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KING, LARRY

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CNN "LARRY KING LIVE" INTERVIEW WITH:  
HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

THURSDAY, MAY 5, 1994

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ANNOUNCER: Welcome to "Larry King Live." Tonight, our King Size Week  
continues with a first -- Hillary Rodham Clinton, first lady of the United  
States in her first live interview, taking your calls. Now, from Washington,  
here's Larry King.

LARRY KING: Good evening. Thanks for joining us, Hillary.

MRS. CLINTON: Thanks for having me.

MR. KING: We appreciate this. We'll be taking your calls. You'll see the  
numbers flashing on the screen. We're going to get to  
a lot of calls tonight. I want to touch a lot of bases. First, your reaction  
to the passage today of the assault gun bill.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I was thrilled, Larry. I mean, it is such  
a great step for this country to start taking control of our streets and our  
neighborhoods again. You and I have talked about that in the past. And it  
has to be seen in context. It must be part of the larger initiative. The  
president is pushing for crime control with more prisons, tougher sentences,  
more prevention -- but it is such an important step.

MR. KING: You said, after health care, that's what you were going to  
bring your attention to next, right?

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MRS. CLINTON: Well, you mean, the whole web of violence. I mean, the guns, the drugs, the decaying neighborhoods, the irresponsibility -- all of that we have to tackle.

MR. KING: Were you involved in this last minute push today -- because you way behind in this earlier in the week?

MRS. CLINTON: I was urging my husband on last night, as he was still calling at midnight, and then he got up very early and started again. But it wasn't anything I was directly involved in.

MR. KING: Do you like this job -- still like it? Last time we talked, you semi-liked it.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, you know, there are lots of parts of it that I really like. I love seeing what we're doing in the country. I am thrilled by all the progress that's been made in the last 15 months. I love meeting people. I love hearing their stories. I'm like you -- I just can listen to people and want to know what's going on in their lives. So, there are many things about it that I like.

MR. KING: What don't you like?

MRS. CLINTON: It's hard being so confined. You know, feeling that you can't just walk out the door and go to the store. You know, I was over in a Safeway store the other day, and I was there to promote health care benefits -- but I loved being in the store. I haven't been in a store since I came to Washington, except one, you know, little effort that didn't pan out.

MR. KING: When you're first lady of Little Rock, you can go to the shopping center, right?

MRS. CLINTON: Absolutely. Well, yes. I mean, I could get in my car, go to the store, take my daughter out shopping, have lunch with her, go to church with my husband, go to the movies. It was very different, yes.

MR. KING: Did you expect it. Nancy Reagan said that the biggest surprise was how different Washington was from Sacramento.

MRS. CLINTON: I agree with her. It was a very big surprise because, even if you think about it -- and, of course, California is a much bigger state than Arkansas -- but when she said that, I know what she means, because even though you might think, from watching on television or talking to people, you have an understanding of what it's like, once you get there and you know that your life will never be the same again -- it's a pretty big change.

MR. KING: Your husband, the other day, criticize the vituperativeness that goes on, and the angle. Why do you think you and him create such volatile feelings on the part of opponents. I mean, it's like hate. Why do you think that?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think because he's really trying to change things, and I think that gets people who don't want to see anything changed -- like they don't want bans on assault weapons that are going to be used to kill people -- gets them very agitated. So, anytime you really mean what you say and you stand up for it, you're going to create opposition. And if you go back and look at presidents who really made a difference -- that's what happened to

them.

MR. KING: What do you make of the anger at you?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I think some of it is part of the fear and insecurity about what my husband's trying to do, and the direction he's trying to take our country, and get us all moving together again. I think some of it is because I'm kind of a transition person in the history of our country.

MR. KING: Meaning what?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think that, you know, for many women, the life that I've led -- trying to balance family and work, is what we are all trying to work out in our own lives. But we've never had somebody in my position before who had done that. And I've, you know, worked most of my life, and I really believe in women having the full range of choices available to them. I don't care what choice they make, as long as they make the right choice for them. But I think some people would rather have stereotypes. It's easier that way.

