

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

08/04/94
BURROS, MARTIN

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Internal Use Only

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INTERVIEW OF THE FIRST LADY
CONDUCTED BY MARIAN BURROS

MRS. CLINTON: -- an amazing event. Our culture and our country are so young compared to --

Q Whatever happens with us is a blip.

MRS. CLINTON: That's right. It's like a non-event.

Q In our history, yes.

MRS. CLINTON: They go back to worrying about the people they have always worried about. The Chinese, Cambodians --

Q That's exactly right. And besides they say it's between our government and their government. And not between the people. We were greeted extremely (inaudible).

MRS. CLINTON: I think they always saw it that way.

Q You are looking very well.

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you, thank you. I am feeling very well.

Q I am not allowed to chat with you and have a social conversation.

MRS. CLINTON: All right.

A PARTICIPANT: Says who?

MS. BURROS: Pardon me?

A PARTICIPANT: Says who?

Q You talk about two things.

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MRS. CLINTON: Okay.

Q Some day, when we are all about 90, we'll sit down and have a nice chat.

We have to talk about the crafts thing. And I see that I didn't bring the pictures because --

MRS. CLINTON: I got them. I will show you some of my favorites.

Q That's exactly what I want to know.

But, first, why did you decide to do this, bring crafts into the House?

MRS. CLINTON: I have always been interested in crafts. And when I was in Arkansas I did a lot of work to help local crafts people and organizations get better organized so that they could have broader markets both around the state and outside the state.

And I worked with the Ozark Folk Center, and I worked with other cooperatives of crafts, artists. And my husband is very fond of pottery. And we have a very limited collection of Arkansas pottery, both porcelain and other earthenware.

I have always really responded positively to the work of artisans. And when I got here, and we were talking about a theme for our first Christmas, I wanted to do something that would have broad involvement from, literally, as many Americans as we could include.

And I also wanted to begin a permanent White House crafts collection to be used for centerpieces, to be used to highlight the fine American crafts along with our historic fine arts emphasis.

And I noticed as I was working to find what was available in the basement and in the various storerooms, that many of the items that we were pulling out to put back on display were the crafts of their time.

They were the vases, they were the statuettes, they were the cameos, they were the silhouette cuttings. They were a whole range of crafts that, or because they are now

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100 or 150 or 200 years old, moved into (inaudible). But in their time they were French or English or American crafts.

So it seemed that we should bring that up to date. And then we worked with Michael Munro. And he was so helpful. It became a very exciting project.

Q What are your favorite pieces?

MRS. CLINTON: One of them, which isn't in here, is this magnificent shell-shaped piece of blown glass from Dale Shahoolie (phonetic).

Q The one that's up in your --

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, on the second floor. And I love it. We had it down in one of these rooms in a window. And I loved the light coming through it. But I also wanted it upstairs.

He has been a favorite of mine. I actually visited his studio several years ago when I was in Seattle.

Q Why do you like it so much?

MRS. CLINTON: I like it because I love the shapes. They are almost primeval shapes. And the colors. The combination of color and shape for me in what he does is very emotionally compelling and exciting.

And also I like that he is always pressing the boundaries of glass blown. I don't know if you saw his pieces that were over at the Renwick for a couple of months, a few months ago. But they were originally designed for an opera. And they are just enormous.

You walk into this room and there is these huge pieces of -- they weren't glass as his smaller pieces are. They were some kind of -- I don't know how to describe it technically, but stretched glass in a way.

And then in the display windows were all of the models for all of those large pieces. And it was just exciting to me. So I love his work.

Q Upstairs you also have the pulled blown glass -- I don't know the proper term for it, either -- at the top of

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the stairs.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, I love that, too. That's one of them I have got. We can give you all of the artists' names.

This is a man named Sydney Halcutter (phonetic). I don't know much about him at all, but I like that. I don't know if you saw that --

Q Yes, I did.

MRS. CLINTON: I love that.

Q Use that on a table setting.

MRS. CLINTON: This is the piece that is upstairs.

Q Yes.

MRS. CLINTON: You know, when the Times did the article about the crafts early on, the woman who came and did that, she thought that -- she had somebody with her; didn't she? But it was reported, anyway, that she thought that was the finest piece.

