

= Louis Howe =

Louis McHenry Howe ( January 14 , 1871 ? April 18 , 1936 ) was an American reporter for the New York Herald best known for acting as an early political advisor to President Franklin D. Roosevelt .

Born to a wealthy family in Indianapolis , Indiana , Howe was a small , sickly , and asthmatic child . The family moved to Saratoga , New York , after serious financial losses , and Howe became a journalist with a small paper that his father purchased . Howe married Grace Hartley and spent the next decade freelancing for the New York Herald and working various jobs . He was assigned to cover the New York state legislature in 1906 , and soon became a political operative for Thomas Mott Osborne , a Democratic opponent of the Tammany Hall political machine .

After Osborne fired Howe in 1909 , Howe attached himself to rising Democratic star Franklin D. Roosevelt , with whom he would work for the rest of his life . Howe oversaw Roosevelt 's campaign for the New York State Senate , worked with him in the Navy Department , and acted as an advisor and campaign manager during Roosevelt 's 1920 vice presidential run . After Roosevelt contracted polio in 1921 , resulting in partial paralysis , Howe became Roosevelt 's public representative , keeping his political career alive during his recovery . He arranged Roosevelt 's 1924 " Happy Warrior " convention speech that returned him to the public eye , and helped to run Roosevelt 's narrowly successful 1928 campaign to become Governor of New York . Howe then spent the next four years laying the groundwork for Roosevelt 's landslide 1932 presidential victory . Named Roosevelt 's secretary , Howe helped the president to shape the early programs of the New Deal , particularly the Civilian Conservation Corps . Howe grew ill shortly after Roosevelt 's election , and died before the end of his first term .

Howe also acted as a political advisor to Franklin 's wife , Eleanor , and he encouraged her to take an active role in politics , introducing her to women 's groups and coaching her in public speaking . Eleanor later called Howe one of the most influential people in her life . Franklin Roosevelt biographer Jean Edward Smith called Howe " a backroom man without equal in Democratic politics " , and Roosevelt publicly credited Howe and James Farley for his first election to the presidency in 1932 .

= = Early life = =

Howe was born in 1871 in Indianapolis , Indiana , to wealthy parents , Eliza and Edward P. Howe , who owned a store and part of a wholesale business . Edward P. Howe , originally from Cincinnati , Ohio , had been a captain with the Union Army in the Civil War and made an unsuccessful run for the Indiana State Senate as a Democrat before Louis ' birth . Louis had two stepsisters , Maria and Cora , from his mother 's previous marriage . Howe was sickly and fragile as a child , suffered from asthma , and was generally kept home by his parents ; he would never grow to more than five feet tall . Fearing to expose Howe to public school , his parents instead enrolled him in an all @-@ girls seminary .

Edward speculated heavily in real estate , and gradually lost the family 's wealth in the depression that followed the Panic of 1873 . When Louis was seven , the family lost their home , moving to Saratoga , New York , with help from Eliza 's family . Edward 's health collapsed , but he nonetheless took a job as a reporter for a Saratoga newspaper , later purchasing a small Democratic paper of his own , The Saratoga Sun . Louis 's health , in contrast , improved during his teenage years , allowing him to leave the house more often and consider attending Yale University . On his way to a cousin 's wedding rehearsal , he suffered a bicycle accident in which he fell into gravel , permanently scarring his face . Ultimately , the dual obstacles of his still @-@ questionable health and finances caused him to abandon his university ambitions and instead take a job with his father 's paper .

In 1896 , he met Grace Hartley , a well @-@ off twenty @-@ year @-@ old who was on vacation with her mother at one of Saratoga 's sanitariums . Though she was initially unimpressed with him , Howe courted her assiduously for two years , and the couple became engaged in 1898 , marrying the following year . The pair had three children , one of whom died in infancy .

