

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

July 24th, 1951

Description: In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's letter regarding the British attitude toward American spy-hunting and the danger of communist spies in the United Kingdom. In the interview segment, ER interviews Major Ruth Weidner and Captain Jonita Ruth Bonham, nurses who work in flying wounded soldiers to hospitals in Korea.

Participants: ER, Elliot, Ruth Weidner, Jonita Ruth Bonham, Ben Grauer

[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:] Major Ruth Weidner and Captain Jonita Ruth Bonham are the guests on Mrs. Roosevelt's program today. Major Weidner is Assistant Chief of the Air Force Nurse Corps, and Captain Bonham is the first flight nurse in Korea to receive the Distinguished Flying Cross for her work in the air evacuation of wounded men from Korea. They have much to tell us about the very wonderful service being performed by the "Angels with Silver Wings," as they're commonly known. Mrs. Roosevelt will introduce her guests after we have discussed a letter sent in by a listener, and now our announcer with a few words for us.

[Break 1:18-1:36]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mr. John Curly of New York City has written to Mrs. Roosevelt about his concern over the two missing British diplomats. He says, "Dear Mrs. Roosevelt, I've just read an article in the paper which says that a prominent Briton was quoted in a London paper as knowing two persons holding sinister information concerning these diplomats. He was also quoted as believing [Guy] Burgess [1911-1963] to be definitely something more than just a member of the Communist Party. Also in another New York paper, an editorial states, 'Until now, level-headed Britons have been critical and scornful of the witch hunt in the United States, following the Alger Hiss [1904-1996] case.' It was the last thing they wanted to see in this country, which prides itself on its tolerance and reasonableness. They were upset by the discovery of atomic spies in their midst, but they were somewhat comforted by the fact that [Klaus] Fuchs [1911-1988] and [Bruno] Pontecorvo [1913-1993] had been aliens, distinct from pureblooded, British-bred citizens. Now the loyalty of the latter has been shaken by the disappearance of [Donald] Maclean and Burgess [1913-1983]. I think the British are locking the barn after the cow is stolen, and instead of scorning our investigations, should uh clean house themselves. They are endangering all of us. I would very much like to hear you discuss this, Mrs. Roosevelt."

[ER:] Well, I don't think anyone knows anything about these two Britishers. I have heard all kinds of conflicting things. Among other things, I've heard that these two were rather gay gentlemen, and um it is possible that um they've been kidnapped, it might easily happen. Um what would happen after that, I don't know. Uh I was um appalled to read not long ago that uh one of our AP people who'd been taken prisoner was induced to um say that he had been a spy right after the AP here had announced that uh they had-- he had nothing to do with spying and would do nothing of the kind. Um so that, of course, one does not know if these two Britishers have been kidnapped, what they may be induced to say when they [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] um reappear, if they ever do. But um I don't think that's any reason for feeling that the

British have been lax. Uh I-I think the British method is in many ways better than ours. They um are really able to pick up any real communists, I think, just as uh our FBI is able to, and they have not had the kind of hysteria which we have been through, and which we are still going through. [ER clears throat] Um I-I have no idea how this thing will eventually come out until we do know what happened to them and what they do. Um there's no way of telling. But I don't see why um for instance, we should uh feel that we are on so much better ground in doing it the way we have been doing it. Um none of the things we have done have prevented um the fact that this AP correspondent has been brought to acknowledge, just exactly the way the Roman Catholic bishop was brought to acknowledge, that he had been spying. Now of course, the methods used on people to make them do this sort of thing are outrageous methods, and the type of trial that they are getting today under Soviet-dominated courts [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] is simply a farce and a perfect outrage to the feelings of justice and the rest of the world.

