

11/28/94
HRC INTERVIEW WITH
USA TODAY

CLINTON LIBRARY PHOTOCOPY

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

Internal

November 28, 1994

Interview with USA Today

VOICE: Good. He's a delightful man.

VOICE: He's very lovely.

VOICE: He really got enthusiastic about the
(inaudible).

VOICE: (Inaudible.)

MRS. CLINTON: Right. Well, we didn't know what he was going to create, but I have long admired his work, and I like the way he combines different elements, whimsical and realistic at the same time. And I have a copy of the serigraph of the Constitution which he (inaudible) right to represent that type of thing such as the Constitution.

And so I've always just liked his work. It always makes me happy. So, when we asked him and he agreed to do it, we didn't have any idea what he was going to do. He wandered around the White House during last Christmas looking at everything, going into every room, trying to figure out what he wanted to do.

And he submitted a couple of different designs, but we really loved that. I think it turned out great.

VOICE: He told me a couple of things. He started a couple of himself with his dog with him.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, his dog, yeah.

VOICE: A nod to Socks.

MRS. CLINTON: That's right. A saxophone.

VOICE: Did you ask him?

MRS. CLINTON: No, we gave him complete license to just be creative, try to represent the White House in a warm, inviting, holiday spirit. And I think that's the most important thing to me because I love this season, and I think that's
(inaudible).

VOICE: Did you get through Good Night Moon
(inaudible).

(Laughter.)

MRS. CLINTON: That's a good way to put it. You know, one of my favorite children's books.

VOICE: Mine too. When I saw it, that's the thing I thought is (inaudible) with the monument out the window and all those little things.

MRS. CLINTON: Uh-huh.

VOICE: Is this part of your push to feature American artists?

MRS. CLINTON: It is.

VOICE: Like the garden?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, I feel strongly about that. I want to highlight American arts and crafts. And, you know, last year during Christmas we had this marvelous collection of crafts that was part of our decorations.

And the sculpture garden, of course, (inaudible) American artists. And Thomas McKnight is one of our foremost American artists, so it was a nice way to combine our love of art and our wanting to highlight American artists with the season. So, it was a good marriage.

VOICE: Well, it's a very casual and sort of a happy card. We wondered -- you know, last year you did a photograph. (Inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: We wanted to try different things. You know, last year was our first Christmas here, and we were excited about it and wanted to be part of it in a very personal way. And this year we wanted to highlight the house and the feeling that the house has during Christmas which really is magical.

I don't have an (inaudible) start thinking that in a couple of months, when we recover from this year.

VOICE: I was wondering, are you going to do some (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. Yeah, I chose that months ago. I looked at a sheaf of stamps and I just thought it was beautiful. And I'm so grateful the Post Office has changed its decision not to issue the Madonna stamps. I thought that was a very inexplicable decision, but thankfully they have reversed it. So, all of us who like the Madonna stamps will be able to look forward to them in years to come.

VOICE: (Inaudible).

VOICE: Let me also ask you, I was thinking about as a point that high visibility makes shopping, all the things that (inaudible). Have you figured out ways around that?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, last year we actually did go out shopping. Chelsea and I went out several times, and then Chelsea, Bill, and I went out once, which caused pandemonium, but it still was lots of fun.

So, we'll probably figure out ways for the two of us to shop. And then I hope, since he loves to Christmas shop, he gets to do it with us at least once.

VOICE: Have you started gathering --

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I do that all year long. I squirrel things away that I think people would like. I'm already on the road to doing that. But I always do last minute shopping, too. It's part of the tradition of Christmas for us.

VOICE: Are you done?

MRS. CLINTON: No, not at all. No.

(Laughter.)

MRS. CLINTON: I have some things which give me a false sense of security.

VOICE: And then you wait until the last minute?

MRS. CLINTON: That's right.

VOICE: Do you all give each other sort of hints as (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Yeah, we do. You know, we will say something like, gee, I really would like one of those -- very subtle. But most of the time we're more focused on what we're going to give for other people. And, of course, Bill and I talk a lot about Chelsea, and then we surprise each other.

So, it's something that -- we really get a lot of joy out of Christmas. And Chelsea starts getting excited about Christmas almost at a fever pitch around Thanksgiving, and only gets more so as the month goes on. She's dancing around over Thanksgiving saying, I don't believe it, it's going to be Christmas, you know. And that's sort of the way we all feel.

And the gifts are part of it, but it's not the most important part.

VOICE: Do you do, you know, making things?

MRS. CLINTON: We used to do that a lot. I don't know that we'll do that this year, but that was a big part of what we did for Christmas. We would make lots of things, and probably won't do it this year. I haven't really stopped to think about that (inaudible) part of our plans.

But we all miss, you know, sort of secretly adopt families and we've done that all -- well, ever since I've known Bill. And we've always done things on Christmas and around Christmas for families at the shelters.

That's one of the things that we get the most pleasure out of as a family, and particularly before last year, when it became more difficult to do, we would always adopt families with children. And Chelsea and Bill and I would shop for the children, and that was something special for us. And we would always extend that, particularly on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day to a lot of shelters, particularly the shelters for women and children.

