

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

August 16th, 1951

Description: In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's letter about how members of congress make decisions. In the interview segment, ER discusses the theater with composer, director, and producer, John Golden.

Participants: Eleanor Roosevelt, Elliott Roosevelt, John Golden, Ben Grauer.

[ER:] This is Eleanor Roosevelt speaking. Our program is coming to you from my living room here at the Park Sheraton Hotel in New York City. I'm very happy to have this little while with you each day and I hope you'll enjoy the guest we've invited to be with us today. And now for a moment I'm going to turn the program over to Elliott.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mrs. Roosevelt today is going to enjoy the privilege of having a valued friend of long standing as her guest. He is Mr. John Golden, the eminent producer and presenter of outstanding plays and a leading figure in the theatrical world. We will hear Mr. Golden a little later on in the program, but first we are as usual going to discuss a question sent in by a listener. Right now we'll pause for a moment to let our announcer have a few words.

[Break 0:50-0:56]

[Elliott Roosevelt coughs]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mrs. May Walch, unfortunately she did not give her address, seems to be in some doubt about the integrity of our congressmen in the matter of voting on bills and issues. She writes: "Dear Mrs. Roosevelt, do all Representatives and Senators vote to the best of their ability, that is upholding their own beliefs, or doesn't it seem that many of them may be swayed by some political boss or pressure from constituents' mail? Or, indeed, do they b-uh-do they bother to read this mail? Uh One reads articles about the sluggishness of Congress's actions and the large amount of absenteeism. It seems to me that a much better job could be done. What do you think?"

[ER:] Well, of course there's an age old um discussion as to whether a Congressman or a Senator, or any Representative who is elected, is elected to vote as he thinks best, or as he thinks his constituency wants him to vote. Uh That's a very old argument and um the only answer to that is that if he feels strongly enough, personally, he should go back to his constituency and try to enlighten them to the point that they will agree with his point of view, because after all he is a representative and he should represent what his constituency really understands and really wants him to do. Now, on this question of absenteeism, I think you have to remember that very often, um absenteeism does not mean that a vote is not cast. It may be paired with someone else who takes a different point of view. Uh There is a certain amount of absenteeism um which perhaps should not exist. Um I think it is likely that there are congressman who do not perhaps have the ability, perhaps just don't have the time to really inform themselves on even such bills as affect their own district or affect things their own district is um feeling strongly about; general bills of some kind.

And of course those congressmen are not doing their job in the way they should do. But I think the great mass of congressmen try very hard to educate themselves after they go to Congress, to find out uh much of the background of legislation that they naturally didn't know before and to really try to do a good job so that on the whole, I would think that there was an effort being made. I have thought that

maybe it would be a good stimulus if every now and then without any previous notice um one of the sessions were televised. Uh that might be very good, because we occasionally find that our Congressmen slept through speeches; [Elliott Roosevelt laughs] we would occasionally find that they just went out and didn't listen to speeches when they got bored, and uh it would also be good for us to discover that sometimes people make speeches just so as to get them in the Congressional Record and not really eh to do much to the thinking of the other Congressmen. And they get them into the Congressional Record so they can get reprints of them and send them home through their district and say "See what I did?" and it might be a very good thing if people did really see at home that sometimes they had either said it, or just had it read into the Record, um to an empty house. Because um it-it would jack up people's um real interest in the job [Elliott: Yeah.] they've been doing, I think.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, I'd like to uh go back to this letter and uh ask a few uh questions about the uh indication that there's a feeling that uh either politicians are swayed by their constituents' mails--uh mail that they receive, or that they are um-- don't pay any attention to it. How much attention do you think a con-congressman pays to his mail? (5:53)

[ER:] Every congressman has his mail [Elliott Roosevelt coughs] rather carefully analyzed, I think. But um I think every congressman is accustomed to receiving what might be called um routine type of uh-of um mail that has been signed by people without any real feeling or understanding even back of it. For instance, people put on uh campaigns uh getting people to write postcards to their congressman on this or that bill. Half the time the people who write the postcards are simply given the name of the bill and the name of their own congressman and don't even know what the bill is about. Now a congressman soon gets to find that out if he doesn't pay much attention to those postcards. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] But if he gets a letter, which is a real personal letter, which shows feeling on a subject and a decision on the part of the individual to really do some work back in the district on this, then believe me a congressman pays attention because he knows that person is going to sway the votes in his district. [Elliott: Yes.] And I think that is the kind-of-of pressure that has value because these are your representatives and they should know how you feel and what you want them to do.

