

Hotel Kalastajatorrpa,
Helsinki 7/10/96

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

**First Lady's Press Conference
Hotel Kalastajatorppa
Helsinki
July 10, 1996**

[It was difficult to hear many of the questions, and therefore that part of the transcript is not accurate.]

Q I have three quick, non-trip questions. Have you been told whether or not you are a target of the — investigations? And what was the extent of your knowledge, if any, — What can you tell us about the phone call between yourself and — in '86.

A Gee, if I can remember those. No, to the first one. And to the second one, nothing. And to the third one, nothing.

Q You don't remember the phone call?

A I do not remember the phone call.

Q Do you agree with your attorney who says —

A Well, — I don't think it corresponds with the evidence as we do know it but we'll just have to wait and see how that develops.

Q Mrs Clinton, you talked at several points during your trip about the market— game Messy Business. What is the messiest aspects was the mud stain designed in the American presidential campaign. What kind of example you think that sets for the emerging democracies that you visited this week, and your husband's campaign ran an ad accusing Senator Dole being — and several ads run by the Dole campaign against your husband. Would you like to see less of that? What kind of an example does it set for countries that are just now becoming democracies?

A Well I hope that our elections like the elections in any democracy would be about the future direction that the country would take. So that people could make a good decision based on the information that they are given. I think we do a pretty good job of that but certainly there is room for improvement to make sure that who ever is running for whatever office really does provide people with a good, solid understanding of what they stand for and what they would do if they were elected. And I think America as - I guess now the longest surviving democracy - is looked to by people in old and new democracies alike as to how we run campaigns. So I hope that this campaign would be a good example of a vigorous discussion about the future direction of the country.

Q Less made of advertisement?

A Well I think that what's important is to get information to people so they can make a decision and that's certainly what my husband's going to try to do.

Q This morning at the discussion you had one of the women voiced an impression which I think people in the States have too, and you immediately jumped in and corrected her. What she said was that you've worked hard to change the traditional role of the First Lady. What about it?

A Well, what I said in response to her comment is that I think every person, man and woman, is an individual. And what I have worked for all my life, is the opportunity for individuals to choose what is best for them and to make the decisions that are going to give them the most satisfaction and fulfillment. And I don't think that we should be saying that there's a certain way to fill any kind of role. In your position as a commentator you should be judged as who you are, not because there is another woman who had that role before you. And I feel the same about the role that I am in now, that would argue strongly for the opportunity for any woman, or someday any man, in this position to be able to do what is best for that person, for the President, for the family, for the country. So I'm not really supporting the idea that there is one way to do the role or a way to change the role that is very different. I'm really trying very hard to get across the idea that each individual should be given the opportunity to make the choices that are best for that person.

Q Looking ahead to the campaign, what would you say to the Democrats who think you are a liability to them?

A Well I haven't encountered Democrats who say that. In fact, I've been very encouraged by the responses that I have around the country. I've traveled extensively in the last year, I will continue to do that and speak out on behalf of the President's vision for the country and what he's already accomplished. I look forward to being part of the campaign.

Q Mrs Clinton, you on this trip have mentioned a couple of times the media and in fact, I think this morning you were talking about how hard — it sometimes is for the government to communicate through the media to its people. And yet the United States has probably the most unfettered media in the world. Would you explain a little bit about that, how you see that and that issue and how hard it is for the present administration to communicate with the United States' people?

A Well, I don't think it's hard to communicate but I think it is certainly in our country where there is so much information, it is difficult sometimes for people, including myself, to make sense out of everything we hear. We have so many channels of television, we now have so much activity on the internet, we have so many radio stations and newspapers that we are blessed with an enormous amount of information. But I think it is sometimes a little bit confusing for people to try to figure out what's important, what is going to last the test of time and what isn't. And I think that part of

what we have to do is to make sure that people are well educated and particularly our children are well educated so that they themselves can make sense out of what they hear and what they see. That's why I think everything that we can do to invest in education, make our children understand the world that they are living in, help them become technologically proficient is going to be very important for them to be able to say, well, I agree with that, I disagree with this, this makes sense, I understand that. Because in a democracy, every citizen has the responsibility to make decisions. And if we don't have good solid information, it will be more difficult for our democracy or any democracy to make the best decisions for the future of us all.

Q And speaking of the media, a speculative (?) book has come out recently about you and about the Clinton presidency etc. Do you read those books, personally, just to see what is in them and what impact do you think they will ultimately have on the election campaign?

A Well, I don't really know what impact they'll have. I don't think very much. And I don't read them. People tell me sometimes what's in them and most of the times it's hard to believe some of the things people say but that's part of the free market and it's part of the First Amendment and when you are in public life, it's part of the price you pay. So I don't really pay much attention to it.