And so we'll probably try to figure out a way like we did the day before Thanksgiving at least to go to a shelter, because we want people to think about doing that in their own homes.

VOICE: Do you choose a family that you know?

MRS. CLINTON: No, we don't. Well, we have always done a lot of things for families that we've known, but we also usually pick at least one family, sometimes two that we don't know.

VOICE: (Inaudible.)

VOICE: Do they know you? Was that anonymous?

MRS. CLINTON: It's always anonymous but sometimes, particularly at home when we drop off the presents or arrange for the presents to be delivered they might find out who we are. But that's really not the purpose.

But sometimes, too, they do find out. And particularly with my husband it's been kind of exciting because sometimes then we hear from these families next year or the year after saying, well, you know, I finally got a job and I remember what you did for us, and I want to tell you that I'm doing something for somebody else. And that's really the spirit that we like to (inaudible).

VOICE: One thing that I was wondering, especially given that (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, you know, just being able to spend it with our family and to do all the things around Christmas that mean so much to us, such as giving gifts to other people and helping people that need help all year long, but particularly

remembering them at Christmas, going to church Christmas Eve, spending time with friends at their homes, having lots of people in, reading the Christmas story, which is one of our traditions, and just everything that makes Christmas for us really reinforce both the message of Christmas in the original Christmas story, and the importance of family and friends, which you remember all year long, but this kind of makes it possible for us to do it at a particular time.

VOICE: (Inaudible) the Christmas story you mean the --

MRS. CLINTON: Gospel, yeah.

VOICE: And you and your daughter (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: And the President reads "The Night Before Christmas" which he loves to do, and last year -- he used to do it just for family and friend's children, but then last year he did it here in the White House for children that came in, and I think he's going to do it again this year.

VOICE: That's good. You have to look for younger children, then?

MRS. CLINTON: That's right, exactly. And then we get out a lot of the old favorite movies that everybody watches at Christmas time. We drag out "A Christmas Carol," "The Miracle on 34th Street," and we haven't seen any of the new ones, which we're going to have go see or rent.

VOICE: "The Santa Clause" and (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

VOICE: They've already had "The Grinch" on (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Have you already seen it?

VOICE: "The Grinch" -- we've watched it twice.

MRS. CLINTON: Now last year I heard that a lot of the stations actually decided consciously not to run "It's a Wonderful Life" because, you know, you could watch it 45 times in one day, apparently. I hope it's back.

VOICE: No, I saw it. It was back-to-back. It was out there right after Thanksgiving.

MRS. CLINTON: Good.

VOICE: (Inaudible?)

MRS. CLINTON: Right, yes. My mother and my brothers, and the President's brother. It will be our first Christmas without my mother-in-law, and so it will be kind of poignant. But the President's nephew will be here and that will be great, and it will all of us together.

VOICE: (Inaudible?)

MRS. CLINTON: Uh-huh. Right.

VOICE: Have you used the (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: I have not. I have seen lots of pictures. Chelsea and I have not been able to seem him yet, but the President has seen him on several trips. But my trips out there never coincide with their being there. So, I have a lot of excitement about being able to (inaudible). That one of the wonderful things about Christmas is you can begin to relive the excitement of Christmas through the eyes of a child.

VOICE: (Inaudible?)

MRS. CLINTON: That's right. Well, he's a little young. I don't know. "Good-Night Moon" maybe will be a little too much for him yet, but --

VOICE: But he can't get (inaudible).

MRS. CLINTON: That's right. We're captive in that respect.

VOICE: Fine. Let me ask you, too, you've talked recently about your spirituality and so forth. In terms of Christmas you've touched on that, reading the gospel. Are there other things that you do to prepare for the (inaudible) for the holidays, or as a family (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think that that's very important to us, and going to church and being grateful for, you know, the blessings that we have is one of the ways we really can try to reinforce the meaning of Christmas, and not just get caught up in the commercialism of gift giving and buying, and every one of us frantic with anxiety which doesn't have much to do with the Christmas story, which should be the focal point.

And, you know, going to church particularly on Christmas Eve, we've always done and we will do again. But I think just being aware of what the real meaning of Christmas is, being in touch with the story that's been really at the root of it to me is the most important part of the whole holiday.

Although I love everything else, I love the tree, I love the food, I love everything about Christmas, it's not nearly as important as the meaning of Christmas.

VOICE: And how about as a mom (inaudible), do you think of new ideas (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, we always have. You know, when Chelsea was a little girl we spent a lot of time reading Christmas stories. You know, the Little Drummer Boy, the Littlest Angel, I mean all the -- every variation on the Three Wise Men stories.

Actually for the month before Christmas we would read a different Christmas story, Christmas version. We had this whole collection of Christmas stories that we collected that we'd read to her. And so it's something that I think can really have a lot of meaning to her as well, and she looks forward to it.

But that's just always the -- we always try to remember what Christmas is about.

VOICE: (Inaudible.)