And I think all of us deeply resent the treatment of uh religious people in this way, though without a doubt I suppose that the--these -- in these countries, they would justify what they are doing and perhaps with a show of um of something on their side, because you must remember that they are wanting nothing done against their theories. And just the mere fact that these people live and work and probably express their opinions, whether they are the bishop or the priests of the Roman Catholic Church, or whether they are our own correspondents, the mere fact that they live in the country and uh undoubtedly show in little ways their disapproval of certain things they see, uh would appear to the people who are anxious to have nothing criticized as-as in itself be um an act that was detrimental to the--what was going on in the country. But even if you accept it, that anyone from outside who was residing in a country of this kind must by his mere attitude towards what was going on uh do them harm. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] Uh still a travesty on justice, which is put up in these trials and the methods that must be used to bring about these confessions, which are no confessions, um must outrage the sense of justice of the peoples of the world, and I think, in the end, will bring um great harm to [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] uh these--the whole Soviet system. (8:05)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, what do you think uh this gentleman means by uh stating that the British have such a different system from what we have and that they uh-uh--[Elliott clears throat] it seems to me that the gentleman has been reading some newspaper articles uh-uh declaring opinions about Great Britain and uh not so much--has not looked in really into the whole question of what the British security system is.

[ER:] Well, perhaps he doesn't know how very carefully uh they do watch uh in Great Britain. But on the other hand, I think what he is talking about is the fact that they have not set up in their Parliament any Un-American Activities Committee, which for them would have to be an Un-British Activities Committee.

[Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] They have not put uh under suspicion people who held different-- differing opinions purely because their opinions were different, and they have tolerated people who even, in high places, like the Dean of Canterbury, the Red Dean, [Elliott Roosevelt:] Mhm.] um who openly advocated um communism, and they haven't put them in prison. The Red Dean's just been to Russia and received [Elliott coughs] a -- and probably will be-- will go back to Great Britain. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] They have--they have assumed that they were strong enough um not to be hurt by known activities, do you see? Whereas we have--have uh taken the position that um anything might hurt us, and that we didn't have any strength in ourselves to stand up against it. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] Um of the two, I prefer the British attitude, because I think we're quite strong enough to stand up against it, and I don't like to see a spy system comparable to the Russian growing up in our country. (10:12)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes. Well of course, uh the thing that really bothers me the most is, has there been any uh published information that either Mr. Maclean or Mr. Burgess uh definitely uh were communists or in a--[ER: No. There is only--] on the side of the communists?

[ER:] There--there was--I didn't read it, but I--apparently, from what he writes, there must have been a Britisher who said that he had some inside information as to what they were, but he didn't say openly what it was. Now, I didn't happen to read that, so I don't know. And as far as I know, uh there is--there is always um a certain amount of suspicion and worry when two people, who happen to be employed in a part of the government where they must have certain knowledge, disappear [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] and suddenly drop out of--uh all view. But there are a great many things that may have happened, and until they clear it up, I don't know uh how we're going to know.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yeah. Well of course, to my way of thinking, uh--uh we have uncovered uh certain people who definitely uh did work against the security of this country, uh and uh the British have uncovered some too, but I don't see that in either country that there has been uh a great uh um disparity in the--in the number of people who are working against their government. I think that Great Britain has been singularly free of uh subversive elements. (11:58)

[ER:] Well, they found--they--we found, of course, those scientists, and they--they found them, and in Canada they found the same thing, and we have had--had um a number of things happen in this country. But um that is bound to happen, there are always certain human beings who for one reason or another, uh sometimes out of idealism, sometimes out of a spirit of adventure, there are a million reasons why a few people will always um be weak. You can't uh--you can't uh put your finger on the exact things that are going to tempt different people. [Elliott Roosevelt:] No.] But I don't think there is any widespread uh situation, and I do think the important thing is for the um constituted authorities whose job it is to be given um what they need in the way of appropriations, uh what they need in the way of men, and uh allow them to go ahead and do their job, [Elliott Roosevelt: Yes.] and not get everybody all stirred up all the time to the point of being exactly what the Russians would like: suspicious of everyone.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes. Well I think that answers the uh letter from Mr. Curly, and I see now that uh it's time for us to go on to another part of the program.

