

## THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

June 25, 1951

Description: In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt commemorate the first anniversary of the Korean War by detailing what led to the conflict. In the interview segment, ER asks Carl Dodd, winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor, to describe his wartime experiences.

Participants: ER, Elliott Roosevelt, Carl H. Dodd

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[Break 0:00-00:23]

[ER:] How do you do? This is Eleanor Roosevelt. Every Monday through Friday, my son Elliott and I have the opportunity to visit with you here in my living room at the Park Sheraton Hotel in New York City. Each day it is our desire to bring interesting guests that we are hopeful you will enjoy meeting. Elliott, will you tell our listeners today's plans?

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Today being the first anniversary of the beginning of the Korean War, Mrs. Roosevelt feels it is very fitting that her guest should be a young man who has had an active part in this conflict. He is Lieutenant Carl Dodd, a winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor for action in Korea. Also in place of our usual question and answer period, Mrs. Roosevelt and I will review the events leading up to the United States being engaged in this war and subsequent actions. But first, our announcer has some words for us from the sponsors who make this recorded program possible.

[Break 1:24 - 01:42]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mother, this being the twenty-fifth of June and the anniversary of the commencement of the war in Korea, I thought it might be interesting if we uh reviewed a little bit what-- just how the United States happened to become involved in the Korean War. Uh if you'd want to start off by giving a uh sort of capsule picture of just exactly how we did get into that conflict.

[ER:] Well, when Korea was uh-- when the Japanese were driven out of Korea, um Russia and the United States uh were given uh a mandate by the United Nations. Russia called the North, and the United States called the South, and the thirty-eighth parallel was just a-an arbitrary line that was picked out of uh-uh the limbo because [Elliott Roosevelt: Yes.] it simply had -- something had to be found that would divide the areas of uh responsibility, and we were both told—

[Elliott Roosevelt and ER overlap]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, the responsibility was to administer to the countries—

[ER:] Oh we were told to try and administer the countries but as quickly as possible to set up independent governments. And uh they were to be democratic governments and the UN would supervise an election as soon as order had been reestablished and it was possible to um uh gather together people and machinery could be established to run a government.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] But were they supposed to be separate governments; one set up by the Russians and one [ER: No.] by ourselves?

[ER:] The original thought I think was that we would both of us withdraw from Korea, um leaving them to be uh a joint a-a-- one country uh working together. But unfortunately, eh uh the Russians uh went to work immediately to establish a communist area. Um and they also, uh under the guise of a police force, uh really established uh an aggressive armed force in North Korea, and naturally also the North Koreans were taught that um they must establish communism in the country as a whole. Now in the South, we um held an election, and one of the things that a great many people have um resented is that in that election, Syngman Rhee was chosen to be the president. Now the difficulty about that is that, of course, um people say that Syngman Rhee was a reactionary and that we established a reactionary government. I've had people even tell me uh that um it was not a free election, that we forced it which we, of course, we had nothing to do with it. It was a United Nations supervised election. But, um I think the answer is that when you ask people who have never been free to elect someone they probably can think only of the name that has been most prominent before them. And it happened that in exile, Syngman Rhee had been the one who had fought most for a free Korea, free from the Japanese. And his personal ideas of what should be done in a country afterwards had probably been very little known. He was purely known as the man who had advocated the freedom of Korea. [Elliott Roosevelt: Yes.] So I think you have to look upon that election as being the reaction of people who had just heard the name but had tied it up with the chance of being free again. [Elliott Roosevelt : Mhm.] And-and that they didn't know whether he was going to be a conservative or a radical or whatnot, [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] they had no idea. Now um it was certainly not up to us to say uh, "You must elect this or that person." In fact, we probably wouldn't have known um who the people wanted any more than they knew themselves. So uh I think people expected more of the people of Korea than could be expected. I think perhaps after another election, after a period of exp--discovery that they had to know [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] what policies would be put in by the man they elected. [Elliott Roosevelt coughing] Perhaps the second election would have resulted in something different. I don't know. But in the meantime, um what happened was that um the North Koreans trained to uh believe in communism, and when you believe in communism you also believe in the spread of communism. So believing in that, and being trained in a military way, and being given arms by Russia, while we were placidly withdrawing from South Korea our military forces as we felt the um South Koreans were becoming able to um govern themselves. And we had only uh armed a real police force, a small group to keep the peace. And um then suddenly the South Koreans uh crossed the border and attacked -- I mean the North Koreans uh crossed the border and attacked the South Koreans. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] And we were in that area because of Japan and the occupation of Japan with the only strong forces that were available to repel aggression. And quite naturally it being our responsibility to protect the South Koreans, we naturally immediately began to move back again with our forces. [Elliott Roosevelt: Yes.] And that-that in a in a capsule, I think, is how we came to be [Elliott Roosevelt: Wh--] the first people immediately after um our government had started to uh do what they could to protect the South Koreans, which was very little because we had so few forces there, um we put the whole question up to the United Nations. And the United Nations, on consideration, decided to repel aggression, even though within the United Nations there was no force at that time and they had to count on voluntary contributions. And uh they at once called on all the nations to come [ER coughs] to the assistance of the United States [ER coughs] in um carrying out the decision of the United Nations to repel aggression. (9:08)

