

## THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1950

Description: In this segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's question about child rearing in the modern age.

Participants: ER, Elliott Roosevelt

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(0:03)

[ER:] Have you got any more questions, or have they run out?

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Oh no! Not at all. We've got a stack of questions here for you for many, many days to come. Uh one of the --

[ER:] I'm appalled by the amount of information I'm handing out on these questions. [ER laughs] [Elliott Roosevelt: Ah but --] Someone will say some day that I should keep quiet! [ER laughs]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] No no, no no, the idea is that you express your opinion; other people don't have to agree with you, but we can-we can sort of uh have a good [ER: Rub minds.] rubbing of the minds. [Elliott Roosevelt laughs] [ER: All right.] Now this is a real one for you, I-I'm going to learn a lot on how to handle my daughter, Chandler, from your answers to this: "Taking into consideration the tempo of today, how much freedom should young people be given? Makeup, dates, use of the family car, late hours, chaperones, etc." [ER and Elliot Roosevelt laugh]

[ER:] Well now, you know that --

[Elliott Roosevelt:] You're a grandmother, you know. [Elliott Roosevelt laughs]

[ER:] That's a very unfair question to ask because I am a grandmother, and because the um uh children growing up today about whom these questions are should be handled by their parents. I am two generations back, and uh you just said you were going to learn about handling Chandler, but you handle Chandler much better than I handle Chandler.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Oh ho! But you have different ideas!

[ER:] And her mother handles them better than-I could possibly handle her--

[Elliott Roosevelt:] But you have different ideas from her mother and myself! [Elliott Roosevelt laughs]

[ER:] Well, I don't think I have different ideas. I have a little different um background, and of course, I was brought up differently, and I brought up my children differently. But um I realized the change in the times when I was young. And uh and when I brought up uh Anna, for instance, um I had been taught that to use makeup was, oh, practically beyond the pale because -- [Elliott Roosevelt: Sinful.] Well, only actresses used makeup. [Elliott Roosevelt laughs] and to be an actress was really quite a dreadful thing. And - [ER laughs] and so --

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Oh my goodness. You say Sarah Bernhardt was a dreadful woman? Fallen woman type?

[ER:] Oh no, not fallen woman type. But while you might -- if they became very great uh people like Sarah Bernhardt or [Eleonora] Duse, you might look at them from afar as something really very wonderful, but um you kind of whispered that perhaps their private lives weren't all they should be. And - [ER laughs] and so um you weren't expected -- I mean I-I saw in my young life when one or two people that I'd heard of wanted to go on the stage, the whole family was practically in mourning. [Elliott Roosevelt laughs] It was a terrible thing to do! [Elliott Roosevelt: Well now --] Well now, [Elliot Roosevelt: Now, that's --] uh that was a conservative background!

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well now, when your daughter was growing up you didn't like for her to wear makeup when she was fifteen or sixteen.

[ER:] No, I didn't like it all, because I had been brought up that way! I thought it was terrible to wear makeup. (3:13)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] I remember when she used to sneak lipstick, [ER laughs: Yes.] and you used to just die when you caught her with lipstick on!

[ER:] Well, it was just exactly the same about smoking. I felt smoking was perfectly awful for a woman, and then the thing that really --

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Now, when do you think uh to-in the modern day and generation when everybody smokes, men and women uh smoke, when do you think it is a good time to say to a child: "All right, you can smoke if you want to?"

[ER:] Well, I think the thing to do really is to put it on a health basis. Um a boy who wants to be top notch in athletics is better off not to smoke until he's fully grown, 'til he's really fully developed. And I think the same thing with a girl, and a girl today should take a great interest in -- at least until she is completely grown, giving herself the opportunity to have as good a physical setup as she can possibly have. I don't mean by that that she has to become uh um an absolute athletic type of girl, [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] but I mean that it is really incumbent on everyone, I think, to build um as strong uh as uh healthy person as they can build. Now, I think that's where you should put smoking and drinking and uh, again, in moderation, my old theme of moderation. That once they have accomplished that, once they have their full growth and are strong and healthy, then if they do things in moderation, it doesn't hurt them.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, in actuality, uh um most of us uh do not achieve maturity uh as to physical being until we're twenty, twenty-one years of age.