= = Journalism and early political career = =

Howe hoped to travel to Cuba to cover the 1898 Spanish ? American War for the New York Herald , but the war ended before he could secure the paper 's approval . Not long after , the Howes ' marriage ran into trouble as the financial difficulties of Howe 's father again threatened the family 's position . Grace 's mother had given the couple a large house for a wedding present , which Louis mortgaged in an attempt to save his father 's newspaper from bankruptcy . The Sun was nonetheless sold , and Louis fired in 1901 , though he soon after successfully begged to return to his job . Louis continued working as a freelancer for the Herald ; one of his most notable stories was to interview Vice President Theodore Roosevelt on his return to Washington , D.C. after the death of President William McKinley . During this period , Grace went to live with her mother , where she gave birth to the couple 's first child , Mary .

In 1903 , after a failed attempt to make a living writing fiction , Howe worked for a time as a manager for a Saratoga country club . In January 1906 , Howe began covering the New York State Legislature in Albany for the Herald . Later that year , Howe was hired by Thomas Mott Osborne , a rich Democrat , as a political operative . Osborne was a member of the " Upstarters " , a group opposed to the influence of the Tammany Hall political machine in New York politics . He employed Howe to oppose the gubernatorial candidacy of William Randolph Hearst , the Democratic nominee , newspaper magnate , and ally of Tammany . Howe and Osborne 's other operatives successfully spread dissent and chaos among the Democratic campaign , and Hearst lost the election to Charles Evans Hughes .

Howe biographer Julie M. Fenster describes the anti @-@ Hearst campaign as a " personal turning point " for Howe , in which he got his first taste of politics , learned the practical mechanics of party organization , and had an opportunity to make news rather than simply reporting it . He pursued a permanent position with Osborne , declining an opportunity to go to Jamaica as a correspondent for the Herald , and was hired in November 1906 . For the next three years , Howe blended his two jobs ? reporter and political operative ? using information from each in service of the other . Osborne intended eventually to run for governor himself . However , he was made a nonviable candidate by his unusual propensity to travel in a variety of disguises and his close friendship with a young handyman , with whom Osborne was rumored to have a homosexual relationship . Howe lost interest in Osborne as a patron and began searching for another upcoming name with whom to associate ; Osborne fired him in 1909 .

= = Assistant to Roosevelt = =

Howe first met Franklin D. Roosevelt when Roosevelt was a freshman New York state senator leading a movement to block Tammany Hall nominee William F. Sheehan from the US Senate . Roosevelt was successful , marking him as the new leader of the anti @-@ Tammany " insurgents " . Howe interviewed Roosevelt for the Herald , and they began to regularly meet to discuss politics , becoming good friends in the process . In 1912 , Roosevelt became ill with typhoid fever during his re @-@ election campaign , and hired Howe to campaign on his behalf . Howe managed the final six weeks of Roosevelt 's campaign , focusing particularly on rural areas that he felt politicians traditionally neglected . His initiatives included a mass mailing to farmers telling them that Roosevelt was likely to become chairman of the Senate Agricultural Committee . In November , Roosevelt was re @-@ elected by a larger margin than in his previous race .

After the election , the administration of President Woodrow Wilson appointed Roosevelt to be Assistant Secretary of the Navy . Roosevelt brought Howe with him as his chief of staff . Though previously ignorant on naval matters , Howe studied diligently and was soon considered an expert . Through patronage positions and the hosting of visiting state officials , Howe and Roosevelt also began to build a national network of Democratic supporters to support an eventual presidential run . Howe also helped Roosevelt make connections with labor leaders by encouraging Roosevelt to personally inspect work conditions and meet with workers . In 1914 , Howe managed a brief

Roosevelt campaign for the US Senate , but Roosevelt was easily defeated by Tammany candidate James W. Gerard in the Democratic primary . Howe appears to have been opposed to Roosevelt 's run for the Senate , feeling that Roosevelt was moving too fast ; Howe described his role as " to provide the toe weights " to slow down the ambitious younger man . In 1918 , the relationship between Howe and Roosevelt became briefly strained when the Roosevelts ' marriage nearly ended over Franklin 's affair with his wife Eleanor 's secretary , Lucy Mercer ; a divorce would have meant the end of Franklin 's political career , and therefore Howe 's as well .

