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INTERVIEW OF THE FIRST LADY

BY

GERALDINE BAUM, THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

Q (in progress) And if you could absolutely accomplish one concrete thing in this administration, one thing, what would that be? If you walk out of this house and say, we think (inaudible).

MRS. CLINTON: It's so hard. I think if I felt when we walked out of this house that every adult in America, whether or not they were a parent, understood what it took for children to develop into healthy, resilient, self-disciplined adults and were determined to do that, I would feel very good about what we had accomplished.

Q That is a complicated, deep, psychological message that takes a lifetime to learn about -- how do you do that? How does this administration do that? Legislation? Do you go out and -- is this your platform? Do you say it every single day to a group of people?

MRS. CLINTON: I think that is the answer -- that you do it in a variety of ways. And this book is one way that I've chosen to try to communicate with people about issues that my husband and I and others have been talking about every since he became President, and in fact, we've been talking about for many years before that.

But I think maybe now people are more open to hearing that there are both small, bite-sized changes they can make in their own lives as well as actions they can take in their places of employment or in their government that could make a difference.

Q I'm a very practical person. You know, I'm a reporter; I cover government. But how do you do it? Is this a bully pulpit -- you get out there and talk about? I mean, you know, every possible show you can talk about it constantly? Is that --

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, I think this is a bully pulpit. And it's something that I want to make better use

of with respect to children. When Bill ran for President, I said I wanted to be a voice for children. And I saw that role as being part of the reason that I took on and worked so hard on health care, because to me what was the most pressing issue were the millions of children who did not have access to decent health care.

Q You know, I want to talk about you. I wrote down on the train for eight hours, and it's always -- this really happened -- I sat next to a woman, a professional woman, about our age, and she saw me reading your book, pointed over to your book, and she said, oh, Hillary Clinton, I love her. And she was asking me about the book. And then she said -- and then she kind of whispered to me -- some of the guys on the train would hear it -- she said, I'm worried about her, and I worry about her integrity. And a lot of Americans have a lot of common sense. And these conflicts that we're hearing about -- (inaudible) -- talk a little bit more about it -- they sort of strain common sense. If you were on the train with us sitting there, which I wish you had been, what would you have said to that woman on the train?

MRS. CLINTON: I would have said I appreciate her support for me, but I also understand her questions, because I have been subjected to relentless attacks and charges ever since my husband decided to run for President. But we have answered them. And many of them have been put to rest. And I am absolutely confident that eventually all of this will be finished, and the American public, who are fundamentally fair, will understand we've been telling the truth from the very beginning.

But there is a reason why these issues are promoted so heavily attacking both my husband and me. And part of that reason is because we do have a different idea of how our society should function and how we should take responsibility for each other so that health care, for example, was turned into a debate not about how we solve our health care problem, which is still a problem today, but about the charges and countercharges put forward by people with vested interests in the health care system.

So somehow we've got to figure out how to get the truth, the accurate information, out to people like the woman that you rode with on the train, because I have no doubt at all that there are a lot of people in her position. And who do you believe? What do you believe? And I understand that completely.

Q It came down to that. I mean, when she said the word integrity, I kind of went like that. That

was the word she focused on. I didn't make it up.

Let me just get to the question (inaudible) -- some people believe that you misspoke when you described in your role in representing Madison Guaranty and in the travel matters. You have said you have made no false statements. I'd like to try to get beyond that a moment. Can you provide me with any additional information that would help us understand and help the American people resolve the conflict between the so-called new evidence and your statements? Is there any more you can tell me, Mrs. Clinton?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, absolutely. And I'd be glad to put it in writing for you and give you support for it, because let's -- let's take a step back from this. When these questions first arose in 1992 -- and this may be a longer answer, but I think it's important to put in context and then you can interpret it and convey it however you think.

The questions were really of two kinds. The first was, did we lose money in a real estate transaction called Whitewater? We said we did. The people asking the questions claimed we did not. We said we lost money and were passive investors. Now, all these years later an independent study done by a law firm with many Republicans in it, spending \$4 million, has concluded that what we said was true.

Q The RTC.

