

SOUTHERN CALLS

PRESIDENTIAL PASSINGS

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PART TWO OF OUR
8-PART SERIES

A Three-Day Journey Home to Hyde Park

THE FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT FUNERAL TRAIN

On April 12, 1945, in his Little White House cottage perched atop the Pine Mountains in Warm Springs, Georgia, President Franklin D. Roosevelt was busy at work reviewing official documents. He sat in a leather chair in front of the fireplace while artist Elizabeth Shoumatoff was sketching the president for a portrait.

Roosevelt said, "I have a terrible headache," and he subsequently collapsed at 1:15 p.m. His valet, Chief Petty Officer Arthur Prettyman, and another aid carried him to his bedroom and placed him on the bed. Without gaining consciousness, at 3:35 p.m., President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the 32nd president of the United States and the only man to win four consecutive presidential elections, was dead, the victim of a cerebral hemorrhage.

A shocked nation grieved as the news quickly spread, with crowds gathering in front of the White House in silence. FDR had earlier requested that there be no state funeral in his honor.

Fred Patterson, owner of H.M. Patterson & Son Funeral Chapel in Atlanta, was notified to come to Warm Springs to prepare Roosevelt's body. The president was dressed in a grayish blue suit with a white shirt and grayish blue tie, and he was placed in a National Seamless Solid Copper Deposit, No. 21200, with a bronze finish and a lined velvet interior.

A special funeral train was assembled for the three-day, 1,050-mile final journey from Warm Springs to Washington, D.C., then on to his home in Hyde Park, New York.



President Franklin D. Roosevelt's funeral train proceeds up the Hudson River at Cold Spring, New York, toward Hyde Park, where FDR will be buried on April 15, 1945.

Photo by Ed Nowak

It was a hot morning with blue skies on April 13, when, at 10:25 a.m., the flag-draped casket was taken from the cottage after a brief service and placed in a Cadillac S&S black limousine hearse. The president's wife, Eleanor Roosevelt, along with her Scottie, Fala, entered the car behind the H.M. Patterson hearse. The cortege, with muffled drums, proceeded past Georgia Hall and paused as 150 to 200 patients stood and wept openly while Chief Petty Officer Graham Jackson played "Going Home" on his accordion. The funeral cortege continued down the road, flanked by friends, mourners and 2,000 paratroopers standing shoulder to shoulder on the way to the tiny train station. The funeral train, 11 cars coupled to a Southern Railway "light Pacific" 4-6-2 steam locomotive, No. 1262, was waiting.

The grief-stricken Mrs. Roosevelt, wearing a black dress, hat and veil, entered the Pullman observation car "Ferdinand Magellan," and sat in the parlor section with family members. Also known as U.S. Car No. 1, it was built in 1928. The bulletproof car, the heaviest passenger rail car ever used in the United States, was lavishly refurbished in 1941.

The last car of the train was the "Conneaut," designated as the casket-viewing car. Built in 1928, it was dark olive in color and dimly lit to illuminate the casket at night.

At 10:55 a.m., eight enlisted men carried the heavy casket from the hearse up the steep incline to the platform. Because the casket was too wide to fit through the steel door, it was handed through an opening created when a window was removed in the lounge section of the car. The casket, flanked by four honor guards, was placed on a small platform, 22 inches high, so it could be seen by the people outside the train.

At 11:13 am, Engineers Allgood and Wofford opened the throttle, released the brakes and sounded the whistle twice, and the steam locomotive began chugging slowly down the track. Picking up speed but not exceeding the mandated 25 mph, it headed north through the throngs of mourners lining the track on the president's final journey home.

As the train rumbled across the country landscape, spewing smoke from its stack, many mourners, including groups of children holding little flags and people standing



Saying Goodbye To FDR - Polio patients watch as hearse carrying remains of President Roosevelt leaves for Warm Springs train depot. Georgia Hall, Warm Springs April 13, 1945



Left: Navy Chief Petty Officer Graham W. Jackson plays "Goin' Home" on the accordion as Franklin D. Roosevelt's body is carried from Warm Springs. Jackson, a celebrated musician who played in numerous command performances in Washington, was a personal friend of President Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. Later, Jackson would build a home in Atlanta which was modeled on Roosevelt's Little White House in Warm Springs.

at road crossings, patiently waited. They stood outside country stores and tiny train depots just to catch a glimpse of the passing train. During the long journey, the light steam engines, No's. 1262, 1337 and 1409, had to be changed out after short distances.