By 1920 , Roosevelt , on Howe 's advice , had made peace with Tammany boss Charles Murphy , and again sought New York state office . In July , however , he was drafted by the Democratic National Convention as the vice presidential nominee on a ticket with Ohio governor James M. Cox . Roosevelt selected Howe as his campaign manager . The Cox ? Roosevelt ticket lost overwhelmingly to Republicans Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge , but both Roosevelt and Howe saw themselves as having successfully built Roosevelt a national reputation ; not long after the election , Howe boasted to several friends that Roosevelt would soon occupy the White House , taking Howe with him .

= = = Roosevelt 's polio = = =

In mid @-@ 1921 , Howe was vacationing with the Roosevelts at Campobello Island when Franklin began to run a high fever and reported paralysis in his legs . A doctor was sent for , and Roosevelt was diagnosed with poliomyelitis . Howe remained by Roosevelt 's bedside throughout the early days of his illness , cheering him up , tending to his needs , and even changing his bedpans . By September of that year , Howe had been formally invited to join the Roosevelt household , and began visiting his own family only on weekends .

In the months that followed , Howe became Roosevelt 's " advance man " . As described by historian Hazel Rowley , Howe " had to boost Franklin 's spirits , help Eleanor in every way possible , be Franklin 's stand @-@ in at work , and keep up Franklin 's political prospects " . Howe emphasized the need for everyone to keep the extent of Roosevelt 's paralysis a secret , setting in motion a campaign of concealment that would last for the rest of Roosevelt 's life . In collaboration with Roosevelt 's secretary Marguerite LeHand , Howe wrote a series of letters to the press , supposedly written by Roosevelt , assuring the public that Roosevelt would not suffer any " permanent effect " from his illness . Howe also encouraged Eleanor to become active in politics herself through women 's suffrage organizations ; to this end , he introduced her to Marion Dickerman , who would become one of Eleanor 's closest friends . Eleanor later titled the chapter of her memoirs about Franklin 's polio and its aftermath , " Louis Howe Takes Charge " .

In 1924 , Howe and Eleanor collaborated to arrange for Franklin to give the speech to nominate New York governor Alfred E. Smith as a presidential candidate at the 1924 Democratic National Convention . Franklin initially felt the idea was too risky , knowing that if he fell down before the convention due to his limited mobility , his political career would be effectively over , but Howe and Eleanor persuaded him to attempt it . When the convention came , Franklin successfully walked to the podium with the aid of crutches and his son James Roosevelt and received an ovation from the crowd . The walk to the podium and Franklin 's speech , in which he famously nicknamed Smith the " Happy Warrior , " has been regarded by later historians as the key moment in Franklin 's political resurgence .

= = = Gubernatorial and presidential elections = = =

After the success of the nomination speech , Howe and Roosevelt planned that the latter would run for Governor of New York in 1932 and President in 1936 . However , Governor Smith was named the Democratic presidential candidate in 1928 , and persuaded the state convention to draft Roosevelt . Howe predicted disaster , feeling that a Republican challenger was sure to beat Roosevelt in what was expected to be nationally a Republican year . Though Howe remained Roosevelt 's unofficial campaign manager , he was technically subordinate to a state campaign

manager selected by Smith , as well as Smith 's personal campaign manager , Belle Moskowitz , with whom Howe frequently clashed . In the fall election , Roosevelt won the governorship by a small margin , though Smith was defeated by Herbert Hoover both nationally and in New York State .

After the election , rather than take a job with Roosevelt 's administration in Albany , Howe remained in New York City to prepare for Roosevelt 's 1932 presidential run . During this period , he worked closely with James Farley , chairman of the New York State Democratic Committee and another devoted Roosevelt supporter . Roosevelt would later publicly credit the pair with being the two men who had done the most to secure his election .