MRS. CLINTON: That's right -- the RTC report. Then the focus shifted and it said, oh, well, all right, but you were in business with a man who later -- not at the time we were in business at the beginning -- but later bought Madison Savings and Loan. And we remained in business with him while he bought this savings and loan; and people said, oh, money must have been funneled to the Clintons. There's something funny about the relationship between Madison and Whitewater investment. We said, no, we never got any money; we were not investors; we were not borrowers; we didn't even have a savings account there. Again, four years later, the truth is as we described it at the time.

Then the next set of questions came up. Well, we understand that Mrs. Clinton's law firm, with

Mrs. Clinton's involvement, represented Madison Savings and Loan on a securities matter before the Arkansas Securities Commissioner. There must be something wrong with that. I was asked questions about that particular representation. I answered those to the best of my ability and truthfully.

And for example, if you look at the billing records, which have been discovered and voluntarily turned over, they support what I have been saying for four years. Every question I was asked publicly by the press, I understood, and I think the fair reading of them is, they were about the securities representation, because that's all anybody was focused on. I worked on the securities representation about 15 hours over 15 months. Mr. Massey, as I have said from the very beginning, was, in his words, the attorney in the trenches. He did the work. That is consistent; it is supported by what he said; it is supported by the billing records; it is supported by what my memory was four years ago.

Now, people are now attaching the wrong question to the right answer. People are now saying, but when we asked you about the securities issue and the work you did for Madison, why didn't you tell us that you had done other non-related work that had nothing to do with what we were asking you about in the beginning?

Q So in other words, they weren't asking you about what you are answering them. You were answering them about something --

MRS. CLINTON: I was answering the question they were asking me. And that question was, what did you do about the securities business? Remember, the big issue was whether I had acted inappropriately because my firm had done this business, which I was involved, as to whether or not we had somehow influenced the Securities Commission. The facts are --

Q Who your husband appointed.

MRS. CLINTON: Who my husband appointed. The facts as they have been developed and have not changed from the beginning is that a legal -- legal ethics experts have looked at the representation. They say that it was ethical. Now, in retrospect, obviously if I knew it was going to cause all this big hullabaloo, I would have, you know, said, my goodness, I better not do this, because somebody in four years or 10 years might say that it was wrong. But at the time and by any standard, there was nothing wrong with it. I said I did an insignificant

amount of work. That is certainly how I understand 15 hours over 15 months. I said I did not do the work, although I was the billing attorney. Mr. Massey, who was qualified, did the work.

All right, now, fast forward. Those are the questions I was answering. That's what I thought I was answering at my press conference. It was all I had ever been asked before. As this investigation went on, documents came to light that, frankly, refreshed my memory, because although I think I have a pretty good memory for matters that are of importance to me, I do not claim to remember matters that are not very significant to me at the time. But if someone brings something to my attention, I will work as hard as I can to remember what I should about it.

So subsequent to those series of questions I was asked, I think, first by the FDIC, as I recall, and then later by the RTC. If I did any other work on behalf of Madison -- and based on the documents that my lawyer and others presented to me, I said, yes, I did. I did some work on a few other matters. The entire total of the work was 60 hours, which is about an hour a week over 15 months. Again, someone may quibble with my definition of significant, but to me, it was never a significant client, or a significant representation compared to other work that I did, both for clients and pro bono, the boards that I was on, and my other involvements.

Q But when it comes to that client, per se, just Madison Guaranty, you did about 40, 50 percent of the work for the law firm -- about that --

MRS. CLINTON: I haven't calculated that, but it was not -- I mean, it was not significant for our law firm either. That's the other point. This was not a major undertaking on behalf of anyone, including myself.

Okay, fast forward again. Then I was asked in interrogatories by the RTC last summer if I recognized the names of any of these entities that Madison was alleged to have done business with or as. And one of the names on the list was Castle Grande. I did not recognize the name. We had no document that said anything to me about any involvement that I might have had 10 years before in doing anything for something called Castle Grande. The billing

records proved I did not have any involvement on behalf of Castle Grande. I worked on something called IDC, which was a separate name for a project that was not the Castle Grande trailer park.

