

## MRS. ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S OWN PROGRAM

May 2, 1940

Description: Broadcast time 1:15-1:30 PM over the NBC Red Network. ER answers the question "Why is life in the White House sheltered?" and reads FDR's proclamation for National Employment Week.

Participants: Ben Grauer, Eleanor Roosevelt, NBC Announcer

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[Ben Grauer:] This is *Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt's Own Program*.

[Theme music 0:03-0:25]

[Ben Grauer:] Friends, that theme music means that we're about to enjoy another radio visit with Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. Your distinguished visitor comes to you each Tuesday and Thursday at this same time presented by the makers of SweetHeart Soap, the favorite American beauty soap since the days of the Gay Nineties. Mrs. Roosevelt just arrived here at our NBC studios from Washington, DC for her regular Thursday appointment with you. She's coming over to the microphone now. Ladies and gentlemen, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt.

[ER:] Good day, ladies and gentlemen. When I left you last Tuesday I went over to the Girl Scout Practice House to celebrate the opening of Better Housing Week. This occasion every year reminds us that we're all interested in improving our homes and these girls, from ten to fourteen years old who served and cooked our lunch, are going to be better able to do all that should be done in the homes of the future.

Now, what I said the other day about life in the White House being sheltered has brought me an inquiry which I'm going to try to answer today as I hope to try to answer all your inquiries. What is it that makes life in the White House sheltered? Well, in the first place, the minute you enter its doors you realize that here is a place where there are traditions and customs and habits which have to be observed. In a limited way, you may change minor details, but the main picture was the same before you came and will remain so after you leave. Others presidents and first ladies and their families will conform in much the same way. For instance, I had no idea what happened on Inauguration Day, and Mr. Ike Hoover, who was then head usher, had been arranging for inaugurations during many years. He said I need not worry about anything except the list of those I wanted to have invited. All I need do was to tell him how many I expected and he would attend to everything. (2:29)

The doormen with their dignity and perfect manners impress you first. Then the ushers are the next visible signs that you encounter on entering the White House of your bondage and your freedom. Bondage in that they are so well trained they will always hurry to do all the little things such as announcing you before you enter a room, being on hand in the morning to greet you if you come home by an early train or staying late to see you off at night, arranging your trips and having your tickets ready to put into your pocketbook as your leave. Where again will you ever have so much attention and kindly consideration? Freedom in that there is so much less for you to do yourself, that all your wishes seem to be made possible by magic. Nevertheless, you must be introduced before you go into a room, and you must live up to the standards just as any other first ladies have done and will do. (3:29)

I did take a stand with Mr. Ike Hoover that I would run the elevator myself, but I think it grieved him very much. It is still frequently run for me in spite of the fact that everyone knows I'm capable of doing it myself, which I think is all I really wanted to achieve. Then there is always a car to take me wherever I wish to go, and someone else remembers my engagements and tells me when the car is at the door and the footman knows when I am going. I had an amusing experience this year when I arrived somewhere and no one seemed prepared to receive me. I telephoned back to the White House to discover that there had been some mix-up and I had gone to the wrong place. You would have thought from the anxiety and the explanations of regret that everyone else was at fault. Whereas it did not seem unreasonable, as I was the person going to the place, that I should have found out where I was going. Apparently, that never crossed anyone's mind.

Yes, cushions surround you on all sides. In the morning, I get up and a maid brings me my clothes, breakfast is ready and waiting, the guests are all agog not to be late, then the housekeeper, Mrs. [Henrietta] Nesbitt, who does all the work, consults me. It seemed unnatural to me at first, for I've always gone to the kitchen and written out the menus at least. Now I find myself presented with the finished menus which require no thought on my part, and I take it for granted. I visit the kitchen in the White House only on rare occasions, and then only because I think it is wise for everybody to have an opportunity to tell anything they have on their minds to the ultimate authority now and then. I like to see and speak to everyone in my household occasionally, otherwise I feel as though we no longer lived in a home. And now, Mr. Grauer looks as though he'd like to say a few words. Let's listen to him. (5:28)

[Ben Grauer:] Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt. Ladies, I want a word with all of you who are going to buy a new beauty soap today. Without a doubt, you're seeking a pure, dependable soap that will give your skin the thorough yet gentle cleansing its loveliness needs. Try SweetHeart Soap. SweetHeart is so gentle that it's highly recommended even for young babies' delicate skin. Yet it is also so thorough that it can help reveal the radiant, natural skin charm which wrong cleansing methods so often leave hidden. Its fifty-year record of cleansing gently, of cleansing thoroughly, is your promise that it will do as much for you. Make SweetHeart your new beauty soap. See if you don't say "there's no other soap like it." And now Mrs. Roosevelt, may I return your compliment. Friends, let's listen to Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt.

