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GORDON, MERVYN  
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THE WHITE HOUSE

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AN INTERVIEW OF THE FIRST LADY  
CONDUCTED BY MERYL GORDON  
ELLE MAGAZINE

Q The paper in the morning and think --

MRS. CLINTON: No. Because, look, I know what this is about. This a well-organized, well-financed attempt to undermine my husband and, by extension, myself, by people who have a different political agenda or have another personal or financial reason to be attacking us. So taking it for what it is, which is pretty blatant, you can't take it seriously. And you have to keep doing what Bill and I do every day, which is remembering why he did this and what he's trying to accomplish and working hard on making it.

Q But what do you do about that, where you have a front-page story in the New York Times which says Hillary Clinton's former law firm and paper shredding in the same story? Obviously it creates, if nothing else, an image problem. And what I was thinking about is that these investigations may go on for months, at least go on for months. And how do you counter -- even if at the end, you know, everybody says nothing bad happened -- how do you counter that consistent, you know --

MRS. CLINTON: You don't. And since I know that at the end nothing bad happened -- and that's what everybody is going to know as they should know now, because they have yet to come forward with anything other than the wildest kinds of paranoid conspiracies. You just don't pay much attention to it. I mean, you have to do the best you can to refute it and counter it, but I just am not interested in spending my days falling into the trap that the fomenters of all this want us to, which is to become isolated and on the defensive and diverted. I'm just not going to let that happen.

I mean, unfortunately in today's climate, anyone can say anything about a person in public life, and it will

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get printed. So, I can't help that. That's not my problem.

Q One thing I was curious about, do you think -- hindsight is always great. I'm personally great at my own hindsight. Is there something that you could have done earlier in the process that might have just squashed everybody?

MRS. CLINTON: This started in 1991 when my husband was in the New Hampshire primary. Ads were run against him by Republicans in order to avoid his doing well in New Hampshire. This is not by accident. I mean, these people have, with the full complicity of much of the press, made outrageous charges which don't withstand much scrutiny but which keep getting attention, because they want to undermine what he's trying to do. So I don't know how -- I mean, if you've got a -- I mean, I, in a fun way, am very flattered, even honored by it. I mean, you don't spend your time trying to destroy somebody that you're not afraid of.

Q True.

MRS. CLINTON: And you don't launch a vicious attack against someone in the New Hampshire primary unless you're afraid they might really catch on. You don't devote half of your convention -- as the Republicans did -- to bashing me, unless you're scared of something. Now I have yet to figure out what they are scared of, but I think it has to be pretty simple. They are scared of, you know, losing their political and power advantage in this country, which they've had for all but four of the last 25 years. So I don't think it's real complicated.

Q I just want to ask -- you were attacked two years ago for your mothering, cookie-baking skills, and now you're being attacked for your professionalism as a lawyer. Which is worse?

MRS. CLINTON: It's all of the same pot. It is designed to try to find a way of undermining me. So if one thing doesn't work, these folks shift gear and try something else. I mean, it is so transparent to me. I mean, they've fought in restaurants in Washington, as you well know. This is how they spend their time.

Q If one thing doesn't work, what do you mean, like the American Spectator article?

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MRS. CLINTON: Sure. I mean, they'll try anything. I mean, it is -- and what is so sad is that the so-called legitimate press because of commercial pressures, the best I can figure out, gets sucked into it. The kinds of things that get printed and allowed to be said without corroboration, substantiation, evidence, even logic, is sad.

Q But one thing I was thinking about is that it's almost been in the last whenever it is, X years, the books come out afterwards, as in Kitty Dukakis' book after the campaign saying, "Actually I was an Alcoholic," you know, all those. So I think everybody is so afraid now that, you know, to be seen as a fool. Oh, my God, I wrote a glowing piece on X and, you know. So I think almost that's the --

MRS. CLINTON: Yeah. But, you know, reality is always more complicated than anybody is able to capture in an eight-second tv report or a ten thousand word article, you know. But that's -- every human being is complicated, and I don't think people should be looking to destroy persons or being in concert with their political opponents without more evidence than they have these days, simply because they're afraid that in ten years they might be wrong. I mean, that's a kind of bizarre thought process to me.