[ER and Elliott Roosevelt overlap]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mhm. And uh as I understand it, the uh the command uh of the UN forces in the uh - in the Korean area uh was given to General MacArthur by whom? That has been a point that has been uh quite uh belabored by the press.

[ER:] Well I have a question on that point. And I uh asked for information, and it was received in my office this morning but was not yet typed out so I haven't a full [ER coughs] explanation as yet. But my understanding is --I mean I haven't the exact directive or-- [Elliott Roosevelt: Yes.] my understanding is

that General MacArthur was appointed by us uh to command in Korea because he was in Japan as the Commander in Chief. That the United Nations um [ER coughs] then appointed him over all the forces in Korea and asked us to allow him uh to be in general command uh. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] But we always retained um our right uh to deal uh with him as our general. [Elliott Roosevelt: Yes, so that--] Even-- plus it was purely an acceptance by the United Nations of his command of the whole force.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Right and uh therefore it was [ER: But I --] President Truman's appointment of him as the UN commander uh with the uh-- at the request of the United Nation's Security Council.

[ER:] Yes. I have however -- I will have of uh a question directly on that which came in in the mail and the exact directive and the exact explanation uh in a very short time.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Oh, that's fine. Well, we'll put that as a question to you in the next few days. Now uh I'm interested in knowing to what extent do the other nations participate in this war in Korea? Are there substantial forces, for instance, from England and Canada and France and so forth?

[ER:] Well, there are from Canada, there are -- there is not so much from France though there is some, but France has been carrying on a war of its own in Asia, in uh-- [Elliott Roosevelt: Indochina.] between-- in Indochina and has not been able to contribute as much in actual uh man power. There are forces from Turkey, there are forces from Australia and New Zealand and Canada and Great Britain, [Elliott Roosevelt: Siam] uh Siam, uh [Elliott Roosevelt: the Philippines.] the Philippines, uh. [Elliott Roosevelt: Australia] I've said Australia. [Elliott Roosevelt: Ah.] And there are -there are forces from an enormous number of countries, and there are also contributions, for instance, such as Sweden's of um uh a um a Red Cross ship--a hospital ship. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] And many countries have contributed whatever they had in the way of food and um uh medicines and all the contributions have been uh very good, I think-- the general overall. The manpower has come from fewer countries though gradually according to the populations of various countries, they've done something on a quite a large scale.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] I see. Well, I think that is a good review of the Korean uh War story and uh I think it serves as a good lead in to our interview today which will come next on the program with Lieutenant Dodd who has recently returned after winning the Congressional Medal of Honor. And now I see that we should pause for just a moment to hear an important announcement from our announcer.

