



American FLOTUS



Lou Henry Hoover, A Woman of Adventure featuring Annette B. Dunlap

Alan Lowe: Welcome to *American FLOTUS*, a podcast produced by a partnership with the *American POTUS* podcast and the First Ladies Association for Research and Education. I'm your host, Alan Lowe. Thanks so much for joining us. I'm very pleased to welcome as our guest in this episode, Annette B. Dunlap. Annette is an independent scholar and journalist and the author of several books, including *Frank: The Story of Frances Folsom Cleveland, America's Youngest First Lady*; *The Gambler's Daughter: A Personal and Social History*; *Charles Gates Dawes: A Life*, and the book we'll discuss today, *A Woman of Adventure: The Life and Times of First Lady Lou Henry Hoover*.

Annette, thanks so much for joining us on *American FLOTUS*.

Annette B. Dunlap: Thank you, Alan. It's a pleasure to be here.

Alan: I really enjoyed the book. Always been interested in learning more about Lou Henry Hoover, and now I feel like I know a lot more about her, thanks to you. Admittedly, I'm skipping over a lot of her early life, and that's kind of a function of podcasts, I'm afraid. But I encourage our listeners to read the book. Let's skip to when she's going to Stanford University, in a time when most universities did not allow female students. At the age of 19, she goes to study geology at Stanford. How did that come to pass?

Annette: Well, Stanford was a relatively new university. It had been founded by Leland Stanford, who was a railroad baron, and it's actually Leland B. Stanford Junior University, because it was named in honor of his son who had passed away at the age of 15. And one of the things both of the Stanfords wanted to do was educate the children of California. They

also were one of the first private institutions to implement co-ed education. So, Stanford was new. It was looking for students. It was groundbreaking in terms of, at that time, there was no tuition. I'm sure people would like to have that same thing today. It was co-educational. Lou had already gotten her teaching certificate from San Jose Normal School. She wasn't able to find the kind of teaching position she wanted. She really had wanted to do banking, which was her father's profession, but that was not a job where women could be employed. She had always had an interest in the outdoors and in science, and she started to listen, go to lectures, which today we would call it continuing education or outreach, and this was Stanford's way of getting its name known and getting its expertise known in the community. So, their geology professor, John C. Brenner, was doing a series of lectures, and Lou started to attend. She got fascinated with it, wrote Brenner and asked, could a woman come and study geology? Brenner said, "absolutely" and so Lou enrolled, and now we know the rest is literally history.

Alan: That's right. And while she's there, she meets Herbert Hoover, known as Bert. What brought them together?

Annette: Bert was in the, what's called the Pioneer Class, which means he was the first entering class to Stanford, and he was a geology major. So even though he is actually about six months younger than Lou, he was a senior when she became an entering freshman, and Brenner introduced the two of them. Though Bert likes to say in his memoir how he was won over by her looks and her charm, and that he thought she would need help in the lab. But truth be told, what he needed help with was to pass freshman English, which he was still trying to pass as a senior. So, I think that help was pretty much mutual, or maybe more on her side than his side.

Alan: Well, there was a love affair there, and they got married, and as soon as they got married, they moved to China for Bert's job as a mining engineer. While there, they had a lot of adventures, including surviving the Boxer Rebellion. Can you tell us that story?

Annette: Well, as you said, Bert actually was already employed by an English firm that had mining interests in China, and he had written Lou. He was in Australia at that time. He wrote Lou and said, "Going to China. Will you go with me?" And she knew that he meant, would you marry me, because they had been carrying on a correspondence, and so she said, yes. So, he took a ship, came back to California, they got married, and then as you've said, they left the very next day to head back to China. Well, China was having a period of unrest. There was an incredible amount of foreign influence in the country. There was a group of people called "the Boxers," which is actually the short name for what their full name represented. But the long story short with it is, they wanted to rid China of its foreign influence. And so, with support from the Empress of China, they began a rebellion and a war. They murdered quite a number of foreigners, including a lot of missionaries. And so, Lou and Bert had the opportunity to leave, but Bert thought that he had loyalty to the people who were employed in the mine and people who had worked for them. So, they stayed, which meant that, ultimately, they had to go to Tianjin, which was where what was called the 'foreign concession' was. So even though there was a lot of foreign influence in China, China was containing where the foreigners could live. And so, Tianjin is one of the places where the foreigners were permitted to live. And so just massive influx of the missionaries and the diplomats and the business people into this small, confined area. So, Bert and the men are patrolling the perimeter. Actually, Lou helped patrol the perimeter, but she also helped with feeding people,

