

## THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1951

Description: In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's question about whether or not Americans take their freedoms for granted. In the interview segment, ER's guest is Frances L. Roth, the director of The Restaurant Institute in New Haven, Connecticut.

Participants: Eleanor Roosevelt, Elliott Roosevelt, Frances L. Roth

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[ER:] How do you do? This is Eleanor Roosevelt speaking. I'm most happy that I am able through medium of radio to visit with you each day at this time, and I trust that you will feel that you are friends visiting with me right here in my living room at the Park Sheraton Hotel in New York, where you will meet my guests selected from all walks of life, sometimes just to entertain you and sometimes to be informative and increase our knowledge. Elliott, my son, who assists me on this program, will talk to you now.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes, thank you, I will. Europe claims the distinction of having the world's finest chefs but it's not going to be long before Europeans have some serious competition from our own chefs. Trained right here in this country, it's a new and profitable career for young men, and Mrs. Roosevelt's guest today, Mrs. Frances L. Roth, is going to tell about a school in New Haven, Connecticut, that offers culinary training. Before we come to the interview however, I am going to read a letter from a young woman whose unusual experiences during the war will be interesting to you, I'm sure. Now let's hear from the sponsors who make this recorded program possible and then we will come back to the letter.

[Break 1:24-1:37]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Our correspondent today, Mother, has written regarding one of our previous discussions. Her letter is quite long but is so interesting that I'm going to read all of it, and then we can discuss her question. The letter is from uh A. Linnea Svensson of Locust, New Jersey. She writes: "I felt very sad after hearing the letter from the young student read over the radio. How can a young girl, born and educated in this very wonderful country, be so utterly disillusioned about her future? On the other hand, the French girl's true story was a tonic to me. Mrs. Roosevelt, thank you a lot for everything you give over the radio and the press and at all the numerous other activities, all of which I am watching closely. It was a thrill to see and hear you in Stockholm City Hall last July. Thank you again. You have during the radio hours for weeks back asked whether or not the American people are aware of what goes on in the rest of the world. You also mentioned it this morning. Since January 1950, I have covered most of the European countries, some for the third and fourth time. Before this, lived through total war in England, revolutions in the Balkans and in South America and two earthquakes, been a prisoner on Russian controlled territory, escaped by leaping from a window of my cell, and crossed the Atlantic in a troop ship surrounded by U-boats. Arrived at Boston, Mass., in August 1950; it was like coming in to another world, far from war and the aftermaths of war. Went down south then west, so up to Seattle and on to New York. I have met and talked to all sorts of people.

The broad masses with a few exceptions seem to take a sense of freedom for granted, while the better educated are somewhat concerned with what war means. How can a nation not knowing what war is be anything but indifferent. In a land of milk and honey, it is difficult to picture the full meaning of starvation. It would be too much to ask. Only by experience do we learn and understand the full, grim story of total war and the aftermaths of war, as bad or worse than war itself because it takes many more years to reestablish and rebuild a country than to tear it down. How many Americans know of the over

twelve thousand young and old English people blind in one or both eyes as a result of shrapnel from bombs? How many know of Row Hampton, just outside London, where over fifteen thousand English people of all ages got and are getting fitted with artificial limbs? Children's limbs must be changed as small bodies grow larger, but children as a rule get used to their substitutes. They play football, climb ladders, dance, and run nearly as well as before they got hurt. These two examples are only a fraction of the aftermath of war. Should the people here be told of war's horror? Will it undermine or strengthen their morale? It is hard to know which. The student girl and her type may change entirely should the hour come. It happened in England. Those we thought low in moral sometimes turned out to be dependable civil defense workers, and as England keep her enemy at bay by resistance, so will most of America. Off the subject, to me it seems pure madness even to try to open up actual battle on this enormous continent. With apologies for my poor English, yours faithfully, A. Linnea Svensson.