[Break 13:27-13:48]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Korea has produced heroes who are carrying on the tradition of the American soldier that was begun when our country itself was begun. Today we are privileged to have as our guest one of these Korean heroes. A Congressional Medal of Honor winner, a young man you've been reading about in the papers a few days ago. Mother, will you introduce our guest?

[ER:] Yes, thank you, Elliott. I am very proud to introduce our guest. He is First Lieutenant Carl H. Dodd of Kentsaw, Kentucky. But more recently, his address has been the 24 Infantry Division in Korea. Lieutenant, I'm very happy to welcome you to our program this morning.

[Carl H. Dodd:] Thank you ma'am, it's wonderful to be back.

[ER:] We've seen in the newspapers, a number of pictures of you and two other men who have just been awarded the nation's highest military award, the Congressional-the Congressional Medal of Honor. Would you tell us about the action that led to that award?

[Carl H. Dodd:] Well, ma'am, it dates back to as far as 1948. The men that I worked with during that time, and up-- in-in-including the attack, I knew and I knew them quite well. I knew where their homes

were, how many sisters they had, and uh their parents. I knew their bad habits and their good ones. And if I asked one of those people to do anything, I knew it would be done. The action is just another job. A commanding terrain feature that had to be taken, so we did it.

[ER:] A terrain feature of course is perfectly familiar to you but not very familiar to the public. What is a terrain feature? [ER laughs]

[Carl H. Dodd:] A uh piece of terrain or a terrain feature is uh—

[ER:] Terrain means ground!

[Carl H. Dodd:] That's right, yes ma'am. The uh, just terrain feature would be in a tactical-tactical sense would be a hill, a commanding feature overlooking a valley or a road junction or something of that nature, ma'am.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well—

[ER:] I see, well in this particular uh case, it was um a hill, was it?

[Carl H. Dodd:] Yes ma'am, that is correct.

[ER:] And—

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Uh Lieutenant could I ask a question here? [ER: Yes, surely, dear.] You sort of uh went rather rapidly uh on that uh description of the action. Uh you just said you just took the hill. Well, uh-uh they don't usually give a medal of honor for taking a hill, unless there is some extraordinary action and uh I think it might be of interest to the public to have you uh tell of uh some of the action that you and your men went through in order to take the hill. (16:45)

[Carl H. Dodd:] In this particular position, the communists, or the enemy on the position, were rather determined. And apparently they had been ordered to hold the ground. We had been ordered to take the ground. We moved on the position, rather up to an LD-- the LD being the line of departure-- at about noon. Very foggy. We start in the attack and start receiving mortar rounds, sixties, eighty-ones, mind you our own, and one-twenties. We started receiving automatic fire, and uh the platoon or the leading platoon of my company just faltered, uh I moved up with grenades, knocked out one of the positions, and the men followed through. During the course of the events that day, we knocked out seven machine guns, six mortars, and a large one-twenty mortar, the following morning, after the position was secured.

[ER:] That of course, sounds all so simple when you tell it. But uh in the first place, uh were you glad of the fog? Did that help you? (18:08)

[Carl H. Dodd:] Yes ma'am and no ma'am. That's a two sided question. Moving up to the position for a jump off it was wonderful. The enemy could not see us or rather they couldn't see us so easily. But after we moved into the attack it was very difficult, ma'am.

[ER:] Then you were afraid of getting your own people I suppose—

[Carl H. Dodd:] Yes, ma'am, that's true—

[ER:] Because of the fog. The reason I ask that is that uh a long while ago there was a war in Europe, and I happened to have uh gone right afterwards to a particular place which was a very steep gully which our

boys took. And uh they took it because there was a fog and they were able to get down one side and up under the enemy guns so that they couldn't be shot before the enemy knew that they were there. That's all the way back in World War I, but it happened that I went with some of the boys who took it um right after the end of the war. Women were not at that time supposed to do it, but I was with my husband and uh we went out. The reason women weren't supposed to go was there was still shells in the area that hadn't exploded. But I remember very well about that and that's why I asked you the question about the fog because it has an advantage when you're getting into position, but, of course, it would have the disadvantage afterwards. So now will you tell us too about Sergeant [Ernest R.] Kouma and Sergeant [John] Pittman, and what was the action that led to their awards?