nursing people who may have gotten wounded, helping to take care of children. It was quite a stressful, difficult time and very threatening, because of the chance of being massacred, because they had already heard of and knew of several massacres of foreigners. And so, they, being in that enclave, probably had a lot to do with their survival. Plus, the arrival of forces from a lot of the foreign countries, who knew they had nationals in China, to help defeat the Boxers and enable those who wanted to leave China to depart, which ultimately was the case with the Hoovers.

Alan: One of the many examples in your book of her bravery and determination and grit, really, standing up to that. Really an amazing story. They traveled a lot around the world. Was she able to contribute ever to Bert's engineering work, given her background and her knowledge?

Annette: Yes, she really did make a lot of contributions, which unfortunately doesn't get the attention, and some of that is because of its hidden impact. For example, editing Bert's reports, helping him write his reports up. We do know that when they were in China, that she went down in the mines with him and visited the mines, which was interesting because the Chinese believed that women were evil and that they brought evil spirits with them. So, if she descended into a mine with him, they would then have this elaborate ceremony to chase all the demons out, that she had potentially brought with her when she had gone in the mine. When they went back to Australia, she traveled with him to do work. So yes, her influence was there behind the scenes in the work that he did, in the reports that he wrote, and probably also assistance with the evaluations that he would make of what potential ores or minerals were in the various mines that he was involved with working in. They traveled all over the world: Africa, the Near East, the Middle East, as well as, as I've just mentioned, Australia and China, Southeast Asia. They were in Burma. And this is all to assess mining capabilities and resource identification.

Alan: And they translated a major work during that time together, right?

Annette: Yes. Lou always had this desire to write books, and so she envisioned this project around 1905, to translate a 16th century mining treatise. So, the scientist's name who wrote it in German is Georg Bauer, which translates to Georgius Agricola which, actually, in English is George the farmer. So, he went by his Latin name, and he wrote this mining treatise in Latin. And what this book did was, it looked at ways to smelt metals, to handle mining construction, and also how to do metal refining. And even though it was written in the 16th century -- it was published about 1556 -- those principles were still relevant at the beginning of the 20th century, and from what I understood from my research, actually continue to be relevant. But there were issues with the book. Not only was it written in Latin, but some of the terms that Agricola used were contrived; he made them up. So, you had to be able to read and understand the language, which Lou could do. Then you had to be able to either infer or piece together some of those "not Latin" terms that needed to be explained and needed to be translated. And that's where Bert's expertise would come in because Lou could do the translation and say, well, he's saying this in the context of this particular procedure or this particular process. And Bert then had the expertise to be able to say, okay, he's talking about X, Y, Z, and then they could put that into the book.

Alan: Interesting. So, we know that Bert started making an international name during and after World War I, bringing help and relief to many, many people in Europe. How did Lou

and the organization she helped lead engage with those efforts, or undertake efforts on her own during that time?