MRS. CLINTON: Well, we -- look, Thanksgiving and Christmas are our favorite times, and we always have pretty much the same things. We have turkey at both Thanksgiving and Christmas, so we repeat the Thanksgiving turkey dinner.

And my brothers and I, when we were growing up, we made chocolate chip cookies every Christmas Eve. I think my mother started that so that she could get us out of her hair when she was doing last minute shopping, and running around, and wrapping and everything, which I fully understand now.

So, we will make cookies some time during Christmas. We haven't made them yet. And Chelsea and I will do that, and she'll decorate them. And they will be then available for literally months.

(Laughter.)

MRS. CLINTON: We always overdo it. And so the cookie making is part of what we do.

VOICE: Now, you do that in the White House kitchen?

MRS. CLINTON: Yeah, on the second floor. She makes a lot of things. She really likes to cook. And she has sometimes friends over, girls who spend the night, and you know they'll go make something.

Two of them were over here I guess it was about 2 weeks ago, and they made an apple pie. The other night she made for her school assignment some cookies, Latin American. So, then we'll make the Christmas cookies together.

VOICE: Do you do that, too? Do you --

VOICE: Do you miss being able to? I know there was a story in the beginning, when you first came here, about when Chelsea was sick you used make her scrambled eggs.

MRS. CLINTON: Right. Well, that's the kitchen (inaudible). Yeah, the kitchen that we sort of turned into a family kitchen upstairs, and so that's the one that we cook in, and that's the one that she and her friends hang out in.

It's not real well equipped. We always have to have a mad dash around the house to the real kitchen to find measuring cups and all the things that are needed. But it's a normal size, family size kitchen.

VOICE: Is there anything that you'd like to do for the holidays that you can't do because of living here, you know, something like getting all of the measuring cups, and it's too much of a hassle?

MRS. CLINTON: No. I think that I would like to be able to just wander around. I'm not a really adept shopper, but I love to wander and look at things, and just kind of lose myself in the crowds and the excitement of Christmas, and I don't see how I can do that. So, I miss that.

That's the one thing that I -- and my husband really does because he's a last minute shopper who loved always to go out with a group of his, you know, friends and they would all go out and buy presents for their wives, try to figure out what they were supposed to buy.

They'd be calling, you know, for various stops saying, do you think so-and-so would like this? You know, what if he gets this, do think she'd like it? What size? What size do you think she really is?

And they had so much fun together. And, you know, it's just very hard to do that now.

VOICE: Disguises (inaudible).

MRS. CLINTON: That's right. You know, Groucho Marx glasses and nose and things like that. We may have to work on that.

But that is -- I do -- I mean, I know shopping can be such an enormous pain in the neck, but when you can't do it easily you miss it even though it's something that we all wish were a little easier and wouldn't take quite so much time and hassle. But still it's part of the experience, getting out there, you know, fighting the crowds, finding a place to park at

the malls, getting tired, saying you'll never do this again. I mean, all those traditions.

VOICE: Do you ever try, or is it just too much, just too much to go to Georgetown?

MRS. CLINTON: You know, we try, but it's very hard. Yeah, we do. Chelsea and I do. We have much more freedom than the President but it's not the same. It's not the same as it was. So, everybody who is complaining about shopping, enjoy it. (Inaudible.)

VOICE: I thought looking at the house that it also strikes me that it's decorated so incredibly, but people come and (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Yeah, we do actually. You know, especially because, just as last year, we have asked people all over the country to contribute to Christmas. So, we don't really know everything that we're going to see.

And last year we would finish an event, come back to the White House, say good-bye to the last guest, and then just wander around looking at everything. It is so beautiful.

And we try to open it up -- I mean, I think Ann can tell you, I think we've opened it up to so many people, and literally thousands more than have ever been able to get through the White House before, which gives us a lot of joy. We want to share it with people.

So, that all starts next week. The tree comes on Thursday and the house will be closed, and will be decorated by dozens and dozens of volunteers working with the permanent staff, and it opens up on Sunday. And then it's an extraordinary month, a little bit less of a month, of activity afterwards.

VOICE: (Inaudible?)

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, we do. Well, we do our own tree for sure, and we have own ornaments that are meaningful to us. And we like to pull them out of the box and remember and say, oh, my gosh, what about that? Remember when this happened? But we also have some help upstairs too, because it's just such a bigger space than we've ever lived in.

But we pull out all of our old ornaments and things from the past and put them out and around, and that's really one of the things that we enjoy doing with the family.

VOICE: Do you all collect (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, they like ornaments. And, you know, we're not -- we don't do it all the time, but it's something that comes across our experience that we see, you know, pick up and say I've got a stack of those things but (inaudible). We stopped in Hawaii and the commander and the Marines and his wife picked out this cute little Marine ornament that, you know, we'll put it up and it will remind us of when we stopped in Hawaii on the way back from Indonesia. It's things like that that have some meaning to us that we'll --

VOICE: (Inaudible.)

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, all of that.

(Laughter.)