[Carl H. Dodd] Well, I'm not too familiar with the exception of what I've heard in the citation. For instance, Sargent Kouma, they were fighting a delaying action. I refer to a delaying action. They started withdraw, naturally one unit protects the other while they are moving out. And Sargent Kouma got caught in a tight, let's put it in a tight. And he being a tanker and a very proud one uh was fighting this delaying action for his unit -- particular unit. And uh the Chinese broke through, or rather they--they uh were in faster than they had anticipated. He got out of his tank, and mounted the fifty caliber machine gun which is on the top turret and started firing. Estimated two-fifty casualties.

[ER:] That sounds like -- was Sargent Pitman with him or was he in uh--?

[Carl H. Dodd] No, ma'am, I believe that was a different occasion. If uh-- I think I am right that Sergeant Pittman had a patrol out, or either he was in a counter-attack. And uh they were fired on, and mortar rounds coming in, and Sargent Pittman was hit by shrapnel from a mortar. And they were getting in rather close to the enemy and a grenade was thrown within his patrol or his unit, and he covered the grenade with his body, uh protecting the rest of his men. And after the explosion, he came to the first question he asked was, "Are any of my men hurt?" [Elliott Roosevelt: Mmm.]

[ER:] I guess that's a very fine tradition in uh um uh--the concern uh for the other man-- it's one of the few things, I think, that um make you feel that war pulls out the very best that is in people. So often you have a feeling that there isn't anything good that comes out of it. But my uncle Theodore Roosevelt used to say that it called out extraordinarily fine qualities and uh that that was really one of the compensations. And I suppose that that story you just told us is one of the finest things that come. I was reading in the paper the other day, where one uh officer had come back-- I don't know whether you saw this, Elliott-- and said that the men coming to Korea didn't have enough training and weren't tough enough. Now I-I'm an old women and I've watched uh our men train and I've watched them through two wars and I've seen great deal of them. And uh I was awfully interested because of what he said. He said there was "too much ice-cream and too little uh whiskey and uh toughness".

[Elliott Roosevelt:] That was a brigadier general in the Marine Corps.

[ER:] Yes. Well it sounded like some of the top sergeants I've heard at times [ER laughs]. But I-I never have found that um our-our men were that way. What do you-- I've always found that when it got to the tight places, the mere fact that our men knew how to think for themselves was a very valuable thing. What have you found?

[Carl H. Dodd:] Along the same line, I think our soldiers are cuddled too much, also. But when you come to a tight, they're there- they're with you 100 percent, and they're fighters and they have the know-how. [Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, I'd like to ask some more questions about uh the conditions [coughing] in Korea in just a few minutes [cough] if I might enter for a few minutes, Mother. But I think that we should stop at this point and uh allow our announcer to say a few words, and then we will come right back to our very interesting discussion.

[ER:] All right.

[Break 24:02- 24:13]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] And now we can return to Mother's interview with Lieutenant Carl H. Dodd, who recently received the highest award that our government has to give for valor on the field of battle. He's just come back from Korea to receive from the hands of the President of the United States the Congressional Medal of Honor. And he uh I think is going to be asked a lot of questions about conditions of our men over there in Korea and some of his views on the war as it is being conducted.

[ER:] All right Elliott, then I can begin again. You just said you felt uh the men should have tougher training. Now, how do you envisage that? I mean, what should be done?

