

MRS. ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S OWN PROGRAM

May 16, 1940

Description: Broadcast 1:15-1:30 PM over the NBC Red Network. ER discusses the importance of teaching home arts to the young.

Participants: Eleanor Roosevelt, Ben Grauer, NBC Announcer

(47:45)

[Ben Grauer:] This is *Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt's Own Program*, presented by SweetHeart Soap.

[Theme music 47:50-48:16]

[Ben Grauer:] And so begins another visit with Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. These informal chats with one of the world's most admired women come to you with the compliments of SweetHeart Soap, one of America's fastest-growing bath and beauty soaps. And now in Washington, DC, our distinguished guest takes her place at the microphone. Ladies and gentlemen, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt.

[ER:] Good day, ladies and gentlemen. It seems impossible these days to go about one's business in the same, everyday manner. The sky, even if the sun shines, is filled for many people with portents of disaster. We wake in the night with a dream of something unbelievable which hides just around the corner. What we have considered civilization seems to be crumbling around us. We are the oases where the traveler seeks repose, refreshment, perhaps even the water which will bring him back to life. To be the guardians of civilization is a heavy responsibility. We must wait day by day with a firm determination that here at least we will make democracy work. We will give the best that is in us to preserve the freedom of the individual, and the ideals which have been and still are the foundation of our nation.

We're going back today to the home arts, which we were talking about on Tuesday. In my travels around the country and from the many people I see, I'm happy to learn that increasingly, girls are being taught through school programs and the youth-serving agencies that the home arts are valuable even when the girls are trying to fit themselves to earn a living in a professional way. Every girl should learn to cook. Every girl should learn to sew. I know that some of my granddaughters, who much prefer to play with the boys and do outdoor things, will think this is very poor advice. Nevertheless, their mothers will agree with me, of that I am sure.

I was interested to read an account giving the number of girls and even older women who had learned to sew for the first time either by hand or by machine on WPA [Work Projects Administration] and NYA [National Youth Administration] sewing projects. It is true that the art of making clothes for the family which our great-grandmothers practiced as a matter of cost in the home, beginning with the carding and spinning of the wool and cotton, going on to the weaving of the material, and ending with the making of the garment is an industry which, to a great extent, has walked out of our homes and been taken over by large manufacturing firms. There are still many advantages, however, in being able to use a needle or to run a sewing machine. You will find that even ready-made clothes need some alteration and can occasionally be made much more attractive if you add some personal touch. You can make many things for your own home which would cost you much more if you bought them ready made, and you will find that if you cannot take a full-time job because of some responsibility that keeps you at home, you can earn some money on the side in your community by developing a service with your needle. I know one

young girl who has not only made money for herself, but who now employs several other people in making slipcovers. I know another girl who has developed a mending service and does not only her own family mending, but that of many other people as well. (52:12)

We have a story in my husband's family about one of his great-grandmothers who not only brought up a family of eight children, but who, at various intervals, housed and fed and clothed and sent through school and college several boys who for one reason or another seemed to have a claim on her interest. She combined her darning, which was done for this large family and two of her neighbor's daughters who lived with her to learn the art of housekeeping, with the reading aloud by her husband of such well-known writers of the day as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Charles Dickens. Reading aloud is almost a lost art, and yet there is tremendous enjoyment in sharing the books that you care about with people who have similar tastes, who may bring out by their comments some points of view or some thought which you yourself have missed. Much poetry should be read aloud, for the beauty of poetry is often enhanced by the actual rhythm and sound which can only be fully enjoyed when it is spoken as well as read. I often think that one of the things we miss today in our homes is the old-fashioned custom of family prayers. Not so much because of the prayers that were said, because they can be said as effectively alone, but because it was almost always a period when either the head of the family or each member of the family in turn read aloud a portion of scripture. There is nothing which educates one's taste in literature as much as reading the Old and New Testaments. Well, I've wandered far from my original text of the value of being able to sew, but it shows that a variety of things are tied together when you begin to talk about home arts. (54:16)

There is another art which we've allowed to slip out of the home and which we should bring back to a great extent, namely the art of home recreation. The old games, the charades, the singing round the piano left something unforgettable in the minds of the older generation which tied them to certain rooms and certain people. You can never feel the same way about a movie theater or a dance hall. Though the radio is said to have increased the amount of time which people spend at home, I am not sure that it has increased the sense of companionship and joint participation in some recreational activities.

But before I continue, here's someone else with something to tell us. Let's listen to Mr. [Ben] Grauer.