MRS. CLINTON: All of those things. And, you know, we used to have a whole bottom tier of unbreakable ornaments when

she was a baby, and all of the ones made out of cloth or straw or cotton and things. So, all of those, which are chewed on by the cat or by our old dog who died, or pulled off and have little gummy finger prints on them, those all go on the bottom of the tree, you know, especially because we'll have a new baby to crawl around and try to pull things off this year. So, that will be fun.

VOICE: (Inaudible.)

MRS. CLINTON: That's right.

VOICE: Does Sox stay away from the tree?

MRS. CLINTON: Sox does. You know, Sox has become such a cat of the White House now. He's got a whole different persona than he used to have, so he's probably much too well behaved these days for that.

VOICE: As an animal lover I've got to ask you, does he ever -- does he stay upstairs? Does he ever come down like at night like you come down? Does he come down?

MRS. CLINTON: No. That's the hardest thing for us is the fact that he is much more confined than he ever was before. He has a great set of quarters in the basement, and he roams those, and he's friends with all of the men that keep all of the systems of the White House running.

But he really can't have free reign because it's not only so big that he'd literally get lost and we wouldn't know, but it's also because there are so many antiques and so many things of such value. So, he has his own domain.

VOICE: I was going to say, are you afraid some day he's going to get lost down there?

MRS. CLINTON: Not in the basement. The basement he has mastered.

VOICE: Oh, he does.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, he knows the basement.

VOICE: He doesn't go outside.

MRS. CLINTON: But I think there are 120 rooms here or something like that, so that would be -- it's too big for just --

VOICE: For one cat.

MRS. CLINTON: For the run of the house. I'm so glad you're interested in this. I hope you'll come back when everything is all decorated and look around, too.

VOICE: We'd love to.

MRS. CLINTON: You know, maybe when we do the tree and all that next week you ought to come back.

VOICE: Do you light the big tree outside?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, well, the big tree gets lighted --

VOICE: Next Wednesday.

MRS. CLINTON: Next Wednesday, but our tree gets unveiled on Monday, so if you come back on Monday you can see the -- all the decoration will be done just like a miracle the way it is -- amazing.

VOICE: I've seen pictures. I'd love to see it.

MRS. CLINTON: It is just incredible, but they're really well -- they literally work on it all year long. I mean, I remember when we first got here, I had only been here about a month, and people told me they wanted to have a meeting about

Christmas. I was just stunned, but I realized that it takes that much planning to do it.

And the people who work on it year after year are so dedicated to it, and so absolutely professional. They just love doing this. They do it so well. And then they have a cadre of volunteers who come and help put part of it up.

VOICE: Do you step in and help them?

MRS. CLINTON: I did last year, yeah, and this year I have to unfortunately be out of town for 2 of the days that they're going to do most of the work on (inaudible).

VOICE: Where is the tree from?

MRS. CLINTON: This year it was (inaudible).

VOICE: Is there a special (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, every year the National Christmas Tree Growers Association picks what they think of as the best tree in the whole country, and that's the one they offer to the White House. And so they're the ones who make the selection.

And then the people here at the White House go and make sure that it will fit, the dimensions, but they've been doing it so long that they've got it pretty well down.

VOICE: So this year it's from Missouri?

MRS. CLINTON: I think it's the first time there has ever been a tree from Missouri. We are really excited about it.

VOICE: The show me tree, right?

(Laughter.)

VOICE: Could I possibly get you to hold that card?

MRS. CLINTON: Sure, of course. Do you want me to stand and do it?

VOICE: Right there is fine.

VOICE: Would you rather the commemorative? Do you want the bigger one?

VOICE: No, the actual card. Could you hold it a little bit higher?

MRS. CLINTON: Sure. Mr. Clinton is absolutely (inaudible).

VOICE: Oh, good.

VOICE: Well, Sox should be (inaudible) and I love that.

MRS. CLINTON: Sox gets so much mail every week.

VOICE: Thank you.

MRS. CLINTON: We should give you one of the Sox photographs with his paw-print.

VOICE: Oh.

VOICE: Actually, I they sent one to my daughter's school.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, really?

VOICE: It's a very big deal in the kindergarten.

MRS. CLINTON: Kids love it. When people come to see the President, if they have they children with them --

(Break in recording.)

MRS. CLINTON: That is cute. I love the way you did that. And the saxophone I thought was so clever.

VOICE: Well, it's fun. It's like a puzzle. I mean, that's what I like about it is you just keep finding all these things in it.

VOICE: I just wondered if there's a little meaning, but you're saying he put them in, right? You didn't ask for them?

MRS. CLINTON: No, we didn't ask. I mean, we hang our stockings on the mantle -- I mean, he asked a lot of questions when he was here. He knows that I love to have tea and so we have a tea which I think is on here.

VOICE: Do you collect his art?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I don't collect but I have one, yeah, the Constitution which is really (inaudible). VOICE: A lot of your friends collect, don't they?

MRS. CLINTON: I have a lot of friends who are collectors.

VOICE: But you're right, this will be good for kids to look at. It is like "Good-Night Moon."

VOICE: It's so much fun.

VOICE: It's such a neat idea, "Good-Night Moon." We ought to (inaudible) concept.

