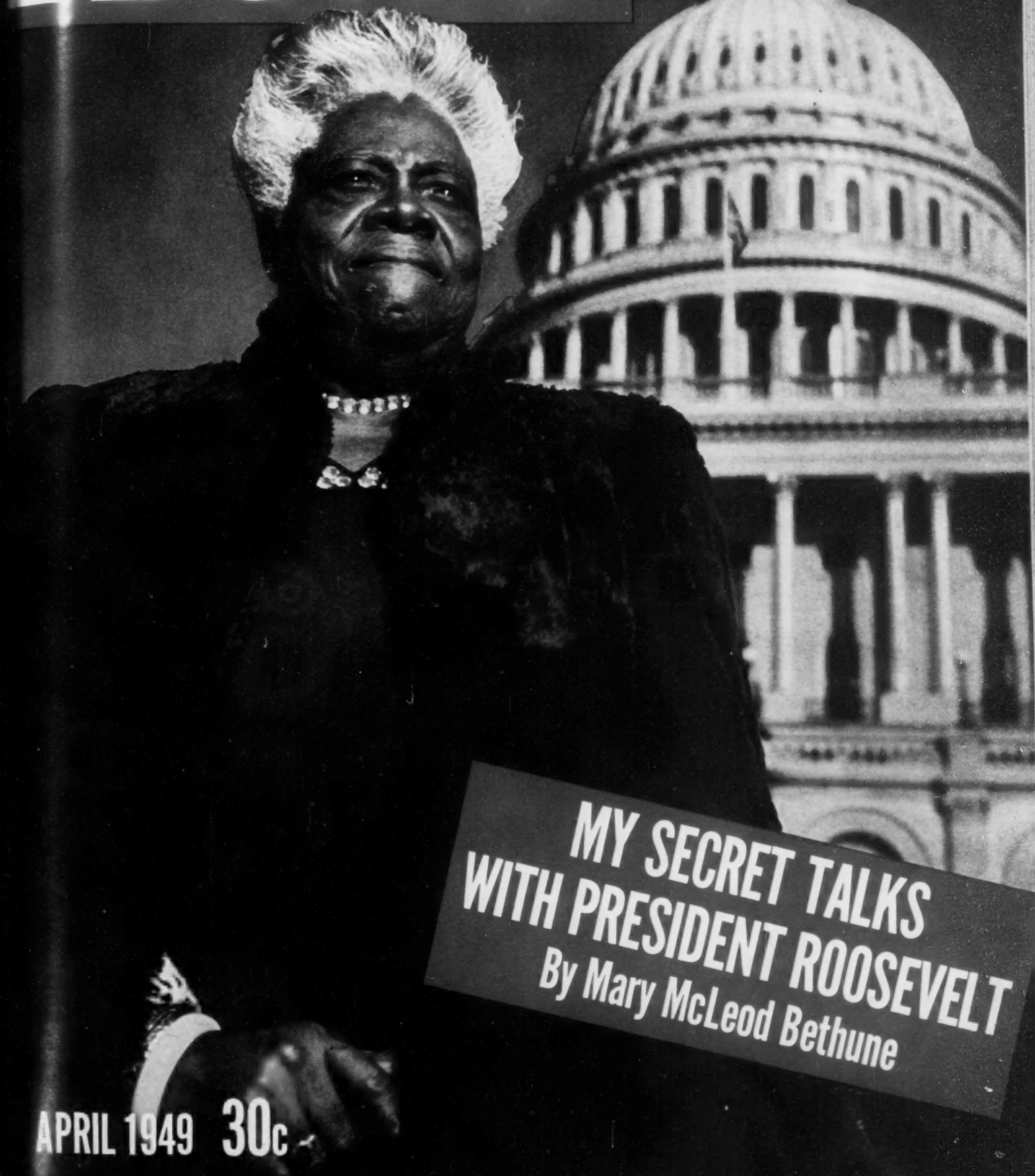


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**MY SECRET TALKS
WITH PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT**
By Mary McLeod Bethune

APRIL 1949 30c

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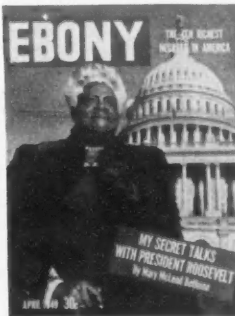
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COVER

Mary McLeod Bethune is perhaps the best known Negro woman in America outside the entertainment field. From a humble background, she became a leading educator building a college out of the swamps in Florida and later became a top-ranking adviser to President Roosevelt on Negro affairs. She was a regular visitor to the White House and tells of her talks with FDR in an article on Page 42 of this issue. Kodachrome is by Edwards Burks of Scope.



