



The 32nd president of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, holds a very special place in U.S. history. His memorial, one of the largest and most personal in Washington, D.C., reflects both the events of his times and the respect with which he is remembered. Infected with the crippling disease, polio, Franklin Roosevelt taught himself to use leg braces and a wheelchair. Undaunted, his personal courage and determination led the country out of its most critical years since the American Civil War.

Known by his initials, FDR, Franklin Roosevelt is the only American president to be elected for four terms, serving from 1933 until his death in 1945. He began his first presidency at a time when almost one-third of working Americans had lost their jobs, during a long economic crisis called the Great Depression. Thousands of businesses and farms were ruined, and most banks had closed, losing most families' savings. Just elected, President Roosevelt didn't wait for things to get better. Promising a "new deal for the American people," he created programs that provided immediate relief as well as real jobs. His ideas for relief, recovery, and reform were the engine that drove the country forward again.

While Americans struggled at home, many countries in Europe were at war. Quietly supplying countries with aid, he had tried to keep the United States out of the conflict. When the U.S. military base in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, was attacked in 1941, America entered World War II. Over the next four years, President Roosevelt's strong leadership helped to change the direction, and outcome, of the war. Exhausted, and in failing health, President Roosevelt was elected to his fourth term, but died only three months later.

Roosevelt's memorial features outdoor rooms that represent events from each of his four terms. The rooms are joined by waterfalls and pools that soften the strong, stone and bronze walls. Several bronze sculptures of President Roosevelt, including one in his wheelchair, draw heartfelt attention from visitors. They come to this peaceful place to learn, and to remember, all that he did for his country.

Do You Know?

President Franklin Roosevelt's far-reaching recovery programs built many of the roads, bridges, dams, and national parks that are used today. Some of his critical business reforms insured financial institutions, created fair labor practices and unemployment insurance, and established Social Security for retired workers.

WOWSER!

President Roosevelt was a radio rock star! In the evening, people sat next to the family radio to hear his reassuring voice deliver his "fireside chats."



More people listened to President Roosevelt's "chats" than to entertainment programs!

(inset) © Juan David Ferrando/BigStockPhoto

Discussion questions

1. Name three events that might have affected families during the years of the Great Depression, 1929 to 1940.
2. Why did the United States take part in World War II?
3. What disease caused President Roosevelt to use a wheelchair? There is now a vaccine to prevent this disease— who invented it?



President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1944



THE ROOSEVELT MEMORIAL