

OCTOBER 93
MARGOLIES-MEZVINSKY,
REP. MARJORIE

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REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY
AN INTERVIEW WITH CONGRESSWOMAN MARJORIE MARGOLIES-MEZVINSKY
(D-PENNSYLVANIA, 13th District)

Map Room

Q But anyway, I'm writing a book for my kids, for the next generation. The important thing for me, I think, is that -- to leave a few lessons.

MRS. CLINTON: And then I (inaudible), Marjorie.

And we never had enough role models for all the Members of Congress. We had no role models like you, you know, who are out there. I'm so excited. The best thing was when she's up here before ENC. I mean, I was just there (inaudible) -- (laughter).

Q (Inaudible.)

MRS. CLINTON: It was so wonderful.

Q But we have role models. So what are we talking about, and what's happening? What made (inaudible) become very (inaudible).

MRS. CLINTON: But (inaudible) role models.

Q I think that's so important.

And we are not tearing up -- everyone (inaudible), even the men in Congress who have -- how to train (inaudible) -- you know, I mean, it was pathetic (inaudible). (Laughter)

I mean, Ray Thornton (D-AR) is not my favorite person this person this month -- or last month -- or

August 6th. But I (inaudible) for the most part people who want to come back. And my feeling about the women is that we really want to do -- that's not true at all, but pretty much. But I --

MRS. CLINTON: What kind of proportion?

Q Well, and that's what's -- and that all of the freshmen women, save one, voted for the budget, even in -- that's what I really want. And it has to do with women. It has to do with not possessing your seat.

MRS. CLINTON: Yeah.

Q Not -- and it has to do with really seriously thinking about what our legacy is to our children. It has to do with looking at issues in Congress -- and then I'm going to stop talking -- but I was looking at issues like a (inaudible) -- there have been 363 men in Congress, and 163 women since it's inception. And when you talk about day care, when you talk about -- talk about "my wife," and, you know, "My wife's at home taking care of the kids" as a Member of Congress. I mean, it's not -- it's not true anymore. And where they say, I think, stop. (Inaudible) percent -- (inaudible) percent of women are staying home taking care of children, and (inaudible).

So that's in capsule, because (inaudible) -- I mean, (inaudible) out there what we think are some of the challenges that I would get in there.

What are some of the (inaudible) after that book (inaudible). I mean, it's really an extraordinary experience that you knew that (inaudible). But it's okay. There's so much (inaudible).

MRS. CLINTON: (Inaudible) that you cared more for the country than (inaudible) --

Q (Inaudible.)

MRS. CLINTON: -- institution and the politics of it.

Q And still I think we thought it was the right thing to do.

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MRS. CLINTON: Yeah.

Q And a lot of us like you -- I mean, like you guys, you and your husband, so that we felt that we came (inaudible) with one -- your success was very important to us.

But it has a lot to do with -- with being a woman and not necessarily with our possessing a job, which is very -- and I don't know if it's true or not, but my feeling is that we -- we are less what we do than men are.

MRS. CLINTON: I think that's right. And hasn't it -- there's a wonderful (inaudible).

Q Are we close enough?

MRS. CLINTON: Yeah, yeah. And are we rolling?

AIDE: Both of them. All of three of them are (inaudible).

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, this is the (inaudible).

I will find it for you, Marjorie. There's a wonderful line that I've heard about how, you know, men are inclined to work at their life; women want to make a life. I mean, you know, it's just -- it's a difference in the whole way (inaudible) to start thinking. You can get that record.

Q I will.

MRS. CLINTON: You know where it is? It's -- I'll find it. It's a quote from Campbell, the mythologist.

Q Oh, let's hear it here. (Inaudible)

MRS. CLINTON: (Inaudible.) Yeah, yeah. It's a wonderful line. So we'll find it for you.

Q Oh, okay.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I have just a (inaudible) -- till 10:30 they said.

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Q Oh, okay. From what you've been able to assess thus far from Congress, what difference do more women in Congress make?

MRS. CLINTON: I think that women bring their life experience to Congress in ways that, at least up until now, men, as a whole, have not. They come knowing what it's like to balance family and work. They come feeling the pull of being both a nurturer and a breadwinner. They have a perhaps more hopeful sense of what we can do together to try to support families and children, because they have had support in one way or the other in their own life.