(Break 13:33-13:42)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] When the North Korean Reds crossed the thirty-eighth parallel on June the twenty fifth, 1950, to give the United Nations its first real test as a war-preventing body, there were exactly ten Air Force nurses in the Pacific area who had been trained as flight nurses to work on cargo planes evacuating the wounded and sick to hospitals in the United States. One of these nurses is with Mrs. Roosevelt today, accompanied by her superior officer. Mother, will you introduce your guests?

(Break 14:16-14:26)

[ER:] Thank you, Elliott. I'm happy to introduce to you first Major Ruth Weidner, Assistant Chief of the Air Force Nurse Corps. Major Weidner.

[Ruth Weidner:] I'm very happy to have this opportunity to come here this morning and talk to you, Mrs. Roosevelt.

[ER:] I'm very happy to have you. And now I want to introduce Captain Jonita Ruth Bonham, United States Air Force nurse, who has been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for her outstanding medical work in the air evacuation of wounded men from Korea. Captain Bonham.

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] How do you do? I'm so happy to be here, really.

[ER:] Well, I'm very glad to have you both. And now, first of all, Captain Weidner, as background for our talk today, would you tell us something about the Air Force Nurse Corps? Something of its history, and its work today, but before that, perhaps you'd tell us uh a little about yourself. What were you doing when you came into the service again?

[Ruth Weidner:] Well, prior to coming into the service again, I had been at Columbia University completing my education and getting a Master's Degree in Nursing Education in preparation for going on in the work in the Air Force Nurse Corps.

[ER:] Oh, I see. So you really prepared for-for this work.

[Ruth Weidner:] Yes, indeed.

[ER:] Well then, uh--well now, go ahead and tell us about the uh Air-the Air Force Nurse Corps.

[Ruth Weidner:] The Air Force Nurse Corps became an independent service, that is, a part of the Air Force Medical Service on July 1, 1949. And since that time, we have been taking care of the Air Force uh personnel, their families, their wives and children, and today we are trying very hard to obtain 2,000 additional nurses to carry on the c-the service, that is, the care of these people.

[ER:] Were you in the service in the last war?

[Ruth Weidner:] Yes, I was in the service in the last war, and served in this country and in the CBI

[China-Burma-India Theater].

[ER:] You must then have known Dr. [Howard A.] Rusk [1901-1989], didn't you? Uh or known of him, because I--

[Ruth Weidner:] Yes indeed, I do know of Dr. Rusk. I haven't had the pleasure of meeting him.

[ER:] Of course, that was my first introduction to the Air Force Medical Service because I knew Dr. Rusk, and I came to be very much interested in what he was doing, and in the Air Force Medical Service, because it seemed to me the best kind of care in rehabilitation in many cases uh that I saw anywhere during the last war. So um that was how I got my first introduction to the Nurses Air Force Corps and the nur-- the whole Medical Service to the Air Force in the last war. Well now, I'd like to ask you, um how many are there now, uh nurses in the Air Force-- in the Air Force services?

[Ruth Weidner:] We have approximately two thousand nurses--

[ER:] Two thousand?

[Ruth Weidner:] That's right, and at the--among these nurses, there are those who are serving in the hospital that is a part of the-the medical team doing their-doing the-the care of the patient, and then we have the other type, a group of girls who are acting as air evacuation nurses, and they serve on the air-evac team. And of course, we feel that neither team can operate without the assistance of the other, so that we do need nurses to serve in either duty. That is, as a hospital nurse at an Air Force hospital, or those who are interested in flying, to take care of our boys as they are being taken from one part of the country or the world, to another by air.

[ER:] Well now, uh you said-- did I understand you to say that you need more nurses in the service?

[Ruth Weidner:] Yes indeed, Mrs. Roosevelt. We need an additional two thousand nurses, and that is our goal for July 1, 1952.

[ER:] You need two thousand more?

[Major Ruth Weidner:] Yes indeed, because you see, the-the Air Force is expanding, and with that expansion comes the uh the--more and more hospitals, and in each hospital we-we-we are going to have a hospital team, and each team must have its professional nurses.

[ER:] Well now, how many of these new nurses that you want um are--should be flight nurses?

