

# Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

## Clinton Library

DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
001. paper	Interview of the First Lady Conducted by Marion Burros of House Beautiful; RE: private info [partial] (1 page)	11/30/1993	P6/b(6)

### COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records  
First Lady's Office  
Lissa Muscatine (First Lady's Press Office)  
OA/Box Number: 20111

### FOLDER TITLE:

FLOTUS Press Office Interview Transcripts Volume II 10/93--01/28/94 [Binder] :  
[11/30/93 Burros, Marian House Beautiful]

2011-0415-S

ms92

### RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
- P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
- P4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
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PRM. Personal record misfile defined in accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2201(3).

RR. Document will be reviewed upon request.

11/30/93  
BURROS, MARIAN  
HOUSE BEAUTIFUL

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Internal Use Only

November 30, 1993

AN INTERVIEW OF THE FIRST LADY  
CONDUCTED BY MARION BURROS OF HOUSE BEAUTIFUL

Q How do you turn an office at the White House into a family home?

MS. CLINTON: Well, I think you do it by creating an atmosphere that is warm and welcoming and suited to how a particular family lives and spends its time. The challenge here is that you also, I believe, have an obligation to sustain the historic significance and integrity of the house because it is a living museum. So I don't think it would be appropriate, even if your particular style, for example, were very modern to try to redo the White House to reflect your personal style.

So you start with some givens, I think. Then, within those givens, you create an atmosphere that is reflective of your family and fill it with mementos and pictures and nick-knacks. You find private spaces like the little kitchen upstairs where you can really just be as close to a family-like atmosphere as you possibly can be. So that's what we've tried to do.

Q What was your first reaction when you saw the private quarters when you came to look at it?

MS. CLINTON: I thought they were beautiful. When Mrs. Bush showed me around, I had never been -- I had been to the second floor once, but I had never been to the third floor. I was pleased at how much space there was both for living space and entertaining, both privately and publicly. But I thought it was just a beautiful, sunny space on the second floor, which I really was surprised by how much sun there was coming in from the two windows on both the east and the west.

Q How did you decide what was going to be redone? How did you know how much money you needed to collect in order to redo?

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MS. CLINTON: Well, we didn't really go at it that way so much as we said, you know, what needs to be refurbished because Mrs. Bush, when she was showing me around, pointed out a lot of things that she said she would have done had she stayed, you know, just carpets that were worn out, upholstery that was worn. She showed me where Ranger and Millie slept on a daybed and it clearly did need to be redone. So we had a really good talk.

She walked me through pointing out things that no matter what I did, I was going to have to deal with it. The rug on the second floor was terribly worn and I now know why, because it is hard to keep a yellow rug from being soiled with the constant traffic up there. So we moved the one on the second floor to the third floor, which meant we needed to get a new one for the second floor, so things like that.

I knew immediately from her touring me around that I was going to have to do something just for maintenance and refurbishing. Then we stopped and thought about what did we want as a family to feel comfortable so that we could feel at home, and what did we want to do that would enhance the historical nature of the house.

We began working on it, and we really started right after the election, looking at lots of pictures and discussing what my husband wanted and what we as a family wanted, and then took it from there.

Q Discussing what your husband wanted, what did he want?

MS. CLINTON: Well, for example, he wanted an office in the residence on the second floor, and there had been a room used as an office through much of the 200 years of the White House. It's been called the Monroe Room and it's been called the Treaty Room. Its more modern name is the Treaty Room.

So he wanted an office that he would not only be able to work in but have meetings in. He wanted it to be able to serve as a library for a lot of his books. One thing we did notice is that we have literally thousands of books and there were not sufficient bookshelves. So we knew we were going to have to build some and buy some so that we could take care of our books.

So he wanted a kind of library office. I worked with

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Kathy Hockersmith (phonetic) to come up with some ideas for him. I'll never forget, we were in the kitchen of the governor's mansion in Arkansas and we were looking at colors and styles. I actually got his attention for about 15 minutes to sit down and talk to us about what he wanted. He wanted a masculine, comfortable, historical room, and I think that's what we gave him.

Q So the decision to do the Treaty Room was because he wanted an office?

MS. CLINTON: Right.

Q And the decision to do the Lincoln sitting room was because?

MS. CLINTON: Because it needed refurbishing. Something was going to have to be done to the sitting room. It was not since Ms. Reagan, I think, that anything really had been done. The one thing anyone who lived in this house will tell you is that being an old house, as it is, and having as much wear and tear, and that ranges not just from people actually being in the rooms and walking on the rugs but from having the constant stream of visitors, I mean just the number of people who go through this house everyday, so that the front door is open a lot of the time as the tourists leave.