And I think back about some of the stories you've told me or other women -- other freshmen women have told me about how in the pit of depression and worst times of their lives in the past, there was somebody there to help them. And they're giving back. I mean, it's a way of giving back. Because anyone who makes it to Congress, particularly as a woman, has to have a certain level of drive and has to be willing to put up with a lot. But most of the women that I see are there because they're motivated by something bigger than themselves. So I think it has made a big difference.

Q Leslie Byrne (D-VA) the other night said that she really thought that women were there to really connect -- connect (inaudible) -- connect, you know, to the next point on the board more than she thought that men were. And her feeling was that -- that somebody (inaudible) -- and I feel this, too -- and I know women do it, too, so it's not (inaudible) exclusive, but only vote to come back. And she (inaudible).

MRS. CLINTON: I agree with that. I would also say that if we woke up tomorrow and we ended violence in our cities, and our children were all going to good schools, and women were respected, and there was equal opportunity, and it was the kind of world that we've all talked about and have worked hard for, I think most of us would breathe a big sigh of relief and, you know, go back to doing whatever it is we wanted to do, whether it is, you know, the personal private sector or the professional public sector. We wouldn't feel any great need to sort of stay in politics.

I don't know that that's true for most of the men, because for too many of them it is a game. I mean, it's the game that's more important than the outcome. And I really am

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(inaudible). And the power -- yeah, exactly, the wielding of -- the wielding of the power and the fun of the chase and the hunt and the, you know, sort of rituals that go along with the game.

I would be -- I mean, I would love to live in a world where I could walk down any street at any time of the day or night, where I could take my daughter anywhere, where I could say good-bye to my daughter in the morning, and she could get on a bike with friends and come back at night -- you know, the kind of world that a lot of us grew up in and took for granted, which has been stripped away by all of the troubles and the struggles we face in this country.

And I wouldn't care who got the credit. I wouldn't care who was in the Congress. I mean, all that stuff would be irrelevant to me if we could achieve what I think the women that I talk with and relate to in the Congress want to achieve, which, you know, as corny as it may sound, is a better life for ourselves and our family.

Q (Inaudible) sitting on the other side of the (inaudible) and she said -- I'll never forget (inaudible), but she said, "Your next project should be violence." And I --

MRS. CLINTON: She's right.

Q I love it. I get so (inaudible).

I want to get back to the game.

MRS. CLINTON: Mm-hmm.

Q One of my feelings about men being able to put up with this kind of nonsense is when they're not being (inaudible) having to put up with this kind of nonsense (inaudible) -- I mean, if you look at the football teams, there's always the -- the nephew of the coach on the team. The team kind of knew that they'd have to put up with this (inaudible). (Laughter)

And we, unfortunately, in a way, have never learned to like that way. We haven't looked at life as a kind of end game, that -- now, I think it helps in -- in the humanitarian sense, but I don't think it helps us in the game.

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MRS. CLINTON: Mm-hmm.

And it's a big struggle as to how much you give in to the game as it's played and how much you try to change the game. And there are equally good reasons for pursuing each strategy at different points in your life and depending upon what you're trying to achieve.

And I think a lot of it does get back to what you were just saying. Team sport has only recently become widely available to lots of young women. And there is a difference in being raised where you are engaged in solitary or very personal activities with only a few people -- as most young girls always used to play, you know, with two or three best friends, and pursuing piano or ballet and doing something in a solitary way, compared to team sports, where, you know, you win some and you lose some, you're all in it together. You kind of look at each others' strengths and weaknesses. You figure out how to maneuver through all of that.

Q And next year you may be playing on his team.

MRS. CLINTON: That's right. And I remember the first I watched some little girls play softball. They were just stunned that they might have to be on opposite teams of their best friends, you know. And that's something little boys would relish. I mean, that would make the friendship even stronger, you know, to taunt your best friend because he struck out or something. Little girls would be afraid that, you know, your best friend would burst into tears.