[Ruth Weidner:] Well, that depends upon the-the needs of the Air Force at the time. Many of our nurses are interested in becoming flight nurses, and if they uh make it known, we make every effort to see that they can get to the school. The age limit for a flight nurse is between twenty-one and thirty-six years of age.

[ER:] What is the age limit for-for the hospital nurse?

[Ruth Weidner:] Well, for the hospital nurse, the age limit is between twenty-one and forty-five, so that you can see, there is that difference because the Air Force nurse who is doing air evacuation and helping in uh caring for the-the boys, must go--undergo a physical that is a little more strenuous, and therefore the age limitation does enter into the picture.

[ER:] What is your proportion now, in your present two thousand members between the two?

[Ruth Weidner:] Approximately, we have approximately ten percent of nurses who are flight nurses. Now, they are potential. Wh--not all of those nurses who are called flight nurses are participating in the evacuation of patients at the present time. Right now, we have about two hundred and fifty nurses who are performing duties in-of air evacuation.

[ER:] I see. Well, that's very good background to begin on. And now, Captain Bonham, I uh understand that you are the first flight nurse to receive the coveted award of the Distinguished Flying Cross. Would you--

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] The first one in this war, Mrs. Roosevelt.

[ER:] The first one in this war? Would you tell our listeners how you came to receive this award?

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Well ah, we were flying in combat areas, and uh that was the main reason that I was awarded it, was the flight that we made routinely into uh Korea. And uh of course, we did crash and that was part of the award too, but uh that could happen to anybody. (21:15)

[ER:] [ER laughs] Crashing could happen to anybody.

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] You say it'll never happen to me, but--

[ER:] You know, I have a-a very great respect for uh the nurses who fly, because my son told me in the last war, in World War II, one very exciting flight. Now he was in the Marines, so he was flying--he was one of the Marine raiders--but it was um on a flight back from an area where they got lost, [Jonita Ruth Bonham: Oh.] and they um had one nurse and a load of wounded men. And suddenly, he realized as an

officer, that they should be landing in Honolulu, and he saw no signs of Honolulu. [Jonita Ruth Bonham laughs] So he went forward to the pilot, and the pilot said he had no idea where they were, and-and they had just so much uh gas of course, and so uh they told the nurse, and she had to try and prepare her patients for what they would do -- many of them were badly wounded patients and couldn't do anything.

[Jonita Ruth Bonham: Mhm.] And um so he said he had never admired anyone so much, that she gave them all tea, and she pepped them all up as much as she could, and she behaved as calmly as though it was usual to be flying around nearly an hour after they were supposed to have landed. And finally, just ten minutes before their supply was exhausted, they sighted the place they wanted to be, and they came in safely! But it was a very close call, and he said he never had had such a feeling of absolute admiration for the training and the-the way that girl carried the whole situation. Because the men sensed that something was wrong, but she was so perfectly calm about it, and perfectly eh um matter of fact in everything she did that those who were able to of course put on whatever you're supposed to put on, life preservers and so forth. But um uh he-he just uh--I remember his telling me about it, and saying that from his point of view, it was one of the most remarkable exhibitions of discipline and real self-control. So that uh -- I just wanted to pay that tribute to the nurses--[Jonita Ruth Bonham: Thank you.] who fly in these kind of things.

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] In the school of air-evac, that's one thing that we are taught, definitely, is how to uh relax and just take it in your stride if things like that do happen, but they don't happen very often.

[ER:] They don't happen very often. Well uh I-I think it's wonderful to have the uh-- to have the training, because it is training.

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Oh yes.

[ER:] It's a great deal of training [Jonita Ruth Bonham: Oh yes, it certainly is.] to give you that power of self-control. And um I think that uh for a woman to learn that, no matter what she does in later life, I--that will stand her in good stead, in whatever situation she is. Now I see that our announcer wants to say a word, and then we'll come right back to this-our talk.

(Break 24:51-25:13)

[ER:] Now I come back to my interview with Major Weidner of the Air Force Nurse Corps, and Captain Bonham, who won the Distinguished Flying Cross. Uh Captain Bonham was a little uh modest I think in telling us about the crash and the reasons for uh getting her Flying Cross. I wonder if you, Major Weidner, wouldn't like to add a word to her description of what happened in that case?