That affects the heating and air conditioning. The heating and air conditioning, I was told when I got here, hadn't been changed since the Truman restoration and it broke down all the time and it didn't deal well with the need to keep the temperature constant so that you had just all kind of maintenance issues in many parts of the house.

In the Lincoln sitting room, it just was looking worn after all of these years. So we knew we needed to do something. We thought it would be appropriate to have the Lincoln sitting room reflect the era of the Lincoln bedroom. I mean, Lincoln actually never slept in that room. That was an office during Lincoln's time. But it is a bedroom suite that Mary Todd Lincoln bought.

Many of the priceless mementos of the Lincoln presidency, including an original of the Gettysburg Address, is in that room. So it is a Victorian era, Lincolnesque room. So to have the sitting room more reflective of that we thought would be both fun and appropriate. So that's what we did.

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Q But you had no feelings or need to do the Queen's bedroom or the family dining room? You thought they were all right and you'd leave them as they were?

MS. CLINTON: Yes. I think that, you know, the Queen's bedroom and the sitting room are beginning to show some wear, but I don't think they're at the point yet where we need to pay that kind of close attention to them. Part of it is they don't get the southern sun that the sitting room next to the Lincoln bedroom does, so there's not quite as much wear and tear in the Queen's bedroom. But we'll keep an eye on that.

I mean, part of what I believe is that this is the president's house and we have an obligation to care for it and to make sure that it reflects well not just on this president but the presidency and the country. So, you know, we'll keep refurbishing where we need to as we go along.

Q Did you do a lot of reading?

MS. CLINTON: Yes, did a lot of reading.

Q From the White House Historical Society?

MS. CLINTON: Yes. Well, one lucky thing is that there were several wonderful books done in the last several years by the White House Historical Association. One is the "Living White House." The other is the art collection of the White House. Then the library here and the curator's office has a lot of books. But what I found the most fun to read were the personal accounts of the people who worked in the White House, maids, butlers, ushers, you know, the last 100-odd years who would describe life in the White House and life in the room.

I also poured over all the pictures. I had the curators put together for me a notebook that showed every room going back to the earliest drawings or pictures of those rooms so that I could see how they had evolved. It was just fascinating. There was a period of time when the second floor corridor was used like a conservatory, so it had rattan (phonetic) furniture with big plants and swings, much as you would find on a porch in some wonderful old house in upstate New York.

So, you know, you look at that and you see how it reflects the times that people were in. But as you move

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through it, you also realize how we need to to take care of the White House kind of try to have either a timeless or historic period sense of the White House. Changing it from administration to administration has gotten, you know, more and more difficult and more and more expensive, even when you use only private funds, as we did. So you try to kind of find a style that sort of stands the test of time.

I think that Ms. Reagan's renovation of the second floor, particularly bringing in the yellow and lightening that space up, Ms. Kennedy's renovations, you know, those were 20 years apart but they have, to a great extent, been built on. They weren't discarded.

Ms. Kennedy's changes, making the second floor dining room, taking a bedroom and making it into a dining room, using the period wallpaper, Ms. Reagan's changes, I mean those, I think, were very positive for the way that we're moving to understand how the house should be treated and dealt with from year to year.

Q So that even though George Washington said that the house was meant to be changed, you think that because of constraints of money it should be somewhat more timeless, and every administration shouldn't put its individual setting upon it.

MS. CLINTON: Right. You know, it should be changed but in a way that kind of reflects the continuity of the house as a living museum. I mean, when George Washington got in there, we weren't worried about getting a George Washington chair or a Dolly Madison portrait to reflect the history of the house. I mean, they were making the history and we are making it as well, but we're building on what came before.

So I'm a big believer in using the house and creating a warm and inviting atmosphere in the house, but having some anchors as well so that there is a sense of continuity attached to it.

Q How historically accurate do you think the rooms that are like the Lincoln sitting room need to be?

MS. CLINTON: Not very. I mean, I don't think that it would be a great problem if, you know, you're not -- it's more creating a move or an atmosphere. The thing that's nice about what we've done with the Lincoln sitting room is that

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we've been able to display a lot of Lincoln memorabilia and a wonderful Grant portrait that would have looked out of place if the room didn't reflect the historical significance of the object.