Annette: Well, it's kind of interesting, so just a quickie on the history of how World War I started. A lot of foreigners, and especially a lot of Americans, typically summered in Europe. This war broke out very suddenly. You had some diplomatic tensions because of the assassination of the Serbian Archduke and his wife. There were attempts to try to ameliorate those tensions and then, at the end of July, all of the negotiations to settle the matter just fell apart. And so, war was declared, and Germany sided with Serbia. So, you have a lot of Americans who are caught behind the German enemy lines. Then you have Americans who are in France and Belgium that are being, now, rapidly overrun by Germany, so they're fleeing to England. And the other side of this was that the Hamburg America Line was one of the major passenger lines in that time period. So that became a German enemy. In other words, it could no longer dock into England or France because Germany was now at war with those countries. So, you have these people who cannot get their passage home because they were booked on one of these Hamburg America Lines. The banks have all frozen, and all assets are frozen, because how do you do an exchange rate when Germany is now an enemy nation? They are now in the process of overrunning other nations in Western Europe, and so it created a huge problem. And, as I just said, a lot of people are coming to England, and Americans especially, because that's the typical or the natural jumping off point to go back to the United States. And that's now safe, at least for the time being, from German attack. So, Bert is running around with his colleagues looking for ways to be of assistance. Lou, in what is her more steadied, measured manner gets a room in the Savoy Hotel in London, gets some paper and pencil, and has people come in and tell them, what do you need, and she started to look for ways to get them temporary housing. She loaned them money out of her personal funds because she still had access to funds. And then she looked for ways to book passage for them to return home. So that was what she did immediately. Ultimately, what Bert was able to do through the Hoovers' close friend, Edgar Rickard, who had been doing work in Belgium, and he told Bert about how the Belgium people were starting to be starved because they had next to no arable land. The Germans had overrun that country immediately after declaring war. They were massacring people, and then they were also cutting off any trade and any access to foodstuffs. So, with Edgar Rickard and Bert, and some of the other American businessmen these two men knew, they began what was called the Commission for the Relief of Belgium, and Lou will eventually get involved with the women's division of that. But where her focus was, initially, with an organization that she had become president of, and this was the Society of American Women in London, which had been established for quite a while. It was a sororital or female fraternal group of women expats who were living abroad, a way for them to come together. A lot of it was very cultural and educational, but this was now an opportunity for them to do outreach. I will mention that a couple of the members of SAWL -- Society of American Women in London -- were Jennie Jerome, who was Winston Churchill's mother, and Consuelo Vanderbilt, who was one of the Vanderbilt daughters. So, this was a pretty high-end group of people that Lou was involved with. So, they raised funds, and several things they did was: they purchased an ambulance to be able to transport people from the battlefield, they set up a hospital, and they set up two sewing factories for the wives of servicemen who had been drafted and were not there to earn an income. So, they set up these sewing factories so these women could earn a living. They fed them two meals a day. They provided childcare. So, these are all things that Lou is doing. Then when she starts to get involved with Bert's group, she's tied in with the women's division. And in addition to going to the United States to do fundraising for the Commission for the Relief of Belgium, she also engages in a program because the Belgians made very,

very intricate lace, and Belgian lace was very coveted and could also be sold at a very nice price, because Belgian lace is a very complex fabric to make. And so with her network, Lou's network, she was able to find customers for Belgian lace. And this was a way for the lace makers to make lace, use the Americans as a conduit to get it to the United States, get money for that. That money was then converted into purchasing food stuffs that would get shipped over and then get into Belgium. And as long as the United States remained neutral, a neutral nation because we did not enter the war until 1917, the diplomacy had been worked out to make this happen. Once we entered the war in 1917, of course, Bert is appointed Food Administrator in the Wilson administration, and so they finally permanently depart from London, and permanently relocate to the United States.

Alan: Now, post-war, of course, Bert is in Europe helping stave off starvation for millions.

Annette: Right.

Alan: What role does Lou play in that, if any?

Annette: Well, I do know that she has some role in it. It doesn't seem to be particularly clear. Both she and Bert did receive medals from the King and Queen of Belgium for the work that the two of them did together in order to stave off the famine and to enable Belgians to be fed. So, I think more on Lou's part, other than keeping the home fires burning, it would have been her fundraising work that she did. And she did travel, somewhat, with him to post-war Europe, but not to the extent that he did, because Bert was kind of interjecting himself into the peace talks, as well. So, he was involved politically in some other aspects of it that Lou would not have, necessarily, had a role in.

Alan: It seems, at this time, maybe I'm overstating it at this point, but they start living parallel lives in a way. They're running this way and that way. You quote Lou who said, "the joy of life had been stamped out of him" during World War I and all that, the trauma I'm sure that he saw and so many saw. Did that relationship at that point become an unhappy relationship? Did you get that impression?