On the other hand, the kind of pressure which undoubtedly is exerted by pressure groups, by special interests, that is bad because um it's very hard for a Congressman or a Senator to stand up against it. They know that these big groups have money at their disposal, that that money can be used for propaganda purposes in their own districts. And they are always worried by a chance that a real campaign will be put on by one of the special interests, and that they will be the sufferers. So that there is no question that a great many congressman are um under pressure from organizations, sometimes good organizations. For instance, most of us would say that they Women's Christian Temperance Union was a good organization but it undoubtedly exerts a tremendous amount of pressure. And um there are--there are many different organizations that bring pressure one time or another, but um good or bad they should be watched rather carefully because the real pressure that is legitimate is the pressure of a constituent individual who is thinking certain things and wants to get it across to his representative. And that is not only essential in a democracy, but correct, and should be the kind of pressure that a-a representative responds to. (9:05)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Alright, what about the pressure that is brought by the political organization back home on a representative in congress?

[ER:] Well, that can be either good or bad. If it's the kind of organization which exacts votes on certain subjects uh as a return for backing in the election, then it's bad. If it's simply the kind of organization which has the interests of the community at heart, and brings to the attention of the congressman certain things it believes are in the interest of the community, but does not threaten-- what is bad in an organization is when it threatens, when it actually threatens then it's bad.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Uh-huh. Alright, now what about uh this question of absenteeism, to return to that for a second. Do you think it would be well and advisable if all the newspapers, radio stations, television stations of this country were to publicize the records around uh election time, of congressmen as to whether they have actually participated in the major decisions uh that were reached by each congress?

[ER:] Uh Yes I think they do that pretty well, now. Um I think if you read carefully you'll find that the records are rather carefully publicized so-in-in one way or another. Um you would, I think, uh have to take it with certain amount of-of um well, explanation, because there sometimes are congressmen who may for one reason or another have been away on the actual date of a vote, but who may have done a great deal of work beforehand, and who may have paired their vote. Now, that is uh one of the things that should be um looked into, I think [Elliott: Mhm.], before you actually um put down the uh votes, as being just bare, present, or absent.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, now, finally and in summation, would you say that on the whole, of course there must be a certain number of congressmen who are not equipped to handle their jobs, but would you say on the whole, the people who represent us today in the Senate and the House of Representatives, that those people, as a general body, are people of high integrity who are voting not because of special interests or pressure groups but are voting their own consciences?

[ER:] As a whole, yes, I would say that they are not always equipped to fully understand the implications of what their votes are occasionally, but I would say that on the whole they were men who were making a great effort.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well thank you very much, I see that our time is up for this part of our program and that we've got to go on to another part and pretty soon we'll be right back again with our guest for today.

[Break: 12:27-12:36]

[ER:] Thank you, Elliott. As Elliott said, my guest this afternoon is not only a man of great accomplishment and importance in the theatrical world, but also a valued friend. I would like to introduce Mr. John Golden.

[John Golden:] Why thank you, first great lady of the whole world, thank you for asking me here, and I hope to heaven I can say something that's worth listening to. [ER laughs] Lord knows I've lived long enough in the theater to be able to, now the question is can I?

[ER:] Well, now first of all we're going to talk about the theater because I believe you're regarded as the Dean of the Theater.

[John Golden:] Well, yes, by my friends, and some of my enemies don't like me, but a title like that just comes with age and an elephant could win on that score. [ER laughs]

[ER:] I've just been reading to the children, Mr. Golden, *The Jungle Books*, and the other day I was reading "Toomai of the Elephants" and um so we know all about elephants in my family just now. We know that they grow very old and that they're very wise, so you needn't laugh at elephants.

[John Golden:] Well, thank you, thank you very much for the compliment, I'm glad to be regarded as a wise elephant, I think the picture fits me perfectly now that I'm overweight. [John Golden laughs]

[ER:] Well, seriously, I've heard you say that you um might retire, do you really think of such a thing?

[John Golden:] Seriously, I do.

[ER:] I don't think it's possible but I'd like to ask you why. (14:05)

[John Golden:] Well, because I think I can do more good work with the theater by working on the various committees of the -- and trusteeships and sponsoring uh-uh an occasional uh young group who uh are supporting young authors or getting more people interested in City Center, for instance. Uh From Mayor

[Vincent R.] Impellitteri [1900-1987] and his pretty wife to the customers at the box office, and there's-- there's another reason, it's clever to quit while you're good. [ER laughs] I'd hate to produce a couple of failures in New York.