Now, I'm not sure, to be very clear with you, that if I had been asked in the absence of documents, like these billing records, did I remember doing some hours of work on behalf of something called IDC in 1985, I would have remembered. I really don't think I would have, because again, this was not anything --

Q You didn't relate IDC to Castle Grande --

MRS. CLINTON: It's not related. I mean, IDC is the name of a big project, a big land project, that it turns out, based on these records, I did do work for. Castle Grande is a trailer park that is in that body of land, but it would be the difference between being the lawyer who helped set up a suburban development and being the lawyer who closed the purchase of a house in the development. I mean, the lawyer who did the work on the development would know nothing about closing the house, for example.

So then I was accused of not having been truthful about Castle Grande, when in fact, we now know, I was truthful about Castle Grande. Last month I was accused of having destroyed billing records. This month the billing records appear -- they support me, which I'm thrilled about, and I'm accused of something else. That will be next week.

Q The billing records appearing -- the box appearing the way it did, I realize you have a very logical explanation for how these events take place, but it's been years, two years, and lots of excitement, and all of a sudden this box appears. If Hillary Rodham had said to Peter Rodino (ph.), this box appeared, what you have been thinking back then? I mean, don't you think the sense of, wow, this sort of surprise -- I mean, you were a young prosecutor and working -- you know, if all of a sudden a box appeared in Mrs. Nixon's closet, what would you have thought back then?

MRS. CLINTON: We would have thought hooray, they have finally turned over documents which they have withheld for years. There is no comparison between what this White House has done and what happened in the past. If you'll remember back then, they refused to turn over documents. There were minutes of missing tape. There were claims of executive privilege. We have cooperated

completely. We have turned over more than 50,000 pieces of paper. Do I wish that we had found these before? Of course, I do -- especially since it's so clear that they not only refresh my memory but validate my memory.

But, you know, this search that has gone on has been in response to literally hundreds of different subpoenas directed to White House people, to us personally. Our lawyers have supervised and conducted the searches. People have done the best they knew how. As soon as something is uncovered, it is immediately turned over. Nobody is withholding anything. Nobody wants this over with more than I do.

So, yes, I cannot answer for where that box has been, or what was in that box, because I don't know. But the important thing is, when it was found, it was immediately turned over, and it does support what I have been saying for four years.

Q I want to talk about your friends and some of these people who have been subpoenaed and put before hearings. Joe Klein who was an (inaudible) of yours wrote a column recently in which he referred to your and your husband as the Tom and Daisy Buchanan of the baby boom political elite -- careless people who smash up lives. A lot of your friends have been hurt. Vince Foster, Web Hubbell -- people who you really care about, I gather. Two women, Susan Thomases and Maggie Williams are facing possible perjury charges now. Mrs. Clinton, tell me how that makes you feel as a person. Not, you know, legally but as a person to see all this human wreckage -- how does that feel?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, it makes me very sad. It also, from time to time, makes me very angry. I think what has been done to innocent people is inexcusable. And I regret it personally. And I think it's a very bad precedent for our country. I've had friends who have been forced to hire lawyers, run up thousands of dollars in legal bills because they returned a phone call. Everyone knew that at the beginning, but they were still subjected to this kind of harassment --

Q Everyone knew what at the beginning?

MRS. CLINTON: Everyone who was investigating knew that all they were investigating was one returned phone call, but that didn't stop them. I also think it is a little bit outside my experience with human nature to think that everyone experiences and see the events and remembers them the same way.

In fact, to me, it strengthens the credibility of people when they honestly say they don't remember, as opposed to coming in with some well contrived, perfectly in sync story. Many of these people are being mistreated, in my view, because they have told the truth, and the truth is not what some of the questioners want to hear.

Q So they're going -- is there anything specific that you're thinking about when you say that? I feel like there is. Is there somebody specific --

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I'm thinking of so many people, but I'm certainly thinking of what has been done to my Chief of Staff, Maggie Williams, and my longtime friend Susan Thomases. I remember very well what we were talking about when we talked during that week following Vince Foster's suicide. We were talking about our grief, about his family, about how this could happen, how we missed it, how nobody knew, what we could have done if we had seen it. Sometimes we were just sobbing on the phone. I remember very well.