Annette: I don't know how you can describe that. As you know, Alan, it's always difficult to really look at what goes on in people's marriage. I'll tell the listeners some of the things that started to happen, and maybe just let them draw their own conclusions. One of the things that was really interesting is when I started to do the research on Lou, and I contacted the archivists at the Herbert Hoover Library. I said, well, one of the things I want to do is look at the relationship between Bert and Lou, so I would like to have access to the letters between the two of them. And they said to me, they really did not write each other very much, and before I had a chance to get into the archives, this just was pretty strange. I had done the work on Frances and Grover Cleveland. They had written each other. Charles Dawes and his wife, Caro, had written each other. And so, to be told, well, there really isn't a lot of correspondence between the two of them. If you wanna get to know her, you'll wanna read her correspondence with her son Allan, which turns out to be true. What you start to see is, if they communicate with each other at all, it's with telegram. And Edgar Rickard, who I mentioned earlier as being instrumental in the establishment of the Commission for the Relief of Belgium, becomes the go-between, in terms of communication. He will send Lou telegrams about your husband is doing this; your husband is doing that. And she'll send Edgar

a telegram that'll say, tell Bert or ask Bert. And so they're not talking to each other, they're talking to Edgar, who then is communicating all of this. The other thing is, Lou was ready to kind of put aside all this public work that Bert was doing and get settled in the land that they had purchased in California and build a house. And Bert tells her, just put that on hold because we're gonna be in Washington a while. So, she is being asked to make some decisions and asked to accept a lifestyle which is not her first choice. So, as I said, listeners can infer what they want. Their marriage changed; the level of partnership that had been there during their years of mining together was definitely not there.

And so, as you're suggesting, Bert is pursuing a political career. But I'll point out that a wife is very necessary, at that time, for a man to have a successful political career. So, Lou's got to play some of that supportive wife role. But she's also, at the same time, paralleling with her own interests and her own activities, and if they're at cross purposes or cross scheduling, she works it out. Either she wins that round, or she loses that round, but there was a lot of that going on for the next decade, from '20, well, '20 until they get in the White House, so '29, January '29.

Alan: I think a complex relationship, but most of them are. Later, certainly during his presidency, you see her coming to his defense very vocally. So, it's very interesting, as all parts of this book are. Let's talk about some of those activities of Lou. She stays extraordinarily busy. Of all those, you state that her work with the new Girl Scouts "would represent her life's work in many respects." So how did she become connected with that group, and why was it of such great interest to her?

Annette: So, the Girl Scouts had been founded by a woman by the name of Juliette Gordon Lowe who was from Savannah, Georgia. She started the Scouts with a troop in Savannah in 1912, and she was patterning it off of what she had seen when she had been living in England, with the -- I guess they call it the Boy Scouts in Britain. I can't remember. But we'll say the Boy Scouts, and somebody will write after they listen and tell you what the correct name of that is.

Alan: It's a test for our listeners and I like that.

Annette: Exactly. How much do you know about [unclear], start with scouting. When Lou settles in Washington in 1917, Juliette gets hold of Lou's name and asks her if she would be willing to be one of the district commissioners. And Lou takes a pass on the first year, but the next year she says, okay, but you need to understand I have other responsibilities, I've gotta go to California for my family. She demures a little bit, but at the same time, she's willing to say, yes, I'm willing to go ahead and be one of the district commissioners. Well, once Lou gets into it and sees what Lowe is trying to do, Lou jumps in whole hog, so to speak. Because what Juliette Gordon Lowe was attempting to do was what Lou thought every girl and young woman should be doing, and that is to develop herself, to develop her own identity, to be strong in herself. And Lou was also especially attracted to the fact that a lot of outdoor skills, and what we would call camp craft, were promoted with the Scouts. And as I had mentioned earlier, Lou loved the outdoors. It's why she was attracted to geology. So, the Scouts push an independent thinking woman. And I will say that one of Lou's high school essays was titled "An Independent Girl," and in some ways what the Scouts represented was what Lou had written about when she was a teenager: the idea of being somebody who could think for

herself, stand on her own two feet, and develop her skills, and not have to be dependent on a man. And that was the underlying ethos in scouting.

Alan: So, we saw this dichotomy in their views on government service, perhaps, of her wanting to set up house in California and him saying, no, we're gonna be in this for a while. He becomes Commerce Secretary under President Harding and then Coolidge. How did she fare in that role as wife of the Commerce Secretary?