I love that. It is so whimsical. Did you see that?

Q Yes.

MRS. CLINTON: I just adore that. I will give you this. You can go through it.

Q Okay.

MRS. CLINTON: This is a nice piece. I don't know if you have seen it. Not a very good picture of it.

Q Yes. I have seen them all, actually, because I looked at them so carefully because I was fascinated by them.

MRS. CLINTON: This I thought was adorable. Did you see that?

Q Yes, yes.

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MRS. CLINTON: I thought that was fun.

Q This (inaudible) weight. This was at the bottom of the stairs; wasn't it?

MRS. CLINTON: A jewelry case.

Q It's called a jewelry case?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, this was at the bottom of the stairs. But it's unlike anything I have ever seen.

And I love that.

Q It's gorgeous. What is it you like about this?

MRS. CLINTON: It looks so natural and yet it has taken an enormous amount of work to achieve that. The shaving, and the smoothness of it. But I just -- you know, it is almost breathtaking because it is there. And for me it's very primeval. I mean, it is regal, it is out of nature. I just love that.

I get such a charge out of that.

Q Because?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, because it's a surprise. I mean, the way that the shape was altered and the gold interior contrasted with the painted exterior, I find very intriguing. That's one of my personal favorites. I just love looking at that.

Not all the ones that I like are in this, but they couldn't find all --

I also like that.

This I think is cute. I am a big tea drinker. And there was a period -- I don't do it anymore, and hope nobody will read this and start to send to me because I don't -- but there was a period when I collected teapots. And so, you know, I had teapots in the shapes of storybook characters.

There was a cute teapot for a long time, there was a little white teapot that you probably saw a commercial where the spout was lips, red lips. Just funny, whimsical

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things. I drink a lot of tea. And I thought that that was great.

Now, this is a cocoa pot. But I love the way (inaudible).

Some of the work in silver and gold was very special, I thought. I like that piece. Then a lot of the silver and gold pieces I like are in --

Q There are some gorgeous --

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, yes.

Q We saw several pieces, one like this. And then there is one (inaudible) three columns --

MRS. CLINTON: Three columns, yes. I love that. That isn't in here.

That is not the one we are talking about. The one that I am talking about is the column as opposed to the --

Q The one with the column.

Wasn't there a teapot on columns or a coffee pot on columns? Not on columns. I mean, a silver teapot or a silver coffee pot?

MRS. CLINTON: I thought this was a nice display. I like the way we displayed the teapots, the candlesticks, and then the wooden bowl. I love the combination of textures and looks there.

And, you know, the one piece that's not in there that I love is the menorah. You saw the menorah?

Q Yes.

MRS. CLINTON: I thought that was great.

Q I was surprised they didn't want to take a picture of it though.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I loved it. And it was the first time there had ever been a menorah in the White House, which I didn't realize.

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I suppose they had given pictures of how we used a lot of them?

Q We came one day to take pictures at one of the tables, at tables in the Blue Room.

MRS. CLINTON: These pieces are beautiful. Almost a candy theme, glass work that is so delicate, like you could just walk up and pull a piece off and eat it.

This piece, I think that is hilarious.

Q That one I didn't see.

MRS. CLINTON: I think that is just hilarious.

And here is another one of the teapots. I like the color of that, any kind of rough texture.

These I love. I love that glaze. It looks like a sandy kind of texture. But it doesn't look dull. It has a brightness to it that I thought was unusual. I hadn't personally seen that before. I like that.

Q Are you planning to enlarge the collection? I mean, what are you planning?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, we are going to take it on a tour, we hope, so the people can see it, and it can become a statement -- here is one (inaudible). Yes, yes, so it can become a statement, the importance of crafts.

Because the other reason why it was great timing was last year was the year of the crafts. So our first year in the White House coincided with that year of celebration. And I would like to see it travel.

It may be that we will get some additional pieces, but I want to keep the original collection kind of in tact because I think it was a moment in time, and it was a broad range of artists. I think nearly every state was represented, and many different medium were used.

