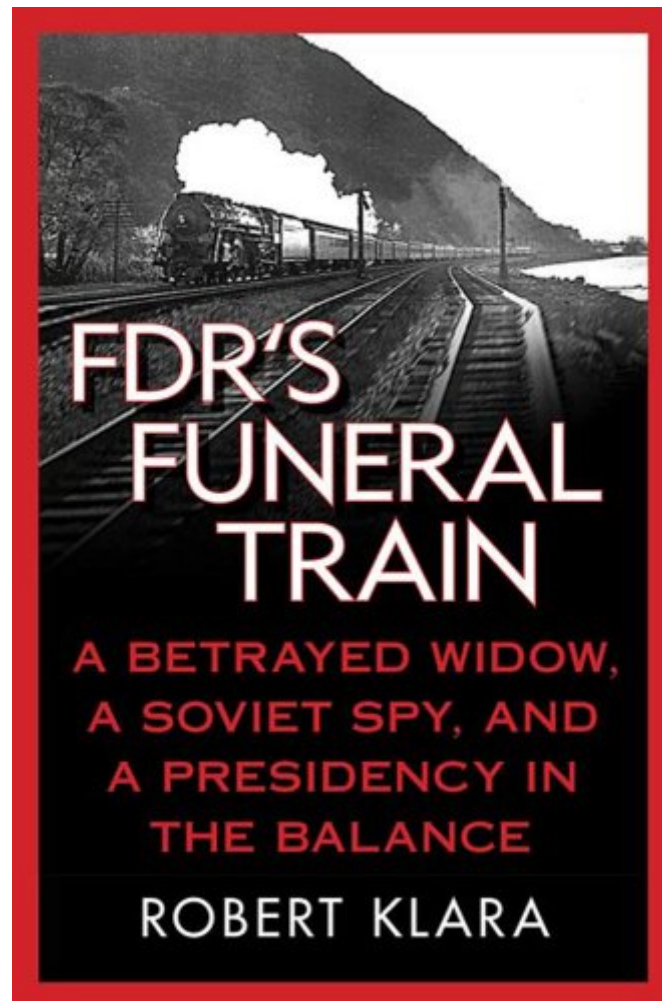


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FDR's Funeral Train: A Betrayed Widow, A Soviet Spy, And A Presidency In The Balance



Synopsis

The April 1945 journey of FDR's funeral train became a thousand-mile odyssey, fraught with heartbreak and scandal. As it passed through the night, few of the grieving onlookers gave thought to what might be happening behind the Pullman shades, where women whispered and men tossed back highballs. Inside was a Soviet spy, a newly widowed Eleanor Roosevelt, who had just discovered that her husband's mistress was in the room with him when he died, all the Supreme Court justices, and incoming president Harry S. Truman who was scrambling to learn secrets FDR had never shared with him. Weaving together information from long-forgotten diaries and declassified Secret Service documents, journalist and historian Robert Klara enters the private world on board that famous train. He chronicles the three days during which the country grieved and despaired as never before, and a new president hammered out the policies that would galvanize a country in mourning and win the Second World War.

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Customer Reviews

Of late, there have been a lot of books written about FDR including a memoir written by his grandson. I have read all of the recent ones and have enjoyed them to varying degrees. However,

by far this is the one that is the standout. Intensively researched, it reconstructs the events leading to FDR's last trip to Warm Springs, GA ('the little White House'), his death, and the two legs of the funeral train that returned his body to his beloved Springwood at Hyde Park, NY. Reading more like a novel than a history, the premise of transporting the fallen president's body for a public funeral and burial was a gargantuan task and one that was mind boggling, dangerous, and probably never should have been undertaken. Even in a pre-9/11 America there was no shortage of security concerns. The country was at war on two fronts and national security was imperative. The game plan was essentially to include all the key players in the government in the massive funeral procession to Hyde Park by train. The security aspects of this undertaking and the logistics involved might well have been enough for one book. However, interwoven within this undertaking is the stuff that elevates this book into a totally different category. The president's widow finds out that FDR died in the company of a former mistress named Lucy Rutherford. Harry Truman becomes president after 3 months as vice president. Completely unprepared for the job, FDR has not shared information with him regarding Stalin or the A-bomb or anything else for that matter. There is the typical political jockeying which occurs when a new president assumes office as another president is buried.

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