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INTERVIEW OF THE FIRST LADY
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Q How about yesterday?

We all saw you on TV. You were kind of weepy when you came out of the church. Did you see that? You were speaking outside the church to John and Teddy.

I was wondering if there was anything in particular that impressed you. Everyone said it was a beautiful service, that Jackie would have liked it. Is there anything specific about the service, any thoughts that went through your mind? Is there anything like that?

MRS. CLINTON: I thought that Ted's eulogy was perfect. It captured so much of her essence, I thought: I don't know how he did it. Because it was funny, it was touching. He put her into the broad historical picture, but kept most of the focus on her as a person, a mother, a friend.

I thought the music was magnificent. I don't know if you have ever been in that church. But the whole setting of the church is beautiful. It's like being in a jewel box. It is so beautifully done. The marble and the altar are just exquisite. It seemed perfect for Jackie. That it would be the church she was christened in, confirmed in, and then to have a funeral mass.

Everybody who spoke I thought did exactly what they should have done. The poem, Ithica, was perfect.

Q That seemed to be the highlight --

MRS. CLINTON: Have you ever heard that poem before?

Q No.

MORE

MRS. CLINTON: It's a poem that I never heard until 1992. I like poetry, but I have never run across it.

Q (Inaudible) did so little.

MRS. CLINTON: That's right. There's another poem he did, that I have now since run across, which is something like -- it's got "Barbarians" in the title. But this poem --

Q "Barbarians At The Gate," was that the --

MRS. CLINTON: Something like that, yes.

That whole mood captured, and the way Maurice read it. And then the little part that he added at the end. Because when he finished reading the poem he reached inside his pocket and he took out this little card. And he had written his closing lines on it himself. They were not part of the poem. He read those.

Q He said, "Farewell, farewell."

MRS. CLINTON: That's right. And so short.

Q Probably everybody here have said, Oh, yes, Mrs. Clinton and Jackie were very good friends. And I was never clear whether you -- you had a few lunches. Did you really connect?

MRS. CLINTON: We really connected. We had lunches, we talked on the phone several times. We had correspondence. We spent that whole day together.

Q What was the last time you had --

MRS. CLINTON: I talked to her sometime in the last six to eight weeks. I don't remember. I didn't note it at the time. I just called to see how she was. That's all I was thinking about. I really respected her privacy during the last couple of months so I didn't call her every week or something.

But I talked to Teddy about her a lot because I would run into him at the Senate. We sort of exchanged greetings, words that way.

Then last week, a week ago Monday, I saw a very

MORE

close friend of hers, who is also a friend of mine, who told me that she had gone back into the hospital. And they were very worried. That was the first indication -- really not the first indication, but how serious it was.

Everybody knew it was more serious than they were letting on, but nobody was quite sure of the death struggle she was engaged in.

And then Thursday morning this mutual friend called me very, very early and said that they had brought her home from the hospital the day before.

And I talked to Maurice a little bit later, early in the morning still. And then I just waited like everybody else to see what --

Q What's your impression of (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: I like him very much. I have been around him a few times, and I admired (inaudible).

Q He is a real gem.

MRS. CLINTON: He really is. He has a quiet strength about him that is very reassuring. And I watched him with everybody there yesterday, and he was so dignified and obviously a caring man.

Q He said to a friend of mine who said to him, "Maurice, you seem to be doing well under the circumstances." And he said "It's just a facade."

MRS. CLINTON: They had such a good time together. They were so good together, my observation. And they complemented each other. He was so interested in everything. He can talk about anything. He is so well read, and well travelled, and has a great sense of history.

Just talking to him is like having a journey through different cultures at different points in time. I talked with him on the plane back from New York to Washington. And we just talked about everything.

We talked about my trip to South Africa because he knows so much about South Africa. We just had a great conversation. But he is someone who will be very sad for a

MORE

very long time.

Q I had thought that she would have planned a lot of things. But apparently they really, the children planned a lot of it. Was that the (inaudible) you got that it was them?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, yes. They carried it off just beautifully in the way that it was all planned. I think whoever said that the service was appropriate, was just right on target. The flowers were beautiful. Everything about it was done well. Bessie Norman was just superb. And that was what they planned.

And then the ceremony at the graveside yesterday afternoon was what it should have been.