Annette: She was very popular. She was considered a fashion icon. She was tracked by the newspapers. There are many mentions of her, sometimes just a concert she attended. The cabinet wives, generally, had to do certain things at the behest of the First Lady. Florence Harding was an independent woman in her own right. She and Lou had common interests, in terms of women's independence. They were both openly pro-suffrage. Lou also told Mrs. Harding, I will try to come to as many teas and cabinet wives' meetings that you hold, but you need to understand that I have other responsibilities with Scouts -- because by this point, Lou's gotten on the national board and she's gonna become national president in '22 -- and I need to go back to California. My sons are there, my parents are there, my sister's there. She also had business interests there with her sister that doesn't get talked about, but she really does very well. And in addition to what we've already discussed, she gets involved with a couple other organizations.

She becomes the second vice president of what's called the National Amateur Athletic Federation, which in this day and age of name, image, and likeness for collegiate sports, I believe that Lou is rolling in her grave because the whole idea between the Amateur Athletic Federation was to encourage competitive sports without it becoming professionalized. And so she promoted this very strongly. She headed up the women's division. She also organized a conference, part of the Women's National Committee for Law Enforcement, which was a really fancy term for let's make sure we're enforcing the Volstead Act [the National Prohibition Act] and that we aren't dealing with bootleggers. So, there was a whole conference that she held. Her face is on the cover of *Time Magazine* for holding this conference. This is in 1924. So, she's building her own identity. She's getting recognized for things that she has leadership of her own, but she's also doing supportive things for Bert. A phenomenal amount of energy. It was just amazing all the balls she kept in the air. And she could not have done it without women friends who were willing to help her out.

Alan: They both seem to have boundless energy. Truly, truly amazing. So obviously she becomes First Lady of the United States, and as first lady she invites congressional wife Jesse De Priest to a gathering of congressional wives at the White House. It was very controversial, had some long-term effects. Why was that so controversial, and what long-term impact do you believe it might have had?

Annette: So, if my memory serves me correctly, and again, if I mess up, you'll get another communication. I think the last Black member of Congress after Reconstruction served until 1901. So, Oscar De Priest, who represents the south side of Chicago, is elected in '28, the same year that Bert's elected to the presidency. It was always the custom of the first lady to host a tea for, at that time, it would've been all the wives of the members of Congress because there were no women serving at that point, and typically, what the First Lady had done was to have all of the Senatorial wives and all the House of Representative wives come to one event. Well, Washington, DC, was a segregated town. Jim Crow was in force. Oscar De Priest is

facing a lot of resistance when he arrives in Washington. Members of the Southern delegations have told Nicholas Longworth, who was Teddy Roosevelt's son-in-law and was Speaker of the House. They have told Longworth, do not seat us next to him. Do not put his office next to ours. The prejudice was very, very strong. The way Longworth got around it was, instead of calling up each delegation by state, which is what he had typically done to swear in the House members, he called everybody up at one time. So, if they didn't wanna be near Oscar De Priest, they could just pass on being sworn in as members of the House. So it was a nice little runaround. But then you've got Lou who's gotta decide, well, what am I gonna do about Mrs. De Priest, because she deserves to be honored in the same way as all the other congressional spouses. So, with the help of Bert's office, she decides that instead of having this one large event, she will host a series of small events and does the invitations in alphabetical order.

The brilliance behind that is: let's say your first event is last names A through E, okay. The people whose names fit in the A through E category run down this list of invitees, and they see there's no De Priest. So, they figure, oh, well, Mrs. Hoover is going to ostracize Mrs. De Priest. And the First Lady was considered the social leader of Washington, so it's a big deal. It's not just not getting an invitation. It's like not getting an invitation. But what Lou did was, she holds the series of teas, runs through the alphabet, and the last tea's June 5th, and that same day she has an invitation written and hand delivered to Mrs. De Priest, inviting her to tea on the 12th of June.