So I think there's a difference in life experience, which is beginning to even out as more young girls are engaged in team sports and have those opportunities. But you're right, from a very early age, there are differences in experience that, you know, kind of prepare one for different ways of dealing with life later on.

Q Were there any different questions that women asked than men didn't ask when you were in the committees? I mean --

MRS. CLINTON: Oh -- I mean, take your committee. If I remember right, I was asked about reproductive rights. I was asked about diagnostic and clinical tests available for women -- you know, the frequency of the mammogram. I was

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asked the question that started with talking about what one's mother thought about this whole endeavor.

Yeah, I mean, there was a different texture in the questioning. And, you know, your question that we finally got around to finishing with Chairman Dingell -- (laughter) -- you know, had a slightly different take on it than the other approaches that I had heard about. It -- yeah, so it was.

And I don't think it was just -- I don't think it was just Democratic women, because if you remember, Marge Roukema (R-NJ) gave poignant anecdotes about the immigrant woman in the hospital and, you know, the barber who couldn't afford the treatment. And there was a much more personal awareness of what it is we're trying to accomplish in the quest and (inaudible).

Q I want to get back to what I said before, that all of the freshmen women, save one, voted for -- all of the freshman Democratic women voted for -- with the exception of Pat Danner (D-MO), voted for your -- your husband's, the President's budget bill.

Give me your assessment of that. Many of us are in really, really hard (inaudible) districts. How -- what did you feel (inaudible)? Or --

MRS. CLINTON: Well, what I felt was real pride, because it was gutsy vote for a lot of people. And it was a vote that put the country first and put the whole political problems on a stronger footing.

And the reason a lot of the men gave for voting against it was so transparent, so intellectually empty. And most women -- you know, it was an emotional vote. You told me that, you know, a lot of women went later into the Red Room and just, you know, broke down. I mean, I -- I, watching it, felt the same way.

But I would have done exactly the same thing. I could not have lived with myself. I don't know how you get up and look in the mirror and live with that kind of intellectual and political dishonesty. I mean, for people to say they voted against it even though they had voted for it the first time with the Btu tax because it had a gas tax, when the original version had a 7 cent a gallon gas tax

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beside the Btu package. I mean, that -- that is just beyond my understanding. It is so weak.

And I think most women knew what was at stake. I mean, if we hadn't had that vote, we would today not have a budget. It would be after the budget deadline. We would all be sitting there, and this country would be going down the tubes. Instead, it was finished. And we could then build.

And now we're on the brink of health care, we're dealing with tough issues like crime and violence and NAFTA and a lot of other things that are very difficult. But in the absence of that kind of courage, we wouldn't have gotten there. And I think that it also is a vote that most people are going to not only be able to survive but be able to wear the badge of courage. And I think that's, you know, the way it's going to work out.

Q I would not be (inaudible) with the next -- tell me how much more time we have.

MRS. CLINTON: Probably about 10 minutes.

Q Okay. I don't know if you saw it the next day.

MRS. CLINTON: I did.

Q I did not see it (inaudible), to tell the truth. I mean, I have to tell you that. Two (inaudible) that -- I walked into the -- I may have told you this. I walked into the congressional (inaudible) that night, and the first thing that happened to me was I saw two Republican (inaudible) going down. And then I talked to you (inaudible). And then I got down to the floor and was watching the screen, and two Democrats said that they were going to change their votes. And they suspected -- I found out later that there were going to be about 20 Democrats (inaudible). So it wouldn't have been -- and it turned out to be accurate (inaudible). I mean, you've got to be. (Inaudible) thing to do. And (inaudible).

I was so angry by it, annoyed by it, that it got into the record. And I stood there saying, "Bill made me (inaudible)." And then I looked at the playback of what happened. And I had no idea of what was going on around me. I mean, all the stuff that I had read about, I just didn't know. I mean, I had no idea that (inaudible). I didn't know

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that. I mean, I was just thinking of what I had to do when they came through, "We need your vote." And they actually said, "Ray won't do it."