[ER:] That's a really very interesting letter. It's a letter from someone who has been through a great deal and done a great deal of thinking and of course has a background which very few of us in this country have! (6:24)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, of course, when she says that she thinks it would be pure madness even to try and open up actual battle on this enormous continent, I would like to remind her that uh [ER: Russia is an even greater continent!] Russia is a much greater continent and Russia -- [ER: China is even greater!] is even greater than Russia! So between China and Russia, if we do get embroiled in a war, our continent will look rather small.

[ER:][Laughs] That's true! Now what is her question that she really wants to ask?

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, let's see. I think it uh the question that she has here uh is mainly whether uh we in this country should or should not try uh to drum in to our people what the real uh horrors of war are. Whether it will do anything to sharpen us up or make us more wide awake to the problems or whether we should just rely on the fact that when we are faced with a problem, we will react as the English people did. (7:37)

[ER:] Well, I think that it's--there's no question that we would react in the same way. I think that the girl who is disillusioned is disillusioned because youth finds it very difficult to live with uncertainty. And uh since she isn't obliged to face total war, uh she is unhappy because she doesn't know if whether it's going to be war or peace. And um so I think as far as that particular situation goes, we will find that all of us meet what we have to meet -- its human nature, the desire to continue to exist is one of those things that is so deep down in people that they nearly always meet whatever has to come. What I marvel at is how they stand up mentally, how some of the people who watched whole families destroyed stood up mentally is, from my point of view, the most astounding thing in the world. But they do! And it lies in the fact that they--that it's almost something stronger than you--your mind, the desire to go on living, and it's what's kept the world going through dark ages and so forth. There's always been people who have struggled to keep going.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] In other words, it is your feeling that our people in this country are not that much different--even though things have been better for us -- than the people of other nations. I am reminded of our ancient history though where the people who lived in the land of milk and honey as a rule had their--were weakened by the fact that they had had no real hardships to face up to for a long time and they became prey to the people who had much less. (9:42)

[ER:] We are still very close to pioneer days. I don't think we have had sufficient time to grow decadent, and as you grow decadent, to lose the ability to stand up under hardship. Most of us are only--there's an old saying that in this country its three generations from shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves. And most of us are

pretty close to shirt-sleeves. We take changes fairly well and we find many people who, by preference, do certain things here that were not done, for instance, in some of the countries in Europe over generations. But here they are done because we are still near the pioneer stage and we like it. [Elliott Roosevelt: Yes.] And I haven't the feeling that we have reached decadence at all.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] So you feel that in spite of the fact that we have got more of everything for the majority of our people than exists in any other country of the world that our people still have the will to go forward?

[ER:] Yes, and we still have a good many people who are struggling to get even the necessities of life. And we are aware of that and we are aware that we are uh still building. We are not stagnant in this country; we're still building and struggling for people to have more. (11:26)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, I think that this-this letter indicates that our correspondent felt that we were a very lusty country.

[ER:] I think it does, and I think we are a lusty country. I uh I have great faith in our ability when we come down to final decisions to meet whatever has to be met.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, I do too and I feel that we have an opportunity opening up to us today in the challenge that has been thrown at us by world communism uh to go forward and to prove that we are a-a leader type of people and are interested in helping other nations to come up to our level. That is the big challenge that faces us today.

[ER:] I think that is the big challenge.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, thank you very much, and I'm afraid that our announcer must take over at this point before we go on to our interview of the day.

[Break 12:32 to 12:48]

[ER:] On today's program, I'd like to talk about a very unusual nonprofit school whose buildings are in Connecticut but whose influence is beginning to show itself around the country. Its name is the Restaurant Institute and its goal is to train young American chefs. Its director, Mrs. Frances L. Roth, is my guest today. She is the first woman to have been made a member of the Connecticut Bar and has spent many years in the field of family law. She is going to tell us about the development of the Restaurant Institute. I am delighted that you could join me today on the program, Mrs. Roth.

[Frances L. Roth:] Thank you very much, Mrs. Roosevelt. I am delighted to be here this morning.

[ER:] Now there is one word that we are going to use over and over today, Mrs. Roth. I think we ought to get it straightened out right away, exactly how the word should be pronounced. How do you say C-U-L-I-N-A-R-Y?