Lou also had some other congressional wives who she knew did not hold this same prejudice. She had her sister there; she had a couple of other close friends there. She hosts this tea with Mrs. De Priest as the guest. And, of course, the papers get wind of it and they publish it, and then all hell breaks loose. So, in the short term, to get to your question about the repercussions. So, there's short term and then longer term. The short-term repercussions are part of the way that Bert had been able to win the presidency, was he had put together a southern coalition. The South had been solidly Democratic, but your listeners may remember that Bert's opponent in the '28 election was Al Smith from New York, and Al Smith was a Catholic. And in addition to there being anti-Black prejudice, there was anti-Catholic prejudice. And also, Smith was hinting that he would look for repeal of the Volstead Act, and the jury was still a little bit out, in terms of what to do about Prohibition. So, Bert builds this Southern coalition and gets sufficient Republican votes to help him win that election. Well, the Southerners feel betrayed. Southern legislators condemn Mrs. Hoover. This goes on for the entire summer. Part of the reason why it doesn't die down is DePriest, himself. He uses this uproar to do more fundraising for the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People]. So, DePriest is out there keeping the issue alive, which means that the Southern newspapers are going to keep it alive. Well, so, you ask, where are the longer-term repercussions. In my assessment, in my read of history, so just underlining this is one person's opinion. You had a number of Southerners who chaired various committees in Congress. And where, I think, we really started to see the issue of this De Priest incident metastasize, if you will, is when the Depression hits and Bert tries to get various types of legislation through Congress, and these Southern committee chairs are stalling and not allowing this legislation to go through. Some of that is backlash from the invitation of Mrs. DePriest. Some of it is because Bert just wasn't a good politician, but it does have its place in impacting it. And I would also point out that quite a number of the recommendations that Bert made as president were found in FDR's 100 Days legislation. So, Bert was not necessarily coming out with outlandish ideas. It's just the politics of the time

were not gonna give him these victories, in spite of how much the American people were suffering.

Alan: I was curious, did she talk to Bert before making that invitation? Did he know that was happening?

Annette: Yes, there is very clear correspondence between Lou and Bert's office. Yes. In fact, the way Lou started out with it was to write a memo to Bert and to his aide asking what could be done about Mrs. De Priest and inviting her to the White House, because she deserved to be honored and recognized the same as all the other congressional wives.

Alan: Turning to another topic. Lou, like several of our first ladies, placed an emphasis on the history and preservation of the White House. So, can you tell us some of the projects she championed there, and why is she not more remembered for what she accomplished?

Annette: Well, you've picked on one of my big pet peeves: that she's not. So, as you've said, Lou took a very great interest in the items that were in the White House and using her own money, she hired a photographer to photograph every single item: every chandelier, every statue, every painting, anything that represented the history of the White House. She had it documented and then she paid one of her secretaries, Dare Stark McMullen, to research the provenance, and so this whole book was put together. Lou had arranged for a publisher. My understanding of what happened was that either the publisher did a pre-release of the book; but what I think actually occurred was Lou may have been interviewed for an art magazine article with the understanding that it would not be published until the book came out; and the magazine publisher jumped the gun, and the article with some of the photographs was published before the book got published. The publisher felt that the contract that he had with Mrs. Hoover for the publication had been breached and, therefore, the book did not get published.

I also think that there were some issues probably tied to the Hoovers were kind of pariahs, at that point, and there may have been a concern on the part of other potential publishers about whether or not a book with Mrs. Hoover's name on it would sell. So, it's really unfortunate. My understanding is there's been some efforts on the part of the Hoover Museum to get this document published, which would be a great addition to the work that we've got about the different items that are in the White House. The other thing that Mrs. Hoover did was to pay for a reproduction of the Monroe Desk. It was a desk that the Monroes had brought back from France, which was in possession of the Monroe descendants. They were kind enough to loan this desk to an artisan who recrafted it to be placed in the White House, and Lou paid for all that with her own money; this was not public funds.

Alan: You noted one of the issues with the publishers is that, by that point the Depression had hit, and the president was taking a lot of the blame for what the country was facing. What were Lou's views on that Great Depression and how Bert was trying to address those ills of the nation?

Annette: And here's where we go to, as the archivist had told me, you kind of get a sense of what's going on with Lou when you look at her correspondence with her son Allan, because this is where she is opening up about what she thinks is happening. And the sense that I got

from looking at that correspondence was pretty much what I had shared a few minutes ago, and that is that Congress was just stalling. Carter Glass was a Democratic senator from Virginia, and he was in charge, if my memory serves me correctly, with the Senate Finance Committee. And it was like he took, well, of course, I'm kind of paraphrasing stuff we wrote, but it was like he took an unnatural sense of satisfaction in just blocking some of Bert's recommendations for legislation to help alleviate the problems with the country. So, Lou was very upset with the press they were getting, with the treatment they were getting in Congress, and just very, very unhappy, on the whole, with how the public was perceiving them, as if they were not caring, when they cared very much.