Q I thought you and the President were wonderfully sort of -- you didn't throw it out of whack like you were so important that it changed the -- that was very well -- the lady must have come in, slipped in.

MRS. CLINTON: That's what we tried to do.

Q You were just like people there. That was great.

MRS. CLINTON: Well --

Q I have never seen that before.

MRS. CLINTON: Really?

Q I think it's hard for a president not to distort any kind of situation (inaudible).

MRS. CLINTON: We really wanted to -- we would be happy to do that more often. Because the distortion really bothers us also. But particularly on this occasion when it was so clearly how she would have wanted it. And that's what my primary concern was.

Q I thought that that was a real tribute to her, that Lady Bird came. I mean Lady Bird hadn't been anywhere since she had her stroke.

MRS. CLINTON: She is a great woman, Lady Bird is.

MORE

She is someone who deserves an enormous amount of appreciation and respect, admiration for the way she is --

Q The greatest thing in that LBJ Library is the letter that Jackie wrote to the president thanking him for letting the children continue and go to kindergarten.

MRS. CLINTON: You know, it was so funny because I was like all of you. I was starting on Thursday when I got those calls, and I had those conversations. I just was glued to the TV. I never turned it on during the day. And I kept flipping it on to make sure that I knew what was happening.

Then the next night when all the coverage began, or the next day of her death -- I guess it was late Friday night when somebody -- I guess CNN tracked Liz Carpenter down and she read the letter. And it was a very long letter. And I could tell at first that, you know, when the announcer said, "Well, you have this letter." And they said, "You want me to read to it?" He said, "Yes." He had no idea that it was a long letter.

But it was so wonderful. I am so glad they let her read the whole letter, and everybody could hear it.

Q How (inaudible) your relationship with Lady Bird?

MRS. CLINTON: I like Lady Bird a lot. Actually, I have probably been around Lady Bird more times over the years because I am a friend of Linda Robb's. And I have been in Texas, and I went to Texas to make a lecture for Liz Carpenter.

I have been to Liz Carpenter's house in the last 15 years, and Lady Bird was there. So I have been around Lady Bird (inaudible). And I find her enormously impressive.

Q And she had just been to the White House when they all gathered --

MRS. CLINTON: That's right. So we were all together, all except Jackie, in Washington a week before. And Lady Bird looked great. She just looked wonderful. I was impressed.

Q She was in great shape.

MORE

MRS. CLINTON: She really was.

So she is somebody who, I don't know whether history will ever give her her due. But what she did, what Mrs. Kennedy did when she was there, on restoration -- and I was so glad Ted mentioned in his eulogy that she had been behind saving Lafayette Square, which is the square right across from the White House, and she was partly responsible for the Pennsylvania Avenue Development.

A lot of people don't know that about her. They think she only worked inside the house, and that her restoration work came later when she did Grand Central Station. But she was really working on that.

What Lady Bird did, the gardens and the wild flowers, has had a huge impact that I don't think people really appreciate enough. So it was good for me to be able to be there.

Q Did you observe anything about John and Caroline that (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Caroline wasn't there.

Q She wasn't?

MRS. CLINTON: No, no.

Q John was there?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, but I don't believe she felt --

Q She looked sort of like she had had it (inaudible). That was so sad.

Q But you all went there (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: With all of his cousins and everything.

They have a wonderful built-in support system with all of those cousins. There are so many of them, and they are all so full of life, energy. And they just come around and support each other. I have seen it before, but I saw it yesterday really dramatically the way that they were helping each other.

MORE

Q When you spoke to Maurice the day before, did he give you an indication, because the hospital had told (inaudible) that it was 24 hours at that point.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, the mutual friend, who was very close to them, who had called me early, told me that it was a matter of time. And that's when I called Maurice. I called him, asked for John or Caroline or Maurice.

Maurice came on the phone, and I just told him that I had just heard. I was thinking and praying for them, and wanted them all to know that if there was anything the President and I could do, we would do it, whatever it was. So that's when I --

Q But he didn't say anything?

MRS. CLINTON: I didn't ask that because I just -- he knew what I -- I knew because of the person who called me was there with them, and I didn't need to say it.

Q Were there any parallels with the way your father died? I know Jackie didn't want treatment. She wanted to (inaudible). Your father was ill for, three weeks?

MRS. CLINTON: For longer, yes.

