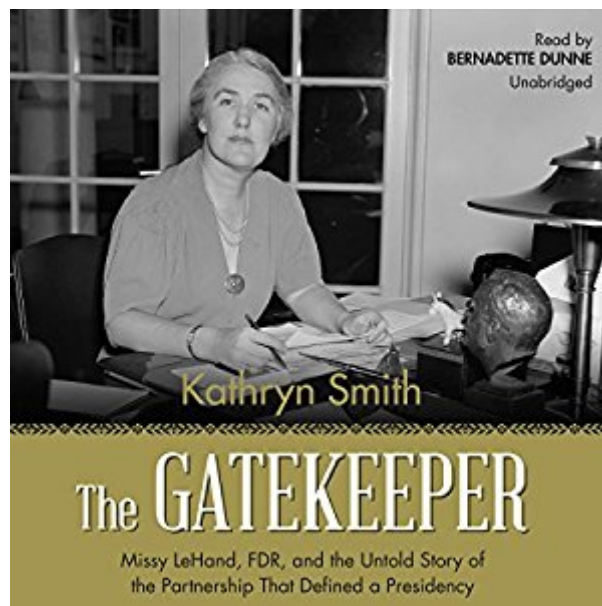


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# The Gatekeeper: Missy LeHand, FDR, And The Untold Story Of The Partnership That Defined A Presidency



## Synopsis

The first biography of arguably the most influential member of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administration, Marguerite "Missy" LeHand, FDR's de facto chief of staff, who has been misrepresented, mischaracterized, and overlooked throughout history...until now. Widely considered the first female presidential chief of staff, Marguerite "Missy" LeHand was the right-hand woman to Franklin Delano Roosevelt - both personally and professionally - for more than 20 years. Although her official title as personal secretary was relatively humble, her power and influence were unparalleled. Everyone in the White House knew one truth: if you wanted access to Franklin, you had to get through Missy. She was one of his most trusted advisors, affording her a unique perspective on the president that no one else could claim, and she was deeply admired and respected by Eleanor and the Roosevelt children. With unprecedented access to Missy's family and original source materials, journalist Kathryn Smith tells the captivating and forgotten story of the intelligent, loyal, and clever woman who had a front-row seat to history in the making. *The Gatekeeper* is a thoughtful, revealing, unsung-hero story about a woman ahead of her time, the true weight of her responsibility, and the tumultuous era in which she lived; a long overdue tribute to one of the most important female figures in American history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

President Franklin Roosevelt and Eleanor were a formidable leadership team but early in Franklin's

career their relationship had become a marriage of convenience. Each found intimacy in relationships and friendships outside their marriage. Missy LeHand, FDR's personal secretary was at his side 24-7, swimming with him at Warm Springs and acting as a chief of staff. Eleanor's friendship, and perhaps love affair, with newswoman Lorena Hickock helped transform her into the First Lady of the World. *The Gatekeeper: Missy LeHand, FDR, and the Untold Partnership that Defined a Presidency* by Kathryn Smith is the first biography of President Roosevelt's constant companion for twenty years in the office and out, the first female 'chief of staff' who could be found with her boss at night only wearing her nightgown. With only a high school education Missy was hired as a personal secretary before FDR contracted polio. She rose with her boss to become his 'gatekeeper' and an influential and respected advisor in the White House. Missy dedicated her life to her boss, She accompanied FDR as he pursued therapy, going on cruises and at Warm Springs (a place Eleanor disliked). Missy served as his hostess while Eleanor was following her own interests. Missy was given rooms in the governor's mansion and the White House and was intimate with Eleanor and the Roosevelt family. Hobnobbing with the powerful and high society, including Joe Kennedy, Missy could pull off glamour and had flirtations and love affairs. Popular magazines ran articles about her. Her love letters to Bill Bullitt offer us glimpses of the woman. Smith's biography covers FDR's life and career showing how Missy played her part.

In an age untouched by feminist principles, in a time of grave world peril, the daughter of poor Irish immigrants became the valued employee and confidante of the most influential man in the world. Marguerite LeHand met Franklin Delano Roosevelt when she was an ambitious young office worker, having chosen that profession after a bout of rheumatic fever made motherhood unlikely and physical work impractical. It was 1920, and he was running for Vice President. She and her boss quickly bonded, and she was cosseted by the Roosevelt brood, who nicknamed her 'Missy'. She was accorded special perks, like her own private room at Warm Springs where she accompanied FDR for his therapy visits. Missy's value to the President was shown in her ability to manage people; she became his ears and eyes, shunting acquaintances in and out of his presence, offering discreet insights and jolly camaraderie behind the scenes. In public, too, she shone, able to fill a fashionable gown for state galas. Her aptitude in meeting and greeting gave her a unique edge; the press knew it and courted her. She hobnobbed with some of the vibrant politicians of the FDR years --- Joe Kennedy, Harold Ickes, Tommy Corcoran --- and stood in for the ever-busy First Lady as hostess when the occasion demanded, as it often did. In private, Missy managed to have at least one love affair, despite the constant need to be on call for FD, as she alone called him.

She and ambassador William Bullitt managed sporadic trysts in a romantically charged liaison with many crossing letters. Nonetheless, whether or not her relationship with FD went beyond mere business (and evidence for that is more presumed than proven), he was always the central figure in her life.

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