Q Coming off this trip where you are experiencing the women issues in countries — - that are emerging democracies, and seeing yourself as a representative of the United States and as a model for what a First Lady can be and then going back to the United States to the kind of, to the wildness of the campaign season, have you given any thought to the role of First Lady and how you've seen it evolve in your own mind in the time that you've been First Lady, — has given some multiple dimensions of what your job really is when you look at it from the domestic point of view and from foreign trip point of view?

A Well, I don't know, Mark, because I don't think about it that way. You know I lived about 45 years before I was living in the White House and I had certain interest that I had developed over those years. I had been engaged in certain activities that I cared about, principally, on behalf of children and women and family issues. And I've continued to work on them. So to me, it is just a great opportunity to meet people and to work about issues that I've long been concerned with. So I don't really think about it as necessarily setting any particular model for anybody else because other women and men have different interests, have different desires in their life. They might not share my concern about some of the issues that I've worked on or my past history on behalf of children and family advocacy. But I would not say that what they chose to do would be any less valid than what I chose to do. So I really don't think about it like that.

Q Tomorrow you'll be back in Washington and you head straight into the campaign — from now until November. What are your thoughts, what are your feelings leaping back into the joys of that environment?

A I love campaigning. I have always loved campaigning. I find it rewarding, educational, exciting and so when I go out on behalf of my husband and talk about the issues that he cares about I'm also talking about issues I care about. When I talk about the choices that the country faces between his vision for the future and the alternatives I'm talking about what I care about for the future. So I consider it a real privilege as well as a lot of fun to go out there. I don't mind the back and forth and the criticism and all that, that's part of American politics. I think these are really important issues. I'd rather have people engaged than be apathetic. I'd rather have people arguing about what direction the country should go in than just throwing up their hands and saying they don't really care. We have seen on this trip what happens when people get so beat down that they are afraid to express an opinion, they're worried about whether they are going to say something that might get them into trouble. I don't know that maybe Americans don't appreciate the blessings that we have. I mean I always feel that way whenever I come back from any of these trips. And part of those blessings is our elections, our democracy, the give and take of the political debate. So I'm anxious to get back into it. I've been doing it, I've been married now for more than 20 years, I've been involved in politics for longer than that and I think that this is a very important election for America. I think that this election is going to set the tone and the direction for our country into the 21st century and I want to do everything I can to talk to as many people and work on behalf of what my husband's agenda is.

Q Speaking of campaigning, Bob Dole has already to some extent made you an issue in this campaign. He said on more than one occasion, if he is elected, his wife won't be in charge of health care or anything else. What do you think about that? What do you think that says to women, what's your personal opinion?

A I don't really think about it. I think the election is between my husband and his opponents and each person in this race is free to express himself and present himself as he chooses to the American public. And my husband is talking about issues like rising the minimum wage and dealing with economic and social and other problems that the country faces. And I think that is what people are interested in.

Q You said today, you talked a little bit about the idea what it would be like if some of the men who are in power in our country were women.

A Right! (Laughter)

Q What do you think it would be like (laughter from Mrs C) if -- were a woman, or -- were a woman?

A Well what was so interesting about being here in Finland is, as you point out, is that the positions that Secretary Perry and Secretary Christopher and Speaker Gingrich and the head of the Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, hold in our country, the comparable positions are all held by women in Finland. And so far the sky has not fallen, it looks like they are trying to deal with their problems as any society that faces

problems today is. So I just think that it would be kind of fun for Americans to imagine what it would be like to have those major positions held by women. I know there is a lot of possibility for just all kinds of thoughts that flow from that (laughs).

(more laughter)

Q Is that the end of your sentence?

A That's the end of my sentence, right, exactly. I leave the rest to your imagination.

Q Something that has puzzled me, since going back to Arkansas, when I see the way that you are portrayed in the media — in the way I see you — in books or whatever. There is a disconnect between the kind of person you could convey or are in private and amongst us on these trips, so much sense of humor — very warm and engaging in what we see on television or in the new or in — It's something that is, you've not — despite the trips where, you know, you put on an effort to show another side the hundreds of — appearances you've made, you've gotten very good coverage in local markets — and despite all this you still have 47 percent disapproval ratings. A majority of people on a recent poll said they — Is there anything you or your staff can or — try to amend it?

A Well I don't know what really explains it. I'm not an expert on the media or really perhaps myself fully understanding that. So I don't really have any thoughts. I mean I just have to continue to be who I am. And I think that over time, people will either make their own decisions about me or accept what other people say about me. But it is very hard to personally meet over 250 million people so I can't really do anything other than what I do which is just try to make my contribution and be who I am and go from there.