Q Was it three weeks?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, about three weeks.

No, not really. I mean the cancer is different from a stroke. But I think one of the really significant things, which I hope you will all beat a drum for, is that Jackie had a living will.

Q And your father didn't? They didn't know what to do.

MRS. CLINTON: The medical condition kind of took its own course. But if we had been faced with a choice that many families are faced with, not knowing what to do, it would have been a great blessing to have a living will.

Q Nixon also.

MRS. CLINTON: Nixon also, yes.

MORE

The President and I are going to do our best to highlight the fact that both Nixon and Jackie had living wills. I hope you all will say it over and over again because it makes all the difference in the world to your family to know what they should do and how they should conduct themselves.

Q Do you know how the law is written? It's my understanding that, because I had an aunt who was taken away, and she had living will. But since her husband didn't have it with him in the hospital, and they put her on life support, that it becomes a whole other issue; is that right?

MRS. CLINTON: I think it depends upon the state because all this is governed, as I understand it, by state law. So New York may have a different law than Connecticut, et cetera.

But you are right, though, that what happens, as I understand it, is, if you have the living will, that you can then tell the hospital here is what she want. You should know where it is, you should be able to get at it, and should have it available. The hospital will listen to you and might not start extraordinary treatment.

But if they start extraordinary treatment, the will itself has to say -- like if I am in an accident on the side of the road, and nobody knows who I am, and they bring me in and put me on life support, the living will has to say I do not want to be kept alive by extraordinary means. Not just don't start it. But end it.

So, yes, I can see where your aunt's problems could have happened. And that's why you need all those form will for each state.

Q What kind of an event are you going to do --

MRS. CLINTON: Just some sort of a public event to try to raise public awareness about what President Nixon and Jackie did.

See, what happens -- I have had lots of doctors tell me that what happens when -- usually it's an older relative gets sick and the family comes around. Oftentimes the -- like, suppose it's a woman whose husband has died, and she has four children, and she has been closer to two than

MORE

the other two. Or maybe she has been estranged from one.

It has to be unanimous. If the hospital is told -- if one child says I don't want that to happen, the hospital is afraid to go forward even if the other three agree --

Q Without the living will.

MRS. CLINTON: -- without the living will.

Q They can be sued.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, because they are going to be sued.

And lots of children who are estranged show up and feel guilty. So they don't want to let go of their parent because they feel like they haven't reconciled or haven't come to terms with it. Hospitals tell me this happens all the time.

I was in a hospital -- and now I can't remember where it was, I don't know where it was -- where a doctor told me that they had a woman in intensive care for eight months. She had no hope of coming out, they believe. But one child would not agree. All the other children were just disgusted. It was a terrible situation.

Q There's a book coming out about Judge (inaudible) and the living wills, their (inaudible) obligation (inaudible) just because of this.

MRS. CLINTON: I hope he, or whomever, on his behalf does as much of a book tour and gets as much exposure as they can get.

Because, you know, still, I think death is harder to talk about than sex in most families. It's very hard without some vehicle to talk about it. And a living will enables you to say to your spouse or to your older relative what should we do if this ever happens.

Q But it's hard to talk to some people in your own family, a husband or somebody, who is getting to that point in life.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

MORE

Q They do not wish to discuss it.

MRS. CLINTON: That's right.

Q And you are therefore left with this grumbling, unravelling. There is no way to make it come to a fruition.

MRS. CLINTON: But maybe there is somebody else, maybe a friend, an old business partner, a clergy member, somebody else can raise it. It's too hard to talk about.

Q I also understand that if they put you on extraordinary measures, and they save your life -- say if you are very old and feeble, and you would have died without extraordinary measures, and they save your life, and then the family says "We have a living will," they may take you off.

Sometimes the extraordinary measures that they took in the first place worked. So they take you off. And then the person just has to starve to death. That's the only thing. They just don't feed you.

Many families don't want to cope with that either, because it's not just that they are going to die now because the heart attack or whatever it was has passed. So it's not so cut and dry.

Q (Inaudible) in 50 years that this will become a norm, that the people who are turning (inaudible) now are not going to be able to -- I have it, I have seen it. They will not be able to (inaudible).

Sooner or later, when they get married they will automatically make these things -- when they go to college or whatever. But at this point, somebody who is suddenly facing it is not going to deal with it. It's terrifying. He is coming to terms with his mortality.

