

02/23/94  
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WORKING WOMAN

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

Internal Transcript

January 9, 1996

INTERVIEW OF THE FIRST LADY  
BY BARBARA WALTERS, 20/20 (ABC) II

The Green Room

Q Mrs. Clinton, instead of your new book being the issue, you have become the issue. How did you get in this mess where your whole credibility is being questioned?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I ask myself that every day, Barbara, because it's very surprising and confusing to me. But we've had questions raised for the last four years, and eventually they're answered and they go away and more questions come up. And we'll just keep doing our best to answer them and, hopefully, it will end at some point.

Q Are you distressed?

MRS. CLINTON: Occasionally, I get a little distressed, a little sad, a little angry, irritated. I think that's only natural. But I know that that's part of the territory and we'll just keep plowing through and trying to get to the end of this.

Q Well, we'll get to some of the specifics about that later. Let's start with the book, which is how we were originally going to start.

Your book takes some very strong stands. This is not what some people thought was going to be a nice, soft book to show that you had a softer image. And you say some controversial things. What does the title mean, "It Takes A Village"?

MRS. CLINTON: For more than 25 years I've worked on behalf of children's issues, as well as being a

mother myself, and always just loving children. And "It Takes A Village" means what I have come to believe: that families are the most important influences in a child's life, they provide the primary upbringing --but they don't do it alone. They need help and support, whether it be from doctors or teachers or police officers or all the other adults in our society who directly and indirectly impact on children.

And I would love for Americans to have a conversation about how all of us can do a better job in the raising of our children.

Q Whom do you want to read this book?

MRS. CLINTON: I would like as many Americans as possible, whether or not they are parents.

Q This is not written for experts.

MRS. CLINTON: No. In fact, it is written in part because the experts have learned so much about what children need in their early years that doesn't get communicated. And I want more and more people to know about the importance of talking to babies when they're so tiny that they can hardly see you. Or taking the time to

really spend with children at every stage of their development. Or, you know, knowing what it takes to find good child care when you're in the market for it.

Those are things experts talk about with themselves, but a lot of us who are parents or concerned citizens may not know that.

Q One of the controversial parts of your book has to do with health care. Do you remember health care?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, I do, very well.

Q You speak of Medicare for older people, and you want it for children. You want universal health care for children. But people are going to say, "Where are we going to get the money?" Federally funded? I mean, this is just what we're trying to get away from."

MRS. CLINTON: Well, there are many ways of doing it. It doesn't necessarily have to be federally funded alone. It can be through the place of employment. It can be through making insurance affordable for people working at low incomes, who want to have that protection. There are many ways we can do it.

But to me the goal should be that instead of having more and more children from working families uninsured, we should be reversing that and insuring more and more of our children every year.

Q Is it very, very expensive?

MRS. CLINTON: No.

Q I mean, is it really going to be one of these major items in the budget?

MRS. CLINTON: No, it's not very expensive. In fact, most of the countries we compete with -- the rich, advanced economies around the world -- already do provide universal coverage for everyone at a lesser cost than we have. And they're always people who will be able to get more than what is provided for everyone. But at least they provide the security that I think every parent should have when it comes to their children.

Q You not only want universal health care, you want federally funded, or funded, early education -- Head Start. You want funding for proper day care.

MRS. CLINTON: Mm-hmm.

Q You seem to be swimming against the tide. You know, all we hear about is less government, less money; you're saying just the opposite.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, that's because I think the

tide is not going in the right direction. I think we are causing ourselves a lot of problems because we are not doing what it takes to support families -- and I mean hold them accountable, hold them responsible. I believe strongly in marriage. I think that divorce should be harder for people with children. I want people to take responsibility for themselves and their kids.

But at the same time, I'm out there. I know how hard it is for most Americans right now. You know, I have visited Malin (ph.) County Day Care Center in Iowa, for example. And I have shaken the hands of parents who are unemployed -- they're going back to get job training, they're desperately trying to get off welfare, they've been divorced and left with no child support. They don't have a

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place to put their child that is safe and good unless it can be subsidized.

So, for me, this is going in the right direction, because in the long run it is cheaper than prisons, it is cheaper than violence, it is cheaper than tearing at the quality of our life together.

Q What do you think of Newt Gingrich?