[Carl H. Dodd:] Well, to cover the toughness, we always refer to a--from the physical standpoint. And I believe the subject of whiskey was brought up before. Well I like a drink once and awhile, but not too much, and I figure that any man that drinks like a drink once in a while. But coming back to the training, the physical standpoint was definitely what I was referring to. I don't mean uh beat and kick a man around. More physical training and the right physical training. No coordination exercises such as the arm exercises that some of the ladies use and so forth for their figures. I mean for the legs, the stomach muscles, the back. And actually get those people in shape to where they can walk twenty miles and still do the job, and uh to withstand the weather and not become sick. Now that was my reference to the tougher training, ma'am.

[ER:] Well, I've always said that uh one of the sad things about modern generation was the ch--you find it so hard to walk because we're surrounded by things we get into and go to places in. And walking is a very good thing, but um what about Korea? Well, it was terrain often, I imagine, where you really had to walk and couldn't do anything else. (26:42)

[Carl H. Dodd:] Uh yes, ma'am, that is correct. Uh especially when you are a uh forward unit, I mean forward say three units up. Uh that's definitely impossible to ride. And all of the positions at this time will refer to terrain, again. Uh the mountain area--the mountain ranges are completely covered. Each hole, each crevasse, and everything is cleared out. Therefore, those legs and the stomach and so forth got to be able to take it, go on to positions as high as nine fourteen meters high. That's pretty high and its deep, rugged terrain. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.]

[ER:] Well uh what did you feel um your-your men lacked most? um Was it uh-uh that you uh--what do you miss most, in other words? What do you think should be done that hasn't been done?

[Carl H. Dodd:] Once again, back to the physical standpoint and uh courtesy. Uh I mean, uh both to the enlisted man and the officer. Not because I'm an officer, but you have to have courtesy and people that will obey orders. Dis-discipline. That's both up forward and in your rear areas, especially when you have a chance to do a little training. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.]

[ER:] But now let me ask you something. Uh do you find that Americans are not well disciplined as a rule? The reason I ask that is I've just come back from five weeks in Switzerland and I was astounded to find practically everyone there-- there is no standing army. Everyone is trained to defend uh the country, do you see? And each man has his gun and his ammunition and everything ready to go at any time in his house. And every little boy, from the time he is twelve, has his rifle loaded in his own house, and goes out every Saturday morning for training in mountain climbing and in shooting. But the curious thing is I'd be scared to death to leave a kid of thirteen with a loaded gun in his closet. They never use it for anything

else. Now that's discipline. But um I don't know of any kid I'd- I'd be awful sure of at home [ER: Laughs] under those circumstances. Now do you think we don't perhaps begin discipline early enough?

[Carl H. Dodd:] Uh I think that is true, yes ma'am. And uh one other thing I would like to say. Uh in the army and uh with the civilians and the army, we forget that the army's first mission is to fight and win wars, and not parade and uh -- for the uh inspections. Naturally you have to have them for the discipline and so forth. But we forget that the first mission is to win wars and keep our country as it is today.

[ER:] Did you find any difficulty in fighting as part of the United Nations force with your other uh nationalities as they came in?

[Carl H. Dodd:] The uh language -- from the language standpoint it is very difficult a lot of times for coordination, especially in the attack and uh night work such as connecting patrols between two units. In other words, two men go out so forth and meet with two men from the other units and it is very difficult to get any information that the other unit has. And that's about it, ma'am. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.]

[ER:] There always ought to be a liaison officer who speaks both languages, [coughing] in other words, between--in every group I suppose where the connection comes.

[Carl H. Dodd:] Yes, ma'am. That's--that is true and on your-- most of your -- uh well the higher operations you will find that. But naturally they can't keep one man, [chuckles] running twenty-four hours a day. And uh there are quite a few persons that speak the different languages and it's tri-- it's worked out that way. But a lot of times it's a little difficult.

[ER:] I heard an interesting hospital story about some Turks. Uh that they couldn't understand anything and the doctor couldn't get across to them what [ER laughs] he was trying to find out, and um uh that sounded like um -- the Turks sounded to me like pretty tough people. How have you found--or haven't you come in contact with them?