MR. KING: Some items in the news today -- we'll take calls, talk about health care, but first, today, Mr. Fiske, the special prosecutor, has subpoenaed all the White House records, everything to do with Vince Foster. Does that surprise you?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I'm sure he's conducting a very thorough investigation and we will, of course, fully cooperate.

MR. KING: I've never had a chance to hear you on that. We were there that night at the White House --

MRS. CLINTON: I know.

MR. KING: -- that tragedy happened, interviewing your husband. In fact, he and I were the only two that didn't know it had happened.

-END-OF-AUTOBREAK(1)-

-AUTOBREAK(2)-FOLLOWS

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MRS. CLINTON: That's right.

MR. KING: You knew it had happened while he was on.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I was in Arkansas, and while he was on with you, as you remember, because you were there, Mack McLarty

called to tell me what had happened. And I think everyone just was in shock. I mean, you were there. You saw the faces. People were traumatized. I mean, I was told they were crying in the hall and just collapsed on the floor. It was a terrible, terrible experience.

MR. KING: Were you shocked? Did you know there was something the matter?

MRS. CLINTON: No. I hadn't ever thought anything like that would happen to someone that I knew and someone who'd been such a good friend of ours for so long. And I hadn't seen nor talked to him in several weeks before it did happen. And I've talked with many people who had who also said, gee, you know, he was working hard and concerned about all the work he had to do -- but nothing that really waved any flags in anybody's face.

MR. KING: And no note leaves you with a kind of helpless feeling, doesn't it?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. You know, I don't know if you've had friends or acquaintances who have committed suicide, but --

MR. KING: One acquaintance.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

MR. KING: Not -- I wouldn't say friend.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I have known a number of people -- nobody as well as we knew Vince, of course. But lots of times there is no warning. Sometimes people make attempts and they want attention so that maybe they can be helped. But all too often, especially with men between about 40 and 60, as I have now learned, it is something they keep deep inside, often struggling with depression that -- I've had a friend now come to me and tell me, I never knew before, that he had contemplated suicide because of a deep depression.

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He told me that it was like being overwhelmed with blackness. Everywhere he looked, he saw no way out. And through a combination of circumstances, that didn't happen to him. But his efforts to try to explain to us what it must be like to be overcome by a deep, serious, profound depression -- I hope everybody in America learns something from this, and maybe we can pick up the signals better.

MR. KING: Were you angry when people started -- there were rumors, you, Vince, Bill, and all this.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, no.

MR. KING: Didn't you get angry?

MRS. CLINTON: No, I found it profoundly sad. You know, it's so sad that when something tragic happens, that people -- maybe out of a desperate attempt to make sense of the world -- try to create conspiracies and, you know, act paranoid and all that, but some of it is not explainable except for people who just want to cause trouble.

MR. KING: You let it rub off you?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, you have to.

MR. KING: But the subpoenas today, any, do you --

MRS. CLINTON: No, no, no. I mean, I think that, you know, the White House will fully cooperate, as it has been.

MR. KING: Was he involved in the Whitewater at all, in the legal office?

MRS. CLINTON: No, there were some files that were there, which were turned over to our lawyers after his death, which I think he had there -- I didn't know he had -- having to do with the blind trust that he was kind of coordinating the activities of the outside lawyers and accountants.

MR. KING: But you had nothing to do with sealing that office off or anything.

MRS. CLINTON: No, no.

MR. KING: Things are happening on the health care front. We're going to talk about that. We're going to take your calls. We're going to devote a lot of this program to your calls. Our guest is the first lady of the United States, Hillary Rodham Clinton. Don't go away.

(Announcements.)

MRS. CLINTON: (From video.) There are many people who are talking about what we need to do. There are many analysts who are analyzing all the different approaches. But there isn't anything as important as taking care of our children -- and that means every child. And as you can tell, for me, this

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is an issue that goes way beyond politics. And it's an issue that I think we should not rest as a country until we deal with.

MR. KING: What caused you to show that which we had not seen in you before?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, this was such an extraordinary experience yesterday morning, I think, for everyone who was there. I've had many conversations and have gotten teared up lots of times as I've traveled around the country talking with individual parents about their children or some other health care problem. But yesterday, to be in a room with parents, mothers and fathers from all 50 states and their children who had very serious medical problems, and to listen to their stories -- the courage, the love that they showed in talking about the sacrifices they have to make because of our health care system to be able to keep their children at home and to be able to love them just like any child deserves to be loved, was just so overwhelming to me.

