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INTERVIEW OF THE FIRST LADY
BY JOSH WEINSTEIN, PORTLAND PRESS

MRS. CLINTON: -- kidding. How did you end up in Portland, Maine?

Q (Inaudible) was just asking me about the job. I scammed my way into a great job.

MRS. CLINTON: Did you, really? How long have you been up there?

Q Two years.

MRS. CLINTON: Really?

Q I have turned into a (inaudible), and I wish --

MRS. CLINTON: Good, good.

Q -- you guys had more time here.

MRS. CLINTON: It was so beautiful when we were flying in. It really was. It was just --

Q You have had a great day for it.

MRS. CLINTON: It is. It's so pretty. I love this part of the country.

Q When the President was here, it was terrible.

MRS. CLINTON: When we went to Bath Iron Works it was just pouring down rain. Somebody was whistling at me to get my attention. When I got off the plane I couldn't see who it was.

Q Was he yelling, "Hey, baby chick"?

MRS. CLINTON: No, he was whistling. Just kind

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of -- not a wolf whistle. But kind of like hoo-yoo-yoo.

Q Let me find where I put my pen.

MRS. CLINTON: You have that newspaper tie on, I see.

Q Oh, thanks.

Also, the two visits by the President, he was wearing a tie, a Save The Children tie --

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

Q Two days before that President Bush had been in town and was wearing an identical tie.

MRS. CLINTON: Really? That's neat. That's neat. That has been a marvelous fundraising technique for Save The Children which does great work around the world and also here at home. I love it. I am in so many groups, and I see so many men wearing them now. It's great. And there's a lot of different designs coming out soon.

Q Is it weird for you, like, to come into some city and people are waiting for you to write down what you say?

MRS. CLINTON: No. I have gotten used to it. Actually, travelling around and coming back to places like Portland and Maine, which I have loved visiting in the past, gives me a real pleasure.

Q Okay, I think we are on. Welcome to Maine. We are with the First Lady.

I was talking, obviously, to a bunch of people today, and said I am interviewing Mrs. Clinton today. "Ask her about health care." "No, I think the health care is" -- you must be exhausted.

MRS. CLINTON: I am going to cough. I need it right now. I need some health care.

Q I always just tend to wonder what's it like for an accomplished person -- lawyer, partner in a law firm -- now sort of living her husband's career. You, I think, have

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spoken about being a transitional First Lady.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I have great feelings of gratitude that I have gotten a chance to do this. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for me to be able to help my husband and try to do what I can to contribute to the country. So I don't think about it as a substitute for anything else, but as a very fulfilling and challenging experience all on its own.

And of course, Tuesday, which was my --

Q Your anniversary.

MRS. CLINTON: -- 19th wedding anniversary. It was also Eleanor Roosevelt's 110th birthday. So the women who have been in this position have always had to figure out how to be true to themselves, fulfil their obligations to their family, and make their contributions. And that's what I am doing.

Q Have you been watching the PBS series --

MRS. CLINTON: I saw the end of the one last night, and it was breathtaking. There were many scenes and footage that I personally had never seen before.

And some of the interviews of people, particularly Mary Samms (phonetic), Winston Churchill's daughter, were so compelling that you felt you were right there as events were described.

Q But you were.

MRS. CLINTON: You were, that's it.

Q And then also your brother is running for Senate from my home state.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, he is. He is the Democratic nominee. I am very proud of him. He has really done this all on his own.

Q And it's also kind of funny because up until a few years ago -- I won't use the word "nemesis" -- but he was sort of going against Janet Reno who was prosecuting people down there.

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MRS. CLINTON: Well, they were working together in the drug court, and he was the lead public defender. And of course Janet was the prosecutor. And then there was a very creative judge. All three of their offices, and those individuals particularly, worked at making the Dade County drug court a model for the rest of the country.

I am hoping that people will learn about what that drug court did in the way it held drug offenders accountable at a much cheaper cost than sending first-time offenders to our prisons. But it also had a very high success rate in assisting people in getting off of drugs.