And if you combine the actual selective crafts that Mike Munro helped us with, with the angels that were created by all of the people who were also reached out to, because they were on a list of people who were well-known artisans,

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it's a wonderful snapshot of a moment in time here in the last part of the 20th century about what people are thinking and making.

Q Are you likely to take other pieces and put them upstairs?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, yes, we will move them around.

Q Do you have any thoughts which ones you want at this point?

MRS. CLINTON: I am not sure because what we are trying to do now is to get everything organized before the travelling exhibition --

Q When do you think that will take place?

MRS. CLINTON: We hope, if we can work it out -- Anne (inaudible) has been working very hard on this -- that it would start at the Museum of American Art, that's part of the Smithsonian, sometime in late spring or summer of '95, and travel to a couple of cities. And then come back to the White House in '96.

Q I would really like to ask you more, but I can't. We have to go on to the chef. I am sure I'll never get through all this.

The first thing I want to know is why you chose this particular chef.

MRS. CLINTON: I liked him. I liked his cooking, his imagination, his willingness to innovate and reach out to other American chefs, his remarkable personal (inaudible) that just immediately came through in dealing with him.

He was somebody that was fun to be around, and looked like he would be fun to work with. And it appears from everything we have learned, to be a good manager. So all of those things.

Q That was important; wasn't it?

MRS. CLINTON: It's very important, because it's not only managing the people you manage on a daily basis. But for large events, all kinds of people are brought in to

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help. So you have to manage people that you don't have daily control over.

And it is a considerable management job. You got to plan ahead, you have to be there, you have to delegate, you have to make sure people are doing what you want them to do. So his personality and his experience just seemed to be a good combination.

Q What are some of the things he has cooked that you particularly liked?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, he has done so many things we like. For our personal cook -- on a daily basis he has been very helpful in keeping the emphasis on healthy and delicious, something the President and I both believe in. But he has done it in creative, fun ways.

Have a lot of fish and chicken and pasta and vegetables. And he uses lots of fresh ingredients. He is really good at mixing flavors and textures. So we have done a lot of couscous and polenta. It's just a fresh, tasty, healthy approach.

And then for our public events, receptions and dinners, he has, I think, just made a great impression with all of our guests at both receptions and dinners. At receptions the foods are creative, they are beautifully presented.

I have had several people tell me they have been coming to White House events for decades, and they really like what he is doing. So that you might see spread before you all kinds of heavy hors d'oeuvres that would range from Chinese influence to Mexican influence, and everything in between.

And then for our dinners, I have gotten very good reviews from the people who have attended and eaten with us because the food has been innovative, beautifully presented, and tasty.

And we have tried to streamline the service so that people feel that they are having a wonderful time, and it is being done in an efficient way where the emphasis is on what happens at the dinner table, and what is on the plate, as opposed to all of the comings and goings that sometimes --

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Q Instead of the service.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. Sometimes interferes with a lot of dinner parties, it's been my experience. And people thanked us for the kind of service. It has been a big, popular change that has been remarked on over and over again.

Q Has this had any effect on your weight or your husband's weight?

MRS. CLINTON: We are holding our own. The President is so good about his running routine. And I think he looks great, myself. I think he looks so handsome.

Q So do I.

MRS. CLINTON: He looks adorable. If he keeps his exercise up, he actually can eat more and feel good than if he didn't have that jogging.

I have not gotten my exercise routine back to where it was. And so I have to be really careful. But I am getting it back. I am starting to pay more attention to it. And that's something that I take very seriously.

Q Back since when?

MRS. CLINTON: Really, when we moved here, it was just hard to have the same routine that I used to have at home because my schedule was so much more uncertain. I'd be in Montana one day, and I'd be in Moscow the next. And it was very hard to get it figured out. But I feel much better about that. So I am --

Q What are you doing?

Treadmill, Stair Master, weights, all that boring stuff. And bicycling. I like to bicycle outside. And I was doing it regularly all during the spring. But I find this heat and humidity very tough to take. So I don't do a lot of outdoor exercise at this time of year in Washington.

When we go to Camp David, I ride my bike, and I run.

Q How many times a week when you exercise?

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MRS. CLINTON: About three or four.

Q Oh, you are?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. I am getting back up to where I (inaudible).