[Ruth Weidner:] Well, I think that one of the most interesting parts of uh her story is that uh she was prepared to meet the situation, and she tells about after having gotten in the water, that she was calm, and she knew that by--because of her training, the best thing to do was to float and wait. And I'd like to have her tell us more, Mrs. Roosevelt, of what happened from that point, because she does it so vividly.

[ER:] Well now, you tell us more about it.

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Well, when you're in the water, you just have to relax, there's nothing else you can do. And there was a lot of luggage floating, so first you hold onto that until it became pretty well waterlogged, and then when it becomes necessary to swim, we swam. We did manage to inflate two life-rafts, and uh-uh--

[ER:] Did you give instructions for inflating in the water?

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Yes, yes. Some of--we had all these boys aboard ship that uh hadn't flown before, and they knew nothing about the life rafts aboard the ship, except they did recognize them as such. So uh as soon as they saw them they were wondering how to inflate them, so it was real simple, and I explained that to them, so we did have two life rafts, and uh once the boys were gathered around them, all we had to do was sit there and wait, really, and try to keep from becoming dist--

[ER:] How long-how long were you in the water?

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Three hours, Mrs. Roosevelt.

[ER:] Three hours? Before they picked you up?

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Yes, ma'am. Mhm.

[ER:] And you were badly wounded.

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Yes. Some of the boys were too.

[ER:] And uh was everybody saved?

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Oh no, no. But twenty-eight of us got out.

[ER:] Twenty-eight of you got out?

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Yes.

[ER:] Well um, that uh was really an extraordinary thing for people who were wounded, I feel, to be able to hold on for three hours. Didn't it take a tremendous amount of uh-- to feel as though you couldn't do it any longer? (27:39)

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Well, Mrs. Roosevelt, it just never dawned on me that we could drown out there. You just think, well it can't happen to me, other people have drowned, yes, but not me. So I didn't.

[ER:] That is a wonderful sort of uh instinct of self-preservation, but I think uh is particularly active in the young. And when--it's a wonderful thing, it's why so many young people can do things and come through that uh older people can't. Where were you hospitalized afterwards?

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Uh at the 118th Station Hospital in southern Japan uh to begin with, and then on up to Tokyo General, and then I was air-evaced -- working both ways -- came back to the States and I think air evacuation's here to stay, after being a patient [Jonita Ruth Bonham laughs]. (28:30)

[ER:] Well, uh are-are you feeling now perfectly well?

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Perfectly well. And I'm going back to duty right away.

[ER:] You're going back to work?

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Oh yes, mhm. Maxwell Air Force Base.

[ER:] Well, I think that's perfectly grand. And I-I just flew around the Pacific for five weeks during the last war, in uh summer of '43, and I used to wonder how it was that anybody ever found those little atoms of islands, I used to think that it was most likely that they would-they would say to me now to look out of the window um in two hours you will see uh a little green, and that will be where we're going. And I'd say yes and appear convinced, but I was never very convinced that it would be there, but it always was!

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] That's always a miracle to me too. I think navigators are wonderful.

[ER:] Yes, so do I. Um before your crash, how frequently did you have to fly?

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] We flew every day. Ah sometimes we made two trips going into Korea, but that was only when we were going into the southern part, um when the flights were rather short.

[ER:] I see. Um how is air evacuation accomplished?

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Well, it takes the cooperation of everybody: the ground force hospitals, and the air force hospitals, and everybody has to cooperate, really. And they're doing a wonderful job doing that now.

[ER:] Well, how-how do you get them onboard, for instance?

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Oh, we have loading teams uh to load the planes, and everybody's taught. Course um the flight surgeon and the nurse uh check the patients and decide which ones should be placed where, where they can receive the best attention. And uh we have regular loading teams though, that do the actual loading.

[ER:] The regular loading teams that carry them on. Um all your evacuation flights were between Korea and Japan, weren't they?