MRS. CLINTON: That's right.

Q You can't get them to discuss it.

Q Mrs. Clinton, I just came from a lunch that People magazine was giving, where they were honoring Jean Harris, who has done all of this work for the Bedford children, and children in prison, and so forth.

MORE

And a lot of people came up and talked to me, lots of distinguished women. I said I was coming here to see you. They all asked to be remembered to you, and to say how much they supported you, and how wonderful they thought you were, and how they were on your side.

Are you aware that there is a large faction of people, now than people who don't go along with this Hillary bash? Do you feel that, or are you just isolated from knowing that there is another version of this?

MRS. CLINTON: No, I feel it. I really do. I get lots --

Q I was just amazed, one after another.

MRS. CLINTON: I get lots of letters, lots of calls, lots of messages like this being conveyed to me. Lots of times people come to the White House on totally different business, they make a point of saying something to me.

I went to the New York Times. I got out. All of the pressmen were standing there, cheering and applauding for me.

Q Oh, how nice.

MRS. CLINTON: I was stunned.

I feel that there is a lot going on in the country, and that to some extent both my husband and I are kind of transition figures, and people are projecting a lot unto us. A friend of mine said like war shock blocks.

So if you are basically an optimistic person, and you have confidence, and you feel that things can be made better, the glass is half full.

If you are insecure and anxious about whatever it is, fill in the blank; if you are afraid that we are going to take your guns away, or afraid we are going to do something to keep pro-choice alive, whatever, then the glass is half empty.

I think a lot of this is also really important to women because -- most women I know lead complicated lives. I mean, you take care of aging relatives, you take care of

MORE

children, you take care of your career, you take care of your house, you do the best you can, you worry about stuff all the time. It's a big complex of roles and responsibilities.

And most women who I think are kind of trying to deal with that, and not feeling overwhelmed by it, I understand that I am a kind of lightning rod in some respects. That people who are worried about women's roles or anxious, project all this stuff on to me.

And what I am trying to do is to say I want women supported as the full human beings they are, with the right to make their own choices. And to respect each other, and to help each other.

So I think a lot of women are beginning to speak up. And they are not just speaking up for me, they are speaking up for themselves. That's what I feel. So I feel very good about that.

Q This was an extraordinary group of women, very distinguished, people like (inaudible) Alexander, Mary Alice Williams, a really broad spectrum of women, who have said to me, "Oh, tell Mrs. Clinton we are in her corner." I just thought that was delightful.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I really appreciate it because I feel like I am trying to be in their corner too. I feel this mutual connection even if I don't know some of them.

Q You feel there is a certain sexist backlash (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: I don't know if I would describe it like that so much as I would say that we are in a transition in our country and people are going to have to make changes in the way they view each other and treat each other. And it goes beyond any kind of ism so much as it really is rooted in whether we are going to take responsibility for ourselves and each other.

People always fall back on categorizing each other if they don't feel they've got enough --

Q And putting each other in little slots.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, put each other in little slots

MORE

because that somehow makes the world more orderly or more understandable. And the world right now is changing. And we've to make change our friend.

And for women particularly we have to stand up for the right for every woman to make the choice that is right for her. That means if you want to be a full-time home maker, and raise your children to be the best human beings they can be 24 hours a day, you should have the right to make that choice. And we ought to support you in it.

And that's not just on a personal level, but it means we ought to look at workplace policies and health care policies because many women don't have that choice. Realistically they have to leave their children at day care at seven o'clock and pick them up at six o'clock. But we ought to help make that choice real.

If you want to be a full-time career person, then you ought to be given the respect and the pay that goes along with making that choice. For most of us we are trying to juggle all the balls in the air. We ought to support each other.

Q You are a good lawyer. Are you a -- has anybody looked into ways in which the American people themselves could maybe -- the ones who want to, of course -- could support you and the President in all of this enormous legal difficulty you are in, the money you need to defend yourself? I hear it's getting to be like a million or two million dollars. Can people give you money as long as they don't give you too much?

MRS. CLINTON: There are some people looking into that right now for us because that's been suggested.

Q I thought I might do something about it, but I don't want to encourage people to do something that would embarrass the White House or that would be wrong.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, that's what people are talking about. Because it -- I think it needs to be explored. But don't write anything about it. We will give you the first -- once the lawyers look at it --

Q I really would like to help you. Even their little widow's mite, you see.