Alan: You mentioned the press. Part of the problem was their great dislike with the press. They did not engage with them. How do you think that affected their short-term ability to do things and their long-term legacy?

Annette: So, you've got a two-pronged thing there. With Lou, she never met with any women journalists, and they actually complained about that toward what became the end of the Hoover presidency. Of course, when the complaint came in, nobody knew they'd only be in there about another year or so. Bert had a press secretary who kept begging him to let his more human side be shown and he refused to do it. Because Bert, having been an orphan, used to have children come to the White House and talk to them and spend time with them. His press secretary thought it would be a great way to humanize Bert and to gain more public sympathy for Bert and what Bert was trying to do. Bert refused to let that be known publicly. Lou had pretty much abandoned any knowledgeable or experienced social secretary or press secretary. She was sort of her own secretary, so she hated the press for the way that they were representing Bert. So, you've got both sides pushing the two of them to open up, let their human side be more publicly known, and they're both pushing back against it. I think the tell, in retrospect of the damage that it did, can be seen by how their successors, Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt utilized the press to great, great advantage. Eleanor would have press conferences with women journalists only. In spite of FDR's physical limitations, he would speak to the press and engage with them and use media, and Eleanor would use media. And even though Lou did use media, she would get on the radio, she would talk to the nation. But the fact that the press has got to be pampered, if you will, or maybe another way for me to put it is, like I heard from one public relations professional one time: the press is a beast and the beast has to be fed. And if you do not feed them what you want them to eat, they will find their own meal, and you might not like what it is. And that's a lot of what was going on with the Hoovers.

Alan: They were both such brilliant people. I kept wondering, as you described that, why they didn't recognize that.

Annette: Well, you know, every single one of us has got our shortsightedness. And you know, to your point, the unfortunate thing about that is, even if just one of them had had a different view to discuss with the other, it might have worked out differently. But the fact that you've got both of them sharing that opinion really is kind of the nail in the political coffin, if you will.

Alan: And it didn't help them then. It certainly didn't help their long-term legacy either.

Annette: No. Bert pretty quickly tries to redeem himself. Bert had a lot of friends and supporters who would've absolutely loved if he had been willing to challenge Roosevelt in '36. They despised what Roosevelt was doing and thought that Roosevelt was leading the country towards socialism. And Bert thought that's what Roosevelt was doing, and he wrote a book about it that came out, I wanna say '34, '35. Again, Lou was the editor. She sent out what, today, we would call advanced copies, to get feedback from women friends of hers who were still more politically active and get their feedback on it, and also get support for readership. Bert wanted to stay engaged. And back to your differences in what they wanted to do. When they leave the White House, Lou goes to California to this house she's finally built. Bert goes to New York to an apartment he's leased in the Waldorf Astoria, and they have this, I guess you can call it, transnational partnership, until she closes up the house and goes to New York, because she recognizes she's probably dying.

Alan: Well, a really fascinating story, an important and fascinating first lady. Really enjoyed *A Woman of Adventure: The Life and Times of First Lady Lou Henry Hoover*.

Annette: Thank you.

Alan: What's next for you?

Annette: I have just been really fortunate to have just finished teaching an Osher Lifelong Learning Institute course on first ladies at North Carolina State University, which has just been a tremendous opportunity, and I am working on another book. I do have a book contract. I'm just playing that close to the vest for right now, but if I can stick to my timeline the publisher will have it by the end of this year. And then, provided the people that will read it and pass judgment on it to say, "yes, publish it," will be positive, and we'll have something out hopefully, maybe, by late '27, early '28.

Alan: Wonderful. Well, you know, we'd love to have you back on *American FLOTUS*. Thank you so much for joining us today.

Annette: Thank you. This has been great. I appreciate it, Alan.

Alan: I wanna thank all of our listeners, too. To hear more episodes of *American FLOTUS*, please go to flare-net.org, or Americanpotus.org, or to your favorite podcast platform. Thanks for tuning in. I'll see you next time on *American FLOTUS*.