

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

February 6, 1951

Description: In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's question about universal military training for women. In the interview segment, ER discuss with Musician's Emergency Fund and the Veterans Music Service with Mrs. Lytle Hull.

Participants: ER, Elliott Roosevelt, Mrs. Lytle Hull

(0:05)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] In the mail today, Mother, we have a letter from Mrs. Brown of New Britain, Connecticut, which reads as follows: "This noon, I was shocked to hear you tell Miss [Elizabeth?] Penrose that you had been considering the idea of universal military training for girls as well as boys." She didn't say military - that was my injection. It actually was universal training for girls as well as boys. "Don't you think that that would lead to undesirable regimentation? I question the value of military training for boys, in fact, I believe it is harmful. It is frightening to me to see how rapidly our people are taking on the ways of Germany and Russia - the kind of restrictions, the patterns, and thinking, which formerly, our countrymen so deplored. I was the more impressed because you have insisted upon the dignity, the worth, of the individual."

[ER:] I don't think that the dignity and worth of the individual is incompatible with the willingness as a young man and to take military training. I did not suggest, however, uh that the girls should take military training. As a matter of fact, however, today, if war comes uh girls serve in the armed forces as well as boys.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Actually, our armed forces will be approximately, ten percent, will be women in the armed forces.

[ER:] And, so that it might be that um girls might get some training for those services which they would perform. I'm hopeful, however, that uh while at present, and as long as force still is um a deciding factor in world affairs uh we will have to prepare for possible war in the interest of preserving the peace um. But I am hopeful that the day will come when possibly, we will still have uh force, but it will be a collective force within the United Nations. Um even for that, our young people should uh get preparation. And from my point of view, I'm not much afraid of the regimentation of our people. After all, the French, who've had um universal military training for many years, look upon it as a force to improve their democracy because um young people of all groups are thrown together. And um I don't think you can say that the French have been regimented, even though they have served in [Elliott Roosevelt laughs] universal military training. And I think that regimentation is the result of the type of people that you try to regiment that lend themselves to that and I hardly think we will. And, my own idea was largely uh to awaken in women, as well as in men, since now they have equal responsibility, a sense of responsibility to the nation in which they live. And I see no reason why a woman should not accept that responsibility just as a man does. And I do not see why a woman could not usefully do um training in services in her community, as many of the services which are now Red Cross services, she might train in the Red Cross. But it would not be done just um as a voluntary thing, but because she had to do it. And -- (4:14)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] And wouldn't it be very helpful if uh in our civilian defense set-up uh [ER: Right this minute] uh we had a registration of all non-combatant personnel? Uh --

[ER:] Well of course we will have for civilian defense, finally, everybody from uh young to-- [Elliott Roosevelt: Cradle to the grave] yes, will be uh registered and have a job and I think that it's quite compatible with freedom uh that you should willingly give service and I do not think that it means um excessive regimentation.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, I- I'm quite interested uh because she uh has brought out the fact that uh formally our countrymen deplored this kind of thing uh and I think you have to go all the way back to the Revolution and realize that uh in winning our freedom-- our freedom was not won by uh just the armies, but it was won by the entire population taking part and doing each, in their own way, what they were best equipped to do to help win that war.

[ER:] That's quite true, but today, war is a very different thing, and those who are not trained uh run a far less good chance of survival. So from the point of view of um uh actual preservation of life uh universal military service today is um probably a safeguard in that way. Eh uh, I remember very well how uh getting a letter at the very beginning of the last war um uh complaining bitterly because a boy-- it was a mother, of course, very sad-- because her boy was being subjected to such horrible training, sitting in uh a swamp in Louisiana for hours and getting cold and miserable. And I had to write back and say that I had confidence that the army didn't make him sit in a swamp for nothing, that there must be a reason. [Elliott Roosevelt laughs] But I didn't know what the reason was so I couldn't say. Finally, I went to Australia in the summer of '43 and I saw some of the final training under actual war conditions and I realized very well why he sat in a swamp because some of the boys out there told me, "we have to learn to sit so still that the leaves won't move that are covering us because if they move, we're dead instead of the Jap." [Elliott Roosevelt: mhm] And uh that taught me what the reason was for learning to sit in a swamp. [ER laughs] And I uh could have answered the letter much better then, but in the way I did, what I really had not had the experience and not had the actual contact with what that training was preparatory to safeguarding you um for doing. Now, I- I feel the same way now about universal military training. I've always hoped that a time would come when we didn't have to resort to force, but until that time comes, I think we better be as well-trained to safeguard as many lives as possible.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes and I think, probably uh the sooner that our people as a whole uh realize that uh in the next war uh it is quite [ER: If we have one] likely -- if we have one.