MORE

MRS. CLINTON: I get --

Q What do you do with those? Are you holding
on --

MRS. CLINTON: No. I was sending them all back. And then where there were some editorials written saying we ought to do this, and some people saying it could be done appropriately, we have been just waiting to see what advice the lawyers --

Q You already know you can't win, whatever you do about it. But I mean you can win with the people who want to support you. Nobody has to do it if they don't want to. But I think there are millions of people who would like to help out.

Q Is there any precedent or something?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, there are for individuals. I can't talk anymore about it because I don't know anymore about it. I just know that the lawyers and other people are looking. And we'll let you know that.

I really believe, though, that there is this kind of fault line right now. There is a lot of people who are concerned and worried about what's happening in the country, and want to solve problems, who support the President in what he is trying to do on the budget and on health care, trying to get weapons off the streets, and all of that.

But there is a very well organized, well financed group on the other side who don't like the changes that are being made. So you've got this real battle going on over the airwaves, and in coffee shops, and across the country.

Up until now the folks who are on the side of "don't do anything to upset my status quo" have been full steam ahead and pretty loud.

But now I get this feeling that other people are starting to let their voices be heard.

When we finally passed the Brady Bill, after seven years, and then the President comes back and passes the Assault Weapon Ban, which I was so proud of. That was a huge

MORE

struggle, passed by two votes in the House.

Q I know.

MRS. CLINTON: Then you've got the interest who don't want any weapon off the streets and out of the hands of violent teenagers, organizing. And they've got lots of energy, and they've got lots of money. And so they attack on many different grounds.

They attack in the straightforward: We are going to try to reverse this, we are going to try to beat members of Congress and beat this president. But then they also kind of insinuate themselves in other ways trying to undermine us and the like. But we know that.

When my husband ran for this job, he wanted to make some changes because he didn't think the country was going in the right direction. Look at what he has taken on. He took on the whole budget mess. We are going to have the first time, since Truman, where the deficit will have gone down three years in a row. This is a phenomenal accomplishment.

But, look, he got so many people mad at him.

Then he takes on many interests on the NAFTA vote, and he wins there. Then he takes on the NRA, not once but twice in six months. And he is taking on all the health care interests. He is just intent upon trying to change things.

Well, if you want to be an agent for change, you are going to be somebody who will be a big target. And I that's a part of what's going on.

Q Is that your true philosophy, that you feel that you are able to --

MRS. CLINTON: I think that's change. I think he is, and I think the rest of us are trying to support him and do what he has asked us to do. It causes lots of cognitive dissonance as well as --

Q Insecurity.

Q Do you think that all these people that are coming out of the woodwork are financed or found by these groups, these big-money lobbying type groups?

MORE

MRS. CLINTON: I think there's a lot of that. I really do. It's just too coincidental, and it's just too many of the same fingerprints, and the same stuff over and over again.

If you go back and read history, a lot of this stuff has gone on since the beginning of the Republic, but it was never given as much publicity or visibility as it has in recent years because we just have so much more news. I mean, you've got so many more outlets. We've got 24-hour news coverage. It's just a different environment.

But, gosh, go back and read some of the things that were said about Jefferson or Madison or Adams or --

Q Did you read the (inaudible) article in the New Yorker?

MRS. CLINTON: I have skimmed it.

Q Very interesting things in there that (inaudible) denied this, but supposedly some people, including outside the White House, talking about you running for president in another four years or some point in the future.

Then there was something interesting about turning the tables whereas you have been defending the President. And then it turns out he was defending you --

MRS. CLINTON: Well, the real reason I wanted you all to come here, so that I can announce my candidacy. (Laughter) I decided I want to go to the four women in America who (inaudible) --

Q We will carry that message. (Laughter)

MRS. CLINTON: I didn't tell the New York Times, but I am telling you, Jeannie.

Q We appreciate that.

MRS. CLINTON: And it starts right here in this suite at the Waldorf. I don't have a platform yet, but --

Q There are a great many women, as Liz would say, who would find this not, not out of the realm (Laughter).

MORE

Q I notice one of the criticisms in the Washington Post today, they were speaking about you all -- you know what I am talking about better than I do. But I read this in a big (inaudible).

