

IT'S A WOMAN'S WORLD

April 19, 1935

Description: Eleanor Roosevelt and Malvina "Tommy" Scheider talk about ER's mail.

Participants: Eleanor Roosevelt, Malvina Thompson Scheider

Door Opens and Closes

MRS. ROOSEVELT

Good morning, Tommy./

MRS. SCHEIDER

Good morning, Mrs. Roosevelt./

MRS. R.

Here is the mail/ which I was able to mark/ last night/ and which you will be able to go ahead with/ without my dictating./ This folder, I am afraid,/ we will have to discuss a little/ before I dictate/ the answers./ I imagine these are the ones/ you picked out/ because you could not decide/ what we should do with them./

MRS. S.

Well, Mrs. Roosevelt,/ I thought you would like to see/ a good cross section/ of all the mail received,/ so I have given you the disagreeable ones/ as well.

MRS. R.

Well,/ let's get to work,/ Have you shut off the telephone?/

MRS. S.

Yes,/ until ~~we are finished~~ your dinner appointment¹./

MRS. R.

These letters are all very pleasant,/ some of them commenting on my radio talks./ So many people/ seem interested/ in really knowing/ what is going on in the President's home,/ which,/ as you know,/ I always feel/ belongs to them/ more than to its temporary occupants/ whoever they may be.

This young man/ evidently got a lot/ out of his visit/ to the White House./ He says/

"I not only attained the peak of every American boy's ambition,/ nor is it that I have been accorded a rare privilege,/ but I found/ such simplicity and thoughtful friendliness/ that my nervousness/ was turned into pure enjoyment/ of every moment"/

Write and thank him for his nice letter.

This one is fine./ It is from a woman/ in the south west/ whose little boy/ we were able to help/ through the generosity of friends./She says/

"I will probably/ never have a chance to favor you,/ but I will do my best/ to help some one else/ and to be worthy/ and raise my five children/ to be 100% American."

That is a worthy ambition,/ send her a line/ and tell her we wish her great success./

Did you give me this letter to keep me from being too puffed up over the pleasant ones?

MRS. S.

Not exactly,/ but the lady seems so irate/ that I am afraid/ I would not be able/ to send her an adequate answer./

MRS. R.

Well,/ she not only disapproves violently of the government's activities,/ but disapproves completely/ of everything I do./ Tell her I am extremely sorry she feels the way she does/ but that we are all/ doing our best/ as we see it./

This one says/ you were not very polite/ in your answer to her last letter/ and does she haul us over the coals!/ You had better write her/ and tell her we would be glad to help her/ if we really knew how it could be done./- Suggest/ that, if she wishes,/ you will send her letter/ to a friend of mine/ in her state/ who will go and see her./

By the way,/ are these some of the letters/ which you had in that suit-case/ which you took home on Sunday?/ - the Sabbath Day/ is a day of rest, you know!/
MRS. S.

Yes, I know/ - but to employ that popular story,/ perhaps in this case/ you could call it/ a bus man's holiday!

MRS. R.

This letter is very interesting/ from ~~this~~ a⁴ farm woman/ in one of the middle western states/ giving a picture/ of what she/ and the family have lived through/ in the last few years/ and what they are still living through,/ but it shows real hope./ Tell her/ I was extremely interested/ and congratulate her/ on her spirit and courage./

Here is one/ from a woman in the northwest/ which has the kind of spirit/ that in the end/ will win out./ She and her husband/ have known what it is/ to walk the streets/ without hope of food/ or shelter/ but now they have a tiny house/ and a baby/ and a slight sense of security./ They have been very far down,/ but never gave up hope.⁶ Do write her a nice/ encouraging/ letter./

These children all want my autograph/ and in here/ are some requests for gifts/ for bazaars,/ etc./

MRS. S.

The number of requests for autographs/ is mounting so rapidly/ I am afraid we will have to stop/ sending them,/ otherwise/ you will do nothing else but sign cards./

MRS. R.

All right,/ but send these./ By the bye,/ how about the etching of the White House?/
MRS. S.

MRS. S.

We only send White House etchings/ to churches./

MRS. R.

Here's a nice letter/ which can go to the Veterans Bureau for immediate attention./

And what/ is this voluminous document?

MRS. S.

That is a very interesting article/ on what has been done/ in a western state/ to prevent/ juvenile crime.

MRS. R.

All right,/ I'll read it later,/ and then it should go to Mr. Sanford Bates/ in the Department of Justice./ I am sure he will be interested/ if he doesn't already know about it./

MRS. S.

These are all requests/ for you to speak/ or to attend meetings./ They are from every corner/ of the country.

MRS. R.

Please tell them/ how sorry I am/ that it is impossible/ for me to make one single additional engagement/ for the next few months./

MRS. S.

These are requests/ for appointments/ from people here in Washington./

MRS. R.

Let me go through them./ Yes,/ tell this woman I will see her for 15 minutes in the morning./

This woman does not say what she wants,⁹ so please ask her/ what she has in mind.¹⁰

Give this gentleman an appointment/ for 11:30/ and this one/ and appointment at 11:45./

Give all these letters from groups asking to be received/ to Mrs. Helm/ and ask her to fit them in/ according to their requests/ if possible./

MRS. S.