[Frances L. Roth:] Europeans usually say "queue-linary" and we in America are more apt to call it the "cul-inary" or the culinarian arts.

[ER:] Well, I'm accustomed to culinary, so I guess that's the way we are going to pronounce it. It's interesting to think that a restaurant institute should be the outgrowth of the war, as I understand this was, Mrs. Roth. How did it come about? (14:20)

[Frances L. Roth:] Yes, indeed, Mrs. Roosevelt. It is rather an interesting organization. Uh we did not have in Connecticut, and many parts of the country do not have, a good quantity food trade program in our public schools. And when the veterans began returning to our area of Connecticut, we found we had no place for uh the training of former ships cooks and army mess sergeants into the restaurants and hotel kitchens of this country. It seemed to me a serious omission. And so we began to work on a program that would take care of our own Connecticut boys.

[ER:] Well, you've been training young Americans to cook and bake at the Restaurant Institute for the past five years. Do you think that these young men will be able to take over the top flight positions now occupied by European trained chefs in our hotel and restaurant business?

[Frances L. Roth:] I do indeed. I think that that's a challenge we will have to accept at this point since we no longer can import from the European countries so many hundreds of young apprentices . Uh we will have to make young American chefs in the next decade, and I believe that our boys who have had the training -- basic training -- that we now can give them at the Institute and others throughout the country will in the next decade take over those top flight jobs. (15:48)

[ER:] Well, that's an encouraging thing to think. Well, I've often thought that we have not placed enough emphasis on the importance of the culinary skills in our public school system. Why have we neglected the teaching of these cooking skills and left so profitable a field to men from other nations?

[Frances L. Roth:] Well, there are a number of reasons. I think that two major ones are the fact that American parents do not look upon cooking in quantity in the kitchens of this country as a prestige job the way they do in Europe. You know that the chef is pretty much king over on the other side of the ocean, Mrs. Roosevelt. And in this country we seem to feel that this is a menial job, and that is due somewhat to the lack of far-sightedness on the part of management in this country, and also I believe it is due to two other things in the school system. The enormous cost of such a good program as compared with other trade programs and the lack of really well trained quantity teaching staff. It's very difficult to get a chef who is able to teach in this country.

[ER:] Who is able to really teach well.

[Frances L. Roth:] Yes, to teach well and also that the trade school program, as you very well know, does not carry salary enough to warrant bringing the chef that would be the top-flight person.

[ER:] Yes, I hadn't thought of that but I can see that. Well now, I want to touch upon one important point you just mentioned. There seems to have developed an overwhelming white collar trend and many skilled trades have suffered from lack of interest, lack of good student material in this country. In most of the European countries that I have visited, uh the chef, as you said, is a man of prestige in his community, rewarded both by good salary and by admiration of his achievements. Uh parents apprentice the young very early and the proper preparation of food and beverages is considered a distinctly worthwhile career. What are we doing here to bring out the rewarding features of the food trades and are American parents and students aware of these features? (18:19)

[Frances L. Roth:] Well, this is one of the reasons why I am so happy to be here this morning and that you would take such interest in such a program to bring it to the attention of American parents because it's a very well paid permanent career if a young man or a woman would take the time and make the effort to get proper basic training. We are beginning--I'll admit that we're about twenty-five years behind many of the other trades--but we are beginning and we are making headway. There are about eighteen universities now doing management level training in food preparation. And uh we are now trying to set standards in

our school that would uh be right for the graduate of the good food trades program in your public school system and to give them the right kind of training to go on to chef hood.

[ER:] And what universities have developed?

[Frances L. Roth:] Well, the oldest would be Cornell. I think you must be aware of the wonderful hotel administration--

[ER:] I do know about Cornell but that is largely, if I remember, that's largely a management course.

[Frances L. Roth:] Yes, it is. It's a four year degree course and usually, that is for white collar training with some knowledge of food preparation supervision but not to make cooks or bakers.

