

MRS. ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S OWN PROGRAM

May 7, 1940

Description: Broadcast time 1:15-1:30 PM over the NBC Red Network. ER describes her daily schedule and the procedures are for both informal and formal visits to the White House.

Participants: Ben Grauer, Eleanor Roosevelt, NBC Announcer

(47:39)

[Ben Grauer:] This is *Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt's Own Program*.

[Theme music 47:42-48:03]

[Ben Grauer:] That music introduces today's big radio event: your regular Tuesday visit with Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. Today and every Tuesday and Thursday, Mrs. Roosevelt brings you topics of keen interest to American women which she will discuss in her own friendly, informal way. These programs come to you with the compliments of SweetHeart Soap, a favorite with American families for fifty years. And now, our gracious visitor joins us from the nation's capital. Ladies and gentlemen, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. (48:35)

[ER:] Good day, ladies and gentlemen. In my last broadcast, I told you what I think spoils me. Perhaps, you would like me to run through the routine of an ordinary day. I usually breakfast at eight-thirty alone or with guests as the case may be; a visit to the President, either before or after breakfast; a casual glance at the newspapers if guests are present, and a hope that later on I'll be able to read them more thoroughly. If I'm alone, I read all the news as I eat. At 9:30, the head usher comes to consult me about the day's appointments, then the housekeeper, and then the social secretary, Mrs. [Edith Benham] Helm. Sometimes the interviews are longer than others. Usually, they take only a few minutes. Then my personal mail is brought me by Miss Thompson. If anything has come up about which I must consult the president, I try to catch him before he leaves for his office. By eleven o'clock, I am free to have a press conference one day a week if it happens to be scheduled for that day or to get some exercise or to meet with a group on some special interest or with individuals who have requested an interview. There usually are guests for luncheon at one o'clock, followed by writing my column, going out to any engagements which have been made for me, or perhaps signing some mail before receiving more people, again either individually or in groups. If I'm through by six o'clock, I may have a swim, though sometimes my guests are not gone early enough. Then dinner, either with the family alone after which all of us go to our respective desks for work, or if there are guests, I remain and talk to them or watch a movie and then go to my desk after they have left to finish the daily mail. (50:18)

All the people who come to the White House want to know about the house itself, and I've come to feel its influence through the mere repetition of the stories connected with it. I point out Lincoln's bed with its heavy carved headboard and the furniture of the same period. Then I find myself explaining that such a massive man had to have an extra-long bed. Then I go on to show that the bed was in the room across the hall from where it now is, and that that was the room Lincoln used during the years he spent in the White House as his bedroom. I use that room now as my sitting room, and many a night I've thought of Mr. Lincoln and the many anxieties which crowded in upon him as the old house creaks, and I turn from my desk to see if anyone is entering the room. We also tell the story about the time when Archie Roosevelt was ill, and some of the other Theodore Roosevelt children put his pony in the lift and brought it up to the

room, the same lift which rises slowly from floor to floor today. My grandchildren, who know the story, have wished they might do something equally spectacular to be remembered by. I point out of my window to the magnolia tree which Andrew Jackson planted, and the picture of what life must have been like in the White House in his day flashes before my eyes. Oh yes, the second floor of the White House imprisons me in its history and makes me feel more interest than I've ever had before in the people who've walked through its halls. (51:51)

I was thinking the other day about the extraordinary stories the various rooms in the White House could tell if they could speak. Take the Blue Room, for instance, which is an oval room directly opposite the front door of the White House. The room below and the room above it are also oval in shape. The woodwork and the mantelpiece are very lovely; the furniture is very formal, consisting of some long sofas along the walls and rather stiff armchairs and straight chairs. The coverings are deep blue silk with a spread eagle and thirteen stars in a circle around it, woven in the material covering the backs of the furniture. This furniture is a reproduction, I think, of that which is recorded in Thomas Jefferson's own hand in the big notebooks which he kept. In them, he recorded the minutes of cabinet meetings, his favorite recipes for food and drink, and the list of things which he bought for the White House. I have always thought that the elegant suite which came from France must have been similar to the present furniture in the Blue Room.

This room was once widely known as the Elliptical Salon because of its shape and has always been considered the most beautiful room in the White House. In this room, the President stands with his aides when he receives ambassadors and ministers who come to present-present their credentials with their aides. Here we stand when we receive our guests at the big official receptions in front of a row of green palms and ferns which is placed across the middle of the room to serve as a background. Here I have received the Daughters of the American Revolution. Frequently, groups of young people who come down from their schools in the spring and who have some special claim on me are assembled here so I can greet them. And now before I go on, let's listen to what Mr. Grauer has to tell us. (53:53)

[Ben Grauer:] I'll be less than a minute, Mrs. Roosevelt. Friends, how many people live in your town? Ten thousand? Fifty thousand? A million perhaps? Now, just imagine the excitement if five million new neighbors suddenly decided to make your town their home. Well, in the last two years alone, more than five million people have decided that SweetHeart is the soap for them and have made it their own bath and beauty soap, and this is only one chapter in SweetHeart's fifty-year success story. Ever since 1890 when this pure, delicately fragrant soap first began to win friends and delight them, SweetHeart has been the careful choice of more and more American families. Please put it to the test in actual use in your own home. Next time get pure, economical SweetHeart Soap. And now Washington, DC is signaling us. Please come in, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt.

