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CONGRESSIONAL SPOUSES  
CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

December 1994

REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY  
AT CONGRESSIONAL SPOUSES CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

MRS. CLINTON: My first Christmas present. I'm so excited. I hope that all of you will be coming to the White House at some point during the Christmas season. Bloomingdale's. I hope I get to go shopping. Oh thank you. It's perfect. Oh that's perfect. Oh that is just great. Oh thank you. I was admiring one of your sweaters - I'm just crazy about Christmas, I love Christmas - and this will be great. I will wear it and remember with much joy where I got it and from whom. Thank you so much.

I'd like to say a couple of very brief words. Many of you in this room, Lynn and I have gotten to know - not well enough because there is never enough time - but whom I have had a chance to be with, to observe, to talk with, to listen to. And I am so grateful for your leadership, your presence, the way that you carry out all of the many responsibilities that maybe only people like us can understand. And how each of you, in your own way, has been so graced, and in turn have graced this place.

Some of you have known now what public service has meant in your life for decades and decades. Others are relatively new to it. But I think each of us shares a common bond in our support, not only of a spouse, but also our own belief about why despite all of the difficulties in public life today - trying to make a difference, trying to help people, trying to put into action - our caring about each other is worth it.

And I want to thank all of you. But I particularly want to thank and recognize those of you who will not be back, at least immediately - who will be going off in a new direction. I have done that twice in my life. I have woken up and said "I have to go buy a house." I understand the challenges that come with that. But I want all of us to appreciate what each of us has given and will continue to give in our own ways.

I also want to make sure all of you who are in town will come to the Christmas party at the White House on Monday. I am absolutely committed to the idea that it should be fun. The highest compliment that I received last year was from a longtime spouse of a member of congress who said she'd been coming

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to those things for years, and this was the first one that she had any fun at. So she became a great friend of mine immediately.

But I do want to extend personally the invitation you've already received, and hope you will have a chance to be there - and also to bring family members and other friends through the House on the day that is set aside for touring. We are going to be trying to once again have a theme that will mean a lot to people as they celebrate this Christmas season.

I guess the final thing that I would say is a number of you have said something personally supportive to me which I am very grateful for. But I also hope that you recognize how important it is that all of us take the attitude about this part of our lives that it is a great privilege, a great challenge, and we will just do the best that we can with it every single day. And that there is absolutely unfortunately no way to say life is fair, and certainly politics we know is not. But that out of every experience no matter how difficult - and each of us in this room could tell her or his own story - there are such opportunities for growth and development and new adventures.

I want to share a particular phrase that made an enormous impact on me during the past year. Because it isn't any secret that I've had good days and bad. Some have been very difficult - for reasons that to me seem to come from outer space - to be very honest about it. And you sit and wonder sometimes, my goodness gracious what is going on. And there is a Catholic Theologian, Henri Nouven (phoenetic), whom I have been introduced to through friends of mine. And he has a beautiful book about the parable of the Prodigal Son. And in this beautiful book in which he looks at that parable from the point of view of the prodigal son, the father, and the son who stayed home and did everything right and could not help but feel some disappointment at the joy with which his wayward brother was received back home. And looking at each of those roles, and relating to them - because each of us has been there. Each of us has been extended grace, has tried to give it. Have been both loved and tried to love. Have felt the natural human emotions of resentment, and maybe just a tinge of envy from time to time. And in the description of those individual stories which are universal, there was this phrase. And that was the "discipline of gratitude." And being grateful truly is a dicipline and can help to order ones days, one thoughts, ones feelings. And to learn how to exercise that dicipline for me has been one of the great challenges and gifts of the last year. And if there were anything that I could pass on to anyone else it would be that gift - to learn the dicipline of gratitude in the face of often very difficult times. Because at the end of the day that's what really counts in one's life.

I have a great friend who once said "I have lived now more than seventy years. I have loved and been loved and all the rest is background music." And I wish for each of you a Christmas and

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holiday season filled with grace and love and gratitude. And the  
sure knowledge that each of our lives has purpose and meaning and  
much lies ahead. Thank you and Merry Christmas.

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