

## TALKS BY MRS. ROOSEVELT

April 21, 1937

Description: ER speaks on the subject of being the wife of the president with columnist Genevieve Forbes Herrick.

Participants: Eleanor Roosevelt, Virginia Barr, Genevieve Forbes Herrick

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### BARR:

This is Virginia Barr of the Pond's Company, speaking from Washington, D.C., and bringing you /<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt. Tonight, in beginning this series of broadcasts, Mrs. Roosevelt talks informally about what it means to be the wife of the President.

First, let me take just a moment to speak of the Coronation. In a recent issue of Life magazine there were pictures of beautiful women who will take part in the Coronation social activities. On two pages, there were 5 women shown, a daughter of an Earl, a sister of an Earl, wives of a baron and a baronet. Now, of these 5 English beauties, 4 use Pond's Cold Cream.

So many English women use Pond's, it has become the biggest selling cold cream in England. Remember this when you're wondering what to do for your complexion.

Follow the same method used by English and American beauties for refining the skin and keeping away signs of age. Cleanse and invigorate your skin night and morning the easy, effective Pond's way. Begin tomorrow. Get a jar of Pond's Cold Cream in the morning.

Now, it's my great privilege to present ... Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt!  
(8 MINUTES FROM MRS. ROOSEVELT ENDING WITH THE COMMENT:

"Before we get into our other questions, Virginia Barr has a word to say".)

### MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Tonight I want to tell you a little of What It Means To Be The Wife of the President, and I'm just going to talk it over here, for you, with Mrs. Genevieve Forbes Herrick – a very charming young lady whom I came to know soon after I first arrived at the White House. She used to be well-known as a reporter on the Chicago Tribune, and she and her husband are now living in Alexandria, where she is writing a monthly feature for the "Country Gentleman". Now, Geno, is that chair perfectly comfortable for you?

### MRS. HERRICK:

Yes, it's fine, thank you. I wonder if you'd say, Mrs. Roosevelt, that being the wife of the President means being a very busy lady?

### MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Someone wrote me a letter recently in which she said in part "You may think you are useful to poke your nose into so many things. You are really America's first nuisance."

(LAUGHTER)

### MRS. HERRICK:

How did you like getting a letter like that?

### MRS. ROOSEVELT:

I was very much amused. My family and I have laughed over it and I've even used it in a few speeches I've made.

### MRS. HERRICK:

One of the things I've discovered about you, Mrs. Roosevelt, is a very keen sense of humor. Do you think a sense of humor is essential for a First Lady?

### MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Well, I think if you can see the funny side of some things, it's easier now and then. For instance, the day the lady wrote me that if I would stay at home and attend to the house-keeping and not run around the country so much, she would not have soiled her white gloves on the stair-rail which leads up from the lower floor to the East Room. I might have taken it really seriously and made my household unhappy, but knowing that the stair rail is wiped on an average of every fifteen minutes during the period when visitors are allowed in the White House, it struck me as extremely amusing that I should personally test the cleanliness of it. People do not realize the conditions that prevail in a house of this type and consequently cannot appreciate that it can not be run exactly as your own house would be.

MRS. HERRICK:

I didn't meet you until after you came to Washington, and I've often wondered just what you thought when Mr. Roosevelt was elected for the first time in '32.

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Geno, I was terrified. One of my children was at the campaign headquarters that night. He came up and asked me the same question. If I'd dared to tell the truth then, I'd have told him what I've just told you.

MRS. HERRICK:

Why were you so terrified? When Mr. Roosevelt was Governor of New York, didn't you get used to such a position?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Four years in Albany were relatively simple. The White House, I knew, would be very different. To begin with, Albany was fairly near home. I would have to leave that. There were so many people I was fond of and with whom I worked; they couldn't all go with me. My time was taken up with so many interests that I'd have to curtail. And my privacy – I couldn't imagine what would become of that. I even remember wondering if I was going to be able to drive my own car!

MRS. HERRICK:

Well, you've been able to do that, haven't you?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Well, yes – but one old gentleman I met up in Maine didn't think I should.

MRS. HERRICK:

What did he say?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

He said he didn't believe I was Mrs. Roosevelt because if I were, I'd have a chauffeur. He said his wife had always told him if she were living in the White House she'd have a chauffeur and the most expensive make of car.

MRS. HERRICK:

Well, Mrs. Roosevelt, you've kept right on doing things – how have all your fears worked out?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

I lost some of them when I decided that I'd be lost if I pretended to be anything I was not. Of course, that applies to everyone in any position. You must retain your natural self. If you don't, people whom you meet won't be themselves. They will think of you as a personage, not as a person.

(OVER)

MRS. ROOSEVELT: (Continued)

In realizing that, you see, many fears could be discarded. The household, the increase in mail, the more formal entertaining didn't really trouble me, but the realization of how much of it there'd be appalled me.