[ER:] Well, you know um-uh that's a very good reason, one should always quit--

[John Golden:] Well, do you know that I'm probably one of the very few play producers left in New York City today who put up their own money on their own opinions about productions? [ER: Mm, that takes courage--] The theater has done a complete revolution in the last few years. Now it's a business for getting money from outsiders, mostly--mostly rich outsiders, people who-who think it's uh more amusing to bet on playwrights and actors than on horses. The men of yesterday who built the theater and made it good, [Florenz] Ziegfeld [1867/69-1932], [Charles] Dillingham [1868-1934], [Charles] Frohman [1856-1915], [David] Belasco [1851-1931], these gentlemen selected their plays, selected their actors, and knew their business well enough to-to believe in themselves, and put up their own money, by the way, on-on their own productions. (15:22)

[ER:] Well, of course, I think that you've made a very interesting point there because you not only had to know the theater and the plays, but you had to know your public, and uh that's the thing which you people who produced in the old days um really got to know what people wanted, and then you educated your public, and I think that's one of the things which was really different--

[John Golden:] Well I don't know that I agree with you about that, First Lady, I think our public educated us. [ER: You think your public educated you?] They told us what they wanted, and there was--there's no difficulty about that, I think that uh the various *Veriest Tyro* can read a play and know whether that play holds or interests him, and I'm not for the artistic side of the--or the cultural side of the theater, I mean, I'm--I'm for the play that the public wants.

[ER:] Well, then, are you in favor of a government subsidized theater?

[John Golden:] I am not.

[ER:] Well, that's what I expected you would say, but most theatrical people favor it, and why are you against it?

[John Golden:] First, because I know that anyone-- because, I mean, I don't know-- I know no one in the government, from Truman down, to whom I would give the job as a general manager of a subsidized institution. Next, because there's no artistic group that I would want to trust to handle this unique combination of art, culture, and business. We're coming pretty near to it at the City Center today. Last season under Maurice Evan's [1901-1989] expert uh direction, fifty thousand people in two weeks attended performances of *Richard II*. Poor people pay little money to see Shakespeare. At the end of the season the plays were so well liked by the public that the experiment for that season alone netted a profit of seventy-five thousand dollars, which helped to pay some of the extra costs for the New York City Opera Company. My dear First Lady, no, though I know the high-brows will quarrel with me about this statement, plays aren't worth a darn unless people want to see them, and if people want to see them they make money, and if they make money you don't need to have a government-subsidized theater. [ER

laughs] Of course, we'd all welcome a little lift like taking the extra twenty percent tax off the tickets, I'd advocate that for any non-profit dramatic group. (17:42)

[ER:] Well, that's something that um I think a good many people feel would be uh a good-good thing now to do.

[John Golden:] Well, I know you'll feel that way about it because I think-- I hope you'll remember the time when you helped take the ta-tax off the ticket to soldiers. [ER: Yes, I do.] There was a time when we were giving away tickets in New York City under a little committee that I headed, and uh I went to you when you were down in Washington--[ER: It wasn't a little committee, it was very big committee.] Well the committee's work was good, [ER: Yes.] we turned out uh--well we gave away free to boys coming in and going out of New York City, I mean, the managers of New York- the manager of the New York Theater gave away something over twelve million tickets, and as your darling dear revered husband said, "Twelve million free tickets to soldiers ain't hay." [ER laughs] He did, that was his-- I'm quoting him verbatim.

[ER:] Well, that's quite right. Well, now, I remember all that very well, but I would like to ask you something that I see discussed a great deal, what about ticket brokers, do you believe in them or don't you believe in them?

[John Golden:] Well, strange to say, I'm for them- most theatrical men are not. They think they're sort of an excrescence on the situation, they think that they don't contribute something, I mean they neither produce, write, act, or direct but uh nor costume nor, you know, they-they don't-they don't do-- [ER: Well what do you think they do?] I think that they sell my tickets. I think they go into a business and help me on a business, I think they're all salesmen. And if they're honest salesmen or-- I mean some of them are cheats, some of them take and overcharge, and that brings in the law of caveat emptor, if you know about that. Oh, well, of course you wouldn't. [ER laughs] But uh-uh that law of supply and demand makes them want about three important tickets in New York City. There're about three or four plays where the tickets are high priced, but for the rest of them, you'll find that even-- there's one brokerage office in New York City that has thirty odd stands in as many hotels around New York City, where they have nice girls to tell you what plays to go to, and they don't tell you to go to just those three or four hits, they tell you to go to the plays that are struggling to succeed, good plays too, but not quite the great big smash hits, so the brokers are taking their place as a help in the theater because they are natural salesmen for the box office. (19:49)

[ER:] Well I'm interested that you say that, and I-I think you're probably right, if they don't overcharge. I um I now want to just for a minute ask you a personal question. And one day-- [John Golden: Not about my age.] Oh no, not about your age. [John Golden: Don't do that, don't do that.] Oh no, oh no, not on this program, [John Golden: They've advertised that too frequently already.] we're not going to talk about age. [John Golden: Oh well, you're a girl.] Now what I want to ask you about is sometime or other I heard that you had a very great number of titles, [John Golden: Oh boy.] and I'm going to ask you how you can have these titles. For instance, you're a colonel, and a doctor, and a commissioner, and a shepherd, a major, [John Golden: Colonel in Kentucky, a doctor in a college, a shepherd of the Lambs, a major-a major-- oh well--] a chair-chairman, and a founder, and a lot of other things. Now, first of all why--how are you a Colonel? (20:40)