(Laughter.)

VOICE: Because we have that book at home and my little boy is in first grade and today, every day they have a newspaper. And he said, well, today I'm going to raise my hand and tell them that you're going to the White House and talk to Mrs. Clinton about the card. And I said, well, you should mention that it's in the Red Room and Sox, and then he got very excited about the cat.

MRS. CLINTON: That is so nice. Well, I must have read "Good-Night Moon" 10,000 times. And it gets to the point that they can recite it to you. So, you turn the page and oh, you know, they're already there, a step ahead.

VOICE: When did Chelsea stop believing in Santa?

MRS. CLINTON: She held out a long time.

VOICE: Did she?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. She really was resistant. In fact her best friend said to me one day, probably when she was ten, (inaudible whispering.)

VOICE: And she was ten.

MRS. CLINTON: Yeah, and I think, you know, I mean she sort of slowly petered out. I mean, she really held on for a long time. They were funny the way they did that. I said to Chelsea's friends, are you sure you don't? Her eyes got really wide and she said, I think I don't.

(Laughter.)

MRS. CLINTON: Well, okay, you know. It's hard to know. I'm not sure I don't.

VOICE: Oh, thanks very --

(Whereupon, the recording ended.)

THE WHITE HOUSE

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Internal

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VOICE: Good. He's a delightful man.

VOICE: He's very lovely.

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And he submitted a couple of different designs, but we really loved that. I think it turned out great.

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MRS. CLINTON: Yes, his dog, yeah.

VOICE: A nod to Socks.

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VOICE: Did you ask him?

MRS. CLINTON: No, we gave him complete license to just be creative, try to represent the White House in a warm, inviting, holiday spirit. And I think that's the most important thing to me because I love this season, and I think that's
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VOICE: Did you get through Good Night Moon
(inaudible).

(Laughter.)

MRS. CLINTON: That's a good way to put it. You know, one of my favorite children's books.

VOICE: Mine too. When I saw it, that's the thing I thought is (inaudible) with the monument out the window and all those little things.

MRS. CLINTON: Uh-huh.

VOICE: Is this part of your push to feature American artists?

MRS. CLINTON: It is.

VOICE: Like the garden?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, I feel strongly about that. I want to highlight American arts and crafts. And, you know, last year during Christmas we had this marvelous collection of crafts that was part of our decorations.

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MRS. CLINTON: No, not at all. No.

(Laughter.)

MRS. CLINTON: I have some things which give me a false sense of security.

VOICE: And then you wait until the last minute?

MRS. CLINTON: That's right.

VOICE: Do you all give each other sort of hints as (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Yeah, we do. You know, we will say something like, gee, I really would like one of those -- very subtle. But most of the time we're more focused on what we're going to give for other people. And, of course, Bill and I talk a lot about Chelsea, and then we surprise each other.

So, it's something that -- we really get a lot of joy out of Christmas. And Chelsea starts getting excited about Christmas almost at a fever pitch around Thanksgiving, and only gets more so as the month goes on. She's dancing around over Thanksgiving saying, I don't believe it, it's going to be Christmas, you know. And that's sort of the way we all feel.

And the gifts are part of it, but it's not the most important part.

VOICE: Do you do, you know, making things?

MRS. CLINTON: We used to do that a lot. I don't know that we'll do that this year, but that was a big part of what we did for Christmas. We would make lots of things, and probably won't do it this year. I haven't really stopped to think about that (inaudible) part of our plans.

But we all miss, you know, sort of secretly adopt families and we've done that all -- well, ever since I've known Bill. And we've always done things on Christmas and around Christmas for families at the shelters.

That's one of the things that we get the most pleasure out of as a family, and particularly before last year, when it became more difficult to do, we would always adopt families with children. And Chelsea and Bill and I would shop for the children, and that was something special for us. And we would always extend that, particularly on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day to a lot of shelters, particularly the shelters for women and children.

And so we'll probably try to figure out a way like we did the day before Thanksgiving at least to go to a shelter, because we want people to think about doing that in their own homes.

VOICE: Do you choose a family that you know?

MRS. CLINTON: No, we don't. Well, we have always done a lot of things for families that we've known, but we also usually pick at least one family, sometimes two that we don't know.

VOICE: (Inaudible.)

VOICE: Do they know you? Was that anonymous?

MRS. CLINTON: It's always anonymous but sometimes, particularly at home when we drop off the presents or arrange for the presents to be delivered they might find out who we are. But that's really not the purpose.

But sometimes, too, they do find out. And particularly with my husband it's been kind of exciting because sometimes then we hear from these families next year or the year after saying, well, you know, I finally got a job and I remember what you did for us, and I want to tell you that I'm doing something for somebody else. And that's really the spirit that we like to (inaudible).

VOICE: One thing that I was wondering, especially given that (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, you know, just being able to spend it with our family and to do all the things around Christmas that mean so much to us, such as giving gifts to other people and helping people that need help all year long, but particularly

remembering them at Christmas, going to church Christmas Eve, spending time with friends at their homes, having lots of people in, reading the Christmas story, which is one of our traditions, and just everything that makes Christmas for us really reinforce both the message of Christmas in the original Christmas story, and the importance of family and friends, which you remember all year long, but this kind of makes it possible for us to do it at a particular time.