I was just so struck by how, in our country, we talk a lot about family values and how we, you know, want parents to take care of their children. And here I was surrounded by people who -- by the grace of God and their own love -- were taking care of children in ways that I think all of us would be proud of. And yet, all they did was talk about their frustrations and how they were forced onto welfare because they couldn't get insurance, and men who were unable to change jobs, men who can't take raises, because if they take raises, they lose the Medicaid eligibility for their children, mothers who stood there and talked about how they'd be better off if they divorced their husbands, because then they could get government assistance. That is just wrong.

MR. KING: Senators Boren and Kerrey, yesterday, Democrats, signed up as first Democratic sponsors of the Chafee plan, the moderate Republican Senator. Senator Boren, yesterday, told me on my radio show, that he thinks that the Chafee plan could pass, and that you ought to sit down and talk to him about it, and it does include total coverage.

MRS. CLINTON: And, that's right.

MR. KING: First, what are your thoughts on Kerrey and Boren doing that?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I'm pleased that they are supporting a plan that has a mandate -- because there's no way to get everybody

covered unless we have some kind of requirement -- and that it is one that will reach universal coverage. I have spent a lot of time talking with Senator Chafee and have visited Rhode Island and been on a program with him, and I know that he is committed to making sure we get real health care reform.

MR. KING: So, you were happy that Boren and Kerrey signed on with him?

MRS. CLINTON: I thought it was a positive step. And I think that if the debate in the Congress is between our approach, which has an employer-employee shared responsibility, but recognized you've got to have that, and Senator Chafee's approach, which has an individual responsibility, but, as Senator Boren said yesterday, probably mixed with some employer responsibility as well, I think that's the right debate.

MR. KING: So, in other words, you can live with that --

MRS. CLINTON: Well --

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MR. KING: -- as opposed to, "We don't need change."

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. "We don't need change," or some of the false claims for change that bills have put forward and said, "Well, this is really going to change," and then you analyze the fine print and there is no change.

MR. KING: Are you going to get a health care bill?

MRS. CLINTON: We are going to get a health care bill. We're going to get it because we cannot do any less than to keep faith with people.

MR. KING: Is it going to be a combination, like Chafee- Clinton?

MRS. CLINTON: I don't know exactly what it's going to be yet. I think that's what going on in the Congress right now -- a lot of activity, a lot of very hard work. But I'm confident we're going to have a bill.

MR. KING: Today's Wall Street Journal says that you have been talking to the Canadians about their health care system, asking how the United States could put a government run plan in place similar to Canada's.

MRS. CLINTON: Which Canadians and when did that happen?

MR. KING: Totally false?

-END-OF-AUTOBREAK(1)-

-AUTOBREAK(2)-FOLLOWS

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MRS. CLINTON: Well, I don't know what they're talking about. I talk to people all over the country, and I'm sure that in the last year and a half, I've spoken to a Canadian, you know. (Laughing.) I'd be surprised if I hadn't.

MR. KING: No kidding.

MRS. CLINTON: No kidding. No, but I think that what we are looking at is an American solution to our American health care problem. And what the president has supported is guaranteed private insurance. But we do believe that states ought to have the right to have some flexibility about how they would implement health care reform -- including a single payer system, such as will be voted on in California this year.

MR. KING: So, you don't want a Canadian system?

MRS. CLINTON: I personally don't think that's the best solution for America right now, but I think states should have the right to vote for a single payer, Canadian-like system within the federal framework.

MR. KING: Are you a reader of the Wall Street Journal?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, occasionally, yes.

MR. KING: Do you get angry when -- because they've been pretty tough.

MRS. CLINTON: You mean, the editorial page?

MR. KING: Yes.

MRS. CLINTON: No, I think they're silly.

MR. KING: Silly?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, silly.

MR. KING: You mean for --

MRS. CLINTON: Because they are so ideologically to the right that they twist reality to try to fit their particular world view, and I think that's pretty obvious to anybody who's read it. I think the news pages are very good.

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MR. KING: Are you used to this by now?

MRS. CLINTON: Used to the silliness?

