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FAMILY CIRCLE

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

Internal Transcript

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REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY
INTERVIEW WITH NANCY LLOYD OF FAMILY CIRCLE

The Map Room

Q Tell me about some special memories you might have of Christmases past or your first Christmas that you were married?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, boy. Well, I had wonderful Christmases as a child. We always did the same things. We always had a lot of activities around decorating the house, and my father always -- at least in the early years of our lives, we'd get the tree on Christmas Eve.

And when we were very little, he and my mother would put the tree up after we were in bed, you know, so it was like the whole morning was just this big surprise, I think.

And then, the years went by, we would all put the tree up together and put the ornaments on, and my mother would get us out of her hair by sending us into the kitchen to make chocolate chip cookies, which became a kind of family tradition with my brothers and me. I always had lots of relatives, and just a generally positive family celebration of Christmas.

And the first Christmas that Bill and I were married, we tried to reinstate all of our traditions as best we could, you know, so that I made the turkey dinner, and we got the tree and put it up. And, you know, we really melded our various family traditions.

Q Okay. Were there specific traditions from his family that you -- that were greater (inaudible)?

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MRS. CLINTON: His family has similar traditions to ours, but it was a difference between what you ate on Christmas Day, because there was sort of a southern Christmas dinner and a northern Christmas -- Christmas dinner.

So I learned how to make cornbread stuffing instead of just bread stuffing. And we would have a sweet potato casserole, because he liked that, and that had not been something I had. So that the meals were a bit different. But we both loved to decorate trees, and we both adore Christmas. So we overdo it probably.

Q You had talked, in the last Family Circle article, about you go all out --

MRS. CLINTON: At the Press Club?

Q Yes. And you talked something about the Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer (inaudible) traditions (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: We had a stuffed reindeer that we used to use when Chelsea was growing up. And we also had a big family party every Sunday before Christmas and invited all of our respective families.

And the highlight of the whole afternoon was that -- everybody signing Christmas carols, and we had all these props, like, you know, antlers for reindeer and a big red nose for Rudolph. And we did the Twelve Days of Christmas, and everybody had props for their various roles. We really love Christmas.

Q Well, how did your Christmases change when you became a mother (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: They got to be better. They just exploded in joy and fun for us. It also became part of our Christmas tradition, as most parents face, you know, putting together toys at night and being up at 2 o'clock and realizing you didn't have batteries for the talking teddy bear.

(Laughter)

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You know, those kinds of things became issues, where they had never been before. But mostly, they just became more joyous, because Chelsea loved Christmas as much as we did, and we always had a big Christmas Eve dinner as well as a Christmas Day dinner. And we always had our friends and family around. And we played games, and we sang songs. And so the more children that were around, the better it was.

Q So, was the turkey for Christmas Eve or Christmas Day?

MRS. CLINTON: Christmas Day.

Q Christmas Day.

MRS. CLINTON: Right.

Q And what was Christmas Eve then?

MRS. CLINTON: Christmas Eve was kind of a varied menu, but something easy, because we would go to church. For a while we would go out -- we went out to dinner for a couple of years, but then we went back to having it just at home.

But we would go to church, and then we would have our friends, and we would usually have something real simple, like, you know, chili or, you know, just something that people could drop in. And there would be plenty left, because we always had a moveable feast on Christmas Eves.

Q So will you be continuing those traditions? Will you be serving the same meals?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, yes. Yes, I really -- I want us to hold onto as many of our family traditions as we can. I haven't really thought through how we'll do it or where yet, but I'd like to be as traditional as I can.

Q When do you think you'll know if you'll be spending Christmas here?

MRS. CLINTON: That's a good question. Well, we'll be spending -- I think we're going to be spending Christmas here. I'm pretty sure we will. I think that's what we all

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want to do.

Q And will your mother and the President's mother be coming?

MRS. CLINTON: I hope so. They certainly will be asked to come if they can -- I really hope so.

Q I notice that you have some interesting ornaments on the tree. There was one, for instance, with you and the President holding Chelsea as a baby. Can you explain where you got that one?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I think that was a photograph that a friend of mine put into an ornament for us. And we, for a couple of years, had a photograph taken every Christmas, during -- you know, like about the first five or six years of Chelsea's life. And we turned it into an ornament.

And then, I don't know, like every parent, you know, we had school projects that were ornaments. We had homemade ornaments. We had all kinds of mementoes of trips and things that became ornaments.

The tree really was a kaleidoscope of our lives together -- just all different shapes and colors and lights. And that's one of the best things about putting a tree up, is remembering where you got the ornament and when you got it and how long you've had it.

Q There was also a crystal ballerina, I understand.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, I gave that to Chelsea for -- we also try of give gifts before Christmas, like ornaments that we will want to put on the tree. And she has always loved ballet, and she has danced in the local production of the Nutcracker for many years.