MRS. CLINTON: I think he's a very intelligent man who has a mission that he is on to accomplish. And I just disagree with many tenets of that. But, more importantly, the President has stood up against many elements of the Gingrich agenda for America that would really eliminate the safety net for the poor and the vulnerable, and would so radically alter Medicare that it would not be there for many older people in the future.

Q You can do the things you talk about, federal funding for education, early education and insurance and proper day care, and balance a budget?

MRS. CLINTON: Absolutely. You know, the budget that the President just proposed -- a seven-year, balanced budget using the Congressional Budget Office figures -- invests in education; invests in environmental protection; continues our investments in programs like Head Start and school lunch, which we think are important; and still balances the budget.

Q Let's talk about some of the social issues -- one parent. More and more parents are becoming the one parent, sometimes by choice, sometimes because they're very young and get pregnant. And you have said that this is -- children who have one parent are two to three times as likely to have emotional and behavioral problems as children living in two-parent families; more likely to drop out of school, get pregnant, et cetera. And remarriage of their parents doesn't seem to better the odds.

What's your solution to the one-parent dilemma?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think the first thing we have to do is be honest about what's happening to children. Now, there are exceptions -- we both know that, everyone does. But in general what you've just recited from my book is the case, that we need more parents to both get married and stay married in order to support children.

There will always be exceptions. I write about my mother-in-law, who endured, I think, violence and abuse that should have led to a divorce. But in many instances

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today it is not that extreme a case. And I think we ought to do a little more both to help parents stay together; but if it's inevitable that they are going to divorce, to provide education and counseling so that they don't let their problems affect their children.

Q Something just popped into my mind -- "Murphy Brown." Remember Dan Quayle, when he said that "Murphy Brown" glorified the one parent family? And we see a lot of this on television and in films. How do you feel about it?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I have a general concern about television and films because I do think -- and I also write about this -- that we are paying too much attention to the exception, to the dysfunctional. And we need to be more focussed on what is life like for the average American?

And there are single parents. So I don't think we should be condemning single parents. I don't think we should be, you know, holding them up and saying that they're terrible people. That is absolutely wrong. Instead what we ought to do is to say, first of all, how can we help marriages survive? But if we can't, how do we help single parents survive?

Q How?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think we can do a lot of things. One is a minimum wage increase. And that is very important because many, many of the people who support families on minimum wages are single parents -- mostly women. We also can make it more likely that single parents will have the kind of health insurance that their children deserve to have, through their workplace or through a system they could buy into.

Day care is a terrible problem for a lot of single parents without family support nearby. You know, one of the things that I discovered in writing the book is that, you know, many, many of our single parents work nights, work weekends, and child care is not usually available. And we don't think about the price that they pay for that.

Q In some areas you're very conservative -- divorce -- and you feel that there should be a waiting period before people get divorced.

MRS. CLINTON: With children.

Q With children.

MRS. CLINTON: Mm-hmm.

Q And then in your book you weave in your own personal experiences. And you say, "My strong feelings about divorce and its effect on children have caused me to bite my tongue more than a few times during my own marriage."

MRS. CLINTON: Right.

Q When? Why?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, all the time.

Q Oh, I can't wait to hear.

MRS. CLINTON: I think any couple --

Q You've considered divorce?

MRS. CLINTON: No, never a divorce. But certainly I have thought hard about how a situation can escalate out of hand. You know, the argument that never ends, or the problem that you allow to fester instead of dealing with it. And I have found in my own marriage -- and certainly in the marriages of my friends that have been long lasting, we celebrated our 20th anniversary last year -- that it's a -- not a 50-50 proposition, it's 100-100. You have to really be committed to it, and you have to be willing to make compromises and to bite that tongue from time to time.

But particularly when children are involved, I think it's what mature people who care about their marriage and their children should try to do.

Q To make that marriage last, almost no matter what?

MRS. CLINTON: At least during the childhood of those children, yes.

Q You've heard the expression, "Murder yes, divorce no"?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, yes, I have. (Laughter.)

Q Did that ever apply to you?

MRS. CLINTON: No, but maybe short of that. I've had -- you know, just like all of us, we've had our ups and our downs, but it's been such a great commitment for us, and I think having Chelsea made it even stronger.

Q I want to talk a little bit about Chelsea. She's going to be 16 next month.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, she is.