And everybody, you know -- at least I think you live day-by-day. You do the best you can. But I am just stunned at the level to which malevolent, malicious, false gossip has been permitted to become newsworthy.

Q I realize that, you know, we're roughly the same age. My experience is not your experiences, but I also try to think about what in my life would have -- and I was thinking about I had a couple of periods in which the world's perception, to me, changed, even though I felt it had stayed the same. I had that classic -- my parents moved when I was 13, and I went from being president of the student council to being the new kid with Koodies.

Years later, I had -- I worked for Gannett -- and I had one of those job evaluations which said I had a bad attitude. Six months later I was in the annual report as "Person of the Year." And what I found so difficult is that, you know, I felt that I was the same throughout, but the world suddenly shifted around me. And I was wondering whether that's an odd experience.

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I was thinking about when you testified last fall on the Hill, the press was positive. It was almost comical. Oh, my God, she's actually smart. And then, you know, it sort of -- it's she's up, she's down, she's up. I mean, what's it like for you to be sort of on this plane?

MRS. CLINTON: See, I don't expect any different. I mean, Lisa can tell you after the press coming out of the congressional testimony. And I told her, I said, "I come from the-other-shoe-will-drop school of press coverage. And I just feel there is this inevitability about press coverage, where if they build you up, they have to tear you down. And it's something I don't understand but have come to recognize and accept as inevitable.

So I don't really pay much attention to it. My feeling is that all I can do is the best job at whatever I'm doing, whether it's being a mother, a wife, you know, working on health care, whatever it is. And then people have to draw their own judgments. And for most people, they don't draw their judgments based on any particular press treatment that is ephemeral, you know.

It's an accumulated experience, just as it is with our friends and people we know over time. Some days they look good, some days they look bad, you know. And you draw your conclusions based over a longer experience with them. And I think that's what most people do with folks in public life, too. And so --

Q For instance, are you really just able to blow it off? I mean, I wake up in the morning and say, "I can't get out of bed."

MRS. CLINTON: No. I blow most of it off. I get angry. I get, you know, confused about why people are doing what they are doing. I don't get up every day thinking destructively about something. I don't spend my hours plotting for somebody else's downfall. My feeling is, gosh, you know, there's more work than can be done.

Everybody ought to get out there and try to improve the health care system, reform welfare and get guns out of hands of teenagers. That's real. This other stuff is not real to me. So why should I take stuff that I consider, you know, foolish, seriously?

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Q Speaking of health care, this piece will be coming out in June. So obviously much more will be done.

MRS. CLINTON: Much more to that.

Q But I was curious. As the President said, during the State of the Union, that virtually it was negotiable, other than universal coverage. Are there particular issues about women's health you'll be very concerned if they don't make it into --

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, sure. Yeah. I mean, universal coverage means a way of financing it, a financing of the benefits package that is comprehensive and at affordable costs. And I'm very committed to keeping the preventive health care, the pediatric and womens' benefits in the package that is currently presented by the President, because women's health and children's health have been under valued in our health care system for too long.

I was stunned when I learned that early clinical trials on breast cancer were done on men. I thought that was -- that had to be a bad joke when I first heard it. I was surprised personally, after my daughter was born, to learn that her well-baby check-ups weren't covered by my insurance policy, but if she got really sick and I had to take her to the emergency room in the middle of the night because something hadn't been tended to, you know, that would be covered.

So there's so much about our existing system and the way it's developed which has discriminated against women and children, that I think part of our obligation in this health care reform is to pay more attention and provide more resources for women and children's health.

Q It seems more people are worried that some seniors won't be covered under this. I think Walter pointed out to me that I was lucky the vitro was covered by our last insurance company, because it won't be under this. There are other kinds of things. How do you rationalize what's available, what's not available?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, first of all, we don't know what the final package will be, but we had to create a comprehensive benefits package that would do the most good for the most people. And there were some things that we

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couldn't cover that had very worthy reasons. We don't have the money to provide for the entire population some benefits. But if you provide a comprehensive benefits package that takes care of most basic out-patient and in-patient and preventive health care, then the marginal costs that would be required to obtain uncovered additional services, is reduced dramatically.