[ER:] I hope-- I hope that what we are preparing for is to prevent the next war.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, I hope so too. But also, the people should be prepared that, for the eventuality of war, and uh the people of this country have never experienced modern warfare. They don't know what it is to have bombs dropped on them and we must be prepared to avoid the panic that comes with-- when you're subjected the first time to modern war.

[ER:] Yes, I can remember, having Jimmy [James Roosevelt] tell me the-- when he went on that first trip um [Elliott Roosevelt: Makin Island Raid] to find out what things, that the thing that he found in Northern Africa, because he spent a little time with some of the Australian troops, I think, that were there uh the thing he found that got on the mens' nerves more than anything else was the noise of an aerial attack. [Elliott Roosevelt: mhm] That they wanted to jump up and y-shriek even though they knew that would mean death [Elliott Roosevelt: mhm], probably. A- and, he wrote back from then and told me that he thought our people should be prepared for the noise ahead of time, so as not to have panic seize upon them as individuals. And I never understood that very well until I actually heard an air attack and then I understood.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mhm. Well, I think that this pretty well answers the uh question that this lady has brought up uh but I do know that there are many people who do have a profound feeling against the, the

preparation for war, that they feel a passive resistance is the best answer. Uh for instance, your uh Quakers in this country have a very strong feeling about the [ER: Oh yes] bearing of arms. [ER: I know it well] So, there are people who don't feel that uh there is any point in even preparing. They feel a passive resistance is the answer. Uh I am afraid that the majority of the American people don't believe in that as yet though themselves.

(Break 10:10-10:18)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Rehabilitation of hospitalized veterans through music is proving of tremendous value, and with us today is a lady who has devoted her entire time to this worthwhile project. Mother, would you take over at this point in order to introduce to our audience uh Mrs. Lytle Hull.

[ER:] I'm very happy to have my old friend, Mrs. Hull, with us today. [ER laughs] And uh I know uh that we're going to have a very interesting talk.

[Lytle Hull:] Thank you so much for letting me be on the program.

[ER:] Well, now um I know that music and the service it can render, has been one of your prime interests and before you tell us about the Hospitalized Veterans Music Service, I would like you to tell our listeners about the founding of the Musician's Emergency Fund, of which you are president.

[Lytle Hull] Oh, I'd love to um as briefly as possible. The Musician's Emergency Fund was founded nearly twenty years ago by a group of very famous musicians in this city, among them Lucrezia Bori, and Alma Gluck, and Yolanda Irion, just to name a few. Um at that moment was the so-called Great Depression and many uh musicians found themselves out of work. So uh a large sum of money was raised and um the organization began giving only relief to uh musicians who needed such. But later, we came to find that, really, what was necessary was employment. And we really became a big employment agency, I would say, and provided work for uh talented, and, musicians. In other words, if we didn't know of their reputation already in the music world, they always had to give an audition. And if they were proved, A-- gave an A audition, we tried to provide work for them and in the years that have gone by, we have provided over three million dollars' worth of work for musicians. I mean it, they have earned themselves. [ER: They have earned it] They have earned for themselves, yes. (12:32)

[ER:] But you have found the uh openings -- [ER and Lytle Hull overlap]

[Lytle Hull:] We found the work and the openings for them, and of course, if they are older or ill uh of course, we provide the necessary relief.

[ER:] You do provide care for them and- and- and [Lytle Hull: Yes, we do] relief?

[Lytle Hull:] And I think we're the only organization, certainly in this country, that does it on such a big scale.