MRS. HERRICK:

You have quite a few people at the White House with whom you've worked before, haven't you?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Yes, and I don't know what I'd do without them. There is really too much for one person to do – and if you have a few people you know can do things without supervision, you're lucky indeed. The greatest danger from my point of view is that many of them are so ready to be helpful and shield me from

contact with the ordinary difficulties and activities of daily life that I might become a helpless individual. As an example, my first day in the W. H.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Ike Hoover, who was then head usher, informed that it was not the custom for either the President or his wife to run the elevator, and I had to be quite insistent before I was allowed to do it myself, in spite of the fact that I told him that I had worked a similar elevator in our house for years and that I could still do it.

MRS. HERRICK:

With so much to do at the White House, how do you find time to be away as much as you are?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

I think being out and around the country is just as important, more so sometimes, than some of the things I do in the White House.

MRS. HERRICK:

Why is that?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

If I stayed in Washington all the time, I'd lose touch with the rest of the world. I might have a less crowded life but I would begin to think perhaps that my life in Washington was representative of the rest of the country and that is a dangerous point of view.

MRS. HERRICK:

What's the greatest satisfaction in being the President's wife? Or what do you enjoy the most?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

I'd say the sense of enlarged vision. Because you can see the nation as a whole, through individuals you meet from every part of the country. Also the ability the position gives you to do helpful things for a great many people.

Take the little girl, for instance, who because I was so prominent in public, wrote and told me she had never been able to walk straight. Through the kindness of my friends in the 2.V.<sup>4</sup> Orthopaedic Hospital she was put through the necessary operations and after ten months in a plaster cast came out as straight as any other child. She is now earning her own living.

MRS. HERRICK:

Meeting so many, don't people tend to become all alike to you?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

On the reception line, it's hard to get more than just a casual impression. But I meet so many others who have something definite to tell me, both at the White House and around the country. Through such meetings I know those people as individuals. I know their lives.

(OVER)

MRS. ROOSEVELT: (Continued)

One day a woman stopped me as she went past me in the receiving line and said: "May I talk to you for a minute afterwards? I am trying to make my living as a farmer and I need some help." She came back afterwards and told me the familiar story of farm loans, drought, poor crops, etc. Between us we tried to work out some of the difficulties with the proper government agencies and I learned a great deal from her and it helped me to understand similar conditions throughout the country.

MRS. HERRICK:

What is the greatest drawback of being a President's wife?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

I think it's the fact that you have to think of what you do not as a private citizen, but as a public personage. In private life you can be yourself always, those who know you will understand, but what you do of a public nature will be seen not only by friends who know you, but by many people who will be affected by what you say or do without the background of knowledge of you yourself, so that you cannot count on a correct interpretation. For instance, a great many people may think that your interest in a certain thing is because of some political reason, whereas any one who had known you would at once realize that that interest had been yours for many years.

MRS. HERRICK:

Do you think being the wife of a President changes a woman?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

No, I don't think it does inside. It changes your method of thinking to a certain extent, but it doesn't change you as a person at all.

MRS. HERRICK:

In being the wife of a President, what does that mean to your private life? Where do you get time for it?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

You have very little time – but you plan for such things as are important to you. You do what you feel you must do to retain your individuality. Some people say they can get along without outdoor exercise, I feel that's necessary and will find time for it during the day even though it may mean I work far into the night. I feel it's important to get away from the White House and back to people who don't treat me as a personage. That's why I arrange my time so as to get away and be with old friends now and then.

But Geno, before we get into our other questions, Virginia Barr has a word to say, and then we'll continue our talk.

(INSERT MIDDLE COMMERCIAL)

MIDDLE COMMERCIAL

BARR:

Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt.

I want to speak now of one of the women who will be present at the Coronation. She was over in this country a few weeks ago and I talked with her.

She's one of the three Premier Duchesses in the British Isles – the Duchess of Leinster – and I doubt if there'll be a lovelier woman at the Coronation. She has the figure of a girl. And she has that fresh, vital look you see mostly on girls in their teens, and early twenties.

Of course, we talked about Pond's Cold Cream. I asked her: "Do you really use – just Pond's?" She laughed ... "What else should I use?" She said, "I consider that Pond's Cold Cream is a complete facial in itself. I use it for everything – to clean up when I come in, and to freshen up before I go out. It keeps my skin in perfect condition.

Now that's just what the Duchess of Leinster told me. And since it's so easy and so economical, why don't you take care of your skin the same way – with Pond's. Every night and morning, smooth on Pond's Cold Cream. Let it release dirt and stale make-up from your pores. Wipe away and apply more Pond's Cold Cream, patting it in.