[ER:] I remember they used to cook uh a meal when I used to go up there in Farm and Home week, and the boys cooked the meal, but I gathered that was sort of incidental to the training. The training was to be a white collar um training for management in a hotel.

[Frances L. Roth:] Oh yes, definitely, the college courses are really in the schools of business administration with majors in hotel and restaurant administration and management, and they are quite different from a school like ours which would be 85 percent, let us say, manual in its training.

[ER:] Well now, um in-in the trade schools or the high schools, which would be doing what could be done for youngsters from thirteen to eighteen. Can the cost be brought down so it is feasible to give that training? (20:36)

[Frances L. Roth:] Well, in New York and several other parts of the country, Detroit notably, there has been a great effort to train the thirteen to seventeen and eighteen year old boy and girl. And uh many of them uh make excellent people in due course. And they go out into the trades and go up station by station from that beginning. There again you have the real difficulty of cooking fine foods. It's so expensive to prepare in quantity fine foods, and on tax dollars you would find that they would have to prepare meals that could be served and sold in the high schools and trade schools for perhaps thirty-five or forty cents at the maximum. And on that level, it is very difficult to make the fine sauces and the fine foods that are necessary for the boys who want to go in to hotel kitchens and fine restaurant kitchens and take over those top-flight jobs we talked about.

[ER:] Well now, I'd like to ask a few questions about the program at your school. Looking back at your many years in the field of family law and criminal court, I wonder how you happened to become interested in this school for cooks and bakers, Mrs. Roth?

[Frances L. Roth:] Well, during the war, I had a rather interesting wartime job with our Connecticut War Council. I was a social protectionist under uh Surgeon General [Thomas] Parran during the war and ours was a very critical area. And it was the first time, I think, that I realized how important is the innkeeper so called or the hotel restaurant, the meeting place of people, strangers to your community and so on, in periods of emergency and also in normal times. And I realized what a very wide public service is involved in the housing and feeding of people when there are great movements of population. When the war was over and we had no program at all for our boys in Connecticut, I sought some programs in other nearby states and found that we didn't have those either. So that we began this uh program in Connecticut for our returning veterans and I do believe that ours will be a permanent school for all time because of the need. Now these boys come to us, Mrs. Roosevelt, from thirty-eight states in the Union. [ER: Do they really?] And they go out to work in about thirty-six states of the Union. We place them ourselves, and

they are in such demands that there are three or four interviews for every young man who is ready to graduate from our school. (23:13)

[ER:] Well, that is extraordinary. I am--I have a personal interest because I had a young boy after the last war come to me and say that he had been sent to a school which never gave him any training of any kind and been very exacting. It was really nothing more apparently than an effort to get cheap labor I think and get paid by the GIs for teaching them nothing. So I was enormously interested when you first told me of this effort that you are making. Well now, I am sorry to say that we have to break for a minute and let our announcer have a word, but we will come right back to this interesting talk.

[Break 24:00 to 24:04]

[ER:] Now, we've come back to our talk with Mrs. Roth about the Restaurant Institute in Connecticut, which trains boys to be the chefs, the American chefs, that we are all looking for. I wonder if uh--since I know that this school is a nonprofit venture in the old established New England tradition and of the private schools, with a board of governors made up of citizens and educators and industry representatives. How did you interest the chairman of your board, Mrs. [Katharine] James Rowland Angell, in this project?