[John Golden:] Well I just tried to interrupt you long enough to say that I don't think we ought to talk about me at all, I'm a Colonel-- well, I'll tell you, that's not an uninteresting story if you want it. Uh it's about the time that the greatest songwriter who ever lived in America--now there'll be a lot of quarrelling about my making that statement publicly--the greatest songwriter in America--that ever lived in America

lived in a little home and that home was about to be destroyed, and they asked me would I provide a little money to help keep that home from being destroyed, and that they--

[ER:] Well, as you started as a songwriter that must have appealed to you.

[John Golden:] Of course it did. I was writing songs at the time, when I said-- no I wasn't, I was producing plays at the time-- and the fellow's name was A. Tobias Hurt, and he was the Republican leader in Kentucky, and he--Tobe Hurt called me on the long distance wire and said "You've got a play of yours coming down here next week" the play, I remember, was *Seventh Heaven*, and he said, "they're going to tear down and destroy a place that-that belonged once to a fellow named Stephen Foster [1826-1864]," [ER: Oh--] who wrote songs from my old Kentucky home "two way on the Suwannee river," you know. [ER: Yes.] Uh all those beautiful melodies that are played everywhere nowadays. [ER: We all know.] We all know them. Well, at any rate he said uh, "Do you object to that enough to want to help us?" And I said, "I do, but wha-what do you want, just a little money?" He said, "No, I want a lot, I want your full receipts from the performance of uh of your play, *Seventh Heaven*." I said, I'll give it to you provided you charge ten dollars to the last man in the gallery, and Tobe Hurt did, and they got in five or six or seven thousand dollars, bought the old home, and it's still standing there uh in Lexington, I think it is, I've forgotten where it is. It's anyway it's in Kentucky, and that's what made me a Colonel, if you like. [ER: And that's what made you a Colonel?] You-you started that and that's your fault. [ER: Well, no I think that's very interesting--] Anyway, Stephen Foster's home is still there.

[ER:] Now, I must know how you became a doctor.

[John Golden:] Oh, because I mean I'm humane and they made me a doctor of humane-- oh, please don't ask me to go through all those things--

[ER:] A doctor of humane letters?

[John Golden:] Yes. Well, now I've got two or three degrees like--let's not talk about me, let's talk about the theater, [ER: Well, yes. Yes.] let's talk about its origin, let's talk about the--

[ER:] Well, that's alright but I wonder how-- because this has to do with the theater, what are you shepherd of?

[John Golden:] I'm not, I was Shepherd [ER: Of what?] of the Lambs. [ER: Shepherd of the Lambs? Well now they have certain--] The Lambs Club, which is one of the highest, finest, dramatic theatrical institutions in the world, uh honored me at one time, oh three times, by electing me three times Shepherd, I tried to get a fourth term but they wouldn't have it. [ER and John Golden laugh](22:56)

[ER:] Well, I think it was good, hard work to do it three times. [John Golden: That's all I wanted] I think that's doing it uh for a long, long time.

[John Golden:] Well, let's not talk anymore about Golden, [ER: Now, there's one other thing I want to know--] let's talk about the good things in the theater, the things that ought to be done, you can do so much for them as I-I tried to say but I don't think I finished that time, a little while ago, when you asked me taxes and things, [ER: Well-well, we will come back--] you were--you don't remember that you took the tax, do you know that at one time, while the soldiers were getting free tickets during the war, they were asked to pay a tax of ten percent on those tickets. [ER: I remember that very well.] Well, that was a kind of cruel thing to do, and because you got busy with a dear lady named Mrs. [Elinor] Morgenthau, one day it happened that that tax was taken off and the soldiers could go in and see plays when the

managers gave them free tickets the soldiers went in free of the ticket from the manager and free of a price from the United States of America.

[ER:] Well, I think-I think that was a very good thing. And now for just a minute we'll have to let our announcer have a word and then come right back and go on discussing the theater as--because I see that's what you want to discuss.

[Break: 24:01-24:07]

[ER:] Now we come back to our talk with Mr. John Golden, and he is clamoring to tell more things about the theater, but I'm going to make him stop--

[John Golden:] I am not clamoring, I'm-I'm doing this because you told me to do it.