The annual visits of school children to Washington have begun/ and we have many requests from them/ to be granted an interview with you./

MRS. R.

Please write and say/ it is impossible to make definite appointments with them,/ but that I am delighted to have them visit the White House/ and if it is possible,/ I will try and greet them/ if I am ~~in the house~~ her[e]¹¹/ and free at the time¹³./ Which reminds me/ I had better ask Mrs. Helm/ to arrange a date/ for receiving the graduate classes/ of the schools in the district.

This is an interesting letter/ from a miner's wife,/ voicing the opinion of many of them,/ ~~saying~~ that their condition seems to be improving a little/ in that particular section./

And here is a man/ who runs a country store/ who thinks things are picking up/ and this from a man in New England/ who feels that life is gloomier than ever./ I will dictate letters to them/ when we have cleared up the balance/ of this pile.

MRS. S.

These reports on cases/ which we have referred for investigation/ are a little discouraging./ The reports show/ that many of the situations/ are not/ as represented.

MRS. R.

The only thing to do/ is to be perfectly frank and honest with them/ and tell them/ that we found they really did not need help/ and were not entirely truthful./ I am beginning to suspect/ that many requests for clothing/ are not made because clothes are needed/ but because/ they want something belonging to the President's family./ This bears out my contention/ that one should always investigate appeals./ It is cruel to do nothing/ and unfair to those in actual need,/ but it is unwise/ to give without finding out/ something about the people who write./ Of course,/ it is better perhaps/ to be fooled now and then/ than to run the risk/ of not extending help/ where it is needed/ if one can be helpful,/ but if it is possible to find out about people,/ it is better to do so./

Here is a gentle/and subtle way/of ~~teaching~~ trying to teach¹⁶ me a lesson./ This man says/ he bought a clock/ and named it Eleanor Roosevelt/ because/ it is always on the go./ Well/ clocks should be "always on the go"/ but I doubt/ whether people should be,/ and so/ we will have to take this nice letter/ to heart./ Here is a letter/ on the value of American Tradition in training American youth./ I agree with her/ when she says/

"especially in this era/ it is opportune to consider the things/ which our early pioneers fathers¹⁸ did/ that they may get a better understanding/ of the men/ and the greatness of their lives./ It will give them an enlarged conception/ of the individual's place/ in the scheme of things/ in America today."

MRS. S.

You know Mrs. Roosevelt/ people are really anxious to help when they can,/ as these letters from hairdressers show./ They want to give the unemployed girls in a large city/ free service/ during the hours when the establishments are not busy./

MRS. R.

That certainly is nice,²⁰/ Send them to the people who are managing the rest rooms/ for unemployed girls./

These foreign letters./ I am afraid there is nothing I can do about it²²./ but refer them/ to the State Department/ to find out if I should answer them/ at all.

This man wants to get back into the United States./ He went out for a visit/ and is having a hard time/ because he is not a citizen./ Refer it to the Department of Labor./

(Telephone rings - lifts receiver)

Yes, Mr. Muir,/ oh²⁴ is my first appointment waiting?/ All right,/ bring the lady up here./ Phone back²⁶

Well,/ we will have to leave these others,/ so you run along, Tommy,/ and get started on what we have done./

And now, my radio friends,/ you have listened in/ on how we do some of our work,/ but please remember/ that it is not quite as easy as it sounds over the radio./ Many of the letters take time to read carefully/ and require much thought/ and consideration/ before they can be answered./

Tonight closes this present series of broadcasts/ and before I say good-night to you,/ I want to say/ to all those whom it has been my privilege to visit with each week/ that I have enjoyed tremendously/ working

on this series,/ and from the contacts/ through the letters/ and talks with people/ it has been gratifying to learn of your interest./ /²⁸ I hope I shall be back with you again/ before long./ Good-night./

Transcribed by Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project staff.

Proofread by Angela Baker, Lee Febos, Margaret Swenson, Olivia Kinhan, Matthew Girardi, and Ikerighi David.

Transcribed from a script held in the Eleanor Roosevelt Papers at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

¹ The words “your dinner appointment” are a handwritten interlineation.

⁴ This is a handwritten interlineation.

⁶ ER indicated here with a handwritten notation to delete the pause.

⁹ ER indicated here with a handwritten notation to delete the pause.

¹⁰ ER indicated here with a handwritten notation to delete the pause.

¹¹ This is a handwritten interlineation.

¹³ The words “at the time” are a handwritten interlineation.

¹⁶ The words “trying to teach” are a handwritten interlineation.

¹⁸ This is a handwritten interlineation.

²⁰ ER typed a comma over the period.

²² The words “about it” are a handwritten interlineation.

²⁴ This is a handwritten interlineation.

²⁶ The words “phone back” are a handwritten interlineation.

²⁸ The second slash was written in after the text was typed. It could be a strike out, but if it is whatever is under it is illegible.