Q You've kept her out of the press, and the press has been really pretty good about it.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

Q But she'll be going off to college. Tell us just a little bit about her. What is she interested in? What do you think she wants to do?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, she is still very interested in ballet. And she loves school. She has great friends. Right now she wants to learn to drive and get a driver's license, which is something I'm living in fear and trembling of. But her father -- which is very scary -- is teaching her how to drive, so they're having a good time.

Q Well, there goes that relationship.

MRS. CLINTON: You know, we were up at Camp David, and for months she had been saying, well, you know, come on, I really want to learn how to drive. So he went out with her and they were gone for about two hours. They had the best time. And all of us were just laughing -- you know, just within the compound. They were doing everything -- from parallel parking to backing up. When I came back, I said, well, how did it go? How did it go? She said, well I think Dad learned a lot. (Laughter.) So they really have a good time.

But she'll be looking at college, and I'm just not looking forward to that myself. I will miss her so much.

Q You sound like every mother.

MRS. CLINTON: I know. It's just -- when I think about my mother tell me that when she dropped me off at college, she crawled in the back seat of the car and cried all the way home. I'm afraid I'm not going to be much better.

Q You write that you hope teenagers would abstain from sex until they're 21, and that your for sex education in the schools and sex education at home. I think parents might like to know what you've told Chelsea about birth control and contraception.

MRS. CLINTON: From the time she was a very little girl, we have talked about your body and the

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respect it deserves; not to put things in it -- whether it's drugs or tobacco or alcohol that could hurt your growing up; to be respectful of your body. And that started from the very earliest years. I had some very wise advice from a pediatrician who said -- she had heard so many parents complain that they didn't want their children learning about this from somebody else, but they didn't take the time to do it themselves. And it is a little discomfoting. I'm not saying that these were easy conversations. But I did them, and so did Bill. And so

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Q Your husband, the President, talked to her about --

MRS. CLINTON: Absolutely.

Q -- about sex?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. Just -- you know, trying very hard to make it not some forbidden taboo subject, but something that's a part of life and growing up. And then as she got older, to point out the consequences -- you know, sexually transmitted diseases, unintended pregnancy, the kind of terrible dilemma that nobody should have to face about abortion. Those are the things that I think we need to talk with our kids about. And if parents don't feel comfortable doing it, then at church or at school there need to be responsible adults who will answer their questions honestly.

Q At what age?

MRS. CLINTON: I think there is a way of talking about it all the way up. I don't think you should wait until they're teenagers, because they are bombarded with messages about sex from the movies and television and their music. And if we don't give them some other ways of thinking about it and being responsible about it, they will pick up information elsewhere.

Q Let's not use Chelsea as an example, but if you had a teenager daughter who became pregnant and wanted to have an abortion, not have the baby, would you support it?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, gosh, I just even can't imagine that decision. I would do whatever I could to support her. And it would be a terrible decision. I can't even really think about that. I hope that nobody I know ever has to. And I think it is so tragic when that is the choice. And we can avoid that being the choice if children are given good, responsible information and ability to say no at an earlier age.

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Q Do you feel that a parent should be notified if an underage daughter wants to have an abortion?

MRS. CLINTON: I believe in parental notification. I think there are exceptions. Sometimes the young girls -- 12, 13, 14 -- are pregnant because of sexual abuse from people they know -- older men who are either in their homes or in some way connected with their homes. A recent study has shown that these young teenage mothers are not usually willing participants. They may be overwhelmed. They may not know what they're getting themselves into. So there are situations in which the family is so dysfunctional that parental notification is not appropriate. But in general I do believe. I think that families should be part of helping their children through this.

Q At the end of your book, you quote a noted psychologist as saying, "The present state of children and families in the U.S. represents the greatest domestic problem our nation has faced since the founding of the republic." That's pretty strong words. If your husband is reelected, what will you personally do about this? How will you follow up with the suggestions that are made in this book?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, one thing I'll do is try to talk as much as possible about it, which is why I appreciate this opportunity, because I don't really want people necessarily to agree with me, but I want the state of our children to be the national conversation. And then when it comes to specific issues, whether it is health care or education, there are in every part of our country people who have figured out how to make our systems work. There are schools in the worst neighborhoods in America that are giving kids a sense of discipline and character and turning out good, qualified academic students. Why don't we learn from that? What prevents us from seeing what works right under our own noses?

