

OVER OUR COFFEE CUPS

March 29, 1942

Description: ER encourages Americans to stay healthy during wartime and provides 7 steps to staying healthy so that medical professionals can focus on the war.

Participants: Eleanor Roosevelt

ANNOUNCER:

This is Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt's regular Sunday evening broadcast, sponsored by the Pan-American Coffee Bureau, representing eight Good Neighbor coffee-growing nations.

Mrs. Roosevelt speaks to you tonight from New York City on several subjects of news interest to all of us. But first, here's a mighty interesting news story from "somewhere in Africa." The scene is an R.A.F. airdrome in the African bush. There is the faint far-away drumming of airplane motors in the sky. A great American flying fortress slowly circles through the haze of the African mountains toward a little R.A.F. airdrome deep in the African bush. Quickly the R.A.F. officer in command of the airport signals his native servant ... tells him to brew these Yankee flyers a huge pot of steaming coffee. The plane lands and here we quote from the news story, verbatim ... "The R.A.F. officer led the way to his hut. The bomber crew took their seats, and the servant handed them freshly made coffee while they told of their Atlantic flight. The British officer gave details of the next hop in their flight across the world. He directed them to another part of Africa, to another bush airdrome where they would find more instructions ... and more coffee." Imagine the delight of those Yankee flyers, tired from the long flight across the Atlantic, as they drank deep of America's Favorite Drink ... refreshing ... relaxing coffee. Think of the extra energy, the extra steady nerves this coffee treat gave them for their next hop. Yes, and think what coffee can do for you too in these hectic, nerve-ruffling times ... think how you, too, can GET MORE OUT OF LIFE WITH COFFEE.

And now, we present Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Good evening. From letters which I have received, I have come to realize that there is a great concern among the mothers and wives, all over the country, because they feel they know so little about how their sons + husbands¹ are taken care of in case of illness or injury while they are in the Military Services. There is a booklet which is prepared by the Women's Interests Section of the War Department, called "The Soldier and His Health." This is a publication which I think many mothers and wives will read with satisfaction.

A few paragraphs will amuse every mother, I think, because boys in the Army are no different from boys at home or in school, and they try some of the same little tricks such as getting out of unpleasant jobs by being not quite well enough to perform them, and when something pleasant looms in sight, suddenly becoming entirely well!

But the real thing which mothers and wives want to know is more serious than these little boy traits which hang on even in maturity, and so let us begin first by talking about the policies which the Armed Forces have adopted in this present war.

One, a strict physical examination which shall include an examination by a psychiatrist before induction into any of the Services. This is

MRS. ROOSEVELT (Cont'd)

3.

considered very important because it means that the material that comes in, is good material and with ordinary care will be healthy as the days go by, and better able to resist fatigue or illness.

The standards set for health in the Selective Service have been changed somewhat, as the need for more men has made it apparent that certain requirements were not perhaps essential to getting healthy human

beings. Also, it has been found possible and practical to have certain defects corrected by proper medical care which is attainable after induction into Service.

It has become an increasingly universal practice to give tests for tuberculosis and this is a great step forward. Once a man is in the Armed Forces, then the real responsibility of the Army and Navy begins. It is a two-fold responsibility. First, they must keep the man well. Every man in the Services is vaccinated against typhoid, para-typhoid, small-pox, tetanus, yellow-fever.

There is very careful research on the food given the men, and full recognition is given to the value of proper nutrition. Secondly, once a man is ill or injured, he must get the best possible care as soon as possible.

One interesting piece of information – contained in the report last year on the death rate in the Army, was that as far as deaths due to disease were concerned, this branch of the Service reached the lowest rate in all of our history. The decrease was so great that it more than offset the increase in the death rate due to accidents which were the inevitable accompaniment of mechanization and aviation.

MRS. ROOSEVELT (Cont'd)

4.

There is never any question of the cost of medical care for the men in the Armed Forces. There has, of course, been a great increase in the need of the Army for doctors, surgeons and nurses and this need has not as yet been completely met. An effort is made to have base hospitals fully equipped and mobile hospitals which move with the troops wherever they go, which are set up back of the line so that as rapidly as possible, those who are ill or wounded can receive at least emergency care.

In the Navy, every large ship has a sick-bay and doctors and nurses in attendance for emergency situations, and there are first-aid stations in various parts of the ship. The smaller ships, of course, frequently carry only a pharmacist's mate, but if a man is taken ill, he is transferred to a bigger ship at the first possible opportunity. In the various ports, there are always well-equipped and pleasant hospitals for the Navy men.

All doctors going into the Service must be graduates of a Grade "A" medical school, must have had a year of internship in a Grade "A" hospital, besides passing a competitive written and practical examination after having qualified physically. To enter the Reserve Medical Corps of the Navy, it is only necessary to pass a physical examination and present professional records that satisfy the proper Naval authorities.

Nurses are drawn into the Services in two ways. They must be graduates of a Class "A" training school, pass a physical examination, present credentials that satisfy the Navy authorities.

MRS. ROOSEVELT (Cont'd)

If nurses go into the Reserve, they are selected from those enrolled with the American Red Cross.

Both the Army and Navy try to have every consideration for the civilian population in recruiting their medical forces. Both the Army and Navy have clinics and dispensaries where men can go to receive attention for minor ills, and they are urged to go – for what may seem to them perfectly unimportant symptoms often become serious. Because the Services have learned how much better it is to prevent something from becoming serious than to face some illness which has progressed to a more or less serious condition, they try to impress on the men that they have a responsibility to report even a slight cold.