MR. KING: Well, just -- yes. No, as you see this, as you perceive it, do you ever get used to it?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think, after a while, you kind of know where it's coming from. There are certain predictable --

MR. KING: Knee-jerk --

MRS. CLINTON: -- sources of information and what people were likely to say, you can kind of see coming. So, you kind of get used to that. And what I try to do, as I've tried to do ever since my husband's been in public life is, you know, to take criticism seriously, but not personally, and to try to learn something from it, and if it's put forward in good faith, to try to figure out what I could do to change.

MR. KING: Back with more of Hillary Rodham Clinton in just a couple of minutes. We'll be including your phone calls on this hour edition of "Larry King Live." She'll be our guest for the full hour. Don't go away.

(Announcements.)

MR. KING: We're back with Hillary Clinton. Apparently, tomorrow morning -- we have to have your comment on this -- the Arkansas state worker is going to file this sex harassment suit. What do you make of it?

MRS. CLINTON: I have nothing to add to what's already been said by the White House.

MR. KING: Are you happy with the choice of Bob Bennett?

MRS. CLINTON: I'm getting to know him. He seems like a very fine man.

MR. KING: Does it upset you at all?

MRS. CLINTON: No.

MR. KING: It doesn't bother you?

MRS. CLINTON: No.

MR. KING: Onward to calls. Rapid City, South Dakota with Hillary Rodham Clinton. Hello?

CALLER: Hi. I'm going to be -- I'm a medical student, going to be graduating in less than two weeks. And my question is, why don't we get rid of the waste in the current governmental medical system rather than trying to revamp everything -- (coughs) -- excuse me. As an example, I used to work in emergency medicine in a busy inner-city emergency department. We'd have

people come into the emergency department by ambulance because their child had a cold or diaper rash, not because they didn't have a physician and not because they didn't want to wait or whatever, but because there was no transportation to the clinic. The taxicab didn't take the Medicaid card, and ambulance could only come to the hospital.

MR. KING: What's the question?

CALLER: Why don't we get rid of the waste in the current system rather than revamping everything?

MRS. CLINTON: That's a good question, and we are trying to do that. I mean, one of the goals of the president's approach is to solve the kinds of problems you just talked about. People show up in emergency rooms because they don't have a doctor, they don't have any management of their care, so they don't know where they're supposed to go, and they show up, and they wait there, and then they're eventually taken care of in the most expensive way we possibly can give them.

What we are trying to do is to provide incentives for people to get care from primary and preventive care physicians, nurses and other health care professionals, and use the expensive parts of our system, like emergency rooms for true emergencies. But in order to do that, we have to make some changes.

MR. KING: Yardley, Pennsylvania with Hillary Clinton on "Larry King Live." Dan Quayle tomorrow night. Only in America, right? (Laughter.)

Yardley, Pennsylvania, hello?

CALLER: Hi, how are you doing?

MR. KING: Hi.

CALLER: Mrs. Clinton, I had a question about health care reform also. Presently, in the Philadelphia metropolitan area, about 30 percent of the health care workers have lost their jobs over the past year in anticipation of the health care reform bill. This results sometimes in, well, less services to patients. I'm a registered nurse, so I've seen this. I'm wondering how your health care reform will address this issue.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, thanks for asking that, and thanks for being a registered nurse, too. We really need you and we're trying

to support and expand the role of nurses in health care reform. What you've just mentioned has nothing to do with health care reform. You're right that there have been lots of changes in the last several years. There have been lay-offs and there have been changes in the way we allocate resources, driven by the existing system. And often times, that is not making a decision in the best interests of patients, doctors, and nurses, but instead, trying to keep costs down in a system that is out of control.

What we anticipate happening is that if everybody is in the system, if everybody has guaranteed private insurance with a good set of benefits, if we eliminate the insurance practices -- like, keeping people away from insurance because of pre-existing conditions or lifetime limits, if we guarantee your choice of doctor or health plan, and if we preserve and strengthen Medicare by providing these benefits through the workplace, then a lot of the problems that we have seen in the last few years where insurance companies tell doctors what to do -- I don't want an insurance company telling a doctor; I want the doctor making a decision -- where we spend billions of dollars on unnecessary

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