[Ben Grauer:] I'll just borrow the microphone, Mrs. Roosevelt, and give it right back to you. Ladies, sometime today or tomorrow--soon anyway--you're going to buy a beauty soap. Well, suppose you find fifty people lined up at the soap counter all asking for SweetHeart Soap. You'll be inclined to try it too, won't you? But friends, it isn't fifty people or five hundred or even five thousand. It's five million people who've recently joined the nationwide trend to SweetHeart Soap. Five million new users during the last two years alone. You certainly should look into this tremendous, dramatic upswing in the nation's demand for SweetHeart Soap. Maybe you've been missing something. Perhaps pure, delicately-fragranced SweetHeart Soap can give you more pleasure, can even help your skin look lovelier. Ladies, you'll know when you yourself change to SweetHeart Soap. And now I return the microphone to our gracious speaker at Washington, DC, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt.

[ER:] Many young people today are being taught the arts of the home in NYA projects, and in one of these projects there was something which was being done which struck me as a valuable service which many of us might follow out in our efforts to create successful homes. Most people hope someday to own their own home, and to have at least a small plot of ground around it. This is a hope even when one is actually living in an apartment. These girls on this particular NYA project were being taught how to garden as an adjunct to the creation of a home. They were planning a combination flower and vegetable garden, which is a good idea, for there is no reason why a vegetable garden should not be attractive as well as useful. They were learning how to plant so as to have fresh vegetables for the maximum number

of weeks, how to plant flowers so as to have some to cut as well as those out of doors to please the eye during the whole growing season. Obviously, the next step was to decide on the quantity that one should plant, not only for use of the family in summer, but for canning for the winter. It is true that you can buy today for a very reasonable sum excellent frozen and canned goods, but if you're living on a very limited budget and you can grow and can for winter use, you will find it gives you a sense of satisfaction which is quite as important as the few pennies that you can save. The pride with which you will say that you grew and canned last summer the things you serve in winter will be as great as the pride I have always felt lay behind the story of a successful man who asked his guests at a luncheon given in an exclusive club whether they would have milk from his own farm or champagne to drink, adding that the cost of either was about the same.

We have a favorite story in our family, and whenever my husband impresses us with the extent of his knowledge to the point that all the rest of us have an inferiority complex, we bring it out to remind him that once upon a time, he was, on some subjects, as ignorant as we are on many questions today. This particular tale has to do with a speech which my husband made on our honeymoon, so you can see it was many years ago when he was very young. I was invited to open a bazaar in Scotland, largely attended by the local crofters or farmers. In those days, I was unable to say three words to a gathering of any size, so he had to come to my rescue and take my place. He solemnly told the people, who rarely had milk or cream, that it added greatly to the value and taste of vegetables if they were cooked in cream. I think much of the advice which we give on homemaking to young people is given with as little knowledge of their problems as was that advice to the Scotch crofters. I know in my own case that if someone had told me how important it was to really be able to practice these home arts myself, it would have been of great value. As it was, I grew up a fairly impractical young woman who spent many years gaining confidence in her own ability to cope with the making of a home. And I think this confidence is something that every young boy and girl should have as part of their preparation for living. Without it, the rapid adjustment and stability of home life is made much more difficult. (1:00:11)

[Ben Grauer:] Thank you very much, Mrs. Roosevelt. Ladies, I believe it's safe to say that most of you actually have a lovely complexion. Oh, I'll grant you that it may not always look lovely, and that's where SweetHeart Soap comes in. You see, your pretty skin is forever collecting dust and fine grime; the air is full of it. Now these surface impurities are stubborn; they cling. Ordinary cleansing methods often fail to remove these beauty spoilers and leave them on your skin. Result: a dull, lifeless mask that hides your greatest charm--your naturally clean, radiant complexion. SweetHeart Soap can help remove that hostile mask, ladies, because SweetHeart cleanses thoroughly. Dirt can't resist it, not even the obstinate, clinging kind that may be dimming your good looks this very minute. Get gentle, thorough SweetHeart Soap without delay and see if your own mirror doesn't tell you there's no other soap like it.

[Theme music 1:01:13-1:01:38]

[Ben Grauer:] [music continues softly] And now we say adieu for a little while to Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. Mrs. Roosevelt comes to call again next Tuesday, same time, same station, and we sincerely hope you'll be with us to enjoy her visit. Remember to ask for the beauty soap you hear about on these programs: SweetHeart Soap, famous for fifty years as the soap that agrees with your skin. And be sure to listen next Tuesday when you'll again hear [music crescendos, cuts] *Mrs. Roosevelt's Own Program*. Ben Grauer speaking.

[NBC Announcer:] This is the National Broadcasting Company.

[NBC Chimes]

(1:02:25)

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