Q In addition to the weight, has it changed your feeling? Do you feel better --

MRS. CLINTON: I feel more energy.

Q Do you?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, I do. I like to eat lots of fresh vegetables, and I love pasta. I find eating like that -- the Mediterranean diet that people are now talking about being so healthy, is one that I personally have always enjoyed.

And as long as I can have my occasional splurges on Mexican and Chinese, and occasionally have the great French meal, as long as I keep some variety so that I don't become mono-dietetic, it's a great way for me to eat.

Q There have been no requests or suggestions to you that you should use organic products?

MRS. CLINTON: I think what we are doing is buying as much locally produced produce as we can. But when you buy in bulk, and you have so many people to feed, it is very difficult to do everything you would want to.

But we did start a vegetable garden --

Q You did?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. I love fresh tomatoes in the summer time. I do not like store-bought tomatoes. Even a tomato that's organically grown somewhere else and transported doesn't have the same taste to me as some tomato you pick off the vine, go in and slice it.

For me I love to toast a bagel and put slices of tomato with salt and pepper. I just think that is heavenly.

Q You know, that's one of my favorite --

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MRS. CLINTON: It's heaven. So we have all of these pots of tomatoes of different varieties. We have beans, we have carrots, we have all kinds of things growing. But the tomatoes -- and Walter uses all of those fresh vegetables in our meals.

But the tomatoes -- Bill and I went out on the roof a couple, two weeks ago, and we must have picked three dozen tomatoes. And they are everything from cherry tomatoes to the great big, what are those called, the big round -- not Toms, but --

Q Big Boy?

MRS. CLINTON: Big Boy, that's right. So we just happily sliced away.

Q Do you have herbs up there, too?

MRS. CLINTON: We do have herbs. But we haven't paid as much attention to it, so I am not sure what we have got up there. I did ask that we put in some herbs.

I had a herb garden at the governor's mansion in Arkansas that we used.

Q Are you thinking of enlarging the garden in any way, putting it out somewhere?

MRS. CLINTON: No. Because we looked around to find out where we could put it. There weren't any real good spaces available. And I keep thinking about it, but I don't know where --

I believe in gardens. I think gardens are so wonderful. What we proved up on the roof is that even in a city, if you have got a big pot you can grow tomatoes and some beans. Especially with your children. And let them know where things come from, and feel like they are part of nature, and then get the benefit of all those great tomatoes all summer long.

Q You had mentioned his being in touch with other chefs. Is he bringing them in, or is he just talking to them?

MRS. CLINTON: He is doing both.

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Q He is bringing in other chefs?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, he has met with other chefs. He has had lots of conversations with them. He is very open.

One of the things I really like about him is that he is someone who always wants to learn something new. You never get the feeling that he is saying "It's my way or no way." It's always, here is what I think. What do you think? How can we do it better? Does anybody have a good idea that we need to incorporate? He has been a joy, a personal joy, to be around and to work with.

Q I noticed -- I didn't taste it. (Inaudible) let me taste his food. It seemed to me, even though I didn't taste it, that the food at that first State Dinner was much lighter than it ever has been here before.

MRS. CLINTON: I think that's right.

Q So there is really a change, too, in the meals for the official functions?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. I think that's right. We are trying to present, within reasonable ranges, sort of modern American cuisine and try to set an example of being healthy. But we are not ruling out certain kinds of food, and we are not drawing lines about what can and can't be served.

We are just trying to be innovative. The reaction, as I have said, has been very positive, which I am grateful for.

Q How does this tie in with health care?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, it does tie in --

Q I know it does.

MRS. CLINTON: You know, really, prevention, nutrition, healthy eating, exercise, those are things that people have a lot of control over in their own lives. And if we all ate better and exercised more, and didn't smoke or drink to excess, and do the other things that we know cause health problems, we would as individuals and a nation be healthier. That's something that I think is becoming more and more obvious.

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And I am very impressed by the work of (inaudible) and others about the impact on heart disease, of diet and exercise. But I think it's just common sense.

One of the things that I notice in Europe, whenever I go, like we did twice this summer, is that in Italy and France, where people certainly eat well, they do it in a balanced way, it seems to me. And they also are very active.