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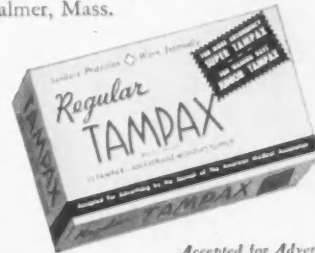


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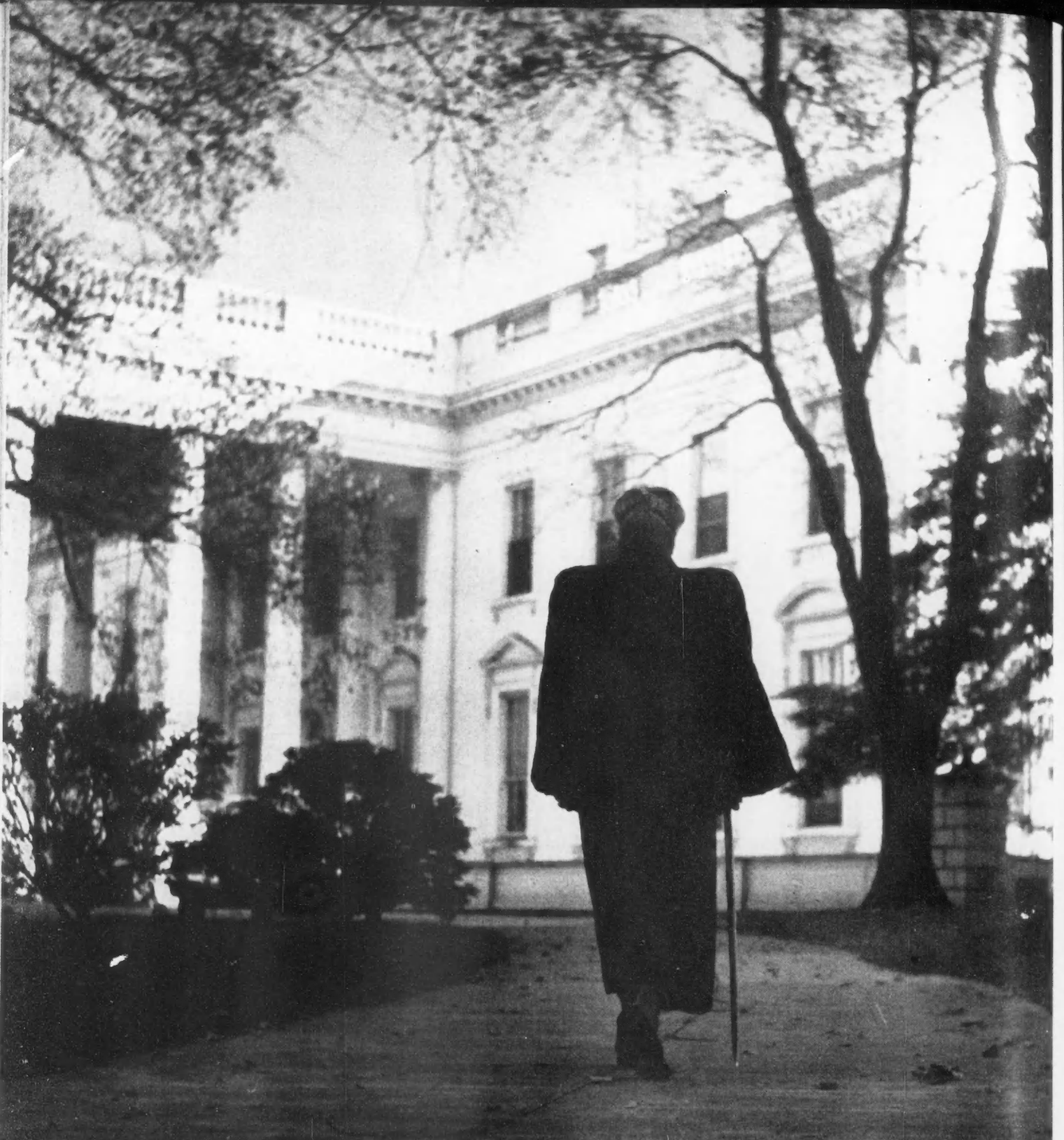
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With vivid memories of many talks with late FDR, Mary Bethune walks alone to White House once again

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My Secret Talks With FDR

BY MARY McLEOD BETHUNE

Probably no Negro in America has ever been as close a confidante and adviser of a U. S. President on racial affairs as Mary McLeod Bethune. During the long New Deal administration of President

Franklin D. Roosevelt, she was called upon regularly to come to the White House to confer with and advise FDR. She has long been a warm friend of Eleanor Roosevelt. Once Minority Affairs Director

of the National Youth Administration, Mrs. Bethune is still today head of the National Council of Negro Women and known far and wide as the First Lady of Negro America.

