

# The Magnificent Lives of Marjorie Post

by Allison Pataki

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## About the Book

*Mrs. Post, the President and First Lady are here to see you....* So begins another average evening for Marjorie Merriweather Post. Presidents have come and gone, but she has hosted them all. Growing up in the modest farmlands of Battle Creek, Michigan, Marjorie was inspired by a few simple rules: always think for yourself, never take success for granted and work hard --- even when deemed American royalty, even while covered in imperial diamonds. Marjorie had an insatiable drive to live and love and to give more than she got. From crawling through Moscow warehouses to rescue the Tsar's treasures to outrunning the Nazis in London, from serving the homeless of the Great Depression to entertaining Roosevelts, Kennedys and Hollywood's biggest stars, Marjorie Merriweather Post lived an epic life few could imagine.

Marjorie's journey began gluing cereal boxes in her father's barn as a young girl. No one could have predicted that C. W. Post's Cereal Company would grow into the General Foods empire and reshape the American way of life, with Marjorie as its heiress and leading lady. Not content to stay in her prescribed roles of high-society wife, mother and hostess, Marjorie dared to demand more, making history in the process. Before turning 30, she amassed millions, becoming the wealthiest woman in the United States. But it was her life-force, advocacy, passion and adventurous spirit that led to her stunning legacy.

And yet Marjorie's story, though full of beauty and grandeur, set in the palatial homes she built such as Mar-a-Lago, was equally marked by challenge and tumult. A wife four times over, Marjorie sought her happily-ever-after with the blue-blooded party boy who could not outrun his demons, the charismatic financier whose charm turned to betrayal, the international diplomat with a dark side, and the bon vivant whose shocking secrets would shake Marjorie and all of society. Marjorie did everything on a grand scale, especially when it came to love.

Bestselling and acclaimed author Allison Pataki has crafted an intimate portrait of a larger-than-life woman, a powerful story of one woman falling in love with her own voice and embracing her own power while shaping history in the

process.

## Discussion Guide

1. What was your first impression of Marjorie Merriweather Post? How did that impression change throughout the course of the novel? How did Marjorie change during her lifetime?
2. Marjorie Post had many roles in life: daughter, wife and mother, businesswoman, philanthropist, press target, press darling, hostess, collector, diplomat, style icon, etc. Which was your favorite side of her? Which do you think meant the most to her?
3. A wife four times over, Marjorie sought her happily-ever-after with four radically different men. How did each marriage shape her identity? In the end, do you think she found her ultimate happily-ever-after?
4. Love, family and feminism are all major themes in the novel. What other overarching ideas did you notice? What did you take away from reading the book overall?
5. Had you heard of Marjorie Post before? What did you learn about her historical significance from this book? Are there ways you think Marjorie's legacy has shaped your life today?
6. *THE MAGNIFICENT LIVES OF MARJORIE POST* is written from a first-person point of view. Did that help you connect to Marjorie as a character? How might the book be different if written from a different perspective?
7. In her note at the back of the book, Allison Pataki says that her job as a writer of historical fiction is to "gather up and absorb many different details and facts and then attempt to get at the emotional truths that reside therein." What emotional truths did you experience while reading?
8. What other great women in history did Marjorie remind you of?
9. Pataki writes that Marjorie's was "A life made ever richer by curiosity and generosity. A life in which I spent gladly of the riches of my heart. A life that has been a truly beautiful thing." (p. 531) What does living life to the fullest mean to you?
10. How does *THE MAGNIFICENT LIVES OF MARJORIE POST* compare to Pataki's other historical fiction, such as *THE QUEEN'S FORTUNE* or *SISI*?

## Author Bio

Allison Pataki is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *THE TRAITOR'S WIFE*, *THE ACCIDENTAL EMPRESS*, *SISI*, *THE QUEEN'S FORTUNE*, *THE MAGNIFICENT LIVES OF MARJORIE POST* and *FINDING MARGARET*

FULLER, as well as the memoir BEAUTY IN THE BROKEN PLACES. Her novels have been translated into more than 20 languages.

A former news writer and producer, Pataki has written for *The New York Times*, *USA Today* and other outlets. She has appeared on "Today," "Good Morning America," "Good Day New York" and MSNBC's "Morning Joe." Allison Pataki graduated cum laude from Yale University and lives in New York with her husband and family.

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