I mean, if you have an invitation to a Lincoln party that, you know, just make people's eyes bog out, I mean, it's so exciting. It's hard to put it in a room that doesn't have some sense of that time. So part of what we were trying to do is open up the warehouses and bring out things that had not been seen for a long time.

Q Did you go to any of the warehouses?

MS. CLINTON: No, I did not. I've gone to the rooms in the White House, which we discovered were many that had been kind of stuffed with stuff that hadn't any place.

Q What do you mean?

MS. CLINTON: There's rooms in the basement, storage rooms, things that haven't been used for a long time.

Q You looked at all of those?

MS. CLINTON: We poked around in those. <sup>Kaki</sup>~~Kathy~~, I think, has spent days and months on her hands and knees in those rooms. But she went out to the warehouse and went through it several times. I mean, that's the balance we strike. I mean, the people who we've entertained have been so excited to go into the Lincoln sitting room and see what could, within reason, be a historically contemporary room. But beyond that, you see the memorabilia that we now have out because it fits in the room.

Q The reaction to the two rooms that have been shown in the papers has been kind of -- not to put too fine a point on it. Yet, when you see your private quarters, the family quarters, the little that I've seen, the feeling is extremely different. It's much more subdued and not so dramatic because that's your personal taste. Tell me a little bit about what you like.

MS. CLINTON: Well, we like color which is the same as you see in the Lincoln sitting room or the Treaty Room or the Oval Office but we don't like always to have as much vibrancy, although I like the rooms with that kind of vibrancy.

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Yellow is a very favorite color of ours, so we've got lots of yellow in the private rooms, lots of green, a kind of muted shade, peaches and corals and pinks and just colors that are strong pastels I guess would be a way to put it.

Q A lot of those colors were there from the Reagan redo?

MS. CLINTON: The yellow was there from the Reagan redo.

Q But not the others?

MS. CLINTON: No.

Q What were your constraints in doing all of this? Money?

MS. CLINTON: Money is always a constraint and needs to be. But it was more that, you know, I just wanted it to fit who we were, both in our sort of public, almost fiduciary, responsibility for the house and in our private family needs. I wanted it to get done so that the house could be lived in. I wanted to get the rooms finished so that we could be entertaining people and letting them see the Gettysburg Address or the Lincoln invitations.

We've had -- I forget the numbers. I'm sure Lisa could get them for you -- we've entertained more people than anybody has entertained ever. I mean, we've just had an extraordinary busy year, which has been great because it's included lots of our friends and family. We entertain them primarily on the second and third floors.

Q Why didn't you use the \$50,000?

MS. CLINTON: Well, we didn't really have any strong reason not to use it. I thought if we could raise the money privately, we wouldn't need to. I view that as kind of more for maintenance and operations if we need to do something.

When I was at the governor's mansion, we had kind of a maintenance budget for things that were lasting additions to the house or significance to the house. But the things that somebody can move or change, the wallpaper or upholstery or

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whatever, I thought we would just raise the money privately for that.

Q How much input did Chelsea have into her room?

MS. CLINTON: She had a lot. I mean, she really was asked a lot about what she wanted and how she wanted it. She wanted a much less fancy, more teenage-oriented room. We took down the crystal chandeliers and put up the brass chandelier, things to just kind of tone it down and make it more of a teenager's room.

Q Can I ask you the colors that are in there?

MS. CLINTON: Green and blue mostly.

Q What furniture did you bring with you?

MS. CLINTON: Oh, a lot. We brought a lot with us, but we also used a lot of the White House furniture and used it as it was or used it by reupholstering it. But a lot of it was ours too.

Q You're a collector of things?

MS. CLINTON: Of all kinds of things.

Q Love collections. I noticed that there are some decoys or decoy-like ducks.

MS. CLINTON: Right.

Q Are those (inaudible)?

MS. CLINTON: The porcelain ones or the wooden ones?

Q Porcelains.

MS. CLINTON: Some of them are (inaudible), yes.

Q And then I saw flowers?

MS. CLINTON: Yes. Some of those (inaudible) also.

Q What else do you like to collect?

MS. CLINTON: Well, I hesitate to say this because I

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don't want people to deluge us with stuff because that's one of the things -- people have been so generous, but if they hear the slightest thing that we're interested in, all of a sudden we get hundreds. But I have a collection of (inaudible) boxes that I've gotten over the years on special occasions from friends and family members, or it commemorates a special occasion. We have a funny collection of frogs.

Q Why?