IT WILL BE four years this month since Franklin D. Roosevelt died. In those four years his enemies and detractors have worked incessantly to turn the minds of the people against what he stood for and did, have sought generally to tear down the great edifice of social legislation and true democratic practice which FDR built up in his lifetime.

By and large, though, the stature of Franklin D. Roosevelt has grown immensely in the four years since his death. Today he ranks second only to Lincoln as an outstanding figure of genius and achievement in our national history. Four years after he breathed his last in Warm Springs, he still dominates our national political life, the one personality who charged this nation with a new energy and gave common people hope and dignity during some of the most critical years through which the country has passed.

I knew Franklin D. Roosevelt as a friend and as a political leader. I talked with him personally on scores of occasions, heard him laugh at a particularly funny story, or ruminate in silence over a grave piece of news. I have seen FDR when he was seriously ill, and when his voice was hoarse and full of suffering. I have looked into his face, gaunt and ashen from the frightful burdens of state and the exertions of an arduous schedule, and my heart has been filled with pity and sorrow for a great man who was working himself to death. I have chatted with FDR in the bright summer sunshine on the lawn of his Hyde Park family home and been filled with joy by his bright humor and strong optimism. I knew FDR over the years when he was fighting reaction in Albany and Washington, when he struck out at poverty through the New Deal and made enemies of the "economic royalists."

I heard his great eloquence denounce greed and intolerance from one end of the land to the other, and I discussed with him the problems of my people in many an off-the-record private talk held in the President's study in the White House. I loved that voice and was thrilled by it on innumerable occasions. To me it represented the voice of sanity and progress and humanism, and when it was stilled forever on April 12, 1945, I felt that the

peoples of the world had lost one of their finest spokesmen and that the earth itself was a poorer place thereby.

America needs his kind of idealism today when war and depression face us as imminent possibilities. The world has need of his kind of leadership with all of its courage and clarity.

There are those who criticize FDR's slowness to move against basic evils in our midst and his obvious dislike of extreme methods of achieving his objectives. But it is important to understand that his methods were those of a man of great experience and insight. He was a man of great depth of mind and seldom made rash moves. I had many opportunities to study the man at work and in the midst of a crisis, and I was struck by the calm, exact, almost mathematical way in which he thought and moved.

I often expressed to him my impatience with the slowness of the democratic process. I remember going to see him one evening in 1943. I was feeling particularly distressed that day over reports I had received on flagrant bias shown against Negroes seeking to enter the National Youth Administration in certain parts of the South. I called him direct that afternoon, and must have sounded awfully agitated.

"Anything wrong?" he asked in that fine strong voice.

"Yes," I answered, "quite a lot."

"Come over after dinner, Mrs. Bethune," he said, "I'll be glad to see you."



Longtime friends Mary Bethune and Eleanor Roosevelt have worked together in many causes. The former First Lady often ran White House benefits for Bethune-Cookman College, of which Mrs. Bethune was president.

I entered the White House in a grim mood, and was escorted upstairs by an attendant who took me up in the President's private elevator.

"He's waiting for you now," the attendant said with a smile. I walked down the hallway to the President's private study and found him waiting for me with a pleasant smile on his face. Sitting in his chair near the door, he waved a greeting with his hand which held his famous cigarette holder.

"Come in, Mrs. Bethune," he called out. "I'm always glad to see you. And do you know why?" I said I didn't.

"Because you always come for others and never for yourself," he said.

His face relaxed and his eyes, though still bright, were searching my features. "How are

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MY SECRET TALKS *Continued*

you," he asked gently. "What can I do for you?"

I told him about the situation in NYA in the South, about the lack of training facilities for Negroes in certain Southern states and of the refusal of state governments to allocate funds for Negro NYA activities. Negroes could not enter the technical training schools established under NYA.

I was visibly disturbed and made the President aware of how I felt. I caught his arm and clung to him. "The Negro people need all of the strength that you can give, Mr. President, in opening up opportunities for them," I told him.

He looked at me seriously for a few seconds, and then said, "Mrs. Bethune, I shall not fail you. I'll see Aubrey Williams tomorrow, and everything that can be done to open up these sections of the South to NYA training for Negroes will be done. Your people and all minorities shall have their chance."

Altogether, I suppose, we talked for 40 minutes, touching on such subjects as anti-Negro discrimination, and the progress our forces were making in the war abroad. As I left, I shook his hand warmly and told him:

"Mr. President, the common people feel they have someone in the White House who cares." The President smiled gratefully and waved a goodbye.