[ER:] Well, that's what I should feel, if you-if you can do it. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] Now, if a child says, "I'm too unhappy. I'm different from all my --," then my-my own feeling would be you would attempt to make it as reasonable uh as possible.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] All right, what about dating? How uh -- for instance I remember when-when Anna was growing up, you used to send her off to a dance and she would have some -- [ER: She would have a maid wait for her.] She'd have a boy and uh who'd come for her and take her to the dance, and she was absolutely miserable with this horrible maid just running around after 'em. [ER: Yes, I realize uh --] You didn't give her any good time at all.

[ER:] I always um-uh had somebody go and wait at the dance and bring her home, and I realize now that it was completely --

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Didn't you trust your friends' boy-boys at all?

[ER:] No, I was not brought up that way, darling. I was brought up to believe that a girl must be chaperoned, and --

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, I'll show you how different the world is today. Now, Chandler since she has been in the third grade -- and she's now going on seventeen -- uh when she-she started dating when she was in the third grade. [Elliott Roosevelt laughs]

[ER:] Well-well, I know all that. [Elliott Roosevelt laughs] I don't uh-I don't tell you that it's -- and I-I think perhaps I was too severe with Anna, but I never felt like it really did Anna any harm. Um heaven knows she had plenty of um freedom later on. (6:50)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes, but I think that uh that Chandler has uh um -- [ER: More maturity, perhaps.] more maturity at her age than Anna had at hers. [ER: Yes, I think at the same age] And uh a greater sense of values.

[ER:] Yeah, I think Chandler has, but then I think that's because um she has been given a chance to talk things over with her elders much more than children were either in your generation or in my generation. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] Um I do think the younger generation -- uh I don't know whether they all do, but I know that I've watched you with your children. You do talk things over with them in a way that would have been thought -- uh well I was thought to talk things over much too much with you by Granny. And um and I don't think I talked them over half as much as you do with Chandler.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] No that's true. Now-now I'd like to ask you about --

[ER:] And Tony, too.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Oh, well all of them, right on down to David, age eight. [ER and Elliott Roosevelt laugh] He gets talked to just as though he was grown up! [ER laughs] But uh what do you consider a correct time of life to allow a child to learn how to drive the car and to be allowed to take the family car out?

[ER:] Well I think that's a very difficult thing to put purely on age, because what it really depends on is judgement. If a child has developed enough judgement so that they don't do the things which endanger not only themselves but the rest of the public, um then they've reached the age when they can be allowed to learn to drive a car and use a car. Um but you see in driving a car today, you have to have judgement both for yourself and the other person, because many accidents happen not because of something you did, but because of something somebody else did. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] And you have to be quick enough and wise enough to watch. I remember very well driving down the road one day and seeing three young people in a car ahead of me. And those young people risked their lives and the lives of everybody else on the road weaving in and out, spurting to pass, passing and then slowing down. And doing this until finally they had a smasher, and it wasn't their car, and they didn't have any insurance. And I happened to still be behind having watched this thing, and I realized that they were young people that shouldn't have had the right to drive a car, because one of them had had a little to drink. They weren't drunk, but uh their judgement wasn't any good!

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yeah, but uh now for instance, I remember when you learned to drive a car [ER: Yes, I drove it into the gatepost.] [ER laughs] many years ago. Uh you drove into a gatepost, and I think I was twelve years old at the time and had already learned how to drive the car, and I was a much better driver than you were! (10:06)

[ER:] That's quite true, but when I had learned how to drive the car, I had more judgement than you had!

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Oh never! Never, Mother! [ER: Oh yes, yes!] Oh, never! [ER: At that age!] [ER laughs] I-I would say that um my son, aged fourteen now, and under the laws of the state of Texas uh where he goes to school he is allowed to have a license. And uh --

[ER:] I didn't know they had licenses in Texas, I thought they just drove.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Oh no! [ER laughs] No, he has a license. Now, he learned how to drive a tractor at the age of uh I think it was uh nine. And uh at the age of twelve he had as much judgement as any grown-up with-in the handling of any vehicle

[ER:] On the road?

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes.

[ER:] I'm not so sure.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] [Elliott Roosevelt laughs] Well, I'm sorry that we have to go one to another part of the program. [ER laughs] I want to continue this!

[ER:] All right, then we have to come to an end. But I think twelve is too young. [ER laughs]

(11:09)

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