[ER:] Well, I- I have always thought that that was one of the most valuable things and um I have always admired very much what you have done in that line. [Lytle Hull: Well, thank you and -] I think, also, that, we-- all of us, know how much you have done for music um as a whole in the city here, and we all appreciate it very much. But now, your main interest is the Hospitalized Veteran's Music Service and I'd like to ask you to tell us just what this service does.

[Lytle Hull:] The service uh which is now the principle work of the Musician's Emergency Fund, because we- we don't do so much relief or work for musicians as much as we did because the Veteran's Music

Service [ER: unclear term] has taken so much of our time and resources and uh it began -- Should I tell you how it started?

[ER:] Yes, I'd like to know just how it started and just how you run it. (13:49)

[Lytle Hull:] Well, about five years ago um at St. Alban's hospital, a naval hospital in Long Island uh knowing that we were a musical organization, asked us to send uh a teacher out there to teach a sailor how to play the saxophone. So we scurried around, we had teachers but no saxophones. But we got the instrument and sent the teacher out and he began giving a lesson. And then the boy in the next bed wished he could have a lesson and then down at the other end of the ward somebody wanted to study something else.

[ER:] And the mouth organ, I'm sure.

[Lytle Hull:] Oh, we teach every instrument except the harp, I have to say. [ER, Elliott Roosevelt, and Lytle Hull laugh] And um, anyway, that was five years ago, and now we have uh we uh we operate in ten hospitals, government hospitals, around New York and have nearly a hundred teachers. And-and employ, as well, about two hundred other artists for entertainment.

[ER:] That really is remarkable. And um do you find constantly, requests coming? I know this interests me for a personal reason, that in Washington, right after the Casa Blanca um landing, I mean a little while after uh I was going through uh Walter Reed and um I came across a boy whose hands were badly burned and he told me that he was uh a musician, a piano player and I was heartbroken for him and I said that I hoped it would improve and uh if he needed to practice, there were lots of pianos in the White House and I hoped he'd come and use them. And that boy's name was Robins. He's been through the Julliard School here in New York and when he had been practicing nearly a year, he once came to me and said now he was ready to have me listen to him because he could reach the octave because, you see, the burning had narrowed all the skin, [Lytle Hull: Yes] and had um drawn together. And it took a tremendous amount of work and he never could be the concert player that he'd hoped to be, but he's undertaking to teach and I had a letter from him just the other day saying that he was going into a new job and he hoped it would be successful. I think, in a way, it must've been a frustration uh to go through Julliard and feel that you couldn't ever be the concert pianist you wanted. But, you must come across things like that all the time.

[Lytle Hull and ER overlap]

[Lytle Hull:] Well, we-we have many such patients. Those who have been um musicians before, but- but you speak of the burns, we had many aviators from the Pacific who had never played the piano but whose hands were injured from burns and we give-- gave them piano lessons with remarkable results.

[ER:] Isn't that interesting?

[Lytle Hull:] They have um you've probably seen them, a silent piano [ER: Yes] that you can um and then you can turn the lever and make the pressure stronger and stronger and they used to play that and uh [ER: And that can-] to strengthen their hands.

[ER:] That can restore the hands to a certain extent. That's something that um I hadn't thought of. I had thought of it primarily for those who knew how to play, but you do teach a new instrument, don't you to so many?

[Lytle Hull:] Many times are instruments that- that have never been played. We uh don't try to make musicians, of course, every now and again one comes across a man, like the one you mentioned who has

been a musician or who's interested in music, but a great many uh compose, they lie in bed, and they compose little tunes and the teacher puts them down for them and then they give a concert. And some of the broadcasting companies have been very generous and allowed us to have a concert sometime and they would hear their own pieces uh given over the air, which is very exciting.

[ER:] Oh, that must be most exciting to them. [Elliott Roosevelt: Uh] But now, you did tell me how many hospitals you operate in around New York, but has this spread at all into the country?

[Lytle Hull:] Not that I know of and the uh Veterans Administration in Washington want us to institute it in every hospital and I only wish we could and, of course, it is expensive because the teachers have to be paid. They're all professional teachers. And uh my idea is that someday, perhaps, every district where there are veteran's hospitals might raise the necessary funds.