So there would be, on our tree, various sizes of nutcrackers and sugar plum fairies and ballerinas, which Bill and I have given to her, you know, like maybe the day we put the tree up, as a way of making her have her own traditions about things that she likes.

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Q Will she be performing in the Nutcracker here?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I have no idea. I don't
(inaudible).

Q And now the new theme, I understand, is angels.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, it's a crafts theme. We want it to be "Year of the Craft," and this is that year, 1993. And what Ann and her staff have done is to send out invitations to craftsmen and women all over the country -- and she can give you all the details on that -- asking them to send a representative craft, and telling them that, you know, the theme is angels and angels with musical instruments and musical instruments.

But whatever is their particular specialty that has a Christmas theme would be welcomed to be received. And then we worked out an arrangement with the Renwick Gallery to jury the crafts that come in so that we'll have this wonderful representative sampling of all different kinds of crafts all over the house for Christmas.

Q So if the readers want to send something, that would be -- this would be a good theme for them?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh -- well, gee, I hadn't even thought about that. I think that's -- why don't we work that in. That would be a great idea.

AIDE: I'll give you the specifics.

Q Okay. (Inaudible.)

AIDE: That's a great idea.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. When does this issue come out.

Q This one I think in mid-November, but I -- it comes out every three weeks and a little --

AIDE: It's for December. It comes out in mid --

Q Yes.

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MRS. CLINTON: Because the tree goes up December 1st. So I wouldn't want to raise anybody's hopes. Because if the magazine didn't come out until mid-November, they probably couldn't even get it here.

Q Well, Federal Express is (inaudible).

MRS. CLINTON: Well, you all work out --

Q That's fine. Great.

MRS. CLINTON: That would be great.

Q Can I ask you, what was the best present that you ever got for Christmas from your husband?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I've gotten so many wonderful presents. Well, it was last Christmas I got this really beautiful opal ring, which is my birthstone, which I just love --

Q That's beautiful.

MRS. CLINTON: -- which he gave me. And he gave Chelsea a birthstone ring as well.

And then each year, he always gives me something that I really love, and it's always -- you know, there are pieces of jewelry and pieces of art, often a piece of pottery or a small painting, something that I have liked during the year. He loves to go Christmas shopping, and often, in the last several years, has not been able to get to it until Christmas Eve. But he always comes up with something that we love.

And I have tried, in my gifts to him over the years, to give him something that was really memorable. And one year I had a portrait of Chelsea done, which was a total surprise to him, which is still one of our treasured possessions. So we really try to anticipate what, you know, the other person would really like.

Q (Inaudible) anywhere that you could take a picture of anything that (inaudible).

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MRS. CLINTON: No, probably not.

Q Okay. Do you know how old was she when you (inaudible).

MRS. CLINTON: She's about four.

Q Oh, okay. What's the best present you ever got from Chelsea?

MRS. CLINTON: I think one year, all by herself, she took those little -- she was probably about four -- she took those little plastic beads that you buy in craft stores, and she made me jewelry. She made -- you know, on elastic, she made me bracelets, she made me a necklace. And she did it all by herself. I had no idea she was doing it. And she wrapped them up in boxes, you know, that were really carefully wrapped, and gave them to me. And I just -- I don't know, I just loved that. And I used to wear them all the time.

And, in fact, I remember a few months later we came to the National Governors Association, and we used to bring Chelsea, before she was in school. And that was right before she started kindergarten, and we brought her. And I brought my jewelry that she had made.

And I'll never forget, she said to me, as I was getting ready to come to the White House for dinner (inaudible) -- she said, "Oh, Mommy, are you going to wear the jewelry I gave you?"

And I said, "Yes, I am."

So I wore this, you know, plastic beaded bracelet, which I thought was just wonderful. And I came home the next day, and she asked me how -- you know, what I did and everything. And I told her. And I told her that I had the most beautiful jewelry in the White House. I'll never forget it.

Q Do you and she do other craft projects together?

MRS. CLINTON: We do -- you know, when we have time, which is kind of increasingly rare, you know, we have

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over the years done little clay figurines for creche scenes, you know.

We have done a lot of decorating by using natural objects, and, you know, going out and picking everything from holly and evergreen to big pods and other things that would be fun to put into some kind of centerpiece of mantlepiece.

We have done a lot of work around what our Christmas would be, so that -- like when she made me the jewelry, we also had strung beads to put, you know, on the tree. We just -- you know, whatever is -- whatever we have time to do. And that was a lot easier to do about 10 years than now -- than what it is now.

Q How do you know what kind of projects she would be interested in?