I just think there's a lot of lessons to be learned and applied which, since are in this position, if we could influence people's eating habits and exercise habits, we want to try to do because it will help.

Q I am finished.

A PARTICIPANT: You can have one or two more.

Q Can you give me a single favorite thing that you like that he has done?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, gee, I don't know.

Q Well, you can think about that when you have nothing else to do.

MRS. CLINTON: I like a lot of his soups. I love soups. I have had a lot of really interesting soups. Of course I am crazy about all his pasta.

Like yesterday, I had home-made -- made in our kitchen right here -- buck wheat noodles. They were great.

Q With what?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, it was strips of chicken with a kind of an Oriental touch to it. It was very good.

Last night, at dinner with the President, we had salmon, grilled salmon and polenta with black bean. It was just great. It was wonderful. I loved it.

Q This is very modern.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, yes, very modern. The problem is it's so good, and it's so light, you have to be careful you don't eat more than you would have if it were old and heavy. That's my big challenge. I love it so much. I just

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feel like, oh, bring it on. When we were in Italy, we ate for four hours.

Q Do you love deserts?

MRS. CLINTON: I love Italy.

Q I'll take it over France any time.

MRS. CLINTON: I like to go over there --

Q They are nice to you all over, but --

A PARTICIPANT: My people.

MRS. CLINTON: Her people.

Q Well, you know, but when you go to Italy, everybody is so warm and friendly.

A PARTICIPANT: They love life.

Q Really, it's so wonderful.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, the whole trip we ate, we just ate. We had a meal at Pompeii to die for. Started off -- first of all, I had no idea it was a restaurant in Pompeii. If you are ever in Italy, go to this restaurant in Pompeii. Call ahead. I thought it was wonderful. It was in a garden setting in the ruins of Pompeii.

Q Really?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. Next to one of the public baths. The first thing they bring out are three different kinds of fresh mozzarella. It was unbelievable.

Everybody who was eating with us, they were thin, they were -- I am sitting next to the professor, who is in charge of Pompeii, he is probably 70 years old, he has got this third wife. He looks great. He eats like this every noon.

That mozzarella was unbelievable. And then we had a pasta dish that was -- it was so delicious. It had seafood of some kind.

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And then we had both meat and fish. It just went on and on.

Q This was at lunch?

MRS. CLINTON: This was at lunch.

A PARTICIPANT: Tell her about the lemon pasta.

MRS. CLINTON: Another day we are on the Amalfi Coast. And we were at this hotel that --

Q Thought you were working while you were in Italy.

MRS. CLINTON: We did. We worked. But I said one day, we are having fun. and we had fun. My mother, my daughter, and my friends from Hillary-land. So we are at this hotel. And they say to us, "Would you like a little lunch?" And we said, "Yes, just a little lunch." Because we knew that we had to tell them, just a little lunch.

Their idea of a little lunch, unbelievable. I could not even begin to describe all the food they brought out. But the most delectable dish was a lemon pasta. There we are sitting in a lemon grove that surrounds this hotel, lemons this big. I had never seen lemons like that. We had five different kinds of pasta, but the lemon pasta was --

A PARTICIPANT: That was like desert.

MRS. CLINTON: It was.

A PARTICIPANT: I mean, it was so rich, it was so good. It was just the right --

Q What was on it?

MRS. CLINTON: We were trying to figure that out. Lemon, lots of butter, we think.

A PARTICIPANT: A little bit of cheese, maybe.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

You know what, though? The hotel comes to New York every year and does a cooking demonstration. Yes, yes,

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that's what they told me.

Q Is this somewhere on Amalfi Coast?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. And they told me they would contact me to let me know if they did it this year. So if they contact me, I will let you know.

Q Will you let me know?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

Q Because I would like to find out about this.

MRS. CLINTON: I mean, if they cook that lemon pasta, that was --

Q Have him come here and cook some lemon pasta for you.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, so delicious.

MS. BURROS: Do we have one minute?

A PARTICIPANT: Yes.

Q We never finished a conversation we were having the last time I saw you, which was about what I think is going on with the press.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

Q I am going to turn this off, and I would appreciate it if you would turn that off.

(End of interview.)

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