Now, I cannot tell you when the conversation took place, and how long it was. I don't remember that. It's just --

Q The gist of it, though.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, and really until I saw phone records, I couldn't remember everybody I talked to. That whole time is just this blur of emotion in my own memory. And I also know what we were not talking about. We were not talking about interfering with anybody's investigation. There were no documents taken out of Vince Foster's office. Maggie Williams has passed two independent lie detector tests. Now, does that mean somebody who in that moment of confusion and grief and shock saw something differently or interpreted something or heard something so that we have different recollections -- lying? I don't think so.

Take Bob Barnett, who is one of the most reputable lawyers in Washington, DC. He came as a representative of our law firm to pick up documents. He knows very well that he picked them up; he inventoried

them; he and Maggie's memory of whether or not I saw them during that time differ. Why would anybody remember that? If it was an innocent encounter where we might have said, how are you? My gosh, are you okay? What's happening? Have you, you know, talked to Lisa or have -- you know, did you -- you know, what did you think about the funeral? Wasn't it moving? If that's what were talking about, which is likely -- if we saw one another, what we were talking about, why would we remember all that in detail?

So people's honest memories, where they're doing the best they can to cut through the grief and the shock and the trauma to answer people's questions years later is held against them, whereas if people walked in and told the same story -- I remember where I was at 2:02 that afternoon; I remember exactly what I talked about -- would that be more credible? I've done enough work, and maybe I've watched enough television --

Q Perry Mason?

MRS. CLINTON: -- you know, exactly -- to be a little suspicious if that were to occur? But instead of giving honest people the benefit of the doubt during a traumatic time, this is an investigation in search of a scandal. So everybody who knows us, everybody who's had any contact with us is fair game, because this is not about finding out the truth. And I regret it very much.

Q You have a very clear and logical succession of events that you describe. I know you had a big press conference in June of '94, but is there any value again in sitting down with the Senate Ethics Committee -- I know they haven't called you yet -- but offering yourself up, or having like a Geraldine Ferraro-type press conference where you say, okay, ask me every last word; just take the heat of my friends. The President alluded (inaudible) talking about when he talked last night at the press conference. Were you thinking about this or --

MRS. CLINTON: We have always said we will do whatever it takes to cooperate. And we will; and I personally will. But think about the history of this matter. The questions keep changing. The ground keeps shifting. The people asking them don't want to know the facts, especially if they don't support their accusations.

It's taken months to get the RTC report publicly released, and it still is not. I think that speaks volumes about what's really going on here. Since the RTC report verifies we lost money in Whitewater; we were passive investors; we did not get any financial advantage out of Madison S&L.

If this were a search for the truth, wouldn't that report have been held up at a press conference and laid on the table for everyone to read? I haven't even seen it.

Q So what you're saying is, in your own mind, there's really no value or point in holding a big press conference or going to committee because the ground will just shift again, so what's the point.

MRS. CLINTON: I will do whatever it takes to end this and to cooperate. But I think that the American public ought to just review in their own minds this sort of piecemeal investigation that has gone on over these four years and think about how, no matter what we answer and no matter how it's validated, it's never enough. So if we ever do get to a stopping point where we think finally we can understand what the ground rules are, I will be the happiest person in Washington.

Q You're hailed, even in The Wall Street Journal this week, as being a brilliant political strategist, and yet there seems to be this -- there's been political stumbling, which is a (inaudible). You know, your efforts at health care, which (inaudible), the stuff with the Travel Office, a little fuss over your ghost writer. It's almost as if, you know, in retrospect, have you treated Washington, this complicated place, sort of like Arkansas -- have you thought about that, I mean, politically?

MRS. CLINTON: I think I did not understand Washington. I didn't understand how it's a city that thrives on rumor and gossip and innuendo. That had not been my experience up until now. And I have learned a lot. But I guess I see it a little bit differently. I think it's part of someone else's political strategy -- to continue to raise questions about my husband, about me, about people associated with us.

Health care is a perfect example. Health care is a very difficult political issue. Any president who has ever touched it has gotten burned, starting with Harry Truman, who tried valiantly three times to reform health care and was really damaged politically deeply because of

his efforts. We knew when we took that on it would be hard-fought battle. But the President believed, and I certainly understood and agreed with him that it was so important it needed to be taken on. What we had not really bargained for was how the issue itself would become subordinated to the political battles about whether or not the Republicans wanted to give this President a victory, even if it would help the American people. How much money in some estimates are \$300 million that health care interests would spent to try to defeat the plan. And through their campaign to really undermine the credibility of the President and by connection myself.