You'll find this simple treatment does more than clean your skin. It also invigorates the skin tissues. It works against blackheads, coarsening pores and lines. Your pores become finer; your skin smoother – clearer – lovelier all around.

Begin right away! Get a jar of Pond's Cold Cream tomorrow.

Now, again we have the honor of hearing Mrs. Roosevelt!

(MRS. ROOSEVELT RESUMES)

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Mrs. Herrick thinks I should tell you a little of what it means to run a presidential household.

MRS. HERRICK:

Yes, do you have anything to do with the kitchen yourself? You don't ever do any ordering, do you?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

No. But I go over all the menus and I know what's happening in the kitchen all the time. Mrs. Nesbitt keeps me in touch with it.

MRS. HERRICK:

What about clothes? Do you have to have a new dress for every occasion?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Oh, my, no. But I have to have a great many more than I sometimes think I need. In the winter ~~time~~, with the increased entertaining I have to have more dresses. This year I had the new inauguration clothes but if it were not for the many photographs one could wear clothes longer!

MRS. HERRICK:

Do you have any set time for going to bed?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

I never get there before eleven and frequently it is three A.M.!

MRS. HERRICK:

And then up again at a quarter to eight?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Oh, yes.

MRS. HERRICK:

How do you feel about the publicity that follows you so much?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

The essential publicity of public appearances concerns me very little. But other types of publicity concern me a great deal not only for myself but for members of my family. Young people hate to have every move recorded and I myself very often feel that the people can hardly be interested in some of the things which are written.

MRS. HERRICK:

Do you write all your own things?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

Yes, I dictate every word which appears over my signature, I've been told that I have a ghost writer, but there are no skeletons in my desk!

MRS. HERRICK:

What's the funniest thing that's happened to you?

MRS. ROOSEVELT:

I don't know whether I think this is as funny as it is natural, but I made some purchases in a New York department store and gave my name and address as Mrs. F. D. Roosevelt, R-O-O-S-E-V-E-L-T, The White House, Washington, D.C. The girl wrote quickly and without looking up said – "Any room number?"

(LAUGHTER)

Now Geno, I know we could go on forever but I must go home for we have people staying in the house and one rule is that the President is not kept waiting and he expects dinner at seven-forty-five.

(PAUSE)

In closing I should like to say to all who are listening that we will welcome any suggestions or questions you want to send in. I really can't acknowledge your letters though, and we can't give any assurance that your questions will be answered in the ensuing broadcasts, but we will do our best.

(OVER)

MRS. ROOSEVELT: (Continued)

And if you do write, would you please address your letters to the radio station to which you're listening?

Next Wednesday I'll be back again to describe a typical day in the White House. I'm going to select a recent day and then Mrs. Scheider and I will tell you all about it. You know I feel that the White House is your house and in this way I hope you will feel that you're sharing a day with me there.

Good night.

(INSERT CLOSING)

CLOSING

BARR:

We will bring you Mrs. Roosevelt again next Wednesday evening and at that time she will tell you about "A Typical Day in the White House."

I'd like to remind you also that if you are going by Daylight Saving Time next week, this program will be heard at this same hour. If you're on standard time, however, it will be one hour earlier.

I hope you will be with us again next week, and that you will begin right away to take care of your skin the way followed by so many beautiful women in England and America. Make a point of getting a jar of Pond's Cold Cream tomorrow.

This is Virginia Barr of the Pond's Company....Good night.

ANNOUNCER:

This is the Blue network of the National Broadcasting Company.

ALTERNATE CLOSING

BARR:

We will bring you Mrs. Roosevelt again next Wednesday evening, and at that time she will tell you about "A Typical Day In the White House." (And in discussing that day, she will have with her Mrs. Malvina Scheider, who has been Mrs. Roosevelt's secretary for many years, and works with her constantly at the White House.)

I would also like to remind you that if you are going by Daylight Saving Time next Wednesday, this program will be heard at the same hour. If you are on Standard Time, however, it will be heard one hour earlier.

And if you are going to write any letters in connection with Mrs. Roosevelt's program, will you please address them care of the station to which you are now listening.

I hope you will join us again next Wednesday, and that you will begin right away to take care of your skin the way followed by so many beautiful women in England and America. Make a point of getting a jar of Pond's Cold Cream tomorrow.

This is Virginia Barr of the Pond's Company saying good night.

ANNOUNCER:

This is the Blue network of the National Broadcasting Company.

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Proofread by: Ivana Mowry Mora, Matthew Girardi, Lee Febos, Jared Tetreau, Christopher Brick and Ikerighi David.

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

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<sup>1</sup> This is a handwritten interlineation

<sup>3</sup> "My first day in the W.H." is a handwritten interlineation.

<sup>4</sup> This is a handwritten interlineation.