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Well, yes. And then we flew from southern Japan up to Tokyo to uh start the patients back to the States.

[ER:] I see. Well now, what are your actual duties during the flight?

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Practically the same as um in a hospital, except we do mostly emergency treatments and dressings, things that just shouldn't be left any longer. Um if it's necessary, we have a flight surgeon aboard the plane uh to take care of the patients, and then we can always call for a flight surgeon to meet the plane if we think it's necessary. But uh we do anything that we uh think we can by ourselves.

[ER:] Course it was very--I-I have always marveled at the things that you could do on a flight. Um because it seems quite extraordinary to be able to, for instance, uh give plasma and give um-um different kinds of injections and so forth. [Jonita Ruth Bonham: Oh, yes.] I always thought it was remarkable and yet you are able to do um practically anything you do in the hospitals! (31:48)

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Oh, yes. Mhm. We carry all emergency treatments and plasma is one of them.

[ER:] Can you tell me how many casualties have been evacuated since the beginning of the Korean War?

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] I really don't know, Mrs. Roosevelt.

[ER:] Would you know, Major?

[Ruth Weidner:] No, I wouldn't have that available, Mrs. Roosevelt.

[ER:] I uh I don't know either, and yet there must've be a very great number of evacuations.

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Well, practically all of the patients are being flown now.

[ER:] Can-can you tell me now, Major? I see you've got something you've looked it up on.

[Ruth Weidner:] Yes, it uh states here that for the past year in evacuating twenty-six thousand wounded troops from Korea to the United States--

[ER:] That must be in-in the past year.

[Ruth Weidner:] Yes, that's right.

[ER:] That's to the United States?

[Ruth Weidner:] Yes, from Korea to the United States.

[ER:] Now there must have been a number evacuated just to Japan and returned.

[Ruth Weidner:] That's right, that's right.

[ER:] So there must have been really more than that that you've evacuated.

[Ruth Weidner:] Oh yes, the overall picture--

[ER:] Fom Korea. [Ruth Weidner: Oh yes.] The overall picture must be an even greater number. And that seems quite a job to have done. [ER laughs] Uh I wonder, Major Weidner, are the Air Force nurses serving in other parts of the world now, uh besides Korea?

[Ruth Weidner:] Oh yes, Mrs. Roosevelt, we have nurses -- Air Force nurses -- serving wherever there is an Air Force hospital. And that is in this country and in many of the countries overseas. We have nurses of course serving in Alaska, we have quite a few there, and we have nurses serving in um Arabia, and we have nurses of course serving in Europe.

[ER:] Well, that's uh--that gives a very wide range. Now I'm going to ask something you may think is um a foolish question, but I wonder if any of your nurses um are chosen or are even uh asked to become interested in learning any foreign language?

[Ruth Weidner:] Yes, they haven't been asked to, but the Air Force uh information and education service does provide that opportunity, because these people can find out what courses are available in their own locality. And as I do get around, I hear them speaking about, as the fall comes along, as to what language courses are available in the nearby college, or if they're going to be offered at the hospital, that is at the-- in which they're working.

[ER:] Well, it seems to me that with United Nations forces um which we hope will um increase as time goes on, um it has seemed to me that perhaps for the nurse, more than for any other person, it would be

valuable. I read for instance, that there were some Puerto Rican troops in Korea, and um I happen to have seen quite a little of the Puerto Rican people on various visits. And I remember in the last war, of talking to a mother whose son was no further away than Panama, and I had been in Panama, and seen some of the Puerto Ricans in hospital there and in service, and I um couldn't help but realize somehow the people of that little island seem to have a love for that little island and it's a very close family feeling. And I couldn't help thinking what it would mean if a nurse could speak Spanish, enough Spanish to give a wounded boy a sense that uh he wasn't too far away from his own home. (35:50)

[Ruth Weidner:] I think in terms of myself and when we were in India, that one does acquire some of the most important words of the language, and I believe that the girls most likely will be choosing to take Spanish, because that's one language that's available. And I think uh you learn to do that as you have the opportunity provided.