So that you make even the services you don't cover more affordable for more people. And so we just had to make a lot of hard choices, you know. We didn't cover dental care for adults, except for emergency dental care. We couldn't cover vision care for adults, and clearly I don't think anyone would argue that those are not very important for a huge percentage of our population. We couldn't cover cosmetic surgery, and cosmetic surgery may be as important for somebody's state of mind and well-being as any other kind of surgeries.

We couldn't do everything we wanted to do on mental health benefits right away. There were some things that in the best of all worlds we would have wanted in the initial proposal, but we had to be aware of the costs associated and make some hard decisions.

Q (Inaudible).

MRS. CLINTON: Yeah. The decision made was that most insurance policies today cover pregnancy-related services, and we did not want this proposal to eliminate any services that anyone would have. And so we have a language with pregnancy-related services but with conscious exemptions for health plans and for individual physicians and hospitals, which was the way we tried to strike the balance between people's feelings on both sides of this issue.

Q It's a tough one.

MRS. CLINTON: It is. It's tough no matter which way you go.

Q I saw you speaking Monday night to a fundraiser (inaudible).

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, Yeah.

Q And one of the things that struck me as I

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listened to you talking about, you know, people you had met along the way, I was sort of curious whether when this whole thing started out you had an intellectual big-picture feeling that you needed to do something with health care. But I was wondering whether it's become a personal mission, whether you're sort of haunted by some of these people that you've heard and seen along the way.

MRS. CLINTON: That's a good way of putting it, you know. I had been on the board of our children's hospital. I had spent a lot of time in hospitals in our state and working on health care-related issues. And I can't hardly walk into a children's hospital without getting teary, because I see so much that is both tragic and wonderful. But certainly, I hadn't had the kind of consistent exposure to the health care system and to the terrible problems people have until I started working on this.

And I have what I think of as almost a movie, you know, running in my head of the people I have met around the country. And I keep their stories at the forefront of my mind, because with all of the policy discussion that goes on in Washington and the maneuvering for position and jockeying for power in the Congress and among the interest groups, I don't want to lose sight of the reason that my husband started to do this, or why I'm so committed to it.

I also feel an obligation to be able, in good faith, through both not only mental conversations, but maybe some real ones, to go back to some of those people and tell them, here's what we have accomplished for you. We did not forget you. And then I also have had the experience of reading thousands of letters, we've gotten millions. And I wish you'd see some of them. I mean, they are so thoughtful. I mean, people sitting down explaining their situation, very little hint of self-pity or whining or complaining.

Matter of fact, letters that recite the most difficult circumstances of people losing jobs after they've been diagnosed with a problem, of having their lifetime limits exceeded so their child is on welfare and they can't bring their child home from the hospital because they would lose the welfare benefits and they don't have any other benefits. I mean --

Q But I'm curious when you see this, do you have

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this moment when you wish she could write checks, she wish she could -- I mean --

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, yeah. And we've tried to help some of the people that we have encountered personally. We've looked for forms of payment for some of the services that they need, referred them to agencies they may not have known about. I take this very personally, because I don't want to be at all part of a discussion that doesn't lead somewhere, that really benefits people.

Q You know, I just -- whenever I've worked on stories in which you write about people whose lives have some sort of a tragedy, I find that personally I can't let it go. It's sort of, you know, I dream it, I sleep it. And I was curious whether -- I was at a dinner about two weeks ago, and I ended up in this conversation with George Stephanopolous and Mrs. Graham. And they were talking about with the pressures of your job, can you sleep. George was saying he wakes up four times a night, bolt upright, remembering something, and then he can pass out.

Mrs. Graham said once she's up, she's up. She's got a pile of (inaudible). I'm curious. Can you sleep through the night. Are you an insomniac? Are you -- is this lawyer's discipline? I mean, tell me.

MRS. CLINTON: No, it's that I don't go to bed very early. I mean, by the time I go to sleep, which is usually 12:30, 1 o'clock, I am ready to sleep until 6:30, 7:00, 7:30, whatever time I get up.

Q So you're really not one of those wandering the White House corridors at 4:00 a.m. What about your husband?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I mean, he has so much more on his mind. I mean, I'm worried about health care and all of the people I've met. He's worried about everything. So he stays up too late, and I'm always after him about that. And lots of times he has to get up very early and sometimes does wake up. And, you know, I mean, that does happen to me, too. I won't say it never happens, but it's very rare for me.