I think we can all feel that in the Services every care is taken to give the men not only the best of medical care, but also convalescent care, so that they will have sufficient leave to be really strong before they take up their duties again. And doctors in both Services try to evaluate the type of duty that a man is going to perform and to make sure that he does not return to conditions which he is not actually ready to undertake.

And now let us turn for a moment to the conditions at home which this great increase in our military medical personnel is bound to create.

The Surgeon General of the United States Public Health Service who, with his staff, works closely with the various city and state health departments throughout the country, is charged with the supervision of the public health. These doctors, through new methods of control, can protect much larger sections of the population than the individual

MRS. ROOSEVELT (Cont'd)

private practitioner, and therefore, in times like these, the preventive work becomes all-important.

In peace times, physicians in the active Military Services represent only about one percent of the nation's total active physicians. With an Army of four million men, we must have 24,000 physicians to serve them ... which means that about fifteen percent of the nation's physicians will be withdrawn from civilian service ... and it is reasonable to suppose that these will be taken from the ranks of the younger and more active medical men.

Of course, this will be felt more in certain parts of the country than in others. For instance, in our southern states, one physician on the average, serves twice as many people as in the New England states, and in some cities it will be easier to spare physicians who are needed for the Military Services than it would be in some of our rural communities. For instance, I saw a report from a public health nurse in one of our defense areas, which was a rural community, and in which there had been only two physicians – one no longer an active practitioner due to age and disability. The younger one was called for Service in the Army, so the population of 20,000 people was left to the care of a single public health nurse and the old, retired doctor.

This situation seems to indicate that in our communities, the civilian population must focus as far as possible first, on keeping every person as well as possible. That means that we will neglect no symptom which might lead to being laid up, and therefore require a visit from the doctor. We will save the doctor's time by going, as far as is possible, to his office. And, if we happen to be really ill, we will go to a

MRS. ROOSEVELT (Cont'd)

hospital so that the doctor can see many patients instead of having to visit a number of homes. We will pay attention to our food and our rest, and we will try to keep that quiet mind which is so essential to building health.

We will see that every baby and every child is vaccinated for small-pox and immunized against diphtheria and whooping cough. And, above everything else, we will insist that sanitation rules are enforced in our community, and that the water and milk supplies are carefully inspected.

This seems to be a very long disser[vice] on something that a great many of us take for granted ... good health and medical care when we need it ... but under the present conditions there is probably nothing that we can take for granted.

We will have to give more thought to an increasing number of things. And, in connection with that quiet mind that I mentioned above ... I think we are going to find that the community will have to emphasize the need of outdoor recreation, as well as indoor recreation of a type to give us physical exercise – both in winter and in summer. We may have less money to spend on certain types of recreation, and it may be necessary to organize ourselves so that a greater number of people can do things which cost less. It may be necessary to develop certain things which can be done at a minimum cost and still meet the requirements of many people in the community for recreation.

This, of course, is a community responsibility, and has its bearing on physical health and on the kind of mental and spiritual condition which makes it possible to use the mind with the body, and, believe it

MRS. ROOSEVELT (Cont'd)

or not, there is a very close connection between the two.

~~I have a request to say something about the victory garden program. Andrew S. Wing of the Garden Digest, feels that we should emphasize the fact that everyone living in a rural or suburban community who can have a good garden, should try to raise their own fresh vegetables, and a good part of what they need and can for use in the winter months. He also seems to feel that there might be a surplus of small fruits and vegetables which would go to waste, because, undoubtedly, cans will be harder to obtain. But, I am told that there is, as yet, no sign of shortage in jars, and that rubber rings will be obtainable this year, and that special consideration will be given to those who need sugar for the purpose of preserving. I heard an amusing story the other day of an inspector who was not familiar with the ways of a rural community, and who thought he was discovering a great deal of sugar hoarding. But, the grocery man finally persuaded him that the buying had been done in the summer months when the people of the vicinity were actually putting up their food for winter use.~~

~~Another~~ A story was sent me by a friend who told me a little something about the family of the corner grocery man ... and I think it is so typical of many American families where every member does his part, that I am going to quote from it here.

The "Smiths" are characters, and splendid citizens. The son, John, is head of the Fire Department and also responsible for the blackout. The last (unexpected) blackout came when John was in a nearby city, MRS. ROOSEVELT (Cont'd)

so his father took charge. But, he belonged to the volunteer fire department and in the middle of the blackout preparations there came a fire alarm. So, he dumped the blackout into his wife's lap, rushed out with the new fire engine and crew to put out the blaze. His wife, who is about the smallest woman you ever saw, efficiently ran the blackout.

If people like the "Smiths" were wiped out, where should we be?

ANNOUNCER:

Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt.

At the beginning of this broadcast, we quoted the news story of the British officer who cheered the hearts of the flying fortress crew by serving them fresh and delicious cups of coffee deep in the African bush. How many hearts, wherever Americans are fighting, working, today are being cheered by America's favorite drink. For coffee does warm one's heart, lift one's spirits ... yes, and more than that, coffee gives the extra energy, the extra steady nerves we all need so much in these trying times. No wonder more and more people every day call coffee America's necessary drink. No wonder more and more people every day find they can GET MORE OUT OF LIFE WITH COFFEE.

Next week, at this same time, Mrs. Roosevelt will be with us again to give another of her vital and interesting talks on world events.

Until then, this is Dan Seymour saying good evening for the Pan-American Coffee Bureau. And remember, you too can GET MORE OUT OF LIFE WITH COFFEE.

Proofread by: Margaret Swenson, Olivia Kinhan, Lee Fobos, Angela Baker, IK David, Crystal Brandenburg
Transcribed from a script held in the Eleanor Roosevelt Papers at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

¹ This is a handwritten interlineation.