[Frances L. Roth:] You know, Mrs. Roosevelt that Mrs. James Rowland Angell is the widow of the former president of Yale University. Well, Dr. James Angell was alive at the--in 1946 and took a great interest in the way that the GI training program was being established and was much concerned over the fact that we had so much for the college student and the junior college student and so little in the trades for men to learn to work with both their hands and their heads. I think that's exactly the way he put it. And Mrs. Angell became very much interested in our program and made possible a purchase of a lovely old estate next to the Yale Divinity School, which in itself, through its location and lovely campus, added a great deal of prestige to the program. Now I wanted to just say a word, if I may be permitted to, about that GI reference you made shortly, uh just preceding this uh talk, and I want to say that that was one of the reasons why our board made this special effort in a direct nonprofit way. We tried on-the-job training for so many of our veterans and found that, while management was willing in this field, that the European trained chef in the kitchen who was supposed to give the instruction was on the defensive about these American boys of ours. And we found another very interesting thing. We found that American boys didn't want to be busboys for two or three years, the way they have to be in Europe. They would come to me and say, now Mrs. Roth, if I could learn to be a line officer in sixteen weeks at Princeton, I'd never been on the deck of a ship before, I certainly don't have to be a busboy for two years before I learn to cook. And I think our techniques and our methods are so much more advanced now in America, that this myth of this long drawn out apprenticeship from a boy's, say, tenth birthday to his twenty-first birthday before he becomes a sous-chef is just a myth as far as Americans are concerned. (26:49)

[ER:] You do it in how many--how long--how long a time?

[Frances L. Roth:] We give eight months of basic training to every boy that comes there and may I say, boy and girl, or man and woman really. And then we give to the ten percent that are the best in our class the chance to work under a really top-flight chef for eight succeeding months either in the pastry field or in the cooking field. [Coughing] Now those are not really ready to go out as top people, but they are certainly five, six, seven years along the line toward that ten years that makes the good first cook.

[ER:] Now you have some scholarships, don't you too?

[Frances L. Roth:] Yes, indeed, we have twenty annual scholarships donated by industry, by food and beverage operators, for the benefit of young Americans who want to come in from high school.

[ER:] Well now, for instance, do hotels contribute scholarships?

[Frances L. Roth:] The very hotel that we are in now; Mr. Henderson of the Sheraton was the first to give us a scholarship [ER: A scholarship. That's exciting] and also to engage our boys in his operations. (27:52)

[ER:] So the Sheraton Hotels contribute-contribute [Frances L. Roth: Yes, indeed.] and- and engage from you. Well that's interesting! Well now how do you get your modern equipment?

[Frances L. Roth:] That has been donated to us by the various equipment manufacturers throughout the country. They have been more than generous in supplying us with six modern kitchens and completely equipping an eighteen hundred foot bake shop with all the modern tools that these boys will find when they go out to work.

[ER:] Well, I think that's really wonderful. The industry is really interested then in getting young Americans in doing this.

[Frances L. Roth:] Oh yes! What good is the best food in the world and the most of it and the best equipment if you can't get it to the table the way it should taste and look?

[ER:] Well, I think that's most interesting. Well now, I'd like to hear about the type of instruction given at the Restaurant Institute. Can you give me a description of a day?

[Frances L. Roth:] Well, I'd like to. We uh decided that the way to learn to cook in quantity was to cook in quantity. And so each day, under expert guidance of highly qualified food personnel, we--our students rather purchase--they comb the market for quality at a price, they prepare, they cook, they serve, they eat a seven course hotel or restaurant meal that would begin at retail say at about a dollar and a half and go to four fifty. They then have it criticized, analyzed, they are told what to do with the leftovers, and they bring up the price per unit, according to fifty portions, a hundred, a hundred and fifty, and so on. It's as practical as that. (29:30)

[ER:] That is. How many-how many-how are the units arranged? How many students to an instructor and so forth?

[Frances L. Roth:] We work with just ten to a station. The range chef will have ten boys with him at one time.

[ER:] And um do you prepare for different groups in New Haven? Do you use uh that method at all?

[Frances L. Roth:] Well, we must have quantity and when the beef prices rose the way they did, it was very important for us to find a unit that needed a great deal of red meat so to speak. And we have been cooking for the Yale athletic teams. And if you know Herman Hickman at all, you know they are fed on beef! [Eleanor Roosevelt and Frances L. Roth laugh] We have been cooking their meals for them regularly for all the teams: hockey, swimming, and so on throughout the year. We also have helped with the New Haven Teaches college setup for practice of that variety, and we bake for all the underprivileged children of the community.