Roosevelt Had Own Plan Versus Jim Crow

THAT WAS not the last time that I felt impelled to speak out strongly to the President on conditions confronting Negroes in the South. More than once I proposed pretty drastic steps to end the hideous discriminations and second-class citizenship which make the South a blot upon our democracy. But FDR usually demurred, pointing out that a New Reconstruction in the South would have to keep pace with democratic progress on a national scale. He strove to bring the whole country into a unified understanding of freedom. He tried to hold the whole country together so that the whole might be one.

But President Roosevelt did not complete his work. Had he lived I am convinced that he would have launched new, bold offensives against bigotry and Jim Crow everywhere. But it would have been according to *his* plan.

Frequently I would ask him with some impatience why this couldn't be done at once or that done immediately. He would think awhile, and then say very carefully and patiently, "Mrs. Bethune, if we do that now, we'll hurt our program over there. We must do this thing stride by stride, but leaving no stone unturned."

FDR taught me much about practical politics and how important it is that we understand their meaning if we are to make progress in the political arena. My contact with him was one of the great experiences of my life.

He would say things that would remain with you for the rest of your life. Thus, one day, I think it was at a reception in 1940, he beckoned to me and opened up a conversation I shall always remember. "You know, Mrs. Bethune," he said, looking out of the window and yet speaking directly to me, "people like you and me are fighting, and must continue to fight, for the day when a man will be regarded as a man regardless of his race or faith or country. That day will come, but we must pass through perilous times before we realize it, and that's why it's so difficult today because that new idea is being born and many of us flinch from the thought of it. Justice must and will prevail."

That is why I believed so deeply in Franklin D. Roosevelt.

How She Met Roosevelt's Mother

MY FRIENDSHIP with FDR was based on more than personal regard for a great man. It flowed, to a large extent, from a long-standing acquaintanceship with the Roosevelt family, especially his mother, the late Mrs. James Roosevelt, one of the most gracious and genuine persons I have been privileged to know.

I first met that grand old lady at a luncheon Eleanor Roosevelt

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Calling on Mrs. James Roosevelt, Sr., FDR's mother, with delegation from Bethune-Cookman College, Mrs. Bethune found ready support for school's fund campaign. Mrs. Bethune was recently elected director of Roosevelt Memorial Foundation.

MY SECRET TALKS *Continued*

gave for representative women's leaders at the old Roosevelt family house in New York in 1924. I had just returned from a European tour and attended the luncheon as president of the National Association of Colored Women. Mrs. James Roosevelt, Sr., was present at the luncheon and it was there that I first met her.

I can still see the twinkle in Mrs. James Roosevelt's eyes as she noted the apprehensive glances cast my way by the Southern women who had come to the affair. Then she did a remarkable thing. Very deliberately, she took my arm and seated me to the right of Eleanor Roosevelt, in the seat of honor! I can remember, too, how the faces of the Negro servants lit up with pride when they saw me seated at the center of that imposing gathering of women leaders from all over the United States. From that moment my heart went out to Mrs. James Roosevelt. I visited her at her home many times subsequently, and our friendship became one of the most treasured relationships of my life. As a result of my affection for her mother-in-law, my friendship with Eleanor Roosevelt soon ripened into a close and understanding mutual feeling. She is today one of the dearest friends I have. Our lives have become deeply intertwined.

Meets FDR During Formation Of NYA

STRANGE as it may seem I did not meet FDR until 1934 when, as Negro Affairs Director, I attended a meeting of the Advisory Committee of the National Youth Administration held at the White House. I had been invited to become a member of the Advisory Committee upon its formation early that year.

I got to know FDR well during these Advisory Committee meetings which frequently were pretty intense affairs. The first meeting was unforgettable. FDR often referred to it in later conversations with me. The meeting had been called to review and report upon the first year's achievements of the National Youth Administration. I was asked to deliver a report on minority group activities. Speaking directly to the President, I told him what the NYA meant to minority groups. I told him that in many parts of the South the \$15 and \$20 monthly checks meant real salvation for thousands of Negro young people. I explained how we were working with the WPA authorities in providing adult education facilities for the parents of these young people.

"We are bringing life and spirit to these many thousands who for so long have been in darkness," I said. "I speak, Mr. President, not as Mrs. Bethune, but as the voice of 14,000,000 Americans who seek to achieve full citizenship. We want to continue to open doors for these millions."