They are speaking about someone in the White House on the staff who did say at some point in the past that she felt Mrs. Clinton would be a great candidate, And then now it's being denied.

I can't imagine that there haven't been (inaudible) who worked with you who felt that (inaudible). That doesn't mean that you want to be --

MRS. CLINTON: People could say, as I now know, they could say whatever they want to about me. But it is something that --

When Lisa called me, because I hadn't read it or anything, and she said, "You are not going to believe this," I said, "Oh, boy, our secret is out. We stood around planning and charting this."

It's just so absurd. But I can't control what people say.

Q I did a story way back in October about some Republicans at a big political caucus, that I happened to find out about, their biggest fear is that you would run, not this time, but the next time. And they were already planning that strategy.

Q Mrs. Clinton, if I may ask, why is it absurd to think that it isn't true? You are a young woman.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, I mean --

Q Why is it absurd? Don't think (Laughter).

MRS. CLINTON: I mean, it's just not anything that has ever been on my wavelength.

I think we've got a great president. I think we have a great vice president. I want the Democrats to stay in office because I want this president and this vice president's whole agenda for change implemented. And what I want to do is help make that happen.

MORE

Q Well, I think if you ever even entertained the idea, you would certainly be entertaining the idea for very far down the pole. I mean, at least not for six or seven more years.

Q She has got time.

Q Are you and the President going to go back to Martha's Vineyard this summer? Everybody is talking about fishing.

Q You can put them out of their misery.

Q I am sure a lot of them want you to come, and maybe a few of them don't because we are all realists. We know that not everybody loves you. But if you can believe this, not everybody even loves us. (Laughter)

MRS. CLINTON: I really want to get another wonderful vacation, but I don't know where yet or when. In part because I don't know when the Congress will really go out on recess. Because the health care stuff is -- that's moving through. So we can't make any plans.

I guess we could make a plan and then just try to lock a place in, but not know when we will get there. I suppose we could do that.

Q I am sure they would accommodate you.

MRS. CLINTON: I really need to go somewhere, though. That was such a great break for us.

Q Did you see Linda Bloodworth-Thomason recently?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

Q She told me she was --

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, I saw her on my last trip to California.

Q Where were we?

MRS. CLINTON: A month ago or so.

Q Early May.

MORE

MRS. CLINTON: She and Harry came over. We were going out for dinner. And we were all so exhausted, we just sat in the room and had room service.

Q She is always calling me and saying, "Liz, she has got me in so much trouble (inaudible). We have to hide the paper from him for so many days."

MRS. CLINTON: His show is cancelled.

Q I know. I think it would cancel because nobody could put up with him anymore.

Q How did you manage -- how are you having your hair? it's not a problem anymore; is it?

MRS. CLINTON: It's growing out.

Q Looks good.

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you. I am glad you like it.

Q You know, I am glad we always get to the nitty-gritty.

(Simultaneous conversation.)

MRS. CLINTON: I like growing it. I will grow it for a while, and I will probably cut it again. I like to change it. It's something I have done all my life.

Q They even criticize you for that.

MRS. CLINTON: I know.

Q Like it's a big deal or any of their business.

MRS. CLINTON: I think it's an adventure. I am not talented with my hair. I used to go to slumber --

One of my dear friends, who has been a friend of mine ever since sixth grade, said the reason that I don't pay any attention to hair is that I always fall asleep by the time when they started doing hair.

Every slumber party (inaudible) then everybody starts working on everybody else's hair, and I have been

MORE

passed out. She said, "You missed that whole part of adolescence, which is why you have had trouble with your hair ever since." That is great.

Q That is wonderful.

Q What would be the smallest business that you would let off the hook of the mandate?

MRS. CLINTON: We don't know. I can't answer it. No, no, because that's what the Congress is working on right now. We are letting the Congress just kind of argue it back and forth and come up with their --

Q Is abortion a trade-off?

MRS. CLINTON: We've got our plan out there, and we are trying to make sure that --

Q You know what they say, put abortion in the bill, Congress will take it out.

MRS. CLINTON: We've got it out there, and we are going to fight for the things that are in that bill. But I can't predict what's going to happen right now. We still don't have a bill out of a committee yet, so we have to wait and see how all that shakes down.

But I am real optimistic.