MRS. CLINTON: Mostly by -- well, when she was younger, by kind of watching and listening to her and her friends and what they were -- what they would talk about and what they wanted to do.

So that I think -- I think most -- I think you learn a lot by just listening to your child and the kind of questions that she asks and what she's ready -- what kind of responsibility she's ready to take on.

You know, like one of the things that -- when she was real little, she -- we have a manger scene that I brought back from Bethlehem when Bill and I went together back in 1981. And she was very -- you know, she was real young, that first year, and that was one of the things that we gave her responsibility for the next Christmas, you know, to arrange the figures and to be responsible for taking care of it and setting it up.

And then as she got older, getting more responsibility for -- we gave her -- we put all of her -- you know, a whole box of our ornaments that were unbreakable ornaments -- they were, you know, cloth or little stuffed figurines or wood or something -- and we had a whole box of ornaments that were hers to put on.

So the whole bottom of the tree was her part of the

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tree. And, you know, it always wasn't the most aesthetically pleasing by some people's eyes, but to us it was always beautiful because she did it. And then if they fell off or if she dropped them, it was no big deal. So we've always tried to things that give her a part in Christmas. And then, as she got older, more and more responsibility.

Now she and her father are, you know, consummate tree decorators. They spend hours, you know, deciding where something should go and how it should be placed and whether it should be moved and what lights we're going to have this year. They really do -- they just spend hours together doing that every Christmas.

Q Well, it's a good project. It's a good family project.

MRS. CLINTON: It is. It is.

Q So, do you open most of your presents then on Christmas Day?

MRS. CLINTON: Christmas morning. That's one of our traditions, too.

Q Okay. And who gets up first on Christmas morning?

MRS. CLINTON: This has changed as we've gotten older. It used to be Chelsea. And it still is, I think, most times -- the last couple of Christmases. But now -- and then, I think there was a time when Bill and I probably got up just as early because we were so excited about getting her up so we could see how she reacted. Now, we all get up about the same time and go downstairs.

Q Okay. Do you have a favorite Christmas song that your family (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, we love every Christmas carol. And we love this -- we always went caroling and we always had carolers come in to carol with. I don't know whether it would be "Joy to the World" or "Come All Ye Faithful." Probably "Joy to the World."

Q Do you have a favorite Christmas movie?

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MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I suppose "Miracle on 34th Street," because I've seen it so many times. And I always like it. And I love watching it with Chelsea, and I introduced it to her years ago.

Q How old was she?

MRS. CLINTON: Probably about four.

Q And do you have a favorite Christmas story?

MRS. CLINTON: The original Christmas story is my favorite Christmas story. We read that at home, and we -- and Chelsea has always been in the Christmas pageant at the church. So it's something we really like to revisit often.

Q Well, do you go to Christmas services together, all three of you to one church (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Q (Inaudible) Baptist Church. Chelsea has gone, too. (Inaudible) your husband?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, there has never been any question about that. I mean, she's -- you know, we always go to church together. And sometimes we go to more than one church.

Q Getting back to the previous (inaudible), is there -- everybody is watching their fat grams these days.

MRS. CLINTON: But not on Christmas.

(Laughter)

Not on Christmas. I mean -- for me anyway. I don't know about anybody else. But for me, I want a very traditional Christmas dinner that every groans about when it's over. And we all work together to get ready in the kitchen.

Q Do you say grace before dinner?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. We do that nearly every night

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as a family.

Q Which? Is it a standard one, or --

MRS. CLINTON: There are variations on it. We picked (inaudible) story and sometimes change it, depending on what's going on.

Q With all the national disaster that have occurred in the past several months, do you have an advice for families or anything going into that season?

MRS. CLINTON: What a good question. I think to remember what's really important about Christmas. And it's not the number of toys or presents. And it's not even how big a dinner you can have. But, you know, how much love you have and how you share that with your family and your friends and what the Christmas spirit means to you.

We often, on Christmas Day, go to a shelter or a home for battered women and children, or the Rescue Mission. We did that in Little Rock. And we visit with people and bring them things. We fill in for the staff sometimes. And I think that's important.

And every year, for the last many years, before we moved to the White House, we would always involve Chelsea in helping us give something to somebody we didn't know. And we would take on a family, or sometimes more than one family, that had some particular needs, and we'd go shopping for that family, and we would go and visit that family. And we would take them what we thought they would need, but also things that would mean fun for them, to give them some joy. And in many ways, those were the best parts of our Christmases together.

And I think it's such an opportunity to rededicate yourself to the spirit of love and possibility that the Christmas story and Christ's birth represent. So that's what's important. And it's -- the trappings, in whatever form they come, can help make traditions, but the best memories about Christmas are rooted in being with people you love and care about and doing something for someone else.

Q Do you have one wish for the country or for your

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family at Christmastime?