Continued on Next Page

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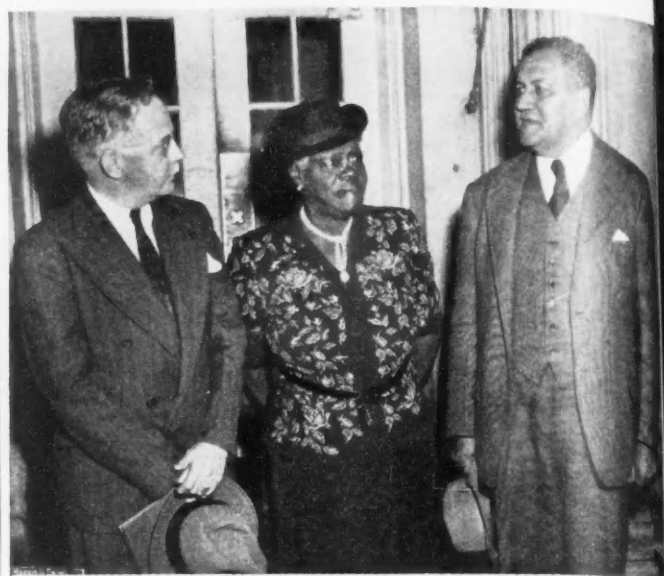
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After meeting with President, three of America's top Negro leaders leave White House. During New Deal administration, NAACP secretary Walter White, Mrs. Bethune and YMCA leader Channing Tobias met frequently with FDR.

MY SECRET TALKS *Continued*

When I had finished, I saw that tears were coursing down President Roosevelt's cheeks. He leaned across the table and grasped my hands in both of his.

"Mrs. Bethune," he said, "I am glad I am able to contribute something to help make a better life for your people. I want to assure you that I will continue to do my best for them in every way." He choked a little. Tears flowed from his eyes. There was a stillness in the room for a moment and then the meeting dispersed. As I left the room, Aubrey Williams who was National Youth Administrator, placed his hand on my shoulder, and said:

"Mrs. Bethune, thanks to you, a marvelous impression has been made tonight for the cause we all represent."

Two weeks later I received a letter from the White House, informing me that the President wished to see me. I went to Washington and hurried to the office of Aubrey Williams. Aubrey was smiling broadly.

"I have wonderful news for you," he said. He told me that President Roosevelt had decided to set up an Office of Minority Affairs of NYA and that I was to be its administrator. I pleaded with Aubrey that I could not accept the appointment because of the great pressure of my work at the college.

"You'll just have to find someone else for the job," I told him.

Aubrey's face was grave. "I'm afraid you'll have to do it. Do you realize this is the first such post created for a Negro woman in the U.S.?" I was silent, realizing that here indeed was a heavy responsibility.

"You will have to do it," Aubrey repeated emphatically. It was not an easy decision to make. I thought of the splendid job Frances Perkins was doing in the Department of Labor, and Mary Anderson in the Children's Bureau of the same department, and I felt that if these talented white women were working at such responsible jobs at a time of national crisis I could do the same thing. I visualized dozens of Negro women coming after me, filling positions of high trust and strategic importance. God, I knew, would give me the requisite strength, wisdom and administrative ability to do the job. I told Aubrey I would accept.

Later that day we went over to see the President. Aubrey told him of my decision. The President turned to me, beaming. "I have thought over very carefully the message you brought to me some weeks ago," he said, "and we have decided to open a department that Aubrey here has chosen to call, the Office of Minority Group Affairs. We have appointed you to administer this office. I want you to know that I do not believe anybody can do this work more acceptably than you can."

I said, "Thank you, Mr. President, for your thoughtfulness and

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MY SECRET TALKS Continued

deep concern for my people and all minorities that need help. You have been most gracious in permitting me to share so deeply in such a great cause. In accepting this appointment, I assure you that I shall give it the best that I have and shall follow very closely the guiding hand of our great Administrator, Aubrey Williams, who is giving so fully of himself for this cause that is so dear to your heart."

FDR was visibly impressed. "Aubrey," he said, after a pause and looking in my direction, "Mrs. Bethune is a great woman. I believe in her because she has her feet on the ground; not only on the ground, but deep down in the ploughed soil." I shall never forget that compliment.

It was always pleasant and stimulating to work with Aubrey Williams. Aubrey is one of my favorite people whose faith in the liberal way has grown stronger with the years. He is, I am convinced, one of America's foremost fighting liberals who has made a very real contribution to the Negro's cause.

How NYA Functioned

THE OFFICE of Minority Affairs functioned for 10 years and brought many tangible benefits to Negro young people throughout the country. It worked vigorously to erase race differentials operating in the NYA and to extend training and educational opportunities for Negroes. On higher education alone, our office distributed some \$100,000 yearly, mainly to the graduate schools of such institutions as Howard, Fisk, Atlanta Universities and many of the Northern universities where Negroes were studying. No government agency did more to stimulate higher education among Negroes than did the Office of Minority Group Affairs of the NYA.