Q When do you think all Americans might have health care, in a year or five years --

MRS. CLINTON: Well, if we get the bill that we should have, and get it signed this year, it will start being implemented next year. And depending upon what the (inaudible) schedule is, I hope it will be by '98 that we have got everybody covered. That's what I am hoping.

Q May I just ask you if -- I know it must be very scary, every day there is like somebody coming out of the woodwork with some outlandish story.

Do you have something to say to all those crazy people coming out of the woodwork with their stories?

MRS. CLINTON: So many times I have said to my

MORE

husband, and I have said to people in the White House, I have said to (inaudible) and Lisa -- every time there is one of these crazy stories, and it falls flat, I have said, "Okay, guys, get ready. They'll go back to work and they'll make up a doozy."

And every time they keep upping the ante, trying to figure out a way to get something with staying power. I am not surprised by this.

They have been doing this to my husband since he said he was thinking of running for president in 1991. And he just keeps going on like -- just onward and upward and being resilient and getting this done, which inflames them.

I don't know what's going to happen. I don't know what's next on the agenda. But I have no doubt that this is part of a long-term strategy of personal destruction because they cannot really deal with his political agenda.

Q I think I know what it is.

MRS. CLINTON: What?

Q You abused Mother Teresa (inaudible).
(Laughter)

MRS. CLINTON: In Albania. This was the secret trip to Albania.

Q That's right.

Q Oh, that ne'er do well Mother Teresa?

MRS. CLINTON: I think, though, that it begins to be as hollow and kind of disgusting to everybody else as it has been to us for over a year and a half. We have just basically decided we are going to keep on going and --

Q You are going to be like the Energizer battery?

MRS. CLINTON: That's right. And we are just not going to --

Q By the time you run for president --

MRS. CLINTON: There she goes again. (Laughter)

MORE

Q -- it will be all out. It will be over. There will be nothing that they could say --

Q There is nothing they haven't said.

Q They will start anew. They will come up with --

MRS. CLINTON: When you get out there, I don't know how to -- not unless you like this. I don't know how you even put yourself in the state of mind of getting up every day with your mission in life to destroy somebody. I don't know how you do that. I don't know how you look in the mirror. I don't know you think about it.

So I can't put myself into the minds of those kinds of people. So I can only assume that their obsession is never ending. So they will come up with something yet again, some other new outlandish story.

Q I wish everybody in America could meet you and see how nice (inaudible).

MRS. CLINTON: I have fun talking to people.

Like the New York Times said, we are safe.

Q The New York Times said that?

(Simultaneous conversation.)

Q No, I liked when he said that we were safe and that Mrs. Clinton saw us because she knew that none of us would ask about Whitewater. And we had asked about it. We had long discussions.

Q If he doesn't shut up, I am going to release that screen play of his that I examined. (Laughter) With things like, "Oh, your man parts are so exciting." I swear to --

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, come on.

Q It's the funniest thing I have ever seen --

Q That's a new one on me.

Q I almost went into a coma laughing. And now I

MORE

am going to get him.

MRS. CLINTON: What else is going on in the world? What else is exciting, interesting?

Q Jackie was such a big story this week. I noticed all of my cynicism, everything, just dried up because -- yesterday we didn't even get a phone call, not a single -- nobody was working yesterday.

Q Do you find it odd that the country reacted like this? To me it became a much bigger story than the death of Nixon.

Q Nixon did, too.

I think people in America would love to come back together in some way in some expression of love or devotion or patriotism, or call it whatever you want. They are willing to forgive Nixon. They are really hurting.

Q (Inaudible) thing that came out of the funeral was seeing all of the presidents and their wives. That was just staggering and thrilling.

MRS. CLINTON: I think you are right. I think we don't know quite how to do it. When you think about what we subjected ourselves to.

President Kennedy's assassination through the rest of the '60s, through Watergate. Don't forget we had Ford shot at twice. We had Reagan -- President Reagan was shot.

We went through so many psychic shocks to this country. We are only now trying to come to terms with it. We have a lot of unfinished business. We have a lot of --

Q In our feelings.

MRS. CLINTON: -- feelings that we have to work through.

I have been thinking about this a lot because that's what i care about. I really don't care who gets the credit of any of this stuff. I really care that we can start walking down our streets again, you can take the children to the park, you don't have to worry about getting health care.