Q Well, will you have a commission? Will you try to do specific things?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, I do -- I want to have a conference this spring bringing together many of the people I talk about in the book -- those who are actually on the front lines doing the work -- so that we can get even more visibility for what they're doing so that more people can know that, you know, gee, there's a program in San Antonio, Texas, that is really making a big difference in how parents behave. Let's find out about that. Let's bring it home. It's that kind of grass roots information that I'm most interested in.

Q If you're First Lady for another four years, will health care again be your number one priority? And will you do it differently?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, health care was part of my priority for children. I was asked to do it by my husband, and I was glad to do it, because I had been on the board of a children's hospital. I had been involved in a lot of situations looking at infant mortality and other problems of children's health. So I felt very strongly about that. Now, certainly we would do it differently because the particular approach that the President took was not acceptable to people. So --

Q -- that you took.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. It was my advocacy of the President's plan. And I really did think it would make a difference and would help people, but that was not to be. So I think we still need to make some basic reforms. I think insurance should be portable. People should be able to take it with them. I don't think we should be eliminating people from health care because of preexisting conditions. Those are some of the things that I would like to see worked on.

Q And people think you have changed your image.

MRS. CLINTON: (Laughter.) Well, it's what I've been doing for 25 years. And it's what I care most about.

Q Well, let's talk about some of the things that are so much in the news this week -- the Travel Office. Last week, a 1993 memo by a former White House aide, David Watkins, was made public in which he says that you were responsible for the firing of seven people in the White House Travel Office because you wanted to have an Arkansas travel agency take its place. And there would have been nothing illegal about your doing that. But you have said you had no idea how the decision was made and that you had nothing to do with it. Is he lying?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think what is fair to say is that I did voice concern about the financial mismanagement that was discovered when the President arrived here in the White House Travel Office. I think that everyone who knew about it was quite concerned and wanted it to be taken care of. And, indeed, the financial mismanagement, which was proven by a big six accounting firm, led to changes. And I can assure people that now that Travel Office is run by appropriate accounting standards.

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But I did not make the decisions. I did not direct anyone to make the decisions. But I have absolutely no doubt that I did express concern, because I was concerned about any kind of financial mismanagement.

Q So is it a question of how much concern? I mean, when you say you had nothing to do with it, and he says you had everything to do with it, he's either not telling the truth or it's a misinterpretation -- where are we?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think -- I don't know, because I'm not aware exactly of what led him to say that. But certain Mack McLarty, who was the Chief of Staff, took responsibility for the decisions; has said very clearly, I did not tell him to do anything; he made the decisions. But he did it in consultation with many people whose advice he sought, whose concern he listened to. So I think that's something that I'll have to let someone else explain.

Q You see, the picture that's coming out is of this domineering First Lady. You know that. And in his memo he refers to an earlier incident in which he said you'd been furious over his failure to transfer certain Secret Service agencies. He says he feared any delay in firing the Travel Office members would not have been tolerated by you. He said there would be hell to pay.

What was this Secret Service incident?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I'm not sure what David Watkins is talking about. I can tell you what I was concerned about -- and, again, expressed it. There had been some stories that were in the press attributed to Secret Service agents --

Q That you had thrown a lamp or a Bible at your husband --

MRS. CLINTON: -- or a bible or a Mercedes Benz or -- you know, there were many variations on it. And when I read stories in the tabloids saying that I've had an alien baby from outer space, I think that is kind of funny and laugh it off. But when stories like that get into what I consider to be respectable journalism, it does bother me. And it particularly bothered me that the Secret Service was being used to try to substantiate untrue stories, and I couldn't understand that. So I was concerned about it and expressed that concern.

Q Did you ask to have certain Secret Service members put in another detail?

MRS. CLINTON: No. I wanted the situation

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cleared up, because -- both for the Secret Service's sake, which is, after all, charged with a very difficult task. And we have a great relationship with them. But also for my sake. I mean, you know, I have a pretty good arm. If I'd thrown a lamp at somebody, I think you would have known about it. And when those things are said, I just don't want that to get a life of its own.

Q So you wanted the situation controlled or

MRS. CLINTON: I want --

Q -- use your words.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I wanted, for example, the Secret Service to be able to say that didn't happen -- you know, to try to get it clarified.

Q Did they?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, yes, those stories stopped. I think it was part of the understandable change and people trying to make up stuff just to cause a little trouble.

Q Did you ever throw a lamp at your husband?

