

THE ELEANOR AND ANNA ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

December 15th, 1948 (catalog date)

Description: In this segment, ER discusses her Christmas shopping.

Participants: ER

[ER:] Thank you, Anna. One of the most impressive things on returning to the United States from abroad is the beautiful shop windows at Christmastime with their profusion of inviting gifts. There is such an abundance in this country compared to the countries of Europe where I have been recently. And while we rejoice in the fact that there is so much in this country in this happy season, it is a rejoicing which for me is tinged with sadness that so few of these beautiful gifts are available for people and especially children elsewhere in the world. New York looks especially beautiful this year, perhaps because I've been away. There is a feeling of the spirit of Christmas that is hard to find anywhere else in the world. The shops with their abundance of bright and colorful gifts, the green Christmas trees along Park Avenue, the huge Christmas tree outside Radio City, from where we are broadcasting, all create an atmosphere of Christmas cheer that is extremely contagious. A number of people have asked me how I manage to get my Christmas shopping done, since I've been away at the United Nations Assembly in Paris. The answer is that I manage it by doing my Christmas shopping all the year round.

Since I'm busy or away so much of the time I simply sandwich my shopping in on the fly, whenever I get a minute or see something that I think would make an attractive or appropriate present for someone I know. Having such a large family with so many children and grandchildren as well as many old friends, I have to buy several hundred gifts which is really quite a task although a very pleasant one. Our Val-Kill Farms at Hyde Park are a help when it comes to Christmas gifts since there are a number of things from there which make very practical gifts. We usually give jars of honey from our own bees and Yule logs hewn from our own trees which make a very colorful and appropriate gift when bedecked with candles. Another very nice gift, I think, are Christmas trees, thousands of which my husband planted at Hyde Park and which are now maturing and very beautiful. My son Elliott and his wife Faye are now raising these trees and they usually present me with as many as I need for gifts. Since I've had to spend a good deal of time abroad the past year, I did quite a good deal of my Christmas shopping overseas.

Over there as well as in this country I tried to find gifts that not only were attractive and appropriate, but to get them from sources whereby buying them I could at the same time assist some charity. In England, for instance, I bought some beautiful hand knit sweaters made by the ladies of the Women's Voluntary Services. These not only make lovely gifts but the money from them is turned over by the women's group to the British government. And of course we pay in American dollars and that helps the British government to rebuild that country's war damaged economy. In Paris there are not the many beautiful things they had in the years before the war but there are many attractive things. Some dresses, of course, some lingerie, handkerchiefs, gloves, and perfumes. The very expensive dresses cost more there than the higher priced dresses in this country it seemed to me. But there are marvelous French dressmakers, not quite in the top range, where you can get a beautiful dress of fine materials for from fifty to a hundred dollars. France is also famous for hats and a little woman who made hats for some French women I knew came and made hats for Ms. Thompson and me, just to suit us. And they cost twelve dollars apiece and I'm quite sure that in this country I'd have paid a good deal more. One curious thing about shopping in France is that while they have beautiful gifts for little girls, especially the wonderful French dolls, it's almost impossible to find a gift for boys.

One reason for my year-round shopping is to try to have it all done in time to avoid the Christmas rush. But being away so long I'm afraid that I've failed to finish my shopping early this Christmas. As a result I'm going to have to finish up like any other last minute shopper, bucking the crowds in the New

York stores. However, although that is a rather strenuous chore it is certainly an exciting and pleasant one and we all should be very grateful that our country has such an abundance of things in this season of joy which is so much less joyous in almost all the other countries of the world. Now here is my daughter Anna again.

(5:18)

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