President Roosevelt maintained a consistent interest in this phase of the NYA program and was once instrumental in actually saving it from total destruction by Congress. A Congressional Committee had earmarked our \$100,000 special higher education fund for elimination in a new sweeping economy program affecting such agencies as NYA and the WPA. There were long faces at the NYA headquarters in Washington. One morning Aubrey Williams told me of the real danger facing our program and suggested that I speak to FDR about it. I got his secretary, Matthew Connelly, on the phone at once and arranged an appointment for that very day.

I found the President in his office, looking a little worried, but still managing to greet me with a charming smile. I began by referring to the attempt to wipe out the \$100,000 fund for graduate training for Negroes and told him what a disaster that would be for the potential leaders of the Negro people who were seeking training in various fields. As I urged him to stop Congress from making the projected cuts in the NYA appropriations, I became so excited that I shook my finger in the President's face.

"Think what a terrible tragedy it would be for America," I cried, "if by this action by a committee of Congress, Negroes would be deprived of the leadership of skilled and trained members of their race!" Suddenly I realized what I was doing, and stopped, staring embarrassedly at my finger now pointing at the President's nose. I apologized for being so demonstrative.

"Oh Mr. President," I said, "I did not mean to become so emotional."

FDR smiled quietly, "I understand thoroughly, Mrs. Bethune," he said. "My heart is with you." After hearing him promise to "see what I can do," I left.

That week Congress voted to continue the full appropriation grant to our National Youth Administration program.

Friendship With Mrs. Roosevelt

ONCE at a meeting of NYA administrative heads held with the President at Hyde Park in 1937, I had the pleasure of lunching with the Chief Executive and telling him more about the Negro's problems. As we talked, the President told me how important he considered youth to the future of the nation.

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MY SECRET TALKS *Continued*

"We must continue to work to guarantee life and strength to American youth, Mrs. Bethune," he said. "We must equip them in body and mind with the necessary proportions to combat the problems of life."

The conversation turned to the South, and I told FDR how Negro youth were gradually being integrated into NYA programs there. He was very pleased. "I know something about the difficulties of work in the South," he said, "and I know you have the tact, common sense and courage to work these problems out. You know, it takes these qualities to handle these problems, and I think you have got them in abundance. I want you to know that you have meant more to our program than I can express in words. Aubrey thinks of you as his right hand. I want you to stand by us in the difficult times that are ahead of us."

As my work brought me more and more into contact with the President I became much better acquainted with his wife, whom I regard as one of the most distinguished Americans of our time and one of the great women of all time. My association with Eleanor Roosevelt has been one of the most enriching of my entire life. Our friendship has combined a deep, abiding understanding with a warm kinship that has been strengthened over the years.

We have travelled together all over this country, and have addressed all kinds of meetings from a hundred and one platforms from coast to coast. We have worked together to establish a cooperative interracialism on various college campuses, and have sponsored conferences on race relations in the heart of the South. My admiration for her liberal outlook and fighting courage has increased with the development of our friendship.

First Lady Comes To Her House

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT has done more to better race relations and to give the "human touch" to the affairs of state and the democratic struggle than any other woman I have known.

She and I have been closely associated in many things almost continuously since I arrived in Washington early in 1934 to assume my duties as head of the Office of Minority Affairs of the NYA. In the intervening years we have not hesitated to draw on each other's experience and counsel. We have had frequent consultations, either at my home on Vermont Avenue or at the White House or in New York at her Washington Square apartment, on such matters as Negro affairs, the political situation, women's problems, the South, my school, the National Council of Negro Women, and the international picture.

During FDR's years as President Mrs. Roosevelt held a series of meetings at the White House for the benefit of Bethune-Cookman College, at which I was introduced to selected groups of her friends and visiting dignitaries.

One afternoon in 1944 I received a telephone call from Mrs. Roosevelt, saying she wished to have a talk with me. I asked her whether I should meet her at the White House.

"Are you busy?" she asked.
 "Well, just a little," I replied. "But I'll come over if you want me to."

"Stay where you are," she said, "I'll be over in a few minutes."

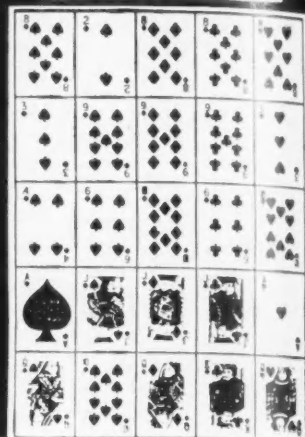
Twenty minutes later I happened to look out the window, and saw Mrs. Roosevelt striding briskly along Vermont Avenue. I gasped. She had walked over from the White House.