Q You fought (inaudible) -- you fought tough battles in Little Rock, you know, political battles over rural health care and over education. And there were, I'm sure, opponents who were, you know, of a different party and had other things in mind when they were arguing for the good of children. You knew that. That's political strategy. Isn't that -- that's what you're such an expert at. I guess I'm -- I'm just wondering, what about in Washington --

MRS. CLINTON: But I don't think anyone could have foreseen, at least no one I talked with, that you would have approximately 22 Republican senators who said they were for universal health abdicate their own position for political reasons. I mean, you have to expect that people will at some level do what they say, and that they stand for what they believe. And so that didn't turn out to be the case. But I have no bad feelings about that. As you say, it's politics. It's just that it was a different kind of politics than I had experienced personally. But I think also it was to some extent different in kind than we have seen in this country before on a major issue.

If you look at a lot of the debates that we've waged in America before, certainly interest groups line up against interest groups. That's the way democracy works to some extent. But in this, the weight on the other side was overwhelming. And even if we were able, as we were, to muster support to try to counter some of the TV ads that were run, for example, we were outspent by such a huge ratio that we could never quite rake through to get people back to understanding what this plan was really about instead of the characterization of it.

So, are you asking me have I learned something? Yes, I have. And I've learned a lot. And I just regret that we were unable to do anything to provide health care for the millions of millions now, more than 41, 42 million people who are uninsured; and the number keeps rising. So our problem has not gotten any better; in fact, it's gotten worse. And eventually we're going to have to deal with that.

Q You know, Elizabeth Dole has said that if she gets your job, which I'm sure you think she won't, she'll also want to keep her own job at the American Red Cross. And I wonder in retrospect -- you've learned about political battles, but I wonder in retrospect if you you've thought about your own role as First Lady, maybe it was a mistake to put forth this notion of two for one and take a job inside the White House rather than take one outside the White House?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think that every woman who's been in this position has worked on issues she's cared about. And they have been involved sometimes to a great extent in the most difficult decisions the President had to make, but behind the scenes. And I believed that it was time for someone to say, we know that women in this position have always influenced policy. They have wielded a great deal of power on behalf of their husband and on behalf of causes they cared about, but that I wanted to be involved in whatever way my husband asked me, even if it were more direct than had been the case in the past. And I think there is a change going on in the country about women's roles. And because of the visibility of this role, more gets acted on and talked about with respect to it than I think we do with everybody else's decisions, so that women are making decisions all the time that are different than their mothers' made. And I am making decisions about how to conduct myself in ways that maybe -- may appear to be different from the ways other women have.

But you know what I have learned is that nothing I have done in this position is new. Everything I have done was done by a former first lady.

Q Eleanor Roosevelt (inaudible) husband's key domestic issue or key major issue and go and fight for on the Hill the way you have?

MRS. CLINTON: Eleanor Roosevelt not only took on many issues but she took a job in the government. Now, criticism led her to leave it, but she was given a major

position by her husband. She wrote letters constantly to cabinet officers and others putting forth her opinions about what should be done. Rosyln Carter testified before Congress on behalf of mental health on a commission that was very important to the President, which she was the honorary chair of.

Q There was a strong sense that nobody has taken on policy and political issues -- discussion the way you have.

MRS. CLINTON: But that's my point -- I don't think that's historically accurate. I think that in our age of intense media scrutiny, everything I do is transparent. But, my goodness, Mrs. Wilson ran the country when her husband had his stroke. Mrs. Taft used to go in and tell cabinet officers and Supreme Court justices what they should do.

So I could give you many other examples. And my point is that all those women did what they did behind the scenes; they were depending upon their own personalities and interests; extremely active; very controversial from time to time, but they weren't living in quite the same situation I am. They weren't of the experience that I brought to the White House. So I take much of what is said about me with a little bit of a grain of salt because I can go back and read historical accounts where much of the same is said about other women in their times.