MS. CLINTON: Many, many years ago, probably before we were married, my husband told me a story that he had been told as a boy growing up in Arkansas, which was a story that had a punch line that follows. You can't tell how far a frog will jump until you punch him. The sort of moral of the story was you don't know what you can do until you get up and do it, right. So when he first ran for office, I had an artist draw a frog jumping, being sort of punched to jump with that little saying.

Then, for a couple of years I gave him funny little frogs that I found along the way. This year as one of my gifts for my birthday he gave me a glass frog with a crown and with a little note which says "this could have been me if you hadn't come along," or something like that. It's so sweet.

But we have a real funny frog on a mantle in one of the rooms that we just kind of give to each other for special occasions or for little reminders of things, going back to that little story.

Q So to make it clear, you've only given them to one another?

MS. CLINTON: Right. They have special meaning.

Q What are your favorite things in the rooms that are here, the family quarters and the private quarters?

MS. CLINTON: A lot of our family photos, a lot of the pictures that we've taken over the years. We have a very large portrait of Chelsea that was done when she was four that I gave to Bill for Christmas that year, which we have over the fireplace in our family sitting room, which is really important to both of us.

A lot of the family pictures are priceless. I don't

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know that I'm -- we have a card table that we play a lot of cards around in that room. We have a funny little -- what am I trying to say? I can't think of the word. My mind is falling apart.

Q What about other things, things that were here, things that belong to the White House? Is it getting darker in here?

MS. CLINTON: Yes, it is. There's something funny going on. Well, you know, that's one of the things that we -- we like a lot of the things that we pulled out of storage. Like we have stocked the upstairs bookshelves with all kinds of things that we found in storage. Then, in the Treaty Room we found these old 18th Century tobacco jars.

That's what I love about the White House is that there's all of these things that go back in time that you could wander around and just chance upon and love because they're part of the life of the house.

Q Things like that. Any particular paintings?

MS. CLINTON: I love the Mary Cassatt up on the second floor. I just adore that picture. I was thrilled to see it there. It's just a wonderful picture. There's a small Cezanne as you come out of the second floor off of the elevator which I like. It's a still life. I am thrilled that we've got the De Kooning up over the piano on the second floor. It is something that I don't think we've ever done in the White House before, but it is perfect for that space.

Q You mean having something modern?

MS. CLINTON: Mm-hmm.

Q If money had been no object, what would you have done differently?

MS. CLINTON: Oh, I don't think I would have done anything differently.

Q No?

MS. CLINTON: No. We're very happy with what we have.

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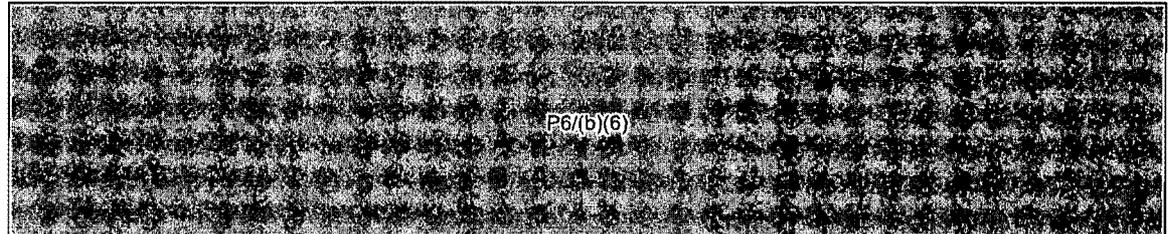
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P6(b)(6)

Q We're back on. Is there anything else in particular you want to tell me about? I mean, when did you become interested in -- again, it's "she bakes cookies. She's interested in decorating. She cares about table settings." Who is this woman?

MS. CLINTON: Oh, I know, all that stuff. Well, I mean, ever since I was at the governor's mansion and realized that that was going to be something that I was involved in, I've been interested in it. We did a lot of work in the governor's mansion. I created the equivalent of the Historical Association to raise private funds for it, because for these public houses, you just have to have that kind of constant upbeat.

~~Kathy~~ and I worked on the second floor of the governor's mansion which needed a huge amount of work structurally as well as refurbishing. We had to put in a whole new heating and air system which is why when they came to me and said oh, it's time for the 50 year change of the heating, I went oh, no, I lived through that. I mean, we moved into the guest house for three months while they redid the heating and air conditioning in the governor's mansion. So we've gone through a lot of this. But it was things that had to be done and I was glad to do it.

Q Did they actually change the heating and air conditioning?

MS. CLINTON: No. They've got these very long term -- and during our term it comes up. But they're going around the edges just like they paint and it takes six years to paint the whole house or however long it takes. Well, now they're starting to do a little heating and air conditioning changes. They've assured me I won't have to move to Blair House or anything like that.