[ER:] That would be a very valuable thing to have done, I think. (18:14)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] How expensive is this program uh where you have a hundred teachers operating in that many hospitals? It must be extremely expensive in the course of a year.

[Lytle Hull:] We call it um in round figures, fifteen dollars a month to give a veteran four music lessons, in other words, one a week. Now, they don't all get one lesson a week because we haven't the funds, but maybe there'll be some certain patient that the doctor will want special concentration and he will get an extra number of lessons.

[ER:] It must have a great effect mentally, doesn't it?

[Lytle Hull:] Well the, we get the best results from in the psychiatric hospitals and you know, that big hospital, in Pe -- uh the uh named for-for Franklin -- up-up—

[ER:] Oh yes, Helena Peekskill. [Lytle Hull: Yes] Yes, I was there just, I wasn't at the hospital.

[Lytle Hull:] Two thousand beds and all psychiatric [ER: Yes] and we have a big program there and many of the doctors have come on our board. When we first started functioning, it was through the Red Cross that we started. I don't think many of the doctors were interested and after about two years, they began to realize the results and now doctors are on our boards and uh consult with us and tell us what they want and uh it might interest you that um we went to Europe two months ago and in England, they're very interested. I had an appointment with a member of the government in London and they are sending someone over here to observe our work in the mental hospitals for rehabilitation.

[ER:] Well, I'm sure Dr. [Howard A.] Rusk has been interested.

[Lytle Hull:] He has spoken for us, yes.

[ER:] Yes, because he has always been uh very advanced in using everything that could come along to help his patients, and um um I'm interested that you uh found that interest in uh England. Did you find any response in France? I would have expected that you'd hear, that there they would be interested.

[Lytle Hull:] Well, I didn't happen to go to France on this trip, but this came about-- this came uh from England to here and it was a coincidence that I was going to London the next week, it just happened. And so I saw this gentleman and then someone is coming over next month, I think.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mother, could I interrupt for just a moment uh for our station break? And then I think we can come back to this very interesting interview.

(Break 20:30-20:40)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Now, Mother, I think we can return again to your interview with Mrs. Lytle Hull concerning the rehabilitation of hospitalized veterans through uh the introduction of music into their lives.

[ER:] Well, I'm very glad to go on with this interview. Helen, do you restrict your services to veterans of World War II because I suppose you have to have rather young people in this program?

[Lytle Hull] We have uh we have some of our students are still from the Spanish War [ER: Good gracious! They go all the way--] [unclear] improve, but they haven't. They've been in the hospital all those years, and many from World War I, but mostly from World War II.

[ER:] Mostly from World War II. Well, now, has the Korean War affected your work? (21:28)

[Lytle Hull:] Yes uh because those men are being returned now and most of them are at St. Alban's, a naval hospital, and uh—

[ER:] Marines, largely—

[Lytle Hull:] Marines, yes. And uh the doctors this time uh the doctors have asked us to provide music of all kinds for them.

[ER:] Um do you find that your uh much more of your money goes into teaching than uh into entertainment?

[Lytle Hull:] Mostly teaching. [ER: Mostly teaching] Yes, mostly teaching.

[ER:] Is much of your entertaining on a volunteer basis?

[Lytle Hull:] Uh none of ours is.

[ER:] None of it?

[Lytle Hull:] None of our entertainment is uh every artist is paid.

[ER:] Every artist is paid?

[ER and Lytle Hull overlap]

[Lytle Hull:] Every artist is paid, which is a point of the organization. You see, the artist, the young artist, or the, who needs a few extra dollars or an older artist who isn't, who's come on hard times, is registered with us. And so, in order to give them work, we pay —

[ER:] You give them work. [Lytle Hull: Yes.] It's a double-edged sword [Lytle Hull: That's right] so to speak. You really help the people, the artists who need the help [Lytle Hull: Yes] as well as providing [Lytle Hull: That is the idea] entertainment which is really good. Well, that's very uh—

[Lytle Hull:] But of course, to the hospitals, we send only our young and attractive artists. You know, there are many young people who --

[ER:] Who find it very hard to get work. (22:44)

[Lytle Hull:] You know that [ER: in the artistic field] and they give eight or ten years to learning one profession and music in some form and then there's nowhere for them to go.