VOICE: (Inaudible) the Christmas story you mean the --

MRS. CLINTON: Gospel, yeah.

VOICE: And you and your daughter (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: And the President reads "The Night Before Christmas" which he loves to do, and last year -- he used to do it just for family and friend's children, but then last year he did it here in the White House for children that came in, and I think he's going to do it again this year.

VOICE: That's good. You have to look for younger children, then?

MRS. CLINTON: That's right, exactly. And then we get out a lot of the old favorite movies that everybody watches at Christmas time. We drag out "A Christmas Carol," "The Miracle on 34th Street," and we haven't seen any of the new ones, which we're going to have to go see or rent.

VOICE: "The Santa Clause" and (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

VOICE: They've already had "The Grinch" on (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Have you already seen it?

VOICE: "The Grinch" -- we've watched it twice.

MRS. CLINTON: Now last year I heard that a lot of the stations actually decided consciously not to run "It's a Wonderful Life" because, you know, you could watch it 45 times in one day, apparently. I hope it's back.

VOICE: No, I saw it. It was back-to-back. It was out there right after Thanksgiving.

MRS. CLINTON: Good.

VOICE: (Inaudible?)

MRS. CLINTON: Right, yes. My mother and my brothers, and the President's brother. It will be our first Christmas without my mother-in-law, and so it will be kind of poignant. But the President's nephew will be here and that will be great, and it will all of us together.

VOICE: (Inaudible?)

MRS. CLINTON: Uh-huh. Right.

VOICE: Have you used the (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: I have not. I have seen lots of pictures. Chelsea and I have not been able to see him yet, but the President has seen him on several trips. But my trips out there never coincide with their being there. So, I have a lot of excitement about being able to (inaudible). That one of the wonderful things about Christmas is you can begin to relive the excitement of Christmas through the eyes of a child.

VOICE: (Inaudible?)

MRS. CLINTON: That's right. Well, he's a little young. I don't know. "Good-Night Moon" maybe will be a little too much for him yet, but --

VOICE: But he can't get (inaudible).

MRS. CLINTON: That's right. We're captive in that respect.

VOICE: Fine. Let me ask you, too, you've talked recently about your spirituality and so forth. In terms of Christmas you've touched on that, reading the gospel. Are there other things that you do to prepare for the (inaudible) for the holidays, or as a family (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think that that's very important to us, and going to church and being grateful for, you know, the blessings that we have is one of the ways we really can try to reinforce the meaning of Christmas, and not just get caught up in the commercialism of gift giving and buying, and every one of us frantic with anxiety which doesn't have much to do with the Christmas story, which should be the focal point.

And, you know, going to church particularly on Christmas Eve, we've always done and we will do again. But I think just being aware of what the real meaning of Christmas is, being in touch with the story that's been really at the root of it to me is the most important part of the whole holiday.

Although I love everything else, I love the tree, I love the food, I love everything about Christmas, it's not nearly as important as the meaning of Christmas.

VOICE: And how about as a mom (inaudible), do you think of new ideas (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, we always have. You know, when Chelsea was a little girl we spent a lot of time reading Christmas stories. You know, the Little Drummer Boy, the Littlest Angel, I mean all the -- every variation on the Three Wise Men stories.

Actually for the month before Christmas we would read a different Christmas story, Christmas version. We had this whole collection of Christmas stories that we collected that we'd read to her. And so it's something that I think can really have a lot of meaning to her as well, and she looks forward to it.

But that's just always the -- we always try to remember what Christmas is about.

VOICE: (Inaudible.)

MRS. CLINTON: Well, we -- look, Thanksgiving and Christmas are our favorite times, and we always have pretty much the same things. We have turkey at both Thanksgiving and Christmas, so we repeat the Thanksgiving turkey dinner.

And my brothers and I, when we were growing up, we made chocolate chip cookies every Christmas Eve. I think my mother started that so that she could get us out of her hair when she was doing last minute shopping, and running around, and wrapping and everything, which I fully understand now.

So, we will make cookies some time during Christmas. We haven't made them yet. And Chelsea and I will do that, and she'll decorate them. And they will be then available for literally months.

(Laughter.)

MRS. CLINTON: We always overdo it. And so the cookie making is part of what we do.

VOICE: Now, you do that in the White House kitchen?

MRS. CLINTON: Yeah, on the second floor. She makes a lot of things. She really likes to cook. And she has sometimes friends over, girls who spend the night, and you know they'll go make something.

Two of them were over here I guess it was about 2 weeks ago, and they made an apple pie. The other night she made for her school assignment some cookies, Latin American. So, then we'll make the Christmas cookies together.

VOICE: Do you do that, too? Do you --

VOICE: Do you miss being able to? I know there was a story in the beginning, when you first came here, about when Chelsea was sick you used make her scrambled eggs.