And then the next thing I see this tape, and I saw all of these men standing there going, "Bye-bye, Margie." I was so incensed at the immaturity of it. I was so angered by the kind of worst of fraternity ethic -- which (inaudible) the anecdotes that -- I mean, for everything that one can think of (inaudible) -- I mean, everything that I hated about fraternities on campuses and the meanness and the meanspiritedness -- I mean, sitting there with Pat Williams (D-MT), nobody went, "Bye-bye, Pat." I don't know if you saw it. But I mean --

MRS. CLINTON: (Inaudible) saw it.

Q But what's your reaction, as a woman?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I have two reactions to it, because, you know, I could object with a brief, brutal --

Q Really?

MRS. CLINTON: -- attack, you know, after a year or two. I don't think people attack you unless they're afraid of you. And I consider it actually a compliment. You know, they don't spend their time thinking of (inaudible). Do you know how good that is?

Q (Inaudible.) (Laughter)

MRS. CLINTON: You know, thinking of ways to torment people that they aren't scared of. And I think there was some of that going on. These are the kinds of boys on the playground when I was a little girl who were scared I might beat them if I played with them, so they want to go preempt a (inaudible) --

Q And they knew you were smarter than they were.

MRS. CLINTON: Yeah, but even then, it was just -- I think it was just this sort of pathetic display about how --

Q Of insecure --

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MRS. CLINTON: Yeah, of insecurity, how they're going to kind of try to protect themselves because they're not sure they're as good as what their competition is.

But that is my first reaction. I thought it must be -- you know, I didn't know whether you knew what was going on, because I've been in those situations, and you're so focused, you know, you kind of shut the world out.

But I thought, you know, I really hope that she doesn't think anything about this except "I'm going to make it, and you're going to be sorry for this," because that's what struck me.

The second thing is that it's a real indication of the disrepair of our political system and how too many of the people who are currently in it aren't there to build this country. They're not there to solve our problems, (inaudible). They're either there, as you point out, just to get themselves reelected or to pursue a very narrow political or personal agenda. And they can't stand up to any big challenge.

They're great on the rhetoric, they're great on the games that they play, but when push comes to shove and you've got to put yourself on the line, they're not likely to be in a foxhole with -- and so they're basically weak. And that kind of weakness is displayed in this sort of immature, insecure behavior that you see.

But out in the country -- yeah, it is -- but we're -- you know, we're turning it around, and we're going to keep turning it around. And we're not going to let them get away with it. We're going to call them, and we're -- you know, the Democrats for too long have let some of this behavior go unchecked. And a lot of decent Republicans have as well. It's not confined to any one party. We've got a lot of weaklings and immature and insecure people as well.

But I think that the important focus for all of us now is to ask, what does any of this have to do with your life or the lives of your friends and neighbors? And anybody who asks those bigger questions has to be a little bit ashamed of themselves if they respond to this kind of bullying. And I think those are the questions we have to keep asking.

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Q Do you in any way think that it is our responsibility? I mean, I have a real problem with this. I don't think it's my responsibility to change these guys. But I think that we've got to redirect the Congress' mission.

MRS. CLINTON: I do, too. And -- I don't think you can change them, because they have too much invested. And besides -- I mean, they're grown men, and they have these immature characteristics and behavior.

Q But we have nurtured that tendency to do that. And when we sit there -- and what will we do with these guys?

MRS. CLINTON: No. You've got to -- you have to just constantly be thinking about how to either work with them or work around them. You're not responsible for raising them. You're not responsible for improving their table manners.

Q (Laughter.)

MRS. CLINTON: You are responsible for yourself and for representing your constituents as you think is best for them, even if they sometimes need to be brought along about why you did something.

I mean, that's the -- I mean, you know, the people who I admire in politics are the people who stay in touch closely enough to be able always to relate to the folks they represent but to lead them, not to be evidence of their worst tendencies, but to try to bring out their best, and to continually challenge them to see the world more broadly and to understand it more deeply. And that's -- to me that the only reason to be in politics. I mean, who wants to live like this if you're not trying to help change the country? I mean --

Q What do you think are the largest frustrations of women trying to do -- are we -- I really don't think that we're better or worse. I just think we're different.

MRS. CLINTON: I think it rests in a very different set of expectations about human behavior and the possibilities for change in the political system. I mean, it is very frustrating when people keep dragging the conversation down to the lowest common denominator, when they

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forget that there are real people with real problems and real struggles that we're trying to represent.