[ER:] I know that, [John Golden: Let's be fair. You're bossy but--] but I mean at this moment you're telling me I'm not bringing out enough about the theater. First of all--

[John Golden:] But I think that it was bragging. I hate that. [ER: I am going to--] I hate these fellows who get up and tell what they've done; I want to know what I'm going to do.

[ER:] Well, now, I'm going to begin [John Golden: You want to reminisce?] by saying that you've known a great many of the Presidents of the United States, and among others, you knew uh President Woodrow Wilson. [John Golden: Oh I could go back to Teddy.] And I want to tell you the-- [John Golden: I can go back to Teddy if you want it.] You can go back to Theodore Roosevelt? My-my uncle?

[John Golden:] I can go back to your uncle--your uncle, Theodore Roosevelt. I can go back to interviewing him when I was a cub thing on the *New York World*, and had to interview him on the story of closing Sunday barber shops, and he threw me out of his office when he was Police Commissioner of New York City, that's nearly two thousand years ago. [ER laughs] But uh then I can come back and tell you a story about he got to like me eventually, because I wrote a song called "You Can't Play Every Instrument in the Orchestra." [ER: Oh, I remember.] He liked the philosophy of that. He liked the philosophy of the fact that you could try to do one thing, you might play a piccolo pretty well, but you might-- if you did know how to do that, keep away from the bass fagot [Bassoon] perhaps. [ER laughs] At any rate, uh he liked me for that reason. I got presidents somehow uh to-to-to tolerate me. Uh they-they-they--

[ER:] Well, now, you tell me the story about Woodrow Wilson.

[John Golden:] Oh, the Woodrow Wilson one, I-I think that's more or less interesting. Uh he was uh at-- when we were uh-uh likely to get into war he was going through the country asking people to stay as quiet and neutral as they could for a while, and he was making some beautiful speeches. The speeches were made in various cities and the pap-newspapers' front pages were full of those speeches, and in one of them I noticed that he had a little rhyme, a couplet. It said, "Every man is wide awake and watchful for his country's sake." Well, I said, whether this president knows that he's rhyming or not he's doing it and doing very nicely, because the meter and the whole beat of a song--remember I was a song writer in those days. So I said, I wonder if that gentleman does that again, I wonder if it's a habit of his. And to my delight, I discovered that he did say things that more or less rhymed, it--perhaps he rhymed -uh-uh-uh by saying one phrase in uh Indianapolis and another one in Boston, but you could put them together and they made enough good little rhymes to make a song.

And so one day I pasted them together. Woodrow Wilson never knew it, or didn't know it then, and put some music to it, and found that what his best line was uh, "You may have to fall into line for your motherland because after all there's no other land." I mean he fixed that so it was a three syllable

rhyme, and I copied it and so I called the thing "Fall into Line for Your Motherland," and oh sang it around at parties, and eventually through Joe Tumulty [1879-1954], who was his secretary at the time, the President heard about it. And the next thing I knew, I got an invitation to come down and sing the president's song to him. [ER laughs] And then I went down and sat at the piano, that great big beautiful piano, that gold encrusted, oh [unclear term] all over and eagles all over. [ER: Yes--] Well ever since I played on that piano, you know they've put it in the Smithsonian Institution, [ER: Yes, it's now in the Smithsonian.] it's now an historical thing, you know. I played on it that day; I went to the White House and at the president's request played him his own song. I can remember the words of the verse went-- these were his own words: "Columbia, you're cried awake by voices of the night, disturbed and red and night are showing you the light. The flames may touch our continent, for sparks are falling near. From shore to shore, our men are answering here." Well, that's kind of a heroic sort of a thing [ER: Yes, very heroic uh very heroic.] that the man had said and not knew it, and didn't know it. [ER coughs] So, there I went and played it to him. Now, the-the best part of this story is in this, that I-- after I played it over I looked up uh rather anxiously-- it isn't a-it isn't a casual, ordinary incident, I mean every little songwriter doesn't get a chance to go down to the White House and bang off something that he's put a-a tune to with the words written by president. And so I turned nervously to him and I said, [John Golden laughs] it isn't uh--it isn't-- it isn't much of a song, Mr. President, and he looked at me coldly and said, "Well, I don't know much about your tune, but my words are darn good." (27:46)

[ER:] Oh, I think that's a lovely story! That's--[John Golden laughs]

[John Golden:] Well, the best of it was we got money for it, and he gave it all to the Red Cross. [ER: Oh that's a wonderful--] We published it, and you can buy, if you got the money now to buy an old copy of an old song, the words written by Woodrow Wilson, the music written by John Golden. It's still somewhere, I can get you a copy if you pay for it.

[ER:] Oh, I think that's very nice. Well, now I want you to tell one more story, and that's the story of *The Black Crook*, uh because I always loved uh that conversation with my [John Golden: Oh, with-with President Franklin Delano.] husband.