MRS. CLINTON: No, I didn't.

Q Did you ever throw a Bible at your husband?

MRS. CLINTON: No, I didn't.

Q Do you have a terrible temper?

MRS. CLINTON: No, but I do get angry about things. I'm not going to deny that. There are things that I think are wrong or things that I think should be fixed. And I am not at all shy about expressing my opinion. I try to be a direct person. But I don't tell people what to do. I say, here's what I think, and I'm concerned about this. But there are many decisions that people make in the course of a day that I don't even know about, and I get some responsibility assigned for.

Q Let's go on to the Madison Guaranty Savings and Loan, from which you did some legal work. There is a dispute as to how much work you did for the Madison Guaranty. You have said it was minimal.

MRS. CLINTON: Mm-hmm.

Q Investigators say you had a more involved relationship.

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Mrs. Clinton, I think most people don't understand it, they don't care how much you billed or how much money you made. But what they do think is, were you aware of any shady practices or actual wrongdoing on the part of this savings and loan for which you did legal work?

MRS. CLINTON: Absolutely not.

Q You did not?

MRS. CLINTON: Absolutely not.

Q Even in their real estate deals?

MRS. CLINTON: No, absolutely not. And, in fact, this whole matter originated because of this Whitewater land deal. And we said when that came up that this was a failed real estate transaction -- about 20 years ago now -- where we lost money. And people said, well, prove it. So we proved that. Then they said, well, okay, how about this. The person you were in business with also later bought a savings and loan.

Q Mr. McDougal?

MRS. CLINTON: Mr. McDougal. Did you get money from that savings and loan? Was the money channeled to you? We said, absolutely not.

Q Did it go towards the President's campaign?

MRS. CLINTON: Right. Absolutely not. And, in fact, an independent study that has been done for the Resolution --

Q Trust --

MRS. CLINTON: -- Trust Corporation, the RTC, by an independent law firm, has looked at that Whitewater and Madison matter and said, indeed, what we said three and four years ago was the case.

Q But they didn't have the billing records that they now have.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, but that is not really the issue. You know, a month ago people were jumping up and down because the billing records were lost, and they thought somebody might have destroyed them. Now the records are found, and they're jumping up and down. But I'm glad the records were found. I wish they had been found a year or two ago because they verify what I've been saying from the very beginning. I worked about an hour a

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week for 15 months. That was not a lot of work, for me, certainly.

Q You never knew the Madison Guaranty was doing anything illegal, corrupt, et cetera, as it was later found to be?

MRS. CLINTON: No, absolutely not. And, in fact, you know, there was a trial -- Mr. McDougal was tried back in '87, '88, '89, somewhere in there, and acquitted of charges. So these are yet another branch of charges being brought against him that we have absolutely nothing to do with.

Q One of the fraudulent loans of Madison Guaranty, which has gotten suddenly a lot of attention, is something called Castle Grande. In the sworn statement you said you had no memory of working on Castle Grande.

MRS. CLINTON: That's right.

Q But these billing records show you made 14 to 16 phone calls to one of the major participants, a man named Seth Ward, and also drew up documents connected with Castle Grande. The big thing about this, again, to most people is, again, a contradiction.

MRS. CLINTON: And there's not a contradiction. Castle Grande was a trailer park on a piece of property that was about a thousand acres big. I never did work for Castle Grande. Never at all. And so when I was asked about it last year, I didn't recognize it, I didn't remember it. The billing records show I did not do work for Castle Grande. I did work for something called IDC, which was not related to Castle Grande.

Q Was that Seth --

MRS. CLINTON: And Seth Ward was involved in that on behalf --

Q Separate deal?

MRS. CLINTON: Separate deal completely. So, you know, we've asked Mr. D'Amato, tell us what the inconsistencies are. I mean, any time we've been accused of something, eventually we have proven that it was a dry hole, that it was just another in the string of accusations. And we will do the same with these.

Q Mrs. Clinton, while we are clearing up rumors, you know there is the reoccurring rumor about you and Vince Foster. What was your relationship with him?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, he was one of my dearest

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friends, Barbara. He was a colleague. He was a partner. He'd been a friend of my husband since they were boys of 4 or 5 years of age. And I miss him. I miss him very much. And everyone who knew him, as Bill and I did, knew that he was one of the finest men, one of the best lawyers, one of the greatest friends you could have. And I just wish he could be left in peace, because he was a wonderful man to everyone who knew him.