MORE

I know that sounds sort of idealistic, but that's really what I feel.

So I go to South Africa for the inaugural of President Mandela. Here is a country that should not even be a country with all of its incredible 300 years of bloodshed and violence and apartheid and oppression. And there at the inaugural of this dignified, strong, gentle leader, with his two deputy presidents, one this very sweet-looking, smart man named Mbekki, and F.W. DeClerk.

I watch Mandela mount the stage for his inaugural, flanked by the white security military leaders of the country. I hear him make his speech. And then they have a 21-gun salute, and a flyover of all of the weapons of military might of the South African government.

And I thought this country has at least pulled itself together in a way that gives voice to the larger issues of humanity that we too often have taken for granted or haven't dealt with.

But then the personal moment, where I just was wiped out, came at the lunch -- go back to the presidency. When we have left the presidency --

Have any of you ever been to South Africa?

Did you go to Pretoria? They have this compound where the President lived, and where there is this huge ceremonial building. It's a gorgeous building.

When we were driving from the ambassador's residence to the presidency, every ten feet there was a military officer. And, of course, they need to be. Everybody was worried about security. Not only had the South African put up a situation. You had Arafat, Castro, et cetera.

When we came back from the inaugural, the police and the military were gone. And replacing them were children and dancers and singers. Every ten feet you had white and black children singing hymns together.

Then you go into this tent where there was a huge luncheon laid out for all of the invited guests. And Mandela gets up to speak. And he said something that changed, just

MORE

impacted me so greatly. He said that he had invited three of his former jailers to his inaugural.

And he talked about how there he had been in prison for 27 years. But across the confines of race and political ideology, he had connected with these men, and they had seen each other as people. And they had been important to him, and he wanted them to be part of his celebration.

I sat there thinking about at the root of this political miracle was the forgiveness and reconciliation at a level that is almost unimaginable in our country where we have so much less to fight about, where we had made such progress, but where we draw these lines and paint each other as caricatures.

I said to Lisa, that would be like me inviting some of these people who are out to destroy my husband, who lie about him, who have tried to destroy him, it would be like forgiving them and inviting them to come to some important event for me.

And I hope that both personally, and by example, my husband, and then whatever role I can play, we can keep trying to talk about bigger connections between us as people and keep avoiding getting drawn into the petty and the diversionary in an effort to get people to think about each other in our real stake in a common community.

I sat there listening to Mandela and I thought this is like one of the greatest examples of leadership in the whole 20th century. To be able to walk out of that prison and forgive people, and to put together a government with his former enemies, that's what politics should be about, to me.

Q Well, I felt the Nixon funeral was a real example of that. I mean, even people who just hated Nixon were sort of affected. It reminded us that we were a country. And that Democrats and Republicans can sit down and respect each other, and meet. And that's what --

MRS. CLINTON: A lot of people told my husband, they said, well, we need to go through the motions. He said, "This is a former president, and he needs to be honored for what he did."

And then my husband had that great line that he

MORE

took from a hymn that we sing in church about you need to judge people on the totality of their lives. You don't forget the mistakes that you make, but you try to learn from them and build on it.

And that we needed to bring people together. And that it was important for the country to see everybody there. And that's what -- and, you know, he is such a good person, and he is such a genuinely good human being. And he believes so much in kind of being positive and reaching out to people. That's what we are going to keep trying to do.

I think it's better than the alternative which is to get kind of eaten away on the inside like what happens to some people.

Q Did Lady Bird give you any little hints of things of how she went through some of the rougher days?

MRS. CLINTON: Lady Bird and I have not talked on that level. I talked more about that with Jackie.

But Liz Carpenter and I have talked a lot. She has given me lots of advice. It's pretty fundamental sense of how you live your life, and what you allow to be important to you, and how you conduct yourself.

What was important at the end of anyone's life is how much integrity you lived your whole life. And there is no way to say I can live your life or you can live Liz's life. We are dealt different hands.

It's just like I wish I was three inches taller. I am never going to be. Live with what God gave you, what your upbringing is, and then keep trying to improve on it. And keep trying to be a better person.

And that's Mandela standing up there saying, "I invited my jailers." What an incredible statement.

Q We thank you so much. We hope you'll have us again.

MRS. CLINTON: If you guys don't mind being criticized for talking to me, I don't mind talking to you.

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