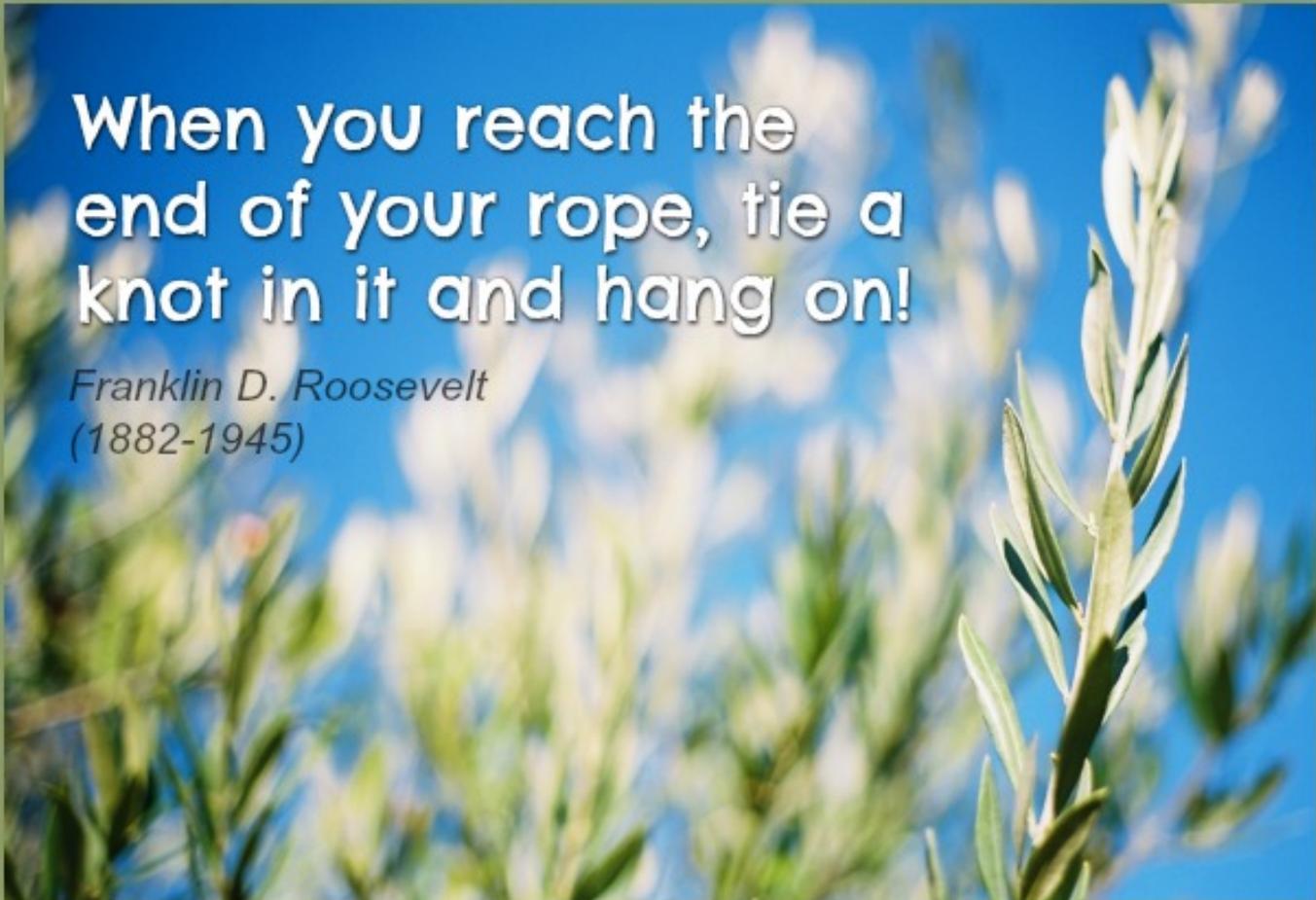


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When you reach the  
end of your rope, tie a  
knot in it and hang on!