So I think it all sort of looks back to what you were saying about the game. I mean, it is just -- that's the big frustration, is that if you care about the issues, it's not a game, because there are too many movies running in your head of all these people that you care about and that you've seen and that you've worked with. And you see them, and you know that you're trying to change conditions so that they can help themselves, and other people don't get it at all. So that's, to me, the greatest frustration.

Q What (inaudible) -- I mean, seeing us there -- (inaudible). And how do you -- how do you (inaudible)? What -- I know that you really don't have an agenda for us, and we are such disparate Members, but, I mean --

MRS. CLINTON: I have been thrilled by it. I mean, I cannot tell you how wonderful it is to go to meetings and see women like you there and to know that we share the same kind of life experiences even though the particulars may differ and that we're involved in what we're doing for largely the same kinds of reasons. It is thrilling.

And I just want women to bring a new level of honesty and commitment and challenge to this whole political enterprise and to speak with the same kind of clear voices that we do in private and public -- I mean, to bring all of that out into the political arena and not to be cowed by what the "old boy" sort of expectations are, but to just talk, talk, talk about what's important and keep it front and center. And I really believe that it will make a difference.

Q Do you know that you're setting the pace for us? I mean, do you -- do you realize that -- I mean, that when you lead, we all say, "Yes." (Laughter)

MRS. CLINTON: I can say it for you all. I watch you on TV, or I watch you on C-Span doing something. I feel the same way. I mean, it's thrilling. I think there's such a sense of support in it, that is really sustaining to me. I didn't know that I would have -- you know, going to the Women's Caucus and talking about health care issues, which was one of the very first things I did, was so reinforcing for me.

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Q What was it like?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, it was just wonderful. I mean, it was -- you know, there had been some thought given as to what the agenda should be, because there had been task forces developed for caucus members to work on --

Q Rape and violence.

MRS. CLINTON: Rape and violence.

Q And reproductive freedom.

MRS. CLINTON: Right, yeah. And, you know, that's thrilling to me, because these are issues that haven't been on the political radar screen before. And I just -- I'm very -- I'm very excited about where we are in all this. I think we have to keep pushing. I think that you can never let up, because there are so many attitudes that still have to be changed.

Q One of the things that I decided, which is -- (inaudible) we are at 11 percent, and we truly are being treated like 11 percent of the body. And I think at some point we've got to -- and I don't know how to do it, but I know we're trying to figure it out -- I mean, a hydra (phonetic) is a perfect example. But we do represent 52.5 percent of the population, and that at some point we've got to say these are the issues and these are new issues. We absolutely have to, because everybody should (inaudible). That's the difference. I mean, we've got to redefine what they think family issues are and they think are only women's issues and say -- I mean, your mother and your sisters and your wives and your daughters --

MRS. CLINTON: That's right. That's right.

Well, I think though that that's something that -- that the more organized your voice can be about that, the more likely you can make that impression. And I see it happening. I see -- I mean, as hard as it may be for you to believe now, I see a greater sensitivity to a lot of positions that were there just a year ago.

AIDE: Okay. Just give her one more.

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MRS. CLINTON: I think the way that a lot of the leadership talk now about issues and the way that committee members talk about the women on their committee, you know, it's just different. And it -- you know, it's not maybe where it should be, but at least it is evolving in the right direction (inaudible).

And in the Senate, you know, the number of women there now, even though still small, several of the women are fairly well respected by the Congress and are beginning to make a difference, and they're standing up on certain issues. And, I mean, you know --

Q (Inaudible) they want.

AIDE: I'll tell you -- I saw the cook come in. Do you have anything you want?

Q I have a real quick one. When do you think we'll have a run in public?

MRS. CLINTON: Hmm. I think I said in an interview a couple of months ago, I think by 2010 -- sometime -- what year is it now? Sometime in the next 15 or so years.

Q I have three quick questions to ask you. May I ask you one?

MRS. CLINTON: Sure.

AIDE; Just -- then (inaudible). And then we need to go.

Q Okay. Thank you for the interview.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, it was fun, great. When is this going to come out?

Q In April.

(The interview was concluded.)

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