MRS. CLINTON: Right. Well, that's the kitchen (inaudible). Yeah, the kitchen that we sort of turned into a family kitchen upstairs, and so that's the one that we cook in, and that's the one that she and her friends hang out in.

It's not real well equipped. We always have to have a mad dash around the house to the real kitchen to find measuring cups and all the things that are needed. But it's a normal size, family size kitchen.

VOICE: Is there anything that you'd like to do for the holidays that you can't do because of living here, you know, something like getting all of the measuring cups, and it's too much of a hassle?

MRS. CLINTON: No. I think that I would like to be able to just wander around. I'm not a really adept shopper, but I love to wander and look at things, and just kind of lose myself in the crowds and the excitement of Christmas, and I don't see how I can do that. So, I miss that.

That's the one thing that I -- and my husband really does because he's a last minute shopper who loved always to go out with a group of his, you know, friends and they would all go out and buy presents for their wives, try to figure out what they were supposed to buy.

They'd be calling, you know, for various stops saying, do you think so-and-so would like this? You know, what if he gets this, do think she'd like it? What size? What size do you think she really is?

And they had so much fun together. And, you know, it's just very hard to do that now.

VOICE: Disguises (inaudible).

MRS. CLINTON: That's right. You know, Groucho Marx glasses and nose and things like that. We may have to work on that.

But that is -- I do -- I mean, I know shopping can be such an enormous pain in the neck, but when you can't do it easily you miss it even though it's something that we all wish were a little easier and wouldn't take quite so much time and hassle. But still it's part of the experience, getting out there, you know, fighting the crowds, finding a place to park at

the malls, getting tired, saying you'll never do this again. I mean, all those traditions.

VOICE: Do you ever try, or is it just too much, just too much to go to Georgetown?

MRS. CLINTON: You know, we try, but it's very hard. Yeah, we do. Chelsea and I do. We have much more freedom than the President but it's not the same. It's not the same as it was. So, everybody who is complaining about shopping, enjoy it. (Inaudible.)

VOICE: I thought looking at the house that it also strikes me that it's decorated so incredibly, but people come and (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Yeah, we do actually. You know, especially because, just as last year, we have asked people all over the country to contribute to Christmas. So, we don't really know everything that we're going to see.

And last year we would finish an event, come back to the White House, say good-bye to the last guest, and then just wander around looking at everything. It is so beautiful.

And we try to open it up -- I mean, I think Ann can tell you, I think we've opened it up to so many people, and literally thousands more than have ever been able to get through the White House before, which gives us a lot of joy. We want to share it with people.

So, that all starts next week. The tree comes on Thursday and the house will be closed, and will be decorated by dozens and dozens of volunteers working with the permanent staff, and it opens up on Sunday. And then it's an extraordinary month, a little bit less of a month, of activity afterwards.

VOICE: (Inaudible?)

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, we do. Well, we do our own tree for sure, and we have own ornaments that are meaningful to us. And we like to pull them out of the box and remember and say, oh, my gosh, what about that? Remember when this happened? But we also have some help upstairs too, because it's just such a bigger space than we've ever lived in.

But we pull out all of our old ornaments and things from the past and put them out and around, and that's really one of the things that we enjoy doing with the family.

VOICE: Do you all collect (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, they like ornaments. And, you know, we're not -- we don't do it all the time, but it's something that comes across our experience that we see, you know, pick up and say I've got a stack of those things but (inaudible). We stopped in Hawaii and the commander and the Marines and his wife picked out this cute little Marine ornament that, you know, we'll put it up and it will remind us of when we stopped in Hawaii on the way back from Indonesia. It's things like that that have some meaning to us that we'll --

VOICE: (Inaudible.)

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, all of that.

(Laughter.)

MRS. CLINTON: All of those things. And, you know, we used to have a whole bottom tier of unbreakable ornaments when

she was a baby, and all of the ones made out of cloth or straw or cotton and things. So, all of those, which are chewed on by the cat or by our old dog who died, or pulled off and have little gummy finger prints on them, those all go on the bottom of the tree, you know, especially because we'll have a new baby to crawl around and try to pull things off this year. So, that will be fun.

VOICE: (Inaudible.)

MRS. CLINTON: That's right.

VOICE: Does Sox stay away from the tree?

MRS. CLINTON: Sox does. You know, Sox has become such a cat of the White House now. He's got a whole different persona than he used to have, so he's probably much too well behaved these days for that.

VOICE: As an animal lover I've got to ask you, does he ever -- does he stay upstairs? Does he ever come down like at night like you come down? Does he come down?

MRS. CLINTON: No. That's the hardest thing for us is the fact that he is much more confined than he ever was before. He has a great set of quarters in the basement, and he roams those, and he's friends with all of the men that keep all of the systems of the White House running.

But he really can't have free reign because it's not only so big that he'd literally get lost and we wouldn't know, but it's also because there are so many antiques and so many things of such value. So, he has his own domain.

VOICE: I was going to say, are you afraid some day he's going to get lost down there?

MRS. CLINTON: Not in the basement. The basement he has mastered.