*Franklin D. Roosevelt*  
(1882-1945)

## TAKE CARE OF THIS HOUSE

There are a lot of topics I could be writing about. The seeds that will be next summer's stars in the garden and the food pantry have just begun to sprout their green wings. Two days ago was the 27th anniversary of the founding of Casa Speranta ("House of Hope") in Romania for children with AIDS — perhaps the greatest example of an impossible dream of mine that came into reality through the help of a lot of friends. The young people who were, and still are, part of our lives at Starcross are doing amazing things. My grandson, Damien, is becoming quite the little farmer as he approaches his fifth birthday.

The new edition of our *The Tao: The Sacred Way* will be released in a few days. We just celebrated the feast-day of St. Anthony, an ancient desert monk who was perhaps the major example for contemplative life in the West. These are all pleasant topics.



The last thing I want to write about, or I suspect you want to read about, is affairs of state. But it is necessary. There is a poison in our land. It's something none of us want to look at but none of us should avoid.



I literally grew up during the long presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He was first inaugurated in 1933 as I had just turned two, then died in 1945 when I was 14. I can clearly recall exactly where I was when I learned of his death. My sense of what a President should be was developed in those years between the Depression and World War II — and I suspect that image will always stay with me.

As the years went on, I learned that FDR had faults like any other human. Some of the things I admired really came from the persistence of his remarkable wife Eleanor. But FDR set a high bar for personal integrity and promoting the good of the people. He was like an Old Testament prophet or an Oriental sage. We had a portrait of him in the house amongst my mother's saints.



I had a hard time adjusting to the election of Bill Clinton (1946– ). It was nothing personal about him. It was honestly because he was the first president who was younger than I was! Oh, I have voted with enthusiasm, especially for two of the

people in recent times but somehow even with these good candidates it seemed like something was missing. I think it has to do with character, and that is a virtue that is very hard to define. If you trace the word back to its ancient origins it seems to mean something that is engraved on the soul. I don't think that is a concept found in many election campaigns these days.

I found some solace recently in an unusual place.



A few years back, Leonard Bernstein and Alan Jay Lerner produced a musical entitled, *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*, which is the official address of The White House. One of the songs in the musical is called, TAKE CARE OF THIS HOUSE. When I recently discovered it, I found there are some things in the lyrics worth pondering. This is how the last verse goes:

*Be careful at night  
check all the doors,  
if someone makes off with a dream*

*the dream will be yours.  
TAKE CARE OF THIS HOUSE  
be always on call,  
for this house is the home of us  
all.*

Someplace along the line we forgot that The White House was the depository for all of our dreams about being Americans — about being responsible inhabitants of this planet.

The song says, “*Take Care Of This House.*” Well, it seems to me we haven't taken care of it. Furthermore, our dreams have been stolen. Now comes the hard part. What do we do about it? All sorts of suggestions are being made up to and including revolution and secession. I think we should start with little steps.



There is nothing more valuable than our dreams. If someone breaks into our house and steals our valuables, the first thing we do is make a list of what has been stolen so that we can give it to the police and the insurance company. I think we ought to do the same thing when we feel that our dreams have been taken away from our common home at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. What are those stolen dreams?

Defining dreams is a hard task, isn't it? But I agree with those who



believe we take the first stride in change by clarifying what it is we want from this country and all the various governments it contains.

A while back, *The Washington Post* asked a poignant question about the

immigration policy of the person currently claiming sole possession of The White House — *IS THIS WHO WE ARE?* I think we have to now follow up with another question — *WHO DO WE WANT TO BE?* and find ways of working together to make those dreams become realities.

It begins with little steps, not just in that house on Pennsylvania Avenue, but in every home, office, public agency, school, church, coffee shop and kitchen table in this nation.

And it has to begin now!

## ***Brother Toby***

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