Q Have you made it so that you're really comfortable here?

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MS. CLINTON: Yes.

Q You feel as if it's home?

MS. CLINTON: Yes, it really is. We love the second floor of the White House. That's something that -- you know, Bill was saying -- first of all, we are left totally alone. We don't have Secret Service people following us around. We can tell the full-time help that they can get off. We don't have to have them up there. So it really is like being in your house when you're up there. That's a wonderful feeling because everywhere else we are we've got people around us all the time.

Q You're not going to tell me you've actually done some cooking up there?

MS. CLINTON: I have.

Q You haven't really?

MS. CLINTON: Mm-hmm. I mean, I don't want to upstate this, not much, but I have.

Q So it really is as if it were just a private home? It's just on the second floor.

MS. CLINTON: I knew we needed a private place to have our meals when we weren't entertaining because even though that dining room is lovely, it still is a formal dining room. So when we finally got the kitchen in, I knew that I'd done the right thing when Chelsea was sick one night and I went to make her some scrambled eggs and, you know, everybody went crazy. Oh, we'll bring an omelet from downstairs. I said no, I just want to make some scrambled eggs and applesauce and feed her what I would feed her if we were living anywhere else in America. So I did.

It was just a great feeling to be able to do that little kind of task for my daughter the way I would have done it had we been anywhere else. At the governor's mansion, we did a lot of cooking on our own. We didn't have any help on the weekend. We just took care of ourselves and we like to do that.

Q So how often do you use that kitchen?

MS. CLINTON: We use it every day practically.

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Q For breakfast?

MS. CLINTON: For breakfast every day and for lots of dinners. If we're not entertaining --

Q You do?

MS. CLINTON: Yes, and Chelsea eats there nearly every night because she doesn't come to the formal dinners. So it's a very comfortable place for us. Then we heat up a lot of leftovers. I mean on Saturday my husband might come home from golf and I'll pull stuff out of the refrigerator and heat it up or throw something together for him, very simply. So we use it a lot.

Q Finally, you say, you've got his attention for 15 minutes. Did he have more input than that?

MS. CLINTON: Oh, yes.

Q How did that work?

MS. CLINTON: Well, he would sit and talk to <sup>Kathy</sup> and me about what he wanted. He talked about what he wanted in the Oval Office. He spent more time -- the first ideas that we came back to him with for the Treaty Room he really liked. He liked the sort of feel of the library idea. But he spent more time working on the Oval Office with Kathy.

They at one time laid out a model of the seal that was going to be on the rug. He looked at it. He spent quite a bit of time on that and really liked it. She would bring him ideas. She'd say we're not moving the (inaudible) flag painting. It's never been in the Oval Office. He said let me see it.

He personally went through the catalogue of art in the White House and looked for things that he would like in the dining room, his dining room over there, or his private office or the Oval Office. So he really did spend a lot of time. He has educated himself about this house and about the objects in this house. He gives a great tour at the drop of a hat and loves it.

Q I've heard.

MS. CLINTON: He never gets tired of it. He just

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adores the whole sense of what this house is and represents. So for him it's a labor of love.

Q And for you?

MS. CLINTON: Oh, I do too, but I must confess his level of awareness and historical knowledge now is much deeper than mine.

Q Oh, really?

MS. CLINTON: I think so. He really has spent -- I have read a lot about how the people lived in the house. I have a lot of wonderful stories and ideas about that. But he has really zeroed in on the art and the objects and the historical significance of a lot of them, and takes great pleasure in it.

When I first came into the map room -- I haven't done a lot in here as you can tell. When I first came into the map room I said where are the maps. We launched this search for any map that would have been in the map room during World War II. I wanted to display the maps in the map room. Apparently, at the end of World War II, it's understandable that they were so grateful to have the war over they just threw away the maps. But we found a gentleman who has been a great friend of the White House who had been a military officer assigned to the map room who had kept that map all these years. We got him to depart with the map.

Q Permanent loan or a gift?

MS. CLINTON: I believe a gift. To give it to the White House -- we've had it framed. I had a visitor, a famous health economist from Princeton, a man by the name of Dr. Uwe Reinhart (phonetic), who knows everything there is to know about health care in America, and I guess the world. He was here months ago to talk to me about health care. We had a meeting in the map room. I came in and he was just transfixed in front of this map. He had been born in Germany, lived in Germany with his mother --

(End of tape.)

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