[John Golden:] With yours. Well, we were sitting after luncheon one day, I think it was at Hyde Park, you had just read something to us beautiful about the butterfly [ER: Oh, yes.] who stamped and shook the world, Kipling's uh little stories. [ER: Kipling's *Just So Stories*] *Just So Stories*. And uh we were talking about theater, and he said, "You know, John, the first play I ever saw?" And I said, no, what was the first play you ever saw? Well, he said, "It was what they called then sort of a naughty play, it was a thing where ladies wore tights and uh I was about ten or eleven or so years of age, and I and another young fellow sneaked down from Hyde Park and saw at the Academy of Music the play called *The Black Crook*." I can assure you that anyone who's over, well, fifty or sixty or something like that, in my class, will remember *The Black Crook* very well as a play thoroughly advertised as quite a naughty play. At any rate, that's the first play your dear husband saw according to his statement to me. Well, I couldn't get over that and so I sought a copy of that book, I wanted to give it to him. I wanted to get copy of the book so he could read over what he'd seen as a boy. It took a long search, as a matter of fact my niece finally found it in an old bookstore in Boston that had been slight--

[ER:] Found in old Goodspeed's, I imagine, where Franklin used to go very often.

[John Golden:] I don't remember, I don't know the name of the place, [ER: Mhm.] but she found it over there uh and uh sent it to me.

[ER:] Oh, well, Goodspeed's may have been in New York, it may have been another in Boston, but he used to go to all of those old bookshops. (30:46)

[John Golden:] Yeah. Well he was a great boy for books, Lady, how he loved books. At any rate, how he loved that one. I can remember that he held it alongside-- I brought it to him, I think it he liked the little inscription that I put on it, I-I-I just had the very beautiful uh binding made on the thing and then I had the printer put inside of it "Just to remember a little boy who became a very great man." And he liked that little uh-that little uh inscription. [ER: Oh, he liked it.] He liked the book, I remember, I was-I was astounded, I was-I was uh almost ashamed of the way he kept talking about that unimportant gift to such an extent that he told that Miss uh-Miss uh Sucket was her name? [ER: Miss [Margaret] Suckley [1891-1991].] Miss Suc-- [ER: Suckley.] The-- she was his secretary and librarian generally at the time.

[ER:] She was a cousin of ours.

[John Golden:] She was a cousin. Who was around there with the [ER: In Hyde-- In Hyde Park library.]-- She told me that how dearly he loved it and, well, he brought it at lunch twice with it him, then he quoted from it, then he showed me a picture of one of the girls in tights and said, "I do think I remember her." [ER laughs] At any rate, today I think it's probably the only book given to him personally by-- I mean that isn't an educational thing, that's up there at the library. I know that it's at Hyde Park [ER: Yes.] because friends of mine go there and say, well, he just was careful to keep that book until he passed away and then he saw to it that it was-- [ER: In the library.] or before he passed away he saw to it that it was there.

[ER:] Well, I think you have very interesting memories of presidents, but now I'm going to ask you something that I've often heard you talk about. I-I'm told that the theater really sprang from the Chinese originally, [John Golden: Oh, yes, they did it, well--] and I'd like you to tell-tell us a little bit about the background. What do you really think uh were the beginnings? (32:30)

[John Golden:] Well I'm going to surprise you then. Uh we should've rehearsed this act because I don't think that any Chinese responsible for the whole-- oh most people say that it comes from the church. And the theater did have much of an inspiration from the church itself. But it-but it goes further back than that. I wouldn't be surprised if it came from Cain or Able [ER laughs] or one of their young ladies. I-I don't--at least it springs form children. [ER: Mhm.] The very word play, have you ever stopped to think that that word play-- we talk about a play, and a play now is regarded as a literary thing-literary thing, but it means exactly what it says. So acting is as old as humanity itself. Playing someone else is one of the first deliberate acts of childhood, even babyhood. A toddler scarcely a year caresses her dolly and plays that she's a momma when she rocks it to sleep. Another year or two and she's putting on momma's sweeping gowns with long tups-with-with long tuck-tucks up in the front of it, to keep it out of the way of her little feet, but leaving a trail behind, and then she's a grand dame. It's all play. Play, play. That's what made theater, play, in a children's world. The children's world of "let's pretend." (33:40)

[ER:] That's quite true, but um and-and I think it's in every one of us to love to um to see a play, to love to-to act.

[John Golden:] I hope it is and I hope that more of you go more often and go to the box office and buy tickets at the theaters, because not too many of them are doing any more than they should.

[ER:] Well, now, I'd-I'd like to ask you that, John. Are-are theaters today disappearing or are they--?

[John Golden: Oh yes. Oh yes.] They are?

