

## MRS. ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S OWN PROGRAM

June 6, 1940

Description: Broadcast time 1:15-1:30 over the NBC Red Network. Reporter Genevieve Forbes Herrick interviews ER about life in the White House.

Participants: Eleanor Roosevelt, Ben Grauer, Genevieve Forbes Herrick, NBC Announcer

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(16:48)

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

[Theme music 16:53-17:19]

[Ben Grauer:] That music tells us we're about to enjoy another visit with Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. Mrs. Roosevelt has just arrived at our NBC studios in Radio City New York, for this friendly chat with her friends all over America. These visits come to you with the compliments of SweetHeart Soap, the delicately fragrant soap you're sure is pure. And now, we give you Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt.

[ER:] Good day, ladies and gentlemen. On Tuesday, with the help of Mrs. Genevieve Forbes Herrick, I was able to answer a number of your questions about the White House. In fact, things ran so smoothly and we managed to cover so much ground that I've asked Mrs. Herrick to be here again today. That makes it a sort of continued-story broadcast. For many years, Mrs. Herrick has been supplying the readers of a large newspaper with information about my activities. That's why I thought she would do well in gathering for all of you the information you've asked for in your many letters. So, fire away, Mrs. Herrick. (18:21)

[Genevieve Forbes Herrick:] All right, Mrs. Roosevelt. Last week you were kind enough to tell us a great deal about the inner workings in the White House. Now today, the questions of your listeners are concerned more about your own life in Washington.

[ER:] I think it's a little hard to separate them, Mrs. Herrick, but I imagine I know what you mean. Besides an official life, one must have a personal life. I find it requires mental adjustment to jump from my part in formal entertaining to the interests of my family and friends and the business side of my life.

[Genevieve Forbes Herrick:] Here's one question, Mrs. Roosevelt, which has not only been asked very frequently in your mail, but which people have often asked me. They want to know if you have a ghostwriter. Do you write your own column, magazine articles and speeches, and especially did you write your own autobiography?

[ER:] Of course, I write everything myself, and I have no ghostwriter. I really enjoy writing. I always dictate my daily column to my secretary and then correct the first proof. No one ever writes my speeches, although I do call upon people for information such as statistics and facts which have to be accurate. In fact, I never write my speeches out in full. I think them out in my mind and make notes to remind me of the sequence. I find that if I write out a speech in full, I'm so concerned with what I have on paper that I pay too little attention to my audience.

Once, when I was on a lecture trip, I arrived on the platform with the notes in my hand which I had prepared beforehand. To my surprise, the gentleman introducing me assigned a totally different subject. There was nothing left to do but go ahead. And fortunately, I'd given a lecture on the unexpected subject the night before, and so I got through without any difficulty. I was grateful that night that I was not dependent upon a written speech.

The magazine articles I dictate to my secretary, and of course correct them sometimes two or three times. The first third of the autobiography was written on the train when the president was campaigning in 1938. You see, on the train your only interruptions are when you have to go out at a station, stand on the back platform, listen to people's speeches; the president has to make one at every stop. Frequently, it's the same one. But, in between, you have uninterrupted hours. I dictated the autobiography almost entirely from memory. (20:58)

[Genevieve Forbes Herrick:] Well, that should clarify the subject fully. Now I have a question that I'm as anxious to ask as are your many friends: where in the world do you find time to do all of this, Mrs. Roosevelt?

[ER:] I try to plan my day and set aside a definite time for my column. The other writings, during the busy winter and spring season, are usually done on trips. I've written columns--well, I even remember one written on a rock--uh with a typewriter on the rock beside the road. I remember one column which was written at an--the opening of the Skyline Drive. The president had to wait after his speech while Miss [Malvina] Thompson typed the column; we were sitting in the automobile and the little jumpseat was up to hold the typewriter. And the president's secretary, with his head in the window, was asking us to "hurry, hurry, hurry," until I finally told him if he went away, I'd get finished more quickly. [clears throat]

Another one, I remember, was written on a destroyer coming down from Vancouver when I left the president's party. And that trip has some very amusing memories. For when we arrived in Seattle, it was low tide and we had to transfer across a very narrow plank, first to another boat, and then climb an almost perpendicular plank up to the top of the dock. I was accustomed to boats; Miss Thompson was not, and I had a feeling that if I even looked at her, she would probably tell me she couldn't climb that plank. So I went gaily ahead and never even turned around to see what happened to her. I've even dictated to Miss Thompson in -- when the motor was going.

[Genevieve Forbes Herrick:] Well if time is money, Mrs. Roosevelt, you certainly spend your allowance wisely. In addition to all of these writings, I know you must receive many letters. Just how many do you get and what do people write about?

[ER:] Last year, I received about a hundred and ten thousand letters. And people write about almost every subject under the sun. They ask for help and advice on personal questions; they describe a difficult situation which touches their lives. I'm asked to find people who are missing; I'm asked to autograph quilt blocks, stamps, and covers for stamp collectors. Many children write for my autograph. Educators write about education; authors about their books. Sometimes, people write their whole life histories. Many write their criticism of things that I've said or done--whether I've crossed my t's and dotted my i's correctly. And I always read the unfavorable criticisms with care, because very often, they are helpful. (23:42)

[Genevieve Forbes Herrick:] What do you do with all the letters? I imagine that you take care of as many as possible personally, but you certainly cannot answer--much less investigate--all of them. What do you do about those other requests so that perfectly worthy people may receive at least the courtesy of a sympathetic attention?