Q It's so pretty.

MRS. CLINTON: Isn't it beautiful? The day is warmer than I thought it would be, too.

Q It's going to be cold tonight, though. I hope you took a sweater.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, yes, I have got some warm clothes.

I sort of hate that they blocked all the traffic off. I hope people don't get inconvenienced.

Oh, look at those colors over there.

Q You see these buildings up here?

MRS. CLINTON: Right.

Q That's the main youth center.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, really?

Q That's the only juvenile detention center in the state.

MRS. CLINTON: How big is it?

Q I think they have about 300 kids in there.

MRS. CLINTON: All boys?

Q No, ma'am.

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MRS. CLINTON: It's co-ed?

Q Very few girls.

Tell me this. One of the things that some of my colleagues were saying was that if you look at things in here, they all compliment your husband. If you look at things objectively in the country, unemployment is down, I have got a job, people seem to be doing well.

But, yet, if you listen to some people -- a lot of people, in fact -- it has managed to make at least an impression that things are going dreadful and terribly wrong. And it sometimes gets you in a mean spirit.

I was buying my sister a birthday card the other day, and I was looking in the card store, and I was shocked. There were birthday cards and stuff mocking you guys. Have you been surprised by it?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I have been saddened and disappointed that people who disagree with the President politically, or have a different ideological perspective, would stoop to personal attacks and outrageous untrue stories that not only are aimed at criticizing this president, but I fear lead to undermining the presidency which is a very serious problem.

Our democracy has lasted more than 200 years because even when we disagree vociferously, as we have in the past, one only has to look at the documentary about President Roosevelt to know that he was subject to extraordinary attacks as was his wife, that we have always as a nation kept the presidency intact as both the repository of our executive power, but also as a symbol of our nation.

There are a lot of people today who are misled by the constant drumbeat of negativism that is really motivated by economic greed and political advantage as much as any deep-felt opposition to the President. So it's an unfortunate development that I think we will, as a nation, have to pay attention to and hopefully ride through.

Q How important is it for you and the President that Tom Andrews wins here and that that seat stays a Democratic seat?

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MRS. CLINTON: I think it's important because I believe that Congressman Andrews has really voted for policies that have benefited Maine and the people of Maine.

Maine was one of those states that cared most about getting the deficit down. The vote for Mr. Pierot shows that. And we had a very tough vote in the Congress, which Tom Andrews voted for, which resulted in real deficit reduction, not just talking about it.

The people of Maine seemed very concerned about governmental reform. Well, today the President in the Rose Garden signed a bill that will change the way the Federal Government buys things through procurement policies. So, hopefully, we will never see another \$500 screwdriver in the Federal Government. Well, that's the kind of policy Tom Andrews supported, which is going to make a difference.

And, finally, the President's fight for restricting lobbyists, and lobbying reform, which I think has a lot of support here in Maine, is something that the Democrats waged very vigorously to the last minute.

And the President was able, with the help of people like Congressman Andrews, to restrict the tax deductibility of lobbyists' expenditures, and then push the lobbying bill only to have it filibustered and killed by Republican senators.

In fact, the Wall Street Journal reported last week that as the filibuster went on, one of the Republican senators, Jesse Helms, from North Carolina, ram off the floor and was greeted by cheers and applause from lobbyists.

Now, if that's what is happening in Washington because of the Republican leadership, I think it's important for Maine to elect a Democratic successor to Senator Mitchell because of what the differences are at this point in time between the Republican leadership and this president and the majority of Democrats.

The Democrats want to keep moving us forward to make tough choices. The Republicans want to return us to trickle-down economics, to the kind of trillion-dollar deficits that nearly bankrupted our country, and eventually to the kind of cuts in Medicare and Social Security that will not be good for the State of Maine.

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So it's not a question of what's good for the President. What's really the important question is what's good for Maine. Thanks.

MR. WEINSTEIN: Pleasure to meet you. I will be seeing you throughout the day.

MRS. CLINTON: Okay, good. Glad to see you.

(The interview was concluded.)

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