[ER:] On several occasions, sad stories have been told to me in this blue room. Some years ago, a group of men and women from New York City tenements came down to appear before a committee in Congress. They asked to see me and they stood around this room. The tears ran down the face of one man who told me how he had been at a school celebration with his daughter and returned to find that the rest of his family had all perished in one of those disastrous New York tenement house fires. There were few dry eyes in the room.

Perhaps, you would like to know how one of the big state receptions, which I mentioned, is managed. The invitations are all sent out through the social bureau with Mrs. Helm's careful supervision in making up the lists. On the night of a reception, the President's two senior aides, the military aide and the naval aide, together with the junior aides from the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps are on duty. Cards of admission are given to each guest, and the entrance which the guest is to use is printed on this card. In a city like Washington, DC, the office occupied by the individual is considered, and the entrances are designated

according to protocol. The White House staff is augmented and everyone who comes checks their outdoor raiments, and if they enter by the diplomatic entrance or the east entrance, they come up the main staircase to the first floor. The honored guests of the evening are escorted into the Green Room because they will head the reception line. The other guests assemble in the East Room, and a little before nine o'clock, a color guard with an officer and four men comes up to the President's study, marches into the room, salutes the flags, and two of the flags -- the flag of the United States and the President's flag -- are taken down to stand outside the Blue Room door under guard until the President returns to the second floor. (57:06)

At nine o'clock promptly, the Cabinet members and their wives assemble in the small dining room. The President with his senior aides and I go down to greet the members of the Cabinet; then the little procession starts. We come out of the State Dining Room with the young aides ahead of us. The Marine Band, which is stationed in the hall, plays "Hail to the Chief;" slowly we proceed to our places in the Blue Room. The Cabinet remains in the Red Room unless they have to go through the receiving line at the head of their departments. The senior aides announce everyone by name to the President, and he and I shake hands with them. The guests go through the Red Room, stopping to speak to friends, and then into the State Dining Room for refreshments. Afterwards, they wander through the rooms on the first floor. When everybody has been received by the President, he goes upstairs and the band moves into the East Room for about an hour of dance music. I often come downstairs again and walk through the rooms, tasting the punch to make sure it is all right, and talking with some of our guests informally.

Guests at informal dinner parties are gathered in the Red Room and greeted by their host before dinner. At the formal state dinners, the guests are arranged according to rank around the East Room. They are greeted by the President and then proceed into the State Dining Room. Guests at the White House are expected to arrive a little ahead of the appointed hour for any engagement. This is a little hard on people from other places who are accustomed to arrive late at dinner parties, especially young people. The President is never supposed to be kept waiting, however, not even by his own family, and that is sometimes a bit hard on the family but very good discipline.

After the formal dinners, there is a musical and the gentlemen join the ladies in the Red Room and escort their dinner partners to the East Room where the entertainment is given. The President and I greet the additional few hundred guests who are invited to the musical. At the close of the entertainment, the President goes to the second floor. I usually stay to say goodnight to our guests and then go to the little dining room for a last word of gratitude to the artists who have entertained us and who have supper after the musical because they do not like to eat before singing or playing or dancing. Then I, too, go upstairs to the quiet of the second floor and lo and behold, it is nearly midnight. I find the President either engrossed in one of his hobbies -- stamps, or more frequently nowadays reading some late memoranda which has come over from one of the departments. I hope this gives you an idea of some of the things which go on in the White House because of the questions concerning the details of the life in the White House. If any of you want more details about special occasions, I hope you'll write me and I will do my best to describe them for you. (1:00:31)

[Ben Grauer:] Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt. Ladies, in some oriental countries, the women have to wear veils that hide their pretty faces whenever they go outdoors, but nobody wants American women to do such a thing. So why let a dull veil of clinging surface impurities hide your naturally clean, fresh skin? Get pure, mild SweetHeart Soap to help remove that dull veil and thus reveal more natural complexion charm. Unlike cleansing methods that often just slide over obstinate dirt and leave it on your skin to dim your good looks, SweetHeart Soap removes dirt thoroughly. It's merciless to dirt! Yet its famous purity makes it kind to your skin. Thorough and gentle, that's the grand beauty cleansing combination you get with SweetHeart Soap. Please try it very soon.

[Theme music 1:01:27-1:01:48]

[Ben Grauer:] [music continues softly] And so we conclude another visit with Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. Make a note to be at home next Thursday when Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt again comes to call. These programs are presented by the makers of SweetHeart Soap, famous for fifty years as the soap that agrees with your skin. And now, it's au revoir until next Thursday when you'll again hear [music crescendos, cuts] *Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt's Own Program*. This is Ben Grauer speaking.

[NBC Announcer:] This is the National Broadcasting Company.

[NBC Chimes]

(1:02:22)

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