Q I wanted to ask you two questions (inaudible) -- first of all, you mentioned the press -- I realize we're not your favorite people -- but is there anything that's ever been written about you, you know, really that portrayed you accurately -- a real portrait of you that you think really got you?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think, pieces -- people get pieces of it all the time. Actually, I think that's one of the problems, is by the very nature of the work you have to do, you have to simplify complex matters to communicate to your audience. I think if you took a snapshot of my life from moment to moment, day to day, and you took snapshots of the lives of many of my contemporaries -- moment to moment, day to day, you would get the same complexity of a portrait that I see in my

life and the life of my friends. You might see one of us with our child, comforting a sick child; then you might see us walking into a business meeting; then you might see us volunteering at some kind of an event; then you might see us hosting a dinner party.

I mean, just take all the different functions that modern American women perform in their lives today, and if you only zero in on one of them, you get a different picture than if you try to step back and say, wait a minute, all of this is going on; it's never to me an either/or proposition. It is both and much more.

And so what happens is that someone sees me --

Q Hanging a wreath.

MRS. CLINTON: Hanging a wreath, or hosting a state dinner, or unveiling the Christmas decorations --

Q Lunches with gossip columnists.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, which, you know, we had a hysterical time. And they set back and they say, oh, well, that doesn't jibe with her testifying before Congress; that doesn't square with the stories I heard about her being interested in her husband's political campaigns. Ah, therefore, that must be not genuine, or she must be changing here image, when I think a fairer way to look at it is that I am all of these things, as most of the women I know happen to be.

But it is difficult, still, for us to explain to ourselves, let alone for our journalists to explain, what is a modern woman's life today?

Q Do you think -- forget the prism of journalism, which you have to be interpreted through -- but do you -- I get the sense, and maybe because of this woman I sat with, that there is some sort of confusion that, you know, that they see you as a person who goes to policy meetings with the President, and that this wreath-hanging somehow is a role -- that you're acting the role of First Lady, and looking for who is the authentic Hillary Clinton?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, why can't I be all of that? I mean, I am a Christmas fanatic. I mean, if you had known me, you know, years ago, you would have seen me hanging lots of wreaths. If you have been up on the second floor when there were no cameras around, you would have seen me laying out the hundreds of Christmas

ornaments we've collected. And, you know, with my brother on one ladder and my husband on another putting them up for hours. Why can't I be a whole person -- to get back to the word of integrity -- why can't I or any woman be an integrated person? Why is it either/or? Why do we, as I say in my book, and I write about this in my book, why is it we say that if a woman is advocating a position or being assertive or ambitious, she's acting masculine? Why can't we just be human beings with the full range of experiences available to us.

Q I'm not even sure people would say, because you're testifying before a Senate committee, you're being masculine. This is the 1990s; we have female senators. We're used to seeing women behind podiums. And you look great behind a podium. You looked alive. And that looked like the real you. It's just the jarring images, perhaps. This happened on a period of time where you were behind a podium. And then of all of a sudden there's this period of time where you're -- the image is more your hanging wreaths or talking about the Miss America contest. It somehow seems confusing. And maybe I'm wrong, but that's the image.

MRS. CLINTON: You know, I really cannot help, and I certainly cannot control, how I am portrayed to people. I can only live my life with as much integrity to the best of my ability, doing what I think is right for me. I enjoy a lot of different aspects of being a woman, of having a full and varied life. And I think any of us, whether we are in our own homes or in the White House ultimately have to do what is best for you. And that's how I view my life.

Now, I hope that women and men will look at my life as they look at their own lives. If someone were to see them at just one moment, and that were the image that were portrayed, how would you possibly convey the full range of your life in one image? I don't think it's possible.

And so therefore, if you are doing something one day that is different from what you did the day before, is that contradiction, or is that just a rounding out of who you are?

Q And that's true. What's interesting,

though, is -- you know the American people have sort of common sense; and they get it; they get a feeling from you. And a lot of people like you. This woman liked you. She had a feeling about you. And then she had an uneasy feeling. And, I mean, that might have to do with the controversy, but it's also -- it was like, who is she, she said to me. Who is this woman? Would you acknowledge in some way that there has been some sort of difficulty in getting a -- strong a perception of you these days? Or in recent --

MRS. CLINTON: No -- yes, of course there's been difficulty, but look what has been going on. I mean, for four years on a regular basis, I've been accused or criticized or attacked for all different kinds of things, so that with every step forward that people might take in getting to know me, inevitably there comes some kind of counter-attack, starting with the Republican Convention in 1992. So all of this stays in the atmosphere. This is not coincidental that this stuff is part of the effort to undermine my husband. I understand that.