MRS. CLINTON: I would wish that the spirit of love and hope that is the Christmas story would find a place in every person's heart now in the next Christmas season and that it would live throughout the rest of the year.

Q What has been the biggest change in your family life since you've come to the White House?

MRS. CLINTON: The loss of free movement -- I mean, not being able to pick up and go out to dinner or our daughter's school without a lot of other people being involved. That's been a big change. Because even when my husband was governor, we had free -- a freedom of movement that enabled us to be pretty much normal citizens. And it's very difficult here, living in the White House, to do that.

Q There is a lot of focus on Chelsea and Socks I've noticed. How has that come about?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, we just have tried very hard to protect her privacy, because I think it's difficult enough for a grown-up to deal with the kinds of changes that come into your life. But it has to be much harder for a child, particularly for a young teenager. And I just don't think it's fair to any child whose parents are in public life to subject them to the kind of constant watching that often happens.

And instead, what we've tried to do is to carve her out some space so she can be who she was meant to be and make decisions for herself and can feel free to develop. And I think that's what -- that's what we want for her, and that's what we trying to provide for her.

Q What have you told her -- or will you be telling her -- about (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I think that what's important is for women -- and men, but particularly women -- to make choices about what's right for them and not to live according to someone else's preconceived stereotypes.

And especially since we're all living so much

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longer (inaudible), and we'll have many years of life beyond child-rearing and other responsibilities will be ours to assume, that we ought to think about our lives as an unfolding of possibilities and to make choices that are right for us at a particular time.

And so what I tell my daughter, what I tell myself, is that you have to make a decision based on what is the best thing for you and your family to do at any point in time. And that may not be the same decision you'll make in year.

And so you have to constantly be asking yourself, is this what I should be doing? Should I be doing something else? Then all kinds of possibilities are open to you.

AIDE: We have time for two more questions.

Q Okay. Has Chelsea gotten a (inaudible) purse?

MRS. CLINTON: No.

Q Well, when 13 came, what happened to (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: That's totally up to her. And I haven't had a conversation with her about it. You know, we said what the ground rules were, but it's up to her to make the decision.

Q Okay. So you bake the cookies and all, but Chelsea cooks (inaudible). Aside from chocolate chip, are there any other --

MRS. CLINTON: Well, we do all -- my husband doesn't like chocolate chip. So we have to do lots of oatmeal. And we have to provide a steady stream of oatmeal cookies, some with raisin, some without, to give him fair treatment, because he hates chocolate chip cookies.

Q (Inaudible.)

MRS. CLINTON: He doesn't eat chocolate. I can't -- I mean, it's his only flaw as far as I can determine. He's never eaten chocolate, as a child even. He never like chocolate. And I just -- when I first met him, I just didn't believe it. And I kept thinking I would be able to break him

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of what I consider a very bad habit.

There he comes.

THE PRESIDENT: I just wanted to say hello.

MRS. CLINTON: A wonderful husband. He doesn't eat chocolate.

Come meet Nancy, who's a Family Circle reporter, who's talking to us about our Christmas.

THE PRESIDENT: How are you? It's nice to see you.

MRS. CLINTON: And I have told her that you are the biggest fan of Christmas in the world. And except for your refusal to eat chocolate chip cookies, a full participant in everything Chelsea and I do.

THE PRESIDENT: We have a Christmas (inaudible).

Q (Inaudible.)

THE PRESIDENT: (Inaudible.)

Q Any special words for the readers for Christmas.

THE PRESIDENT: No interview (inaudible).

Q Okay.

THE PRESIDENT: It's Hillary's interview.

Q Thank you.

AIDE: We're going to have wrap up, so we can get --

Q Okay. That's it. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

MRS. CLINTON: No. Gosh, you've asked wonderful questions. I can't think of anything.

Q I would like --

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AIDE: You two should visit right now, while you have her. We'll go do the photo shoot.

Q Can we get the oatmeal cookie recipe by any chance.

MRS. CLINTON: If you take the chocolate chips out of my oatmeal cookie recipe, it's the oatmeal cookie recipe. It was in Family Circle.

Q Okay.

MRS. CLINTON: All right. Don't tell anybody else (inaudible). Just take the chocolate chips out. So the result -- (inaudible)

Q (Inaudible.)

MRS. CLINTON: That was what we -- I've experimented with -- I mean, because he likes oatmeal cookies, we've experimented with oatmeal cookies. And so putting chocolate chips into oatmeal cookies was -- see, then I only have to make one batch, oatmeal cookies for him --

Q I needed a tip for busy moms, too.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, this is -- chocolate chips. Or with raisins. And all you have to do is (inaudible) on the cookie sheet.

Q Right. I thank you so much.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, listen, thank you.

(The interview was concluded.)

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