Q I read that someone is collecting a book called dreams of Hillary in which people are talking about their dreams. What do you dream about?

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MRS. CLINTON: I'm so tired, that I don't remember my dreams.

Q Really?

MRS. CLINTON: Yeah.

Q You don't have that dream in which, you know, you've got a test and you forgot to study, or you know, or maybe you just got your clothes on? You don't have any of these?

MRS. CLINTON: No, I --

Q I can't do that psychological interpretation in my story of the -- it's free play. It's pretty straightforward.

MRS. CLINTON: No, I don't. I don't. I mean, I think everybody dreams. I think when you get into deep sleep, I think your subconscious works, but I don't ever wake up thinking of any. I usually wake up because my daughter slams the door into our bedroom between 7:00 and 7:20, if I haven't had to get up earlier, and says, "Bye, I'm going to school." And then I go, "Well, are you going to your friend's house tonight, or is that tomorrow night?" I sort of pull myself into consciousness.

Q She gets up earlier than you do?

MRS. CLINTON: She does.

Q And she goes to bed earlier, too. Do you have breakfast together in the morning, you and the President?

MRS. CLINTON: Some days, yeah.

Q I wonder is you sit down and discuss the newspapers or --

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, goodness, no. We wouldn't start our day like that. What a miserable way to start a day. Oh, no.

Q Well, the world does.

MRS. CLINTON: I can't help what the world does. I mean, we don't do that.

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Q What do you do?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, we get up, and he usually goes for a run. And I usually exercise.

Q What do you do?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I use a treadmill or a stationary bike or weights or walk or something like that. And we might have something to eat or drink together. I mean, it really depends -- I mean, our days are not in lock step on the same schedule every day. Some days, you know, I'm up at 5:30 or 6:00, and he's gone by the time I get up. But anyway, you know, we'll sort of catch up on what's going on in the day and sort of get ourselves organized, see our daughter off to school.

But, you know, when we moved into the White House, I think that the pattern was that people got up early and read the newspapers and watched all the tv talk shows. We don't do any of that.

Q The other pattern, you mean other presidents?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

Q But you do read the paper at some point during the day. You just don't read it together.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, sometimes not. I mean, you don't -- my feeling is sometimes I do, and sometimes I don't. It is not -- I don't have a driving need. I figure if there is a fact that is important, that, you know, if a member of Congress has introduced a new health care proposal, I mean, I need to know about that. But if somebody is standing up on the floor of the Congress railing about health care, I don't need to know about that.

Q You don't read your horoscope or the comics or all that stuff?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, there are some days I do, but, you know, it's not what I do every day. I don't spend my time doing that every day. Lisa will call me and she'll say, "Well, I think you should read this article, because it's got some interesting stuff." Somebody else will stop by and say, "Did you see this?"

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Q You mean I'm not going to get an interview in which I find out about your interest in Scorpios and how you always read, you know. One of the things I thought about when I got off the train yesterday and got home and Walter greeted me at the door -- we hadn't seen each other for a couple of days -- he started out with -- immediately started saying, "Well, here's what you ought to ask her." I said, "Walter, where's the I love you, I miss you?"

I want your help, and I appreciate it, but could I get it a little later? What about the part where I'm your wife --

MRS. CLINTON: Wife, remember that?

Q -- you know, your girlfriend or whatever you want to think of me as? How do you juggle this stuff? Do you have moments where you say --

MRS. CLINTON: Time out.

Q Yeah.

MRS. CLINTON: Absolutely. You've got to.

Q But how do you do that? I mean, is there almost a time where you say this is our work time, and this is our time as a family, or how do you do that?

MRS. CLINTON: We try to keep the weekends pretty free -- a lot of work and pressure. I mean, my husband likes to play golf, and I love for him to do that, because he is so relaxed, and he has a good time. He sees, you know, a lot of people. And we try to either like go out one night on the weekend with friends or have friends in to watch a movie. He is teaching me how to bowl. So we go down and we bowl a little bit together, and he spends time correcting my hook and all the other stuff that I know nothing about.

We play lots of games with our daughter, and we'll spend hours playing card games with each other. And, you know, you talk during the time. We watch old, trashy movies on tv. We just have a lot of fun together. And then, you know, we do talk about things that are on each other's minds, but we've been doing that for so long, it just is kind of part of the fabric of our lives together. It's nothing set apart from how we spend time together.