[Carl H. Dodd:] Yes, ma'am. We uh worked with the Turks at one time and they're a good fighter, they're very tough [ER and Elliott Roosevelt: mhm.]. And uh they move out for an objective. I refer to an objective as a uh position or a piece of terrain. They take it. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.]

[ER:] Yes. That's [Elliott Roosevelt: Uh---] a good recommendation anyway. They're people then that uh one would feel uh confidence in having uh near one or on one's own side. (32:08)

[Carl H. Dodd:] That is true, yes ma'am.

[ER:] Do—[Elliott Roosevelt interrupts.]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Lieutenant?

[ER:] Yes, [Elliott Roosevelt: Excuse me.] go ahead, Elliott.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Uh Lieutenant, I'd like to ask a rather general question. Uh we get a lot of information in the newspapers back here, and lots of disagreements raging back and forth. Uh how would you say uh the morale was of our troops was in Korea? Would you say it was high, exceptionally good or average or poor?

[Carl H. Dodd:] Well, that's another difficult question. You'll find that it varies. And uh I would say it's uh very good. Very good.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Does it vary according to the commanders and the ability of the commanders to weld their units together?

[Carl H. Dodd:] No sir, uh I was directly referring to such things as weather, and you hit a diff-difficult objective or your rations get a little bad or something like that. [Elliott Roosevelt: Uh-huh.] But generally the morale is very, very good, at least it was in my outfit.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] And the supply lines have been pretty-pretty well maintained?

[Carl H. Dodd:] Yes sir, they have.

[ER:] I uh I-I am quite interested in-in one thing. There's a young uh officer in a motor track div-division that I've known. I got a um letter from him only yesterday. And he seemed very proud of uh of his outfit. He's a young colored boy that I've known since NYA [National Youth Administration] days and who's worked up through a variety of things, and now he's just been made a first lieutenant, and he seemed very proud of his men and the work they were doing. Do you think that that would be supplied? Do you think that they've done good work?

[Carl H. Dodd:] Uh yes, ma'am, they have for the things they've had to work with and it's getting much better now. At first, the supply line was rather long as you know. We started off and uh it was rather difficult to get supplies up because we didn't have the equipment.

[ER:] Well, our time has come to a close, but I want to thank you and congratulate you, Lieutenant, and also to say that I am very happy to see you back in the United States.

[Carl H. Dodd:] Thank you, ma'am.

[Break 34:22- 34:38]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] I want to tell you today, about something important which is being done by UNESCO. That's the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. Did you realize that there are one thousand two hundred million people in the world today who cannot read or write? Seventy million of them live in Latin America. I think we all know that wherever you find so many illiterate people, you always find hunger and poverty and disease, and we are all eager to see something done about it. It seems that one of the big problems is that there aren't nearly enough teachers to go around. That's why I was glad to hear about the New International School which has just been opened at Pátzcuaro, Mexico, by UNESCO to train new teachers from Latin America in fundamental education. That means that while the people are learning to read, they are also learning how to protect themselves from malaria, about practical farming methods, better housing, proper diets, and perhaps even to organize a ball team to bring a little fun into their lives. The interesting thing about the New School at Pátzcuaro is that the graduates will work in teams of five, each a specialist in one of these subjects and will then go back to their own countries and start similar teams so that teachers will be trained by a kind of chain reaction. It seems to me that Mexico is a fine choice for this school because Mexico has done a good job herself with just this kind of education. You've heard about their schools on wheels for the rural areas. And even today every Mexican who learns to read and write believes in his patriotic duty to teach someone else. Their moto, "Each one, teach one," could pay big dividends throughout South America. And now it's time to close the program and to remind you that you've been listening to the Eleanor Roosevelt Program which comes to you each Monday through Friday at this same time. And this is Elliott Roosevelt speaking and wishing you all good day. (37:00)

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