Attends Huge Meeting At Bethune-Cookman College

ONE of the most stirring events in which Mrs. Roosevelt figured was a huge meeting held at Bethune-Cookman College in 1941. Mrs. Roosevelt was the main speaker, and over 20,000 persons had come from all over southern Florida to hear her. The sight of these many thousands of Southerners, white and black, mingling freely and democratically on the campus of a Negro college in Florida, was an unforgettable experience. Aubrey Williams, who was present, was terribly moved by

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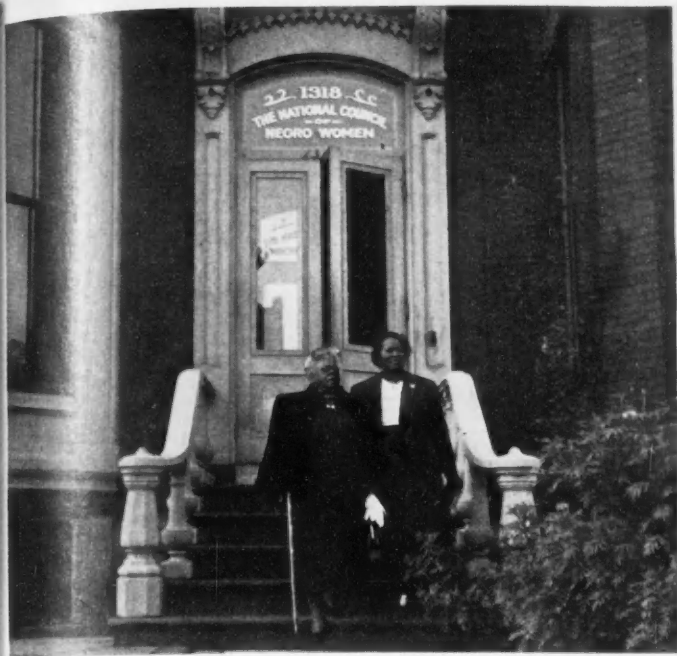
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Offices of National Council of Negro Women in Washington are virtual home for Mary Bethune, shown with secretary Arabella Denniston. She organized council in 1955. It has membership of 850,000, is now enlisting white women in its ranks.

MY SECRET TALKS *Continued*

the scene. So were the score of public officials and representatives of every college in Florida who had come to pay their respects to the First Lady of the land.

On another occasion we were both scheduled to address a mass meeting in 1943 at the Golden Gate Ballroom in Harlem, held in aid of Bethune-Cookman College. I was the first speaker, and as I reached the climax of my appeal for support of the college, my voice cracked and I began to cough badly. The audience became a little uneasy. Mrs. Roosevelt, who was sitting at the far end of the platform, got up at once, walked over to the table placed in the center and poured me a glass of water. She handed it to me, smiling graciously, and said, "Drink this. It will help."

It was a very dramatic gesture, full of simplicity and kindness.

A little over a year ago, Helen Gahagan Douglas, that fine liberal Congresswoman from California, gave a garden party at her Hollywood home for Eleanor Roosevelt and myself. Among the guests were many famous names in the film colony. Actors, writers, directors, producers. Toward the end of the afternoon, Mrs. Roosevelt brought Walter Wanger, the famous producer, over and introduced him to me.

"You know, Mr. Wanger," she said with a smile, "you ought to think seriously about making a film of Mrs. Bethune. Her career is one of the great romances of our time." I was flattered, but Mr. Wanger quickly caught the idea and said he would seriously look into the picture possibilities of such a theme.

Who wouldn't be proud to know such a woman. Who wouldn't feel thrilled, as I did on the night of March 3, 1948, when at a testimonial dinner given for me at the Hotel Commodore in New York, Eleanor Roosevelt told the audience: "I am happy to be counted among the people who can call Mrs. Bethune friend, and I hope that my friendship with her will be lasting and grow warmer and warmer as the years go by." I would like to add that this is also my most fervent hope.

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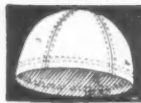
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MY SECRET TALKS *Continued*

to devote more and more time to holding the line at home against the attacks of his domestic enemies made him literally one of the busiest men on earth. Yet I was able to see him practically any time I requested an audience. He always seemed to be able to find time to see people who, in his words, were "doing things." I was privileged to be considered a member of this circle. From 1933 to 1945 I saw FDR six or seven times each year. He never refused to see me, and I, realizing the tremendous burden he was carrying, never asked to see him unless on a matter of importance. He knew that and hence always granted my requests for conferences.

Sometimes he asked to see me. There were a number of these times when he wanted to discuss with me problems that were weighing on his mind, usually issues of direct concern to the Negro people. In such instances he would have either Marvin McIntyre or General Edwin M. Watson, his secretaries, call me. "Mrs. Bethune," they would say, "the President would like to see you today. Can you come over this afternoon about 3?" I can't remember a single occasion when I was too busy to see the Chief Executive. One just couldn't turn down an urgent call from President Roosevelt to come over to the White House.