[John Golden:] Oh yes, they never will disappear, you'll never kill that fabulous invalid. I mean they'll always have a theater-- you-you must always have a theater. But it's reduced. For instance, there were seventy theaters in New York only five or ten years ago, there are thirty now.

[ER:] But is that the influence of the movies, you think?

[John Golden:] Oh, of course, of course. They got a lot more for less money. They got big stars, they got great people.

[ER:] Well, uh but uh still, there's a great difference between seeing real people-- [John Golden: Isn't the man signaling you-- Isn't the man signaling you that our act is over?] No, it's not over yet, [John Golden laughs] and I want to get one thing across, namely that [ER coughs] actually--

[John Golden:] Well, theater today is too much in the hands of the critics. I mean uh four critics in New York can end the life of the play. They couldn't when I was a young fellow, when I produced *Lightnin'* or *Turn to the Right*, or those shows, or down to *Three Wise Fools*-- why, on the fifth week that we played *Three Wise Fools* in the Criterion Theater I had to hire men to stand in the lobby and pretend they were buying tickets. We were a failure.

[ER:] Gracious. [John Golden: Then--] But um-- [John Golden: Do you want to stop now or are you going on?] But afterwards-but afterwards you uh--

[John Golden:] Well, I made a success of it because we could in those days, we could call attention almost--that's why they called it show business. I hate the phrase because show is a circus, it isn't a play, it isn't a literary thing. I hate that "show business" phrase that everybody uses and I'm beginning to get in the habit of it. But I want to quit it, but in those days we were what we called showmen because Frohman liked to rhyme it with Frohman and they became showmen, and uh we would-we could-we could uh we could boost and ballyhoo a play, but today if four critics say that it's no good you'll find the people just staying away. They depend upon it mostly because things cost so much.

[ER:] That's true, I can understand that, but I wish--

[John Golden:] Mostly because they're charging such a price for tickets that it isn't fair at all, we must have a subsidized theater that's helped a little, not too much, but helped a little by not too much rent, by the government-by the-by the city not charging taxes on it, as they're doing up at the City Center, by-by-by not-not-the city not charging the city taxes, by the government not charging the-the-the government tax on the ticket. Help us a little bit, and we'll give you good plays and good theaters.

[ER:] Well, now John, what you've really said is, that you don't believe in a subsidized theater because you want the theater to be good and you want it you be worth pay. [John Golden: I do uh--] But the circumstances today sometimes make it impossible to do without some help, and therefore you want-you want some help--

[John Golden:] Some help, just as the Metropolitan Opera House is being helped, but not by the government.

[ER:] I see, but uh it's government uh, in a way. [John Golden: Oh yes.] It must have some.

[John Golden:] It's uh it's endorsement. It's-its-it's a kindly pat on the shoulder from that uh from the government. [ER: I-I see. Well, now, that's-that's a good--] We-we need that. We need that.

[ER:] That's a good note to leave on and I think [John Golden: Well, I--] what we really want to say today is that the oldest producer in New York still thinks the theater is one of the best things [John Golden: Oh, it'll never die.] we have and will never die, and thank you for being with me today.

[John Golden:] Thank you for permitting me to be near you.

(Break 36:59-37:13)

[Ben Grauer:] Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt has just concluded her interview for today with the noted theatrical producer, John Golden, a personal friend of long standing and one of the most distinguished personalities in the theatrical and literary world of our day. This has been the Eleanor Roosevelt Program, recorded in Mrs. Roosevelt's living room in the Park Sheraton Hotel on the corner of Fifty-fifth Street and Seventh Avenue in New York City. Today Mrs. Roosevelt's guest was John Golden, and a look at the guest list for tomorrow shows us that we will complete our week with a visit with a very interesting personality of the literary and radio television world, Ivan Sanderson [1911-1973], a well-known explorer, cartoonist, artist, and naturalist. I recall chatting with Mr. Sanderson several years ago when he did a program on WNBC, speaking of his uh exploration in the jungles of British Honduras, of how he lived in primitive style, studied the habits of some of the native wildlife, and also did some investigation into the archaeology of the Maya Indians of that period. Ivan Sanderson is our guest tomorrow, and on Monday we'll start the new week with an interview with Quinton Reynolds [1902-1965] and Jack Garfein [1930-]. Mr. Reynolds, of course, is the famed journalist, author, lecturer, and commentator, editor of *United Nations World Magazine*, Mr. Garfein a refugee helped by the United Jewish Appeal. Mrs. Roosevelt and Elliott Roosevelt will be with you again tomorrow with Ivan Sanderson as guest, and every day Monday through Friday, from 12:30-1:15pm. Until tomorrow then, this is Ben Grauer bidding you goodbye.

