



## Mrs. Roosevelt's Confidante

*Susan Elia MacNeal*

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## **Mrs. Roosevelt's Confidante Details**

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## From Reader Review Mrs. Roosevelt's Confidante for online ebook

### **Kimberly says**

Another enjoyable installment in the Maggie Hope series. I appreciate the way MacNeal weaves historical events into her plots. It makes her stories so engaging. Looking forward to the next one.

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### **Jaylia3 says**

I always enjoy spending time with Maggie Hope, and the fifth adventure is no exception. In this outing her code-breaking and espionage skills have taken her back across the Atlantic to the US, her childhood home, ostensibly to act as Winston Churchill's secretary while he confers with President Roosevelt in Washington DC. The attack on Pearl Harbor means America has finally joined the fight, but someone is threatening the joint war effort by trying discredit Mrs. Roosevelt with a manufactured scandal, so Maggie is temporarily assigned to the First Lady's staff to make sure nothing jeopardizes the Allied alliance.

I greatly enjoyed the fictional portrayals of FDR and Eleanor, and we finally get to meet the aunt who raised Maggie in Boston, an outspoken women who firmly believes her niece's prodigious intellectual abilities are being wasted in her job as Winston's "secretary", a supposition Maggie is not allowed to correct since she's undercover. Other historical figures in the book include German rocket maker Wernher von Braun and, surprising to me, Walt Disney, who apparently took time away from Mickey Mouse and his cartoon friends to make propaganda films for the US government.

As always the story skillfully weaves multiple plotlines and points of view, which allows readers to keep up with the actions of Maggie's Nazi mother and eccentric genius father back in England. Romance is in the mix, but not the focus, and while this book isn't as dark as some of the early volumes it still addresses serious issues, most notably racism. The series is following the events of WWII closely, so I appreciate the Historical Notes at the end of the book that separate fact from fiction and name the author's sources. I love this series--the books keep me glued to the page and have greatly enhanced my understanding of WWII dynamics.

I read an ebook advanced review copy of this book, supplied to me at no cost by the publisher through NetGalley. Review opinions are mine.

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### **Hilary says**

It's just after Pearl Harbor. Winston Churchill, has gone to Washington to negotiate America's entry into WWII with Franklin Roosevelt, taking some of his staff (amongst them Maggie, Peter and John) with them. For Peter and John, this is their first trip to America, one that is dazzling with non-rationed food, brightly-lit cities with no blackout requirements

Mrs. Roosevelt has her own agenda, one which may inadvertently threaten both the success of the new agreement and FDR's own standing, and Maggie feels a moral obligation to help with the investigation.

(Readers may also enjoy the short-lived return to code-breaking.)

There are lots of little touches, from "Children's Hour" and Churchill's V-signs to the differing German opinions, and some thoughtful questions raised about imperialism, racism, slavery and the death penalty.

I wavered a little when deciding on the star rating, but rounded down because there just seemed to be *too much* in this one. (view spoiler)

Disclaimer: I received a free copy from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Melodie says**

Though this is the 5th book in the Maggie Hope series, it's the first I've read, but won't be the last! I really enjoy books set during WWII. This one suffered a little because there were 3 or 4 sub-stories going on at the same time which caused it to bog down in places, but I really liked Maggie. She comes from quite an unusual background. This is the only book in the series that actually takes place in the US during the time period. The mystery really wasn't much of a mystery, as it was easy to figure out "whodunit", but the book as a whole was a pretty good read.

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### **Jess says**

I want to thank Bantam books and Netgalley for allowing me to read this advanced reader copy for free in exchange of my honest review of this book. It was truly a pleasure and a privilege. I am a purist in reading series. When I was approved to review this; I scrambled to quickly read the prior books in the series. It was a wise decision on my part because MacNeal has a strong backstory full of character development and plot twists that demand the reader read the series in order.

Spy and former (or now current) secretary to Winston Churchill, Maggie Hope finds herself returning to her home country of the United States. Her time in Europe allowed her to grow personally and professionally. The reader finds a Maggie that has dealt (for the most part) with her inner demons and is fully committed to living in the moment. Maggie and John are tentatively working on mending their fractured relationship..but plans go awry when Mr Churchill must journey to the United States to solidify Britain's relationship as allies with the United States in WW2. Pearl Harbor has just rocked the United States' position of semi-neutrality and alliances must be strongly secured.