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We might be bowling, and he'll say, "What do you think about this?" And I'll say, "Okay." And then in the next breath he'll say, "You know, you're hooking again. You ought to stop that." So we just like being with each other, and he is able to kind of keep his mind in gear on something he's thinking about but get occupied doing something else. So he can watch a basketball game and then at the end of it -- even though he's been fully engrossed in the basketball game -- he will kind of work through some thoughts that he's having about something. So we just like to spend time --

Q It's really just sort of back and forth in a way?

MRS. CLINTON: Yeah, yeah.

Q Because I was -- I guess I was sort of wondering what the adjustment was like that you're in love with a man who happens to be President. And there's both the office and there's the man. And I don't know whether that's changed your marriage and relationship.

MRS. CLINTON: I don't think so. Maybe because we've known each other for so long, and he was not in public life when I met and fell in love with him and when I married him. I knew that he was interested in it, but he wasn't in it. So I can easily separate the man from the office, whether it's governor or President. And actually living here, because it's like living above the store to some extent, we get to see each other a lot during the day.

He does not have to be gone away from home, because his office and his work is done right here. We have dinner together nearly every night with Chelsea. So it's really been, for us personally, pretty positive because of the time we've given each other. And then the way the White House is arranged, you have lots of room for guests. So we have entertained family and friends. So we'll have some friends come in and we'll have dinner with them and stay up talking with them. We'll have breakfast with them and then, you know, you feel like you're refreshed, because you have people come in who are not part of the daily activities around here.

Q Is it possible -- I mean, I thought -- I think there were stories that you occasionally sort of managed to sneak out unobserved. I mean, are you still able to do that?

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MRS. CLINTON: Sure, you know. You just put a pair of sunglasses on or --

Q People don't recognize you?

MRS. CLINTON: Mm-hmm.

Q How often have you done that?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, just a couple of times. Go for walks. I mean, I've got Secret Service, obviously, with me or a friend. Sometimes I've gone -- some of these friends have come to visit us, you know. We just put on sweats and shorts, or whatever, depending upon the season and just go for a walk and just kind of enjoy the day.

So Chelsea had a science project last year that was on display at the National Zoo. So I walked from here to the Zoo. It was wonderful. It was a great late-spring day, and it was a great walk. And then I went and looked at all the science projects. And they had a car trailing us, as they always do. And so they drove us home. So, you know, things like that are fun to do.

Q Well, it's funny. You have to think about your life in a different way in terms of what's possible and --

MRS. CLINTON: Yeah. That's the hard adjustment, because I think I understand much better than I did before I got here, how easy it is to get isolated. And even if you try not to, if you don't go in and out of grocery stores once a week, you lose touch with what is happening in people's lives on a daily basis. So we try to keep pushing the boundaries of what is possible for us to do. So going shopping, going out to dinner, my husband's running along the streets, going to church, I mean, those are all things that we keep doing, because we want to stay in touch with what's going on in the so-called real world.

Q Speaking about when you graduated from college, you applied to law school, not Eileen Ford, and now suddenly you are a fashion plate of, you know. Well, it's interesting, because you're now being judged by the public. You didn't set it yourself, do you know what I mean? And I was wondering what that's like, sort of being this fashion curiosity?

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MRS. CLINTON: I think it's a hoot. I mean, I find it very funny that anybody would care, number one. But I have had a great time doing it. I mean, anybody who has looked at pictures of me going back to the time I was high school, know I change my hair all the time. I did that long before I was ever in the public eye. I try different -- I've always tried different kinds of clothes. I just -- I don't take it seriously, but I think it's fun. So it's actually been, you know, kind of a neat thing to do.

Q Well, you know, it's funny what I find interesting, again, when we were in college, you were supposed to follow the natural look. I remember thinking that wearing make-up was sort of an immoral thing to do.

MRS. CLINTON: Right, right.