[ER:] Yes, I know that. Well, about how many lessons uh I know you couldn't give the exact number, but about how many lessons do you think have been given since you started this service?

[Lytle Hull:] Oh, well I should think eight or ten thousand [Elliott and ER: hm]. I know it's very high up, I haven't the exact figures [ER: no.], I wish I had.

[ER:] Well, that's a tremendous number of lessons. Well, now that you have the acceptance on a part of the medical profession of the program, you said a few minutes ago that some of the doctors have come on your board and that's uh one of the hurdles you don't have to uh face anymore. I wonder what the Veterans Administration feels about um giving this service to their people. Do they also approve of it? [Lytle Hull:] Oh, tremendously. We're in constant communication with Washington and Mr. [Lenard] Quinto, who is in charge of social services. We come under social services. Uh we work with them very closely. Of course, they are unable to supply funds unfortunately, but um we have all their backing and uh anything we ask them to do that they possibly can, they always do, like sending speakers or explaining paper—

[ER:] Well, I'm sure they couldn't provide funds [Lytle Hull: No, of course they can't] for the very simple reason that Congress would tell them they were boondoggling. [Lytle Hull laughs] [Lytle Hull: I know] And sometime I hope you're going to undertake to educate Congress uh on the subject of the value of the arts so we can get something from our government. I'm always a little ashamed that uh our government uh is so much less cooperative in the fields of uh promoting the arts than most of the other governments that uh I happen to know about.

[Lytle Hull:] May I say something about that about that, [ER: Yes, yes you may] which has nothing to do with the veterans? I'd like to ask you, I wish I knew how to go about it. Because, as you know, during the last war, England s-began that uh um commission uh CEMA it was called, for the-- for music and the arts to promote them and now, of course, they have been uh - I don't know if the word is subsidy -- but they have been helping music in England ever since. And we are the only country, I think, in the world that does not.

[ER:] Well, I've-I've often wondered because I have uh a feeling that a nation is not really mature until its government recognizes that um the theater and um painting, and music ag-are actually part of the expression of a nation's growing up and therefore must be supported, that young artists uh must be found and helped and so forth. But uh all the answer you usually get when you talk to anyone is, well, we wouldn't dare do that because the people would think it was boondoggling. I think the people are way ahead of Congress as a rule. [Lytle Hull and ER laugh]

[Lytle Hull:] Oh, I do too. I'm so glad to hear you say that.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Could I -- could I ask a question at this point? Uh since the success has been so uh marked and outstanding with regard to uh psychiatric hospit-veterans' hospitals uh have other uh organizations and doctors uh from, representing lay hospitals uh have they come to you for more information regarding the program?

[Lytle Hull:] Uh one hospital, one state hospital in Long Island with some thirteen or fourteen thousand patients, we have a program in that particular hospital.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Oh, you do?

[Lytle Hull:] That's the only one and we're making experiments, which one can do with uh there's so many patients there, [Elliott Roosevelt: Yes.] uh before and after serious brain operations and so on. And we are experimenting there.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] That's very interesting, it's gradually—

[Elliott Roosevelt and ER overlap]

[ER:] I'm- I'm glad there's a glimmer in the state, but I'm- I'm, I wish it was in all hospitals in the state.

[Lytle Hull:] I want to see Governor Dewey one day because I believe he is especially interested in the-- in the programs in mental hospitals and uh –

[ER:] Well I hope you will because [Lytle Hull: I'm going to try.] I think it would be very valuable. Now, I must ask you an important question. How do you finance your work?

[Lytle Hull:] Entirely by volunteer subscriptions. We have uh three or four hundred annual subscribers and we give benefits, theater benefits, music benefits, and uh dance benefits and at the moment, we are about to start on a drive to enlist new members, annual members, you know, anything from five to a hundred dollars a year. Just that we can count a little bit –

[ER:] So that you have an income that you can count on.

[Lytle Hull:] Yes, and then perhaps supplement when we have to. It- it's terribly expensive and it's very sad to turn down requests, especially these boys that are coming in from Korea now, you know, it's- it's

[ER:] Terribly hard.