Socially and politically, the United States is beginning to experience the hummings of social injustice. An African American man is sentenced to die for a crime of self defense. Activist Eleanor Roosevelt is outraged and earns herself the ire of the KKK and other opponents. Her current secretary is found dead in a bathtub with an incriminating note detailing a relationship with the First Lady. Things are not what they seem and it is vital to Britain's survival in this war that nothing bars a secure alliance with the United States. Maggie is charged with handling this debacle. Maggie finds herself with a case, a man from her past, a distant boyfriend, domineering aunt, lost half sister, and supporter of social change. In true plucky Maggie Hope style, she handles everything in stride with a little bit of luck.

One of the benefits of reading this series in rapid succession was that I could really tell an evolution in Susan MacNeal's writing style. Her earlier books were very plot driven and character driven. I still see these

elements in the later books, but she really delves into the historical, political, and social climates of the period in this one. I could really tell she spent a lot of time researching the time period and made a strong effort to craft her story around this. Well done! Can't wait for number six!

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### **Cameran says**

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States has finally joined the war effort. In the entourage of Churchill, Maggie returns to America, where she comes to work closely with Mrs. Roosevelt after the mysterious death of the First Lady's secretary.

I had high hopes for this book since it was to reunite Maggie with Churchill, David and John. But as with its predecessor, there was too much story rather than a centralized focus upon Maggie. Within the story were the days leading up to the scheduled execution of Wendell Cotton, the German's rocket building effort, the building relationship between Churchill and Roosevelt, and a look into Hollywood commissioned propaganda. But where did all of these other stories leave Maggie?

She, once again, was left with a mystery more suited for a novella. Those responsible for the death and their motivations were explicitly stated very early on, therefore there was no suspense here. In truth, this book is best suited for those interested in minute -- as well as often thrown in -- details of the White House's rooms and furnishings during this time.

The end of the story sets up the possibility of the next story being of more interest, since it claims Maggie will receive another mission, but I have begun to grow wary. Every book ends with the promise of more that is never delivered on. Let us get back to Maggie actually working as a spy, as she did in Berlin.

*(I received a copy of the book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. The expected publication date is October 27, 2015.)*

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### **Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says**

*When Winston Churchill travels to Washington D.C to negotiate with President Roosevelt the United States entry into World War II. Special agent Maggie Hope is by his side posing as his typist. But Maggie is soon drawn into the action as she together with the Eleanor Roosevelt discovers the body of an aide to the First Lady. It seems that someone is trying to implicate the First Lady and now Maggie must try to find out who is behind the killing.*

I read the first book in this series not so long ago and it was a good start of the series. I came to like Maggie Hope and her struggle to find her place as an American woman in Britain during the war. Well she was born in Britain, but she grew up in America so her roots may be British, but in Britain she is American. And now she is back home and she is thrilled to be back even though it's a devastating action that has brought them to America. The attack on Pearl Harbor has just occurred and now it seems that America will finally also join the war. Also, a young black man is accused of killing a white man and is sentenced to death and Eleanor Roosevelt is trying to persuade her husband to interfere with it, to persuade the governor to stop it. I found

this part of the story both sad and horrifying as always when a man is not tried fairly by a jury. But this is the 40s America.

Reading this book made me think of something I read or heard somewhere that on the day that Pearl Harbor was attacked Winston Churchill wrote in his diary “we have won”! Because now he knew that America would join the war. Anyway, I was thrilled to be approved for this book since I a) like this series and I'm planning on reading the two between this one and the first and b) I like FDR very much.

Susan Elia MacNeal has done a tremendous good work in writing a novel about the meeting between Roosevelt and Churchill. Also, I came to like Eleanor Roosevelt quite much in this book. There was a moment in the book, a very intense moment when I really was drawn into the story and I wasn't quite sure, but hopeful that it would end well and that was when Maggie traveled to the prison to the execution. This really made me think of “The Green Mile”. The electric chair is truly an awful invention. How it all ended? Well, you have to read it yourself!

*Thanks to Random House and NetGalley for providing me with a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review!*

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### **AH says**

I discovered the Maggie Hope Mysteries about a year ago and while I have yet to go back and read the earlier books, they are all on my to-read ASAP list. This series is great for people who enjoy books set during WWII which include real historical figures.

*Thank you to NetGalley and the publisher for a review copy of this book.*

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### **Mahoghani 23 says**

Maggie Hope comes to America with the Prime Minister posing as his secretary and ends up assisting the first lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, in finding out the truth about her secretary, Blanche Half our.