[ER:] If I'm planning for any of my guests, I remember that, were I in my own home, I would undoubtedly have to do all my own telephoning and arrange my own engagements so that I could get on without the car if I wished to give it to my guest. In the White House if I have guests, when the usher comes I simply mention that they wish to do a variety of things. He does the necessary arranging and has a car at the door for them and I go my own way gaily. I do have to give orders or directions; I have to tell everybody more or less the same things every morning so no friction will arise, and no one will be upset by what anybody else has been told to do or not been told to do. But whatever I want, there is someone helpful who is going to try to arrange it. Most of us in our own homes would be struggling with situations as they arose and not achieving anything like a satisfactory results. I don't mean that I have no obligations, but that the ordinary ones of ordinary living are removed. There is work, plenty of work, to be done, and yet if I want a ride in the morning, I name the hour and a companion will appear with the horses to look after me and return me safely at the end of my hour or so of exercise.

I have to shake hands with many people and stand on my feet to receive many people in a day, but after the first few days of the season are over, I am accustomed to the physical effort and I have learned that this is not just an idle pastime, but an occupation which means a great deal particularly to out of town visitors. They come to the White House with a sense of ownership, feeling that here is where their representatives dispense hospitality, and that they are in a way involved in seeing that it is done according to the traditions of our country. (8:21)

One more thing seems to me a tremendous luxury. Most of us, if we're fond of flowers, plan and scheme: first, as to what we shall plant in order to have something growing about the house during the winter and next, how we can afford to keep fresh flowers in our house all the time. I used to take my flowers and put them in the bathtub at night in the hope of keeping them fresh a little longer. I changed the water in the vases and tried to learn to create the best effect with the fewest number of flowers. But in the White House, I have all the flowers I want and I do not have to do anything about them. Mr. [William] Reeves, who's been in the White House some forty-two years, has supervised the growing of the flowers and the decorating of all the rooms during all the years of his service. Downstairs, the public rooms are beautifully decorated; upstairs in the living rooms and bedrooms, there is always a profusion of flowers. Mr. Reeves finds out what is the First Lady's preference. If she likes certain vases, they're always filled. Sometimes I wonder if I can ever learn to plant my own bulbs again and keep them in a dark closet and rejoice when the little green stalks appear and cherish the rare flowers and get as much pleasure as before out of the few flowers one usually has. (9:46)

On Tuesday, I told you I should like to read to you the President's letter designating the week of beginning May 1 as National Employment Week. Here it is: "Both the state and federal governments have been especially concerned with the problems of older workers, many thousands of whom despite their persistent efforts still lack a place in industry. Among these are a considerable number of world war veterans, many who now average forty-seven years of age and who I feel have a particular appeal to our national sense of responsibility.

"Our public employment service-- a nationwide network of sixteen hundred offices now operated jointly by the state and federal governments-- has made special efforts in behalf of workers past forty years of age, including veterans. We know from the facts gathered by this agency that men and women in middle life possess abilities and skills which would fit them for employment in nearly every line of work. We know further that these older workers, when given an opportunity, demonstrate a seasoned experience and a mature application to their task which in many callings outweigh the physical advantages of youth.

"A year ago, with these considerations in mind, I designated a National Employment Week during which I asked that all our citizens give particular and active attention to the problem of older workers who lack employment. During the month in which the special work occurred -- the special week occurred, over a third of a million jobs-- a third more than during the same month of the previous year-- were filled through the public employment offices, and a quarter of a million of these placements were in private industry. Moreover, placements proceeded at an accelerated rate in the month following the week set aside. Because of the concerted efforts of government, many public spirited groups, and particularly of employers throughout the land, thousands of workers past forty, among them veterans, shared beneficially in this fine result. I am grateful for the wholehearted response to my first appeal, and as president, I desire to encourage a continued nationwide interest in this persistent problem.

"Now, therefore, I, Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States of America, do hereby declare the week beginning May 1, 1940 as National Employment Week and Sunday, May 5, 1940, as National Employment Sunday. I urge all churches, civic organizations, chambers of commerce, boards of trade, veterans' organizations, industry, labor, public-spirited citizens, radio, and the press throughout the United States to observe that week as National Employment Week to the end that interest in the welfare of all the unemployed, and especially the worker past forty, may be stimulated and employment be extended to them. In witness whereof I hereunto set my hand and cause the seal of the United States of America to be affixed. Franklin D. Roosevelt." (13:07)

[Ben Grauer:] Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt. When we hear about armies of ten or twenty thousand men on the on the march, they sound like pretty big armies. Well then, just imagine an army of five million women, all on the march for one favorite beauty soap: SweetHeart Soap. Friends, that's the latest amazing

figure on this nationwide trend. Over five million folks have changed to SweetHeart Soap in the last two years alone. Now, it's hardly possible that this great army of new users changed to SweetHeart for any one reason. Some seek purity and mildness. Others want a really fine fragrance, or an abundance of quick cleansing lather above all else. But the dramatic fact remains: over five million people found what they wanted when they discovered SweetHeart Soap. Will you try it soon?

[Theme music 13:58-14:16]

[Ben Grauer:] [music continues softly] And so we come to the end of another visit with Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, but it's only a brief goodbye. Mrs. Roosevelt comes to call again next Tuesday and every Tuesday and Thursday at this same time. These fascinating visits come to you with the compliments of SweetHeart Soap, famous for fifty years as the soap that agrees with your skin. And now, goodbye until next Tuesday when you'll again hear [music swells, cuts] *Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt's Own Program*. This is Ben Grauer speaking.

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

(14:53)

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