[ER:] In many of the government departments, there are special people designated to take care of the mail addressed to the president and myself which relates to the work of that department. I can, therefore, forward a good deal of my mail so that it reaches the proper hands. Other requests, I refer to friends or agencies with which I have some contact. We spend a great deal of time trying to find ways of helping. But of course, we cannot always succeed. (24:30)

[Genevieve Forbes Herrick:] Well, I feel a little relieved that you can forward some of your mail. I can just picture anyone trying to answer one hundred and ten thousand letters.

[ER:] Mrs. Herrick, I see you have some more questions. But suppose you hold them until after we see what Mr. Grauer has to tell us today?

[Ben Grauer:] Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt. Ladies, today I have an explanation to make. When you unwrap your first cake of SweetHeart Soap, you may wonder about its unusual oval shape, but you won't wonder long. As you begin to whisk up rich, cleansing lather with your cake of SweetHeart Soap, you'll notice how wonderfully comfortable and easy it is to handle. You'll see that it's specially designed to fit your hand. Each cake of SweetHeart Soap snuggles into your hand and stays there instead of leaping out of control when you least expect it. And there you have the main reason for SweetHeart's unique oval shape. It's to add to your pleasure and enjoyment when you use genuine SweetHeart Soap. And it's one more reason why millions of loyal SweetHeart users say there's no other soap like it. And now, it's my privilege to return the microphone to Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt.

[ER:] And I will turn the microphone over to Mrs. Herrick for our next question.

[Genevieve Forbes Herrick:] And the next question, I see, comes from a woman. She wishes to know if you wear the same dress twice and if you buy your own clothes and if you plan your wardrobe far ahead, or just when you need something new to wear?

[ER:] Of course I wear my dresses over and over again. But I try at the big, official functions not to wear the same dress more than twice in a season. This is really to help the newspaper girls who have to describe my clothes for the benefit of their readers. I'm afraid I've been a trial to them, because when they ask me in advance what I'm going to wear, I usually cannot tell them because I never think about it until I'm ready to dress.

I always plan what I need every spring and autumn and go and buy it myself. I have too little time to really shop, and so the few places that I go to regularly get together a number of things from a letter I write them describing my future needs. From this collection, I can very quickly pick out the things I like, and the people who help me usually know my taste, and they know also that I have very little time to devote to clothes. (26:52)

[Genevieve Forbes Herrick:] Well, Mrs. Roosevelt, shopping can be just as much a job as it can be a pleasure. So, I really don't know whether to feel sorry for you or to envy you for not having much time for shopping.

During one of your recent broadcasts, you mentioned the visit of the king and queen of England, and that's brought many questions. Your listeners would like to have you tell them something more of your impressions and memories of that visit.

[ER:] The king and queen of England were simple and charming. I look back upon their visit with great pleasure. I was deeply impressed with the vision and ability to understand the problems of the ordinary

individual evidenced by both the king and queen. Perhaps the thing which impressed me most was the training which makes a man in the king's position do whatever is expected of him graciously and without complaint, though I'm sure there must be times when weariness and discomfort make him want to rebel.

[Genevieve Forbes Herrick:] Now Mrs. Roosevelt, in a way of proving how varied are the subjects about which your listeners write, I'm going to jump all the way from the royal visit to the servant problem in the White House. Who, may I ask, employs the butlers and maids?

[ER:] The housekeeper interviews all the prospective servants. They must undergo a physical examination. Their wages are paid by the government. The president pays for their food out of his salary. The army engineer in charge of the White House watches over the house itself: the accounts, the purchases, and he has general supervision of the whole staff.

[Genevieve Forbes Herrick:] I think I might close this inquisition with a very thoughtful question, which is uppermost in many women's minds. In this world which we have seen change so much, and which may change even more swiftly and more fundamentally, what can we as women do to safeguard the principles of our democracy, and make our democracy even more real and more full of meaning?

[ER:] In my opinion, we women can dedicate ourselves to the improvement of our own citizenship, and through our examples, improve that of the younger members of our families. We can make sure that we really believe the things that we stand for, and make all the necessary sacrifices to serve our nation for the benefit of the people as a whole, and thus fulfill the responsibility of every individual citizen in a democracy.

[Genevieve Forbes Herrick:] Mrs. Roosevelt, that brings us close to the end of our questions. But since I've been asking so many questions for your listeners, I would now like to ask one for myself: next Tuesday, I'll be at the listening end of this microphone, and I'd like to know what will be your subject on that day?

[ER:] I'm going to talk about Hyde Park, Mrs. Herrick, because next to the White House, that seems to interest people most. And now, let me thank you for your splendid help. I'm sure all of us join in the hope of having you visit us soon again. (29:48)

[Ben Grauer:] Thank you very much, Mrs. Roosevelt, and Mrs. Herrick. In the good old days, ladies, there wasn't much choice in bath and beauty soaps. So when SweetHeart Soap came along with its wonderful purity and lovely, delicate fragrance, it's no wonder people hailed it with delight. SweetHeart Soap became a household word almost overnight. But just listen to this: today, with all the many brands of soap on the market, pure SweetHeart Soap goes right on holding old friends and attracting new ones by the thousands. We think the reason must be that SweetHeart's purity and mildness are a real help to natural complexion charm. But one thing is certain: you won't know until you yourself see how much SweetHeart Soap can add to your pleasure and satisfaction. Get pure, economical SweetHeart Soap this very day, and accept no substitute when you ask for it.

[Theme music 30:45-30:52]

[Ben Grauer:] [music continues softly] And this concludes another visit with Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. Mrs. Roosevelt comes to call again next Tuesday, same time, same station, and you are cordially invited to be with us. Meantime, treat yourself and your family to the fine product that brings you these programs: SweetHeart Soap, famous for fifty years as the soap that agrees with your skin. And now, it's goodbye until next Tuesday, 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]

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