A story written with at least 5 different narration that brought the story to life and showed insight into each area of the plot. New characters are shady and deserve well their just desserts. A very enjoyable read.

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### **Kris - My Novelesque Life says**

MRS. ROOSEVELT'S CONFIDENT

(Maggie Hope: #5)

Written by Susan Elia MacNeal

2015, 337 Pages

Genre: war, mystery, suspense, espionage

(I received an ARC from the NETGALLEY in exchange for an honest review.)

★★★1/2

Right after Pearl Harbor is bombed, Prime Minister Churchill heads to America to visit President Roosevelt. With him is special agent, Maggie Hope, who is posing as his typist. As the two leaders are negotiating America's entry into the War, the First Lady's aid is mysteriously murdered. As Maggie looks briefly into the case she finds that Eleanor Roosevelt is being implicated into the crime. Now Maggie must up her spy skills - code breaking - and find out who is targeting the Roosevelts.

First, I must say I am always impressed with the cover design of MacNeal's novels. They are just what I would picture from that era. I have been enjoying the series and Maggie's time in the espionage game. I was so excited to see that Maggie was going back to America and hang out with the Roosevelts. I found that the novel at times lagged a bit and it could be the case. I just wasn't that immersed into the plot as I usually am. Yet, I did still enjoy the novel and am looking forward to the book!

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### **The Library Lady says**

The Maggie Hope books have steadily gotten more and more ridiculous.

(Number 4 is less so, and is actually pretty moving as Maggie recovers from a preposterous spy adventure, but she's slipped again here.)

I assume you've read the others if you're reading this, so I'll say that the father-who-really-wasn't-dead, the mother-who-really-wasn't-dead-and-was-an-undercover-Nazi-spy, and the discovered-half-sister-who's-now-a-political-prisoner would be more than enough. But then there's Maggie's Zelig like acquaintance with everyone notable, the gay friend who comes out in a way more 2015 than 1941, and her boyfriends, all of whom seem interchangeable and never hang around.

The plot becomes even more ridiculous here as Maggie heads back to the US, gets tangled up with Eleanor Roosevelt and a murder mystery, and we get a tour of wartime NY/DC, where historic atmosphere is so carefully packed into nearly every sentence that MacNeal could work for a Disney history land.

*I just watched Ken Burns documentary on the Roosevelts, and it has a section on Churchill's visit to the White House, as depicted in this book. MacNeal watched it, and clearly took notes about Winnie's drinking, so why did she leave out a lovely bit about FDR wheeling into the room just as he was getting out of the bathtub?*

All that said, as I've said with others in this series, this is lovely brain candy, and certainly entertaining. So you can do as I did, suspend your disbelief, and hang on for the ride. It's still only 1941, so there's plenty of space for MacNeal to write a lot more books, and I will be reading them, if only to see how much crazier the plots get.

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### **Kathy says**

There is lots going on in Susan Elia MacNeal's fifth Maggie Hope book, but then, it is December 1941, only

weeks after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and the United States has entered this second war to end all wars. Maggie Hope has traveled to Washington, D.C. with Prime Minister Winston Churchill and his two aides, Maggie's close friend David Green and Maggie's old/new boyfriend John Sterling, on a mission to shore up America's support for the war and ensure that President Roosevelt is committed to a campaign in Europe first and foremost. Although Maggie has become a highly skilled spy, she is posing as Churchill's secretary on this trip, a trip that brings her back to the country in which she was raised by her aunt. Born to British parents, whose twisted history has been revealed in previous books, Maggie was spirited out of England as a baby to be raised by an aunt who could give her a stable environment. So, it is with much excitement that this British/American/British young woman embraces the nation's capital.

MacNeal has captured the personalities and machinations of this historic meeting between Roosevelt and Churchill with the aplomb of the proverbial fly on the wall. A meeting of such importance required the social graces as well as the diplomatic skills, and the author brings both the seriousness and the entertainment aspects of the White House during this time brilliantly to life. Diplomacy and social graces were indeed in play together when during the Children's Hour, Roosevelt's cocktail hour, the President and the Prime Minister had quite different ideas about the perfect martini. Descriptions of the interior of the White House reflect the keeping up appearances of the Presidency part of the building as opposed to the family's quarters, where the shabbiness of the previous lean, economic years is evident. Eleanor Roosevelt plays a prominent role in this book (hence, Mrs. Roosevelt's Confidante), and the development of her as an historical character with the grace and dutiful First Lady and as a passionate, compassionate social activist was achieved by carefully distributed dialogue and interactions with Maggie.