Q You know, there is in this whole business after his suicide of whether you tried to have records removed or have them examined before they were shown to the Justice Department. And you have said that you did nothing to impede the investigation into his death, had no concern over access to the documents in his office.

But then there were these blizzard of phone calls -- you were in Arkansas visiting your mother -- from the Chief of Staff, Maggie Williams, and the White House Counsel, Bernard Nussbaum, from your close friend Susan Thomases. Phone calls, back and forth, back and forth -- more, perhaps, than would be considered apparent in a state of grief.

And when Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Thomases testified before the Senate Committee, they keep saying they can't remember. So, again, it all seems very mysterious, and it looks as if you had something to cover up.

MRS. CLINTON: You know, I want to be very clear about this.

Q Okay.

MRS. CLINTON: There were no documents taken out of Vince Foster's office on the night he died. And I did not direct anyone to interfere in any investigation. I know very well what we were talking about. We were grieving. We were supporting each other. I was asking questions about how other people who were close friends and colleagues of Vince were doing, how his family were doing. I wanted to be sure that the President was all right because I was in Arkansas, he was in Washington.

Susan had known Vince for, by then probably 15 or 16 years. Maggie had become a very close friend and colleague of Vince during the time they were in the White House together. They were both overwhelmed by grief. And some of those phone conversations consisted of us sobbing on the phone.

I'm very sad that people would take a moment that had never happened in the White House before -- no one was prepared for this. I hope to goodness it never

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happens to anyone else. Because, certainly, mistakes were made. People were running around trying to stay busy, trying to do things, trying to, you know, be helpful in some way. And maybe, you know, they acted in ways that later people said, oh, they shouldn't have done that.

But I don't know anyone who was prepared for such a tragedy. And everybody coped the best way they could. And talking to people that you had known -- I've known Maggie Williams for 15, 16, 17 years. We're not just colleagues, we're very dear friends. And so, for me, I don't know how other people grieve, but I do it both alone and I do it by talking to people who share my grief.

Q And nothing was taken from Vince Foster's office that you asked to have looked over, kept from the eyes of the government?

MRS. CLINTON: I didn't even know he had documents of mine in his office. So that doesn't make any sense at all.

Q You know, on the one hand, the fact that these two records -- the billing records and the travel memo -- come up this week is certainly not something you could have wanted when you're trying to publicize a book.

MRS. CLINTON: That's true.

Q Senator D'Amato implied that it happened because they were going to find these records anyway. But some people may wonder, this is not grandma's attic. This is the White House. These were found in your personal records. And --

MRS. CLINTON: Well, one of them was. Not the other one. But one of them was.

Q Mrs. Clinton, the fact that both the billing of your records, your legal records and the Watkins memo should come to light this week when you want to talk about a book is certainly not something you would have wanted. Right?

MRS. CLINTON: That's right. Absolutely.

Q Although Senator D'Amato says, implies that they were going to be found anyway and that's why you had to release them. But the White House is not grandma's attic. And for two years people have been looking for these records. They were in your personal effects. I mean, one wonders why they were just found now.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, one of them was.

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Q What does it look like up there with your records?

MRS. CLINTON: It is a mess. I mean, that is something that --

Q That's hard to understand.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I know nothing about the Watkins memo. I, to this day, don't know where it was found or under what circumstances. But I think people do need to understand that there are millions of pieces of paper in the White House. And for more than two years now, people have been diligently searching. I can only speak for our stuff, which arrived in boxes and has been stacked up and has been gone through. But, you know, it's something that I can't explain because I wasn't part of finding it, didn't even know it was there.

But I am glad it was found. I keep trying to say -- you know, it's so strange when people are saying, oh, my gosh, first they didn't find it; now they found it. But when you have so many inquiries coming at you from so many different directions; when we have turned over, I think, 50,000 pieces of paper; when everybody who's looked at this with any objective eye says, you know, there's no there there, and they keep answering the questions that are asked. We will keep cooperating and do the very best we can.

Q What do you think of Senator D'Amato?

MRS. CLINTON: I don't know him.

Q Why don't you just go up to Capitol Hill and talk to the Senate Committee yourself and get this all over with?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, we'll cooperate. And we'll do whatever is necessary. There is nobody who wants this over more than I do. I really want it to be finished with.