Q And now I sort of find it funny adjusting to the fact that, well, you know, if you want to look nice, there are things you -- but I didn't know whether, you know, you've got people coming at --

MRS. CLINTON: Some of it has to do with age. I mean, we could get away with a whole lot more 25 years ago probably than we can now. You know, we've talked a lot about Bill's mother in the last couple of months with each other and with our friends. And, you know, she just adored make-up and spent time every morning putting on her make-up. I mean, this was how she got herself going in the morning. And when I first met her, she thought I was from out of space, and I thought she was from out of space, because I was exactly as you're describing.

I didn't -- I disdained make-up. It wasn't just that I didn't wear up. It was a statement, right. And Virginia was just totally the opposite, and we looked at each other like, who is this? And so I remember those days very thoroughly. And it's been a --

Q Different topic. I had a year that you will understand last year. I had three friends who died all within the year. They were all in their 40s and it was to uterine cancer and (inaudible). But I know that looking at these deaths, in some ways it changed me. And you've had an enormous amount of death since last year. I was curious in what ways it's changed you.

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MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I think it's put into perspective even more than before, what's important and what's not, which gives me even more of a sense of balance with the give-and-take on a daily basis with who's up and who's down and who says what about whomever. I think it has helped me re-direct some of my energies into my own spiritual life again, which is very important to me, always has been. But, you know, you get busy, caught up and go for a time without thinking about a lot of issues in your own life.

And it's left a big hole in my life. I mean, it's, you know -- I miss my father. I'd like to be able to call him up, because he gave me what I view as one of the greatest gifts you can give a child, which is a sense of self-confidence that withstands other people's assaults so that you just have to know who you are and have that touchstone.

Q How did he do this?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, just by example and encouragement. So, you know, I would love to call him and say, "What do you think, Dad?" He'd say, "Oh, you know, don't listen to these people. They're all crazy," you know. He just had a great way of centering me. And I miss Virginia enormously because she was a sunbeam. I mean, she was optimistic and enthusiastic about life. But she left me with this great lesson about dying and that dying is a part of living, which is obvious, but that it can be done in a way that celebrates life, not as kind of an aberration.

She knew she was sick for a very long time, and she just was determined she wanted to spend her time with the people she loved, doing what she cared about and was not going to turn her last months or years, however long she had, into a relentless effort to withstand mortality and lots of hospitalizations and lots of disruptions of her daily living. And I just admired the way she spent the last year of her life, as much as anything I can remember experiencing.

Q I've been impressed that given -- after I went through all this stuff, I sort of -- I had a really hard time. I was so depressed, I really had a hard time functioning. I've been amazed that you've done so well. I mean, is this work therapy, for 18 hours a day if you work, you don't think about these things?

MRS. CLINTON: No, it's not. It's something I want

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to -- you know, I've spent time grieving and feeling bad and refilling my own personal store house and with my daughter and my husband kind of mourning together the loss of people that we love. But, I mean, especially with my father and my mother-in-law, they wouldn't have it any other way. I mean, part of what they would want us to do was to honor them by going forward, you know.

I mean, I think of them every single day because when I look at what my -- and my mother-in-law buried three husbands. And until I met her, I had not had much experience of death or violence or difficulties in my life and the life of the people who I knew around me. And I would watch her just pull herself together. And it wasn't a defensive way, it was a kind of resilience of the spirit that was very positive. So maybe without her example, I might have felt more debilitated.

Q I guess I was thinking also of your friend Vince Foster. Whenever anyone commits suicide, you always keep thinking, is there anything I could have done. I mean, it's like you want to hug all your friends.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, we've done a lot of that. We've done a lot of that. And, you know, I think everyone who knew him and cared about him -- and he had a host of friends and family who did -- will never understand.

Q Oh, yeah, I've wondered why the journal and all those (inaudible). That must have got kind of -- I think as long as people can't accept someone killing themselves just because they were sad, there has to be some greater purpose for it --

MRS. CLINTON: Or some conspiracy.

Q Yeah, or something.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, but, you know, I've read a lot about that, and we've all been trading books and stories, you know. And if you read about clinical depression, if you read William Stiran's personal account, I mean, it's not anything any of us who have not experienced it could articulate. It is inchoate. It is all consuming. And I think amongst the many conversations that I've had with so many of our friends over the last month, you know, we don't know, we won't understand. I think everyone wishes that something could

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have been done, somebody could have said or done something which might have made a difference.