The funeral train made a short stop in Greenville, South Carolina, at 6:30 p.m. on April 13, to change out engine No. 1394 to "the pride of the Southern's locomotive fleet," a massive 4-6-2 steam-powered Southern Crescent Ps-4 class, engine, No.1401. Painted apple green and trimmed out in gold with a polished aluminum nose, rims and drums, it was built by the American Locomotive Company at its Richmond works in 1926.

At each scheduled stop along the way, the town's representative would present a floral wreath of lilies, roses, ferns and a large ribbon to Chief Petty Officer Prettyman. In his Navy dress uniform, he would place the wreaths by the casket. Before arriving in Washington, the casket car was overflowing with floral wreaths.

The funeral train arrived at 9:50 a.m. April 14 at Union Station in Washington and slowly backed down a Railway

Express freight spur before coming to a stop. President Harry Truman, other dignitaries and throngs of mourners were there to meet the solemn funeral train.

The casket was removed from the train by eight uniformed soldiers and carried to a waiting black Army caisson drawn by six white horses. As the funeral cortege made its way down Constitution Avenue, many thousands lined the street in silence; some sobbed as the flag-draped casket rolled by. With the sound of clomping hoofs, the caisson arrived at the White House at 11:14 a.m. and stopped under the white columns of the portico. The casket was ceremonially removed from the caisson by military bearers and carried up the marble steps and through the double front doors. Mortician Walter A. "Monk" Gawler, following behind the casket, proceeded into the East Room, where the casket was placed on a black-draped catafalque.

At 4 p.m., a private, 17-minute Episcopal funeral service was held, with 200 distinguished guests in attendance. Following the service, a highly-polished 1941 black Cadillac Superior hearse, provided by Joseph Gawler's Sons, carried the flag-draped casket. The funeral cortege departed the White House at 9:30 p.m.

to return to Union Station 16 blocks away.

The Southern Railway primary funeral train, comprised of 18 rail cars in total, including the casket car Conneaut, the Roosevelt family in the Ferdinand Magellan and President Truman and family in the Roald Amunden was coupled to a Southern GG-1 steam locomotive. At 10:00 p.m. the fireman checked his water pressure gauges, and the engineer pushed the large reverse gear lever forward the train rolled forward down the track in the rain on its final journey to Hyde Park.

A second train the Congressional with invited mourners followed, leaving Union Station at 11 p.m. and traveling north to Hyde Park.

The funeral train arrived in New York at 3 a.m.; it took four railroad switches and a lot of cooperation between the railroads to move the train slowly around the city.

Many of the buildings in Hyde Park, New York, were draped in black and purple bunting as residents gathered to wait for the arrival of the funeral train carrying the president's mortal remains. Traveling throughout the night, it arrived at 9 a.m. and engineer Potter stopped the funeral train on the Roosevelts' private siding north of Hyde Park station. A short time later, the second Congressional train arrived.

Mortician Ralph Worden of Hyde Park was the funeral director in charge of the interment services. The casket was removed from the train and placed on a black caisson drawn by six brown horses.

The funeral procession, led by Rev. W. George Anthony, proceeded to the Roosevelts' Springwood Estate, where the gravesite was located in the garden, surrounded by 12-foot hemlock hedges and flowers.

The 10 a.m. Episcopal committal service was attended by 300 dignitaries and friends and lasted only 23 minutes. After the service, the dignitaries returned by train to Washington, and the family remained at the family estate.

The Southern Railways steam locomotive, No. 1401, has been on display at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. since the early 1960s.

The "Ferdinand Magellan," which was used by FDR when he was the president of the United States, is currently owned by the Gold Coast Railroad Museum in Miami, where it has been exhibited since 1959.

Members of each military service branch standing guard over the flag covered casket of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in the funeral train carrying his body.