Q Do you want to go before Senator D'Amato's committee?

MRS. CLINTON: I don't have a desire in it. I just want to do whatever it takes to cooperate, to bring this matter to an end.

Q And if it takes your going and testifying yourself, you'll go?

MRS. CLINTON: I'll do whatever it takes to cooperate.

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Q You know, the whole business, the people in this country are either confused or they don't care about Whitewater. But there's a feeling that you and your husband are trying to cover something up. You know that.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I know.

Q I mean, you look -- it looks guilty. Even the Republican National Chairman said, they didn't do anything, but they look so guilty.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I don't know that we look guilty. But we sure have looked for kind of funny because we've not been able to answer questions. In part, these things happened 15, 20 years ago. They were not that important to us at the time. We didn't do anything wrong. There was no reason for us to have remembered most of this. So to be asked, did you lose money? We 5

Gosh, I don't remember,

And we scramble around. I mean, it is a very unfortunate set of circumstances. But there isn't any way to anticipate the questions that are going to be asked next. But we do the best we can, and we'll just keep on doing it. At the end of the day, the American people will know we have nothing to cover up. There is nothing that we have done that should be of any concern to anyone. We've tried, maybe not as smartly as we could have, to answer people's questions. But we'll keep doing the best we know how.

Q I have a tough question to ask you.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, dear. All your questions --

Q Do you think that you're becoming more of a negative than a positive force for your husband? Are you becoming a political liability?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I hope not. Because I love my husband and I really believe in what he's doing and I want to help him. But I have campaigned with him for -- you know, gosh, ever since I've known him, so many years now. And through 20 years of marriage, we've been out there and I've been supporting him. And I'm going to do the same thing in this upcoming election.

Q What advice, if any, has your husband been giving you this week?

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MRS. CLINTON: Oh, not to get down; don't let it bother you; we'll get through this; it's the same old stuff, but, you know, people will see that there's nothing to this either. And he keeps saying, you know, these questions that were asked three years now have been answered in this RTC study by this big law firm. And nobody knows about it because nobody has focussed on the fact that what we have said has been proven accurate because there's always a new front being opened. There's always more questions being asked. So he's just basically kind of, you know, bucked me up.

Q "Chin up, honey"?

MRS. CLINTON: Absolutely.

Q Does he call you "honey"?

MRS. CLINTON: He does. Yeah, he does. He calls me "Hiry."

Q He calls you what?

MRS. CLINTON: Hiry. I don't know. That's H-i-r-y, the best I can spell it.

Q Did you ever ask him why?

MRS. CLINTON: Well --

Q That may be the news that comes out of this whole interview.

MRS. CLINTON: I don't know. It just started when -- a long time ago.

Q Hiry, well --

MRS. CLINTON: Hiry, short for "Hillary."

Q That's short -- it's like baby talk for Hillary.

MRS. CLINTON: Yeah.

Q I want to get back to the book, and one section seems especially appropriate after all of this. You write about people pigeon-holing people, especially women and men. Do you think the American people are ready yet to have a First Lady who has strong opinions and an agenda?

MRS. CLINTON: I think so. I think some are, and some aren't. And I believe that this has been a learning experience for me, coming here and not really

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understanding all the expectations that people sort of put on this role. I think the American people want the people who live in this house to care about them, to care about their problems, and not to get caught up in just the back-and-forth of, you know, Washington insider politics.

And so if we can get that message out, that indeed that's what the President is standing up for, that's what I've always tried to speak for, I think that's the kind of activity that most Americans would approve of.

Q A close friend of yours told me that at one point when the President was maybe thinking of running for President and maybe not, you considered running for governor of Arkansas yourself. Did you?

MRS. CLINTON: No. But I did have people come to me and ask me to consider it. And I was flattered, but it's not anything I've considered seriously.

Q If the President is reelected, at the end of his second term, you will only be 54. Can you imagine --

MRS. CLINTON: My gosh.

Q To you that sounds old, to some of us it doesn't. Can you imagine running for political office yourself?

MRS. CLINTON: No.

Q Why not?

MRS. CLINTON: You know, I care deeply about what happens in our country, and I think there are lots of ways to serve --

Q Yeah, but I mean, what don't you have that your husband has? Why couldn't you be --

MRS. CLINTON: Well, it's just not anything that has been --

Q That you want?