But then also look, as I would ask you to, at what information people get about me. I do thousands of things every year. Very few of them are ever conveyed to the public, so that part of what happens is what people consider newsworthy is what is communicated. And what I choose to do, whether it's, you know, being on Martha Stewart's show, which I thought was a kick, or doing something else, like unveiling the Christmas tree, that will get some coverage. But I have very little control over what people who cover the news think of as being important.

So I had an event, for example, here a few weeks ago, which meant a great deal to me about -- I brought kids from all over the country who were in limbo because they were in foster care, and they had now been released for adoption, but they were older kids, and nobody was interested in them. And I had -- a lot of press was there. I spoke behind the podium about the importance of our moving these children into loving homes. There was very little interest. It was not considered newsworthy. That's really my point about this book. Much of what I do every day is absolutely consistent with who I am, what I have done for 25 years. And it has to do with women and children. And yet despite my doing it, people will say, oh, that's a soft issue. I happen to think there are no harder issues than what we do with our children. But it's not controversial. I'm not engaged in going up to the Hill to convince members of Congress to do something. I'm not arguing with somebody. I'm advocating

that each of us individually do something about whether it's the foster care and adoption system or mammograms for women, the Gulf War disease, things I have been very involved in all this year.

But then the impression comes across that I'm either not doing anything, or that what I'm doing is a retreat from what I had done before, or that I have taken on soft issues, when at least the way I see my life and my commitments, they are a seamless web of consistent attention to the issues that I have cared about for more than 25 years. There will never be anything higher visibility than health care. But rather than taking health care out and saying it's of a totally different nature, I see it as part of what I have done for all of these years. I write about it in the book. I got involved in it in part because I cared about what was happening to children.

So, of course, it's frustrating to me, because I wish I could carry millions of Americans around with me every day. I wish they could, you know, be with me last Friday when I entertained the crew of the USS Columbia, because I am the sponsor of their ship. I wish they could have been there when I opened the sculpture garden, which I care deeply about to try to promote American art -- on and on and on.

MS. CAPUTO: We've got to wrap up --

Q One more question?

MRS. CLINTON: How about a few questions about the book. (Laughter.)

Q Actually this is a book question. I even wrote it down. Well, I wondered when I read the book about what you do -- I mean, you are married to the President, and what you do in everyday conversation with him about these issues, about everyday -- with the little conversations. And I thought -- at the time I thought this, too -- I would loved to have been with you guys at breakfast, I think it was in October, the morning after the President said he would support the Senate welfare bill, which in effect ends AFDC to poor kids an families. And I thought, what did she say to him at breakfast? I mean, did she said I'm going to hear from Marian Wright

Edelman today? Do you remember that at all -- or is it not --

MRS. CLINTON: I don't think it would have been a conversation very different from most of our conversations. I express my opinions to my husband, and my husband makes whatever decision he thinks is best. Sometimes I agree 100 percent; sometimes I agree 50 percent. But most of the time I agree in the majority with what he decides to do, because he has a lot broader base -- information and knowledge about what's possible than I do, since that's what he does every single day.

And I always believes that it's good to have a President who seeks information from a wide variety of people. That has always been the way with my husband. I mean, one of the great misconceptions is that Bill Clinton does anything anybody, including me, tells him to do. He takes everything in. I've never seen a person who is more eager to absorb different points of view. And then he distills it, and he makes the decision. And very often it is not the exact decision that I had advocated, but he's come to the conclusion it is the right decision that he wants to make at this time.

And, you know, when he supported the Senate welfare bill, he did so saying it's a lot better than the House bill. It is -- at least got some redeeming features to it. But then when they, in the Republican majority changed it, he vetoed it. So he's always constantly assessing what can be done, what should be done. And as someone who observes him do this, I am very heartened by the way he listens to many, many people.

Q (inaudible) -- over breakfast (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: No, I mean, we talk about this, but, you know --

But, you know, he does things every day that I'm not involved in (end of tape).

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