(Break: 38:57-39:00)

[Ben Grauer:] Friends, this is Ben Grauer speaking, and here's a little suggestion from me which grows out of a household situation which is not at all infrequent. I'm talking about vegetable soup without vegetables. Not so good, is it? But when you serve Habitant vegetable soup, don't worry about finding vegetables. Habitant vegetable soup is generously blessed with all kinds of plump, juicy garden favorites. And the broth is extra rich because it's made from the natural vegetable juices. Perfect seasoning and slow simmering bring out the heavenly flavor of Habitant vegetable soup. You'll also enjoy wonderful Habitant pea soup, the genuine old French Quebec style pea soup. And tangy Habitant onion soup, with its tender, juicy onion slices in pure meat broth. Try and enjoy Habitant vegetable soup, Habitant pea soup, and Habitant onion soup. Get Habitant in the yellow can, and remember, Habitant soups have been granted the *Good Housekeeping Seal*, and have been tested and commended by *Parents Magazine*. Now, time for our regular discussion period and here is Elliott with a letter from a listener.

(Break 40:14-40:18)

[Ben Grauer:] Yes, Elliott. Uh Mrs. Roosevelt will be ready with her noted guest in a moment, which gives us a chance to look at the listings for WNBC tonight. Listings of interesting listening, starting at eight o'clock with the *Truitts*, a friendly little comedy of American family life. At 8:30, another in the series of science fiction dramatizations titled *Dimension X*, with the amazing march of science in the past decades, electronics, atomic science, study into cosmic rays, *Dimension X* acts as a springboard for the imagination of its writers to explore the question marks ahead in the curious challenging world uh combining uh knowledge of science and the roaming imagination of the fiction writer. At nine o'clock, another chapter in *Drag Net*, documentary dramas drawn from actual police records in the files of the Los Angeles Police. At nine-thirty there's another thrilling chapter of *Counter Spy*. Don MacLaughlin [1906-1986] is featured as David Harding. Tonight's chapter is "The Case of the Hoodwinked Widows." And at ten o'clock, one of your favorite programs, the *Screen Directors' Playhouse*. The program for tonight is titled "The Ghost and Mrs. Muir," and the noted screen players who are guests of the program are Charles Boyer [1899-1978] and Jane Wyatt [1910-2006]. That's at ten o'clock tonight and there's the lineup of highlights for listening on WNBC. Now here is Mrs. Roosevelt to introduce her noted guest for today.

(Break 41:52-42:12)

[Ben Grauer:] And now, Mrs. Roosevelt, just a moment's pause at midway mark for our regular station identification, this is WNBC AM and FM New York, and you're listening to the *Eleanor Roosevelt Program*, recorded in Mrs. Roosevelt's living room in the Park Sheraton Hotel in New York City. Today Mrs. Roosevelt's guest is famed theatrical producer John Golden. Before we return to Mrs. Roosevelt and our interview, I want to remind our listeners of the recent announcement from the director of the New York City's Civil Defense program, Arthur W. Wallander. City Director Arthur Wallander announced that the weekly air raid warning siren test scheduled for noon each Saturday would be cancelled. As you know, a new series of air raid warning tests started at eleven o'clock last Friday, August 10th, and will be held on alternate Fridays uh until further notice. That means there'll be no air raid warning test tomorrow, Friday, but there will be a week from tomorrow, August 24th. The test starts with the radar warning signal, a three minute warbling note on the sirens, followed by three minutes of silence, and then the sounding of the all clear, three one minute blasts, each separated by two minutes of silence. It was pointed out by the Office of Civil Defense that the tests have been switched from Saturday to Friday in order to enable the millions of out-of-towners who spend their business day in this city to thus become acquainted with the warning signals which would be so vital to them in the event of enemy attack.

And also these Friday tests enable thousands of business establishments which have completed their civil defense building control organization to find out just how effective those are by scheduling periodic drills to take place at the time of the air raid warning tests. Uh, Commissioner Wallander asked that the people of this city continue to examine their knowledge of the action to take in the event of an air raid by asking themselves this question as they hear the air raid warning sirens on Fridays, alternate Fridays. Ask yourself this question: "if this were a real alert, what would I do now?" In connection, quite related to these activities in civil defense, is a series of programs which WNBC is presenting this week at 11:15pm. And I'd like to remind our listeners about it. It's titled "Robinson Crusoe: US Air Force." W.W. Chaplin went down to the Everglades and joined a group of Air Force men who are testing uh special techniques and equipment of the Air Force in case some of their flyers were forced down in jungle territory. It's an interesting story describing how he and several flyers lived in and off the Everglades in the most primitive of surroundings as modern Robinson Crusoes. That's at eleven-fifteen tonight on WNBC. And now to continue today's interview, here again is Mrs. Roosevelt.

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