MRS. CLINTON: -- on my wish list. I really enjoy supporting him, and I enjoy politics because I think it's so important. I want to see people care more again about politics, not be so cynical, because most of the people that I know -- whether or not I agree with them -- are honestly trying to do the right thing. And many Americans don't believe that anymore.

Q What's the greatest difference in this, the White House, that you and your husband just did not expect?

MRS. CLINTON: I think probably the difficulty in getting a chance to communicate directly with people. It's very isolating here. And your words go through so many different layers. And it is hard not to feel that there's some barriers between you and even your friends of long standing. You can't get in your car. You can't go to the supermarket. You can't just show up at a friend's house for a dinner party. Everything becomes so formal. And that has been very difficult for us.

Q I always ask what's the biggest misconception, or any misconception you want to clear up. Is there one?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I think this whole set of charges and counter-charges about who I am and what I do bear no resemblance to reality. And I have a lot of faith in the American people and in their basic fairmindedness. So what keeps me going when I'm getting, you know, accused of X, Y, or Z, is to know, number one, it's not true, and, number two, eventually people will know that as well.

Q There is a nursery rhyme in your book. You know the one I'm talking about?

MRS. CLINTON: I think I do, yes.

Q I could say it, but you say it.

MRS. CLINTON: This is one of my favorites from when I used to read to Chelsea: "As I was standing in the street, as quiet as could be, a great big ugly man came up and tied his horse to me." You know, I've always loved that, because in every person's life the unexpected, the disappointing, the hardship, it always comes. None of us has a clear sail through life. We all have problems, and sometimes we don't even know where they're coming from or why they're happening. And it's really a challenge to just kind of keep going every single day.

Q Your first year in the White House, you lost your father.

MRS. CLINTON: Mm-hmm.

Q Vince Foster's suicide.

MRS. CLINTON: Mm-hmm.

Q Your mother-in-law's death soon after.

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MRS. CLINTON: Right.

Q Now all of this. What do you say to yourself? How do you keep going?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, 1993 was a very hard year, personally, for Bill and me, because of those deaths. And we do a lot of praying and talking together. We give each other a lot of personal support. I have found that that's more important here than anywhere we've ever been before. I also read a lot and look for guidance from people. Sometimes I read about the women who were here before me and all of the problems they encountered and the issues they had to face. And sometimes it might be, oh, like the story I tell in the book about coming across this wonderful line in a telling of the prodigal son, called "Practicing the Discipline of Gratitude," you know, being grateful for what we have.

We are such lucky people, not only Bill Clinton and me, but we Americans. And despite all of our problems, we have so many blessings. And, you know, that's what gets us up and going nearly every single day.

Q You're a very spiritual person, according to the book.

MRS. CLINTON: I care deeply about my spiritual growth and try very hard to keep doing what I can to learn more, to become a better person.

Q Tell me your greatest accomplishment since you've been here, and your greatest disappointment.

MRS. CLINTON: I think my greatest accomplishment is finally being able to feel that this is an experience that I'm enjoying, that is comfortable for me, to give my daughter the kind of opportunity to have as normal a life as possible, and to have our family life be as rich and fulfilling as it is. That doesn't make headlines, but for me personally the time we get to spend together and the way we each have supported one another during all these difficulties, that's the greatest accomplishment. That's what makes me happy.

Q Disappointment?

MRS. CLINTON: Disappointment, I think that I didn't know more before I got here about how I could have done a better job from the very beginning. I really do think that there could have been some different ways of pursuing health care that might have -- I'm not saying it would have, because it's such a political issue, and Harry Truman, everybody who has tried to provide health care has gotten in trouble with it politically -- but I think I

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could have done some things differently. And I just could have known more. I could have been better prepared for what I was getting into -- not that I would have been fully prepared. There is nothing that prepares you for this experience, but I think I could have avoided some of the mistakes I made.

Q If you talked to more people or --

MRS. CLINTON: Yeah, I think that, you know, the campaign was so hard. It took so much out of us. We didn't take any time off. We immediately had to, you know, pack up a house, and do everything that you have to do to get moved. And then shortly after the inauguration, we started dealing with the family stresses and

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problems of my father's death and the like. So there were lots of real challenges that year.

Q Thank you for giving us all this time and allowing us to go through all the questions that are on people's minds, Mrs. Clinton. We appreciate it.

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you very much.

END