In 1931 , Howe began raising money for the campaign from Democrats like Henry Morgenthau , Sr. and Joseph P. Kennedy as well as recruiting delegates for the 1932 national convention . Roosevelt 's main rival at the convention was Smith , who was seeking his second consecutive nomination . Howe suffered from severe asthma attacks throughout the convention , but remained in telephone contact with Roosevelt ? who was not present , per the custom of the day ? and continued to meet with delegates who were brought to visit him . Roosevelt was nominated by the convention after agreeing to make another rival , John Nance Garner , his vice presidential candidate , and after some of Smith 's Tammany Hall supporters , led by William Gibbs McAdoo , began to defect .

In the election that followed , Roosevelt faced unpopular incumbent Herbert Hoover . The onset of the Great Depression , for which Hoover 's Republicans were widely blamed , meant that Roosevelt 's victory was virtually assured , and in November , he was elected by a landslide .

= = Roosevelt presidency = =

During the administration Howe 's official title was Secretary to the President , a role equivalent to the current White House Chief of Staff posting . After FDR 's inauguration , Howe took up residence in the White House Lincoln Bedroom . Howe described his role in the administration as the president 's " no @-@ man " , checking Roosevelt 's natural enthusiasm and preventing unsound proposals from reaching wider discussion . He was also a strong supporter of the Civilian Conservation Corps , one of the many public works programs of Roosevelt 's " New Deal " . Howe persuaded the Governor of Kentucky to name him an honorary colonel , echoing the name of President Wilson 's famous advisor , Colonel House ; later , Howe printed business cards containing all his nicknames , reading : " Colonel Louis Rasputin Voltaire Talleyrand Simon Legree Howe " .

Howe 's health declined in 1934 , and he was hospitalized for heart problems and breathing difficulties . He spent the last two years of his life in and out of Bethesda Naval Hospital . Though he experienced increasing periods of confusion , he continued to give orders to his staff by telephone ; Roosevelt had instructed them to treat Howe 's calls with courtesy , but to double @-@ check his instructions with himself and other staff . Howe died on April 18 , 1936 . Roosevelt gave him a state funeral three days later in the White House East Room .

= = Influence on Eleanor Roosevelt = =

Eleanor Roosevelt had initially disliked Howe , particularly his chain @-@ smoking , but became friends with him in the course of campaigning . During the long train rides in Franklin 's 1920 vice presidential campaign , Howe encouraged her to become interested in politics herself and coached her in how to talk with reporters . Eleanor later wrote that Howe 's interest during this campaign sparked a major change in her life :

In later years I learned that he had always liked me and thought I was worth educating , and for that reason he made an effort on this trip to get to know me . He did it cleverly . He knew that I was bewildered by some of the things expected of me as a candidate 's wife ... Largely because of Louis ' early interpretation of the standards and ethics of the newspaper business , I came to look with interest and confidence on the writing fraternity ... I did receive an intensive education on this trip , and Louis Howe played a great part in this education from that time on .

In the 1920s , Howe introduced her to representatives of women 's political organizations , with

which she became active , and watched and critiqued her speeches to these groups . The pair even developed a system of hand signals that Howe would use while she spoke to warn her if she was lapsing into a bad habit . He encouraged her to express herself in print as well , and acted for a time as her literary agent .

After Franklin 's 1932 election , Howe told Eleanor that given ten years , he could make her president as well . He encouraged her to break with her predecessors as First Lady and make the role more active and political . In a 1951 magazine article , Eleanor listed Howe as one of the seven people who had most influenced her life .

= = Fictional portrayals = =

Howe was portrayed by Ed Flanders in the 1976 television miniseries *Eleanor and Franklin* , Walter McGinn in *Eleanor and Franklin : The White House Years* the 1977 American made @-@ for @-@ television film and a sequel to *Eleanor and Franklin* ( 1976 ) and by Hume Cronyn in the 1960 movie *Sunrise at Campobello* . David Paymer portrayed Howe in the 2005 movie *Warm Springs* , alongside Kenneth Branagh as Roosevelt .