But I keep going back to that poem I read, you know, in junior high school, Richard Corey. And, I mean, who knows these things? See, I happen to think that despite denials to the contrary, there's a lot of life that is mysterious and unknown, maybe unknowable.

Q One other area I wanted to --

A VOICE: Well, no. We have literally two minutes, because she has a meeting that's waiting.

Q Let me tell you the two questions, and maybe I can get three. I wanted to talk a little bit about Chelsea being (inaudible). Also you mentioned what you were reading. Someone told me you keep a book in which you describe all of the -- a notebook which you have all of the books you've ever read.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, no.

Q What do you have? What have you read recently?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I'm reading right now, (inaudible) "Sense of Snow," which is brilliant. I just can't recommend it too highly. I think it's marvelous.

Q I'm just curious. We all know -- do you watch tv? Do you have --

MRS. CLINTON: Occasionally. Not a lot but occasionally. I like to watch old movies. We watch sporting events.

Q Well, every mother -- I'm sorry that we're running out of time, because actually every woman I've talked to has said, "We want to know about Chelsea. We want to know about how do you raise a kid in the White House with any sense of normalcy."

MRS. CLINTON: You draw some really strict limits about what she can be exposed to and how much public attention she gets so that you give her some space so that she can be her own person. And actually, that's one of the things that's worked out quite well this past year, you know.

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We took a very hard line in the beginning and repeatedly told the press she wasn't going to be there for the interviews, she wasn't going to do the photo op. She wasn't going to do those things, and gradually people stopped asking.

And so we were able to involve her in events that we thought were appropriate, you know, whether it was lighting the Christmas tree, things like that.

Q I mean, do you get -- you know, I think about the stuff I did to my mother as a kid. There was always shopping.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, yes.

Q What kind of girl stuff can you do together?

MRS. CLINTON: We go shopping. We go visit mutual friends, like mothers and daughters who she goes to school with. We do sports together. We ski a little bit, bowl, go bike riding. So we -- but we play a lot of games at home together. We really like to play cards together. We like to put complicated jigsaw puzzles together.

Q Is she now in the phase where she's bringing home rock bands you've never heard of and wants to wear mini skirts. You said it was going to -- I mean, I don't know what 13 or 14 was like for you but --

MRS. CLINTON: I think that's all part of it.

Q Does she hate you yet?

MRS. CLINTON: No, no. She --

Q You know what I mean.

MRS. CLINTON: No. But she is really good about asserting her own independence. But she is very loving and very involved in our lives. And so I feel lucky. I think being a teenager is awfully hard.

Q I was just remembering a song that ran through my head that we all heard growing up about the "Secret Service Makes Me Nervous and I Can't." Do you remember that? It was all about dating and the Secret Service in the back seat? I mean, that's why I was just curious about how, you

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know, you let her have anything resembling --

MRS. CLINTON: Well, we just do the best we can, but so far it seems to be working. And she seems to be very happy, which I'm grateful for. And that's the most important thing to us.

A VOICE: One last question.

Q My question really is -- I'll let you answer it with your own question. You've read the stories about you. Is there anything you'd like to tell the world that does not know either who you are or what you're about and --

MRS. CLINTON: I think I'm like most people. I don't think it's necessary to try to carve me out and put me into some exception that has its own category. I have a lot of the same experiences and needs and hopes that everybody our age does in this country and have gone through a lot of the same adjustments.

Q I guess I was just wondering though, at times it's funny, the whole adjustment of your role being the First Lady. Are there things that you can't do? I mean, whereas you might have sworn at something. Suddenly you realize, you know, the cameras are on me or the eyes are -- I have to sort of be in some ways a different -- I have to -- the role demands a little bit --

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I mean, you try to conduct yourself in the appropriate way, but that's true in whatever role you find yourself in. This just happens to be the one I'm in right now. So, you know, I'm going to do the very best job for my husband and for myself and then move on to something else. I just -- you just have to keep going through your own life and defining it in your own terms and that's what I'm trying to do.

Q You know, it's funny because I went to a press seminar six months ago about how to (inaudible) Mrs. Clinton. And I mean, yeah, and it was hysterical, you know, because people couldn't figure out -- she should be in the style pages. She could be in the such-and-such pages. I mean --

MRS. CLINTON: See, those are somebody else's problems, not mine. Thank goodness.

\* \* \* \* \*

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