The Churchill party has only just arrived when Maggie becomes entrenched in the problems of Mrs. Roosevelt, as it appears someone is trying to drag the First Lady into a scandalous situation involving murder and accusations directed at Eleanor's decency. When the temporary secretary for Mrs. Roosevelt fails to appear for work and Maggie and Mrs. Roosevelt find the young woman dead in the woman's apartment, Maggie knows that not only is the First Lady's reputation at stake, but that a scandal of this proportion would damage the President's effectiveness and efforts to get Americans behind their entrance into the war. Maggie must now use her code-breaking, analytical, and even physical skills of espionage to uncover who is behind the attack on Mrs. Roosevelt. Churchill, realizing the importance of what's at stake, releases Maggie from his schedule to concentrate on Mrs. Roosevelt's and, in essence, America's must-solve problem.

There are other subplots weaving in and out of Maggie's activities. As author MacNeal usually does with great finesse, she brings in fascinating back story, this time the story of the impending execution of a young black man in Virginia. Mrs. Roosevelt is involved in trying to stop the execution, and, thus, Maggie becomes involved in it also. And, as usual, this story, which is based on actual events, connects to the larger story, with the feelings of Southerners in America being a thin line that President Roosevelt must walk in order to keep the South on the side of America's involvement in the war. It's an ugly look at politics, which, unfortunately, isn't a thing of the past today. Maggie's and John's relationship is at a tipping point during this trip, too. Whether or not they can overcome their pasts, which have left deep emotional scarring, is the unspoken question that must be answered. There is a most unexpected character in the book that brings Hollywood into the novel, as Walt Disney is gearing his company to make war-time movies of support for the country.

This novel is so rich with historical matter and allusions that, as a fan of historical fiction, I was thrilled. It is Susan Elia MacNeal's particular genius that blends these fascinating facts with a story of captivating consequence.

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## **Julie says**

Mrs. Roosevelt's Confidante by Susan Elia MacNeal is a 2015 Bantam publication.

With America finally having no choice but to join in WW2, Maggie returns to the States, acting as the prime minister's typist, while he works with the president on a course of action.

But, of course Maggie always manages to find intrigue- this time as a confidante to Mrs. Roosevelt. It seems that one of Eleanor's assistants has failed to show up for work and she is quite concerned. In the process of trying to determine her whereabouts, they make a gruesome discovery. To top it off, it seems someone is trying to create a scandal and first lady's reputation could be at risk.

Maggie also becomes involved in one of Eleanor's causes, in which a black man's life hangs in the balance after he killed a white man in self -defense.

If that weren't enough, Maggie and John seem to be going in two different directions and a new tenseness developed between them and Maggie is waiting to hear word about her sister.

And... We also check in with the infamous Clara Hess.

As always, there is a lot, and I do mean A LOT, going on, which is one reason why these mysteries are so hard to put down. There is never a dull moment, it would seem.

What is so interesting with this installment is the Roosevelt dynamic, which is endlessly fascinating and was so fun to read about in this context.

Despite so much going on in Maggie's life, not only as a special agent, but in her personal life, she has somehow managed to recover her spunky spirit and is more like the Maggie of old, but with a more mature nature. She was the perfect person for Eleanor Roosevelt to confide in and the two worked together nicely.

Of course, it is imperative for Britain to strengthen their relationship with the US and begin building a united force in the war, which is a very important part of this story, as well.

This was one of my favorites in this series thus far. The American setting, Eleanor Roosevelt, the social commentary, and the attention to details makes this one stand out.

No matter what, Maggie always lands on her feet! I can't wait to see what adventures are in store for her in book six!!

4.5

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## **Ed says**

This could have been a great story, but MacNeal fell drastically short. Besides the valid complaints lodged by others, such as a minimal plot that was spelled out early on and got lost amid other story lines, and way too many setting descriptions, there are other glaring problems that are far more important.

The most egregious aspects of this novel are Mrs. MacNeal's twisting of facts, the inability to understand greatness, and her sexist views voiced through Maggie Hope and other women.