[ER:] What other languages are available?

[Ruth Weidner:] I believe Russian is available--

[ER:] Russian?

[Ruth Weidner:] I'm not quite certain, and I believe that uh French and German, and uh-it there right there the courses are available, and we are asking our nurses and recommending that they take any course that is available that's going to help them in the course of providing better nursing care. (36:33)

[ER:] Captain Bonham, from your experience, would you think that many nurses would want to try and learn a language?

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Oh yes, it would help so much.

[ER:] You think it would help?

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Oh yes, very much.

[ER:] Well, I see my time is drawing to a close, and I just want to thank you both for coming to tell us about the Air Force nurses' service, because I think it's of interest to every mother whose um boy--and every woman who is interested in some soldier, either in Korea or somewhere else in the world. Thank you both very much, Major Weidner and Captain Bonham.

[Ruth Weidner:] Thank you.

[Jonita Ruth Bonham:] Thank you very much.

(Break 37:12-37:18)

[Ben Grauer:] Mrs. Roosevelt, in her interview with today's guests, the Assistant Chief of the Air Force Nurses Corps Major Ruth Weidner, and Captain Jonita Ruth Bonham, US Air Force nurse, holder of the Distinguished Flying Cross. And now, before we say good afternoon for today, Mrs. Roosevelt has a special message which she'd like to bring to you now.

(Break 37:43-37:49)

[ER:] In keeping with my plan to bring to you some of the outstanding thoughts written and spoken on the subject of freedom, I would like to read from a speech delivered by Abraham Lincoln, at Edwardsville in September 1858. "What constitutes the bulwark of our liberty and independence? It is not our frowning battlements or bristling sea coasts, our army and navy. These are not our reliance against tyranny. All of those may be turned against us without making us weaker for the struggle. Our reliance is in the love of liberty which God has planted in us. Our defense is in the spirit which cries liberty as the heritage of all men, in all lands, everywhere. Destroy this spirit and you have planted the seeds of despotism at your own doors."

(Break 38:50-39:02)

[Ben Grauer:] This has been the *Eleanor Roosevelt Program*, recorded in Mrs. Roosevelt's living room at the Park Sheraton Hotel on the corner of Fifty-Fifth Street and Seventh Avenue in New York City. Today, Mrs. Roosevelt had as her guests the Assistant Chief of the Air Force Nurses Corps Major Ruth Weidner, and US Air Force nurse Captain Jonita Ruth Bonham, holder of the Distinguished Flying Cross, which she was awarded for her outstanding medical work in the air evacuation of wounded men from Korea. Our guest list for the rest of the week includes tomorrow, a visit with James N. Rosenau [1924-2011]. Mr. Rosenau is the editor of the newly published volume *The Roosevelt Treasury*. And uh he will speak of his work in editing this book and of his close acquaintance incidentally with the letters and papers of uh President Roosevelt. In fact, Mr. Rosenau worked with Elliott Roosevelt in compilation of some of the early published letters of FDR. On Thursday, we're going to chat with the president of the National Travelers Aid Association, Mrs. George [Florence B.] Hamlin Shaw [1898-1963]. She'll tell the story of this organization, which sea and depot and railroad terminals at all points where there's passenger traffic, and many others, I know myself included, have only the vaguest idea what the Travelers Aid Association does. Mrs. Shaw will be here to speak of the story of the organization and the work it performs. On Friday, one of the nation's best known editors, the Sunday editor of the *New York Times*, Lester Markel [1894-1977]. And Mr. Markel will speak of something that's very close to his heart, the story of the founding of the International Press Institute. Mrs. Roosevelt and Elliott Roosevelt will be with you tomorrow with James N. Rosenau as guest and every day, Monday through Friday, from 12:30 to 1:15 p.m. until tomorrow then at the usual time, this is Ben Grauer bidding you good afternoon.

Transcribed from holdings at Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (FDRL)
File(s): 72-30(205)

Transcription: Anna Karditzas
First edit: Natalie Hall
Final edit: Seth LaShier