[Lytle Hull:] It's very hard to add to the program.

[ER:] And then of course um if um your subscriptions are all voluntary um uh you-you can, nevertheless, tell people that if they have a particular interest in helping artists that they are helping the artists because I imagine many of your teachers are ex-artists who can no longer uh [Lytle Hull: That's right.] be entertainers and, but still can teach.

[Lytle Hull:] And they have to be specially trained by us because, before the war, we did a good deal of teaching in institutions and hospitals and that's why we had such a big uh file to call from. We have placed about two hundred veterans in musical employment as it is.

[ER:] You have?

[Lytle Hull:] Yes.

[ER:] Two hundred veterans, [Lytle Hull: Uh, yes.] that's interesting.

[Lytle Hull:] Yes, yes, and one of them, uh ah last year, three of them were from one of the mental hospitals and we placed them in choruses in musical comedies here in New York and they did beautifully.

[Elliott Roosevelt and ER overlap]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] That's wonderful.

[ER:] I think that is [Lytle Hull: Isn't that nice?] perfectly wonderful because that will restore confidence. [Lytle Hull: Yes.] and uh they'll feel that they can go out and-and uh do keep touch so that they have a feeling because I think with mental cases, this is almost the most important. They have a feeling of background that, someone to go back to if anything goes wrong.

[Lytle Hull:] I know that the teachers um become great friends with these men and that is why we are very particular that the same teacher has the same man each time and so, he looks forward to his Tuesday afternoon, or whatever it is, and-and he counts on the teacher as a friend.

[ER:] That's important and I wondered if um in the organization, so to speak uh you were able, because you must interview them before you send them out and so forth, if your interviewers were ever able to give them the feeling that if a question arose or a difficulty, they could come back and ask them about it.

[Lytle Hull:] Well, I know they do.

[ER:] They do?

[Lytle Hull:] Yes, I know they do, yes.

[ER:] Cause I think that's a very important thing particularly for mental cases because uh it takes quite a while to build up confidence again [Lytle Hull: It does, it does.] after a mental break uh of some kind.

[Lytle Hull:] And some of these men, you know, they have no contact with the outside world except the--our teachers.

[ER:] That of course is --

[Lytle Hull:] It's-it's very sad, it's very sad to contemplate but it is a fact.

[ER:] Not only sad but in ah in a way, of course uh if your teachers are trained, it may be better because in some of our state hospitals, I've seen cases where the visits of the family really were the most harrowing thing.

[Lytle Hull:] And not good for the patient.

[ER:] Very bad for the patient [Lytle Hull: Yeah.] and probably, if you train your teachers um it's-it's one of the best things that they have contact only with trained people who give them something --

[Lytle Hull:] Well that is one of the reasons that the volunteer teacher, while kind and thoughtful and so on, is perhaps too sympathetic. In other words, they have- they- the- the uh mental case likes to be uh, in other words, not to be dealt with in too pathetic or sympathetic a way. They like uh man to man, you know, [ER: Yes.] that sort of --

[ER:] And they must, you must be, re-ah, respect that desire because you have to build up that personality.

[Lytle Hull:] That's right.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mother, I see that our time is drawing to a close, but I'd like to ask one more question, if I might and that is occasioned by the fact that this program is heard in many other communities outside the New York City area and I thought that it would be a good idea if listeners in other areas that wanted to start similar programs uh knew where they could write Mrs. Lytle Hull to get further information on how to organize similar programs and, for veteran's hospitals and other institutions.

[ER:] Would you just give that very slowly so that everyone just can –

[Lytle Hull:] Thank you, thank you very much. I think the simplest address would be the Steinway Building, New York City, Hospitaliz-Hospitalized Veterans Music Service.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Thank you, that's the Steinway [Lytle Hull: Building.] Building, New York City, Hospitalized Veterans Music Service. I think we have that clear and I think, Mother, now we have to come to the end of our uh interview.

[ER:] Well, I just want to thank you so much, Helen, for coming. It was wonderful to hear about this and it does give one quite a lift.

[Lytle Hull:] Well, I appreciate enormously your letting me do so, thank you.

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