Our White House conferences almost always took place in the East Wing and were generally held in his office. Evenings we would talk in his study or sometimes in one of the reception rooms. The physical pattern of our conversations had a certain similarity about them. He would wave to me gaily with his widely-publicized cigarette holder. Sometimes I would enter as he was in the act of inserting a cigarette into the holder. He would look up, smile, and say, "Come in, Mrs. Bethune. I'm so glad to see you. Have a cigarette?"

He would thrust an open cigarette box toward me, nodding his head gently. "Do have a cigarette."

"Mr. President," I'd say, "I haven't learned to smoke yet." His brow would wrinkle a little, and he would search his mind quickly for his last impression of me.

"You haven't," he would say. "Well, I have a duty to perform yet, haven't I? I must teach you how to smoke." We would both laugh at that.

Protests On Army Jim Crow

AT THE HEIGHT of World War II Franklin D. Roosevelt was frequently made aware of the widespread discontent among the Negro people arising from their restricted role in the war effort and repeated violence against Negro servicemen throughout the South. I had occasion to speak to him personally about these things. Several times in 1943 and 1944 I, together with Walter White, the executive secretary of the NAACP, and Dr. Channing Tobias, director of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, conferred with the President on the mounting grievances of Negro servicemen.

"I'll press every button I can press to see that these conditions are cleaned up, that colored Americans in uniform are given equal protection of the law and that the unfortunate problems you speak of are overcome," he told us one day. Some changes did result from our protests and proposals. Certainly the projected Jim Crow rest and rehabilitation centers for returning combat veterans never materialized. That was one victory for which FDR must be given large credit. As soon as it was reported that the Army was planning to establish "separate" hotels in New York and Chicago to accommodate Negro overseas veterans, White, Tobias and I saw the President and urged him to use all of his authority to stop it. FDR instructed General George C. Marshall, then Chief of Staff, that there was to be no segregation in the Army's rehabilitation program, and there was none.

Later, at the request of General Marshall, I visited one of the Army rehabilitation centers in Atlantic City and saw white and Negro GI's billeted together at the same hotels, and getting along wonderfully. I asked one Negro GI how he was getting along. "Everything's just wonderful," he told me.

"You can thank your President," I whispered.

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In her modest Washington office, Mary Bethune carries on activities in half a dozen causes although she works almost full-time as president of the National Council of Negro Women. She is president-emeritus of Bethune-Cookman College.

MY SECRET TALKS *Continued*

When President Roosevelt died suddenly in the little white cottage at the top of Pine Mountain at Warm Springs on the afternoon of April 12, I was in Dallas, Texas. I had gone there to make a speech at Samuel Houston College. Because of the poor state of my health, Dr. James Lowell Hall, my physician, accompanied me on the trip.

It had been a trying day, and I was sitting in the living room of the home of a Dallas friend. Suddenly Dr. Hall burst into the room, his face full of grief. He was visibly agitated.

"I don't want you to excite yourself," he said, "but I have very bad news for you . . . the worst possible news."

"What is it?" I asked fearfully.

"It has just come over the radio that President Roosevelt has died."

I sat, stunned, for ten minutes, saying nothing to anybody. It was hard to realize that he was gone. When the awful reality of the tragedy came home to me, I collected myself and sent a wire to Mrs. Roosevelt at the White House. I told her how I felt at the terrible news and that I was coming to Washington.

I had some difficulty getting a plane back to Washington. All of the planes were booked to capacity. Finally, following the personal intervention of the State Democratic Chairman we were able to get two plane reservations for Dr. Hall and myself. It was a long, sad flight. We arrived in Washington at 9 the following morning. I was immediately informed that arrangements had been made for me to participate in a national radio broadcast consisting of messages from leaders and spokesmen of all walks of life. I was asked to speak for the Negro people.

After the broadcast, I got in touch with the White House and learned that the body of the President was arriving the following day. With a heavy heart I went over to Constitution Avenue early the next day and saw my favorite President return from his last trip. I attended the funeral services held in the East Room of the White House on April 14th and found it impossible to restrain my feelings. I wept openly like a little child. I looked at the flag-draped bier and my mind went back to the time when we first met, and I had moved him to tears by my impassioned plea for my people's rights. I recalled holding his hands and looking into his fine, strong face, and telling him how much the common people depended on him. I remembered all this and many other wonderful little things that he had done for me and for my people.

As I left the East Room I was conscious only of a vast sense of loss that pervaded the democratic world. On that day I felt that something big and fine and brave had dropped out of the world, that we had lost our greatest leader. There were sobs and tears in the East Room that day and all over the world. I felt like I had lost a dear, close relative. And indeed, I had.

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