For example, yes, FDR and Churchill were just mortal men with flaws, but to belittle them as being like the Wizard of OZ, hence just "little men standing behind the curtain," is not only naive, but also an appalling insult to two of the most crucial men of the 20th century who saved Western civilization from utter ruin. They were not just putting on an illusionary show.

How MacNeal via Maggie could equate a weak, idle charlatan like the Wizard to FDR and Churchill, who both devoted their lives to intense plotting, flying or sailing to precarious destinations, negotiating with a psychopath like Stalin, and overseeing every detail of their immense global counter offensive to conquer the Axis powers, which had been savagely decimating every corner of the world, is inconceivable. And while Maggie does offer a few words of praise for these two great men, they're quickly quashed by degrading digs like this, and others.

It's revealing how most of MacNeal's male characters have flaws or are downright evil, while almost every female is just peachy keen. She calls Eleanor Roosevelt the powerful "matriarch," but that blatantly defies historical fact. Eleanor was passive and had a complete lack of aptitude or interest in rearing her young children, as she said so herself: "It did not come naturally to me to understand little children or to enjoy them," and "Franklin's children were more my mother-in-law's children than they were mine."

Eleanor was a truly great woman in many other respects, worthy of the highest praise, but a powerful matriarch or good mother? No! But, MacNeal twists reality into grossly false and misleading fiction, which is not a good practice when dealing with real-life characters. However, FDR's improper relationship with Lucy Mercer does get told, because he's a man, as does his getting picked up like a child out of his wheelchair, obviously to focus on his frailty in contrast to Eleanor's tall stature. Yet never once does MacNeal tell the reader how strong-willed, tenacious and amazing Franklin was to persevere through physical pain and mental anguish over many years to eventually win the presidency, all the while being an invalid—an astounding first in world history. Meanwhile, Eleanor's story gets deceptively revised to fit MacNeal's feminist agenda of empowering and perfecting her women characters.

Then we have minor characters, like Bea, who ridicules men for making weapons that look like "the almighty penis...guns, tanks, bombs." That explosive joke, however, quickly becomes a dud upon realizing that those brave men always painted beautiful women on their planes and bombs, not macho penises.

Then once again, FDR & Churchill get belittled for happily waging war like little boy soldiers as they eagerly huddle around their maps. The gibe may seem trivial to some who don't get what's going on here, but after being mocked as little inept Wizards from a fairy tale and then as little soldier boys toying with the deadly game of war, it's clear that the seriousness of what those two great men had to contend with wasn't fully comprehended or appreciated by the author or her female characters, and that's not only a shame but, as a patriotic American writing this review the day after Veterans Day, quite distasteful.

It's too bad, because MacNeal did her homework, reading a wealth of excellent sources, worthy of achieving an A+, but by twisting those sources to her own subtle yet biting agenda, she earned a D+. This is not to say that characters in a novel can't be sexist, nasty, or ignorant, naturally some should be. But traits like these

should be voiced by the villains or blockheads of the novel, not its protagonist, whose supposed to have a higher degree of intelligence and tolerance.

So a little respect and compassion from the main character would be expected, but for Maggie Hope, there is no hope...at least not in this novel. My wish for my fellow readers is that I hope Maggie and her female cohorts mature in the next volume to be more enlightened, with compassion and understanding for their male counterparts, that men are not always dumb, childish, hateful or evil, and that no more misleading lies about historical personalities will attempt to pull the wool over your eyes. As for me, count me out, I've seen enough. Good luck!

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### **Debbie says**

4 stars!!

I don't know why, but I just love books about World War II. And this one fit the bill. While it was mostly centered in the U.S. with the meetings between Roosevelt and Churchill. There were also some scenes from England and a couple from Germany. At first, I was a little upset when they had high up German officials in a prison that had every luxury they could want until I figured out they were bugged and trying to get any and all information they could from them. Then I settled down and I was okay with it. HA!

While a lot of this was fiction, some of it was not fiction and some of it was fiction based on non fiction. The author tells you in the back of the book what is real and what is not.

I definitely enjoyed reading this book although I did get confused thinking that Byrd was the dude in the fedora, not Cole, but I figured that out towards the end when the author spelled it out for me. Sometimes I'm a little slow.

However, I was thoroughly entertained and definitely recommend this book. If you into mysteries with a little drama and history, this will certainly be up your alley. There's even a little Hollywood glamour in this and Walt Disney makes an appearance, believe it or not.

Thanks Random House and Net Galley for providing a free e-galley in exchange for an honest review.

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