VOICE: Oh, he does.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, he knows the basement.

VOICE: He doesn't go outside.

MRS. CLINTON: But I think there are 120 rooms here or something like that, so that would be -- it's too big for just --

VOICE: For one cat.

MRS. CLINTON: For the run of the house. I'm so glad you're interested in this. I hope you'll come back when everything is all decorated and look around, too.

VOICE: We'd love to.

MRS. CLINTON: You know, maybe when we do the tree and all that next week you ought to come back.

VOICE: Do you light the big tree outside?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, well, the big tree gets lighted --

VOICE: Next Wednesday.

MRS. CLINTON: Next Wednesday, but our tree gets unveiled on Monday, so if you come back on Monday you can see the -- all the decoration will be done just like a miracle the way it is -- amazing.

VOICE: I've seen pictures. I'd love to see it.

MRS. CLINTON: It is just incredible, but they're really well -- they literally work on it all year long. I mean, I remember when we first got here, I had only been here about a month, and people told me they wanted to have a meeting about

Christmas. I was just stunned, but I realized that it takes that much planning to do it.

And the people who work on it year after year are so dedicated to it, and so absolutely professional. They just love doing this. They do it so well. And then they have a cadre of volunteers who come and help put part of it up.

VOICE: Do you step in and help them?

MRS. CLINTON: I did last year, yeah, and this year I have to unfortunately be out of town for 2 of the days that they're going to do most of the work on (inaudible).

VOICE: Where is the tree from?

MRS. CLINTON: This year it was (inaudible).

VOICE: Is there a special (inaudible)?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, every year the National Christmas Tree Growers Association picks what they think of as the best tree in the whole country, and that's the one they offer to the White House. And so they're the ones who make the selection.

And then the people here at the White House go and make sure that it will fit, the dimensions, but they've been doing it so long that they've got it pretty well down.

VOICE: So this year it's from Missouri?

MRS. CLINTON: I think it's the first time there has ever been a tree from Missouri. We are really excited about it.

VOICE: The show me tree, right?

(Laughter.)

VOICE: Could I possibly get you to hold that card?

MRS. CLINTON: Sure, of course. Do you want me to stand and do it?

VOICE: Right there is fine.

VOICE: Would you rather the commemorative? Do you want the bigger one?

VOICE: No, the actual card. Could you hold it a little bit higher?

MRS. CLINTON: Sure. Mr. Clinton is absolutely (inaudible).

VOICE: Oh, good.

VOICE: Well, Sox should be (inaudible) and I love that.

MRS. CLINTON: Sox gets so much mail every week.

VOICE: Thank you.

MRS. CLINTON: We should give you one of the Sox photographs with his paw-print.

VOICE: Oh.

VOICE: Actually, I they sent one to my daughter's school.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, really?

VOICE: It's a very big deal in the kindergarten.

MRS. CLINTON: Kids love it. When people come to see the President, if they have they children with them --

(Break in recording.)

MRS. CLINTON: That is cute. I love the way you did that. And the saxophone I thought was so clever.

VOICE: Well, it's fun. It's like a puzzle. I mean, that's what I like about it is you just keep finding all these things in it.

VOICE: I just wondered if there's a little meaning, but you're saying he put them in, right? You didn't ask for them?

MRS. CLINTON: No, we didn't ask. I mean, we hang our stockings on the mantle -- I mean, he asked a lot of questions when he was here. He knows that I love to have tea and so we have a tea which I think is on here.

VOICE: Do you collect his art?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I don't collect but I have one, yeah, the Constitution which is really (inaudible). VOICE: A lot of your friends collect, don't they?

MRS. CLINTON: I have a lot of friends who are collectors.

VOICE: But you're right, this will be good for kids to look at. It is like "Good-Night Moon."

VOICE: It's so much fun.

VOICE: It's such a neat idea, "Good-Night Moon." We ought to (inaudible) concept.

(Laughter.)

VOICE: Because we have that book at home and my little boy is in first grade and today, every day they have a newspaper. And he said, well, today I'm going to raise my hand and tell them that you're going to the White House and talk to Mrs. Clinton about the card. And I said, well, you should mention that it's in the Red Room and Sox, and then he got very excited about the cat.

MRS. CLINTON: That is so nice. Well, I must have read "Good-Night Moon" 10,000 times. And it gets to the point that they can recite it to you. So, you turn the page and oh, you know, they're already there, a step ahead.

VOICE: When did Chelsea stop believing in Santa?

MRS. CLINTON: She held out a long time.

VOICE: Did she?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. She really was resistant. In fact her best friend said to me one day, probably when she was ten, (inaudible whispering.)

VOICE: And she was ten.

MRS. CLINTON: Yeah, and I think, you know, I mean she sort of slowly petered out. I mean, she really held on for a long time. They were funny the way they did that. I said to Chelsea's friends, are you sure you don't? Her eyes got really wide and she said, I think I don't.

(Laughter.)

MRS. CLINTON: Well, okay, you know. It's hard to know. I'm not sure I don't.

VOICE: Oh, thanks very --

(Whereupon, the recording ended.)