[ER:] That's very interesting. And it seems to me a very practical arrangement. Now do you rotate your students from one place to another in their basic training, and do you give any additional lecture courses? (30:43)

[Frances L. Roth:] Uh every student is rotated from station to station through his basic training. When he enters advanced work he cooks only. But during the first eight months, he must have commercial uh, shall we say, a slight beginning in commercial law. I find it terribly important, Mrs. Roosevelt, that these boys understand the problem of the employer. And also that if they wish to go in business for themselves, that they will be very careful, and not use their GI loans or any other money they may have saved without advantage to themselves and to the citizens, so that we have trained them not to sign their named papers without knowing what they sign--the first essentials of commercial law. We do a very excellent course, I think, in business English and culinary terms, so that they will know the French terms or the Italian terms for the native dishes and so on. We also teach business English to a point where our graduates can really write a good letter of application and read the *New York Herald Tribune* and *Times* editorial sheets with some degree of understanding. And uh we do rapid calculations, so that they will know weights and measures and percentages of food costs. Now then in addition to that we do give them excellent work in sanitation, which I think is most important [ER: That's very important]and in nutrition. Because more than-- (32:09)

[ER:] So that they know what a balanced meal is, [France L. Roth: That's right] and they know also the real reason why you keep things clean.

[Frances L. Roth:] Themselves and their equipment must be kept clean, and their food must come to the table so that it serves the public with nutrition and sanitation.

[ER:] Well uh, I-I think that all those things are vitally important because there is a great increase in the American habit of eating out. I don't think it used to be a habit at all in this country, but lately it's become almost universal because of the movement of great numbers of population and increased traveling and the fact that more married women hold full time jobs. And so I think that it's very important that eating places generally be well run and run safely because you can start epidemics of all kinds by having unsanitary conditions in eating houses. I remember down in Washington at one time, a regular crusade almost that the Public Health had to make on the eating places in Washington which were horribly crowded at that time because of war conditions. Uh so it would seem to me that with the wonderful strides we made in scientific equipment and in processing foods, we should be able to do all of this. And I would like to know what you think about it. (34:02)

[Frances L. Roth:] Well, I agree with you, and I do feel that tremendous strides are being made in keeping our kitchens in America the finest in the world today in so far as sanitation is concerned. We have the things to do with and I think we are training our personnel to achieve that end.

[ER:] Well, I think one very interesting thing that you said earlier about the innkeeper, having a tradition, not only of providing good food and good service but of providing a sense of welcome and also a sense of responsibility for what goes on. Do you find that your young people acquire that?

[Frances L. Roth:] Yes, we teach them that gracious hospitality in the food service trade is the first and most important item, that people must be greeted and treated as if they were guests in the home, and that is what makes the successful big business of American eating out. We have five hundred thousand eating out places, Mrs. Roosevelt, with over a million and half persons employed in them. And eating out in America is a habit with rich and poor alike. And all the places should serve them graciously, and everybody in the operation from management right down to the last busboy in the kitchen must be imbued with that attitude, that it is a public service and that we must render it with, uh shall I say, grace.

[ER:] It's really big business!

[Frances L. Roth:] It certainly is. (35:36)

[ER:] It must--it's always, I think, an inspiration to see a project which is undertaken by citizens to fill a special need in their own community, and which will be, as this will be, a permanent asset to the educational system of our country. So you must feel that this has been a rewarding undertaking, don't you, Mrs. Roth?

[Frances L. Roth:] I really do and I think that every member of our board of governors feels the five years of effort and time and money that they have placed in this institution has been well rewarded by the seven hundred and fifty boys who have gone out to make a real career in foods for themselves.

[ER:] Well, I congratulate you particularly on the fact that you have jobs for all your graduates. Now we have to end.

[Break 36:21 to 36:35]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] And now it's time to close the program and remind you that you've been listening to the *Eleanor Roosevelt Program* which comes to you each Monday through Friday at this same time. And this is Elliott Roosevelt speaking and wishing you all good day.

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Transcribed from holdings at Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (FDRL)  
File(s): 72-30(151)

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