Q You said earlier that—

A It can't. I mean there is no way. Because it is something that doesn't reflect how I view the world or what I think I'm trying to do. So I can't really take too much time worrying about it.

Q You said earlier that you enjoy campaigning— and you talked about getting up and speaking on behalf of the President. Can you give us an idea of what you do behind the scenes as far as providing advise to the President, political advice to the President, in his political —. And do you see yourself as — —

A Well, I don't know. I'm really hoping to meet Anonymous someday because he certainly knows a lot about me, whoever Anonymous might be. I don't think there is any way to respond to the constant anonymous quotes about people in public life and where they come from and what's the motivation behind them and what their real agenda might be. So I don't really, you know...

Q — As far as behind the scenes advise to the President?

A I have given my husband advise whenever he has asked for it ever since we've been married and I will keep doing that. That's part of our marriage and part of our partnership.

Q Harold and George and ...

A They're wonderful people. They are just the best people and they are doing a good job.

Q I'd like to come back to the trip that you've just completed. There was a lot of hope and optimism about the future but each of the countries that we were in, over history, has been rolled over time and again by the major powers in Europe, by Russia, by Germany, by France. Why do you think it's going to be different this time?

A Well, I don't know, Gene, that anybody can predict the future but I think part of what American interests are is to do all that we can to help create conditions that make it different. There is no way that we are going to be able to determine or control events from afar. But we know what has happened in our own history when circumstances in Europe forced us to intervene on behalf of freedom and democracy. So it is in America's interests to be as engaged in Europe as possible, to support democracy. We believe strongly in our country that free people are unlikely to a wage war against their neighbors and are more likely to live peacefully with each other. And we have a real personal stake in doing everything we can to make this region of the world as free and democratic and prosperous as possible. So I don't know that any of us can predict what will happen in 10, 20 or 50 years but I know that what my husband is trying to do by staying engaged here is absolutely the right strategy for us to follow.

Q But there seems to be superficiality in American politics when it comes to discussing these kinds of issues. Senator Dole, for example, has been criticizing your husband for not extending — a sizeable segment of his party believes in Fortress America. They — Does a trip like this, how is it played back home, you think, in terms of educating the American people —

A Well I don't know but I hope it plays some role. You know, based on the mail and the contacts that I have people after the trips that I take it seems to affect some groups of Americans. They seem to get an idea of what's going on in other countries because we don't cover a lot of foreign affairs on our television and in our newspapers in the same depth that some other societies do and so it give people a chance to see these places through my experience and I think that's good. I know that coming back from places like South Asia or South America there was a tremendous outpouring of interest that I received personally from people. And I would expect the same from this trip. I don't think it's going to have any affect on our policy and politics at the national level but I think these personal contacts and connections and insights into what goes on in

other countries over time could affect how people see what America's interests are and what we should be doing to make sure that we have a safe and stable future.

Q A lot of Americans, as you mentioned repeatedly, come from the countries that you've visited.

A That's right.

Q Was that taken into account in planning the trip? These people vote and they live in states like Michigan, New Jersey and Pennsylvania and ---

A Well I don't think that that was so much a factor although I'm sure that played in some peoples' minds as - during the time this trip was first discussed some months ago, it was thought that we needed to do something around the time of the Russian election to visit these countries. And I was lucky enough to be asked to go. And I think it is important for people in America who trace their roots to these countries to know that America is not going to forget about them. But it is equally important for the people living there now who are worried about their own economic futures and what's going to happen in the future with their neighbors, to know that America is not forgetting about them, either. So it's a combination, I think, of both domestic interests and concerns as well as what needs to be done to encourage the people who are in Central Europe and the Baltic region.

Q You seem to have been very warmly received where ever you've gone. They've given you flowers, they've kissed your hand. In the States, though, it seems that you spend a lot of time at war with your critics. By your own estimation, what do you think it is that people in Europe see, that some Americans don't?

A Well Joe, none of you, that I know of, has ever traveled with me domestically, so you don't see what I experience. The national press does not cover me when I go to make a speech or visit a school. It is not of interest at the national level. And I have to say that I get the same response and it's as much to do with the position as the person just as it is here in Europe. It has as much to do with the position. But I wish I could interest the national press in, you know, seeing what I see in America. I mean it's very important for me to do the kind of work encouraging people in our own country so that if I go to an inner city school in Philadelphia or Corpus Christi or the San Fernando Valley or up to a small school outside of Duluth, Minnesota. I sense and feel the same kind of positive energy that you have seen here in Europe from people who are not involved in their own minds, with national politics, but are deeply involved in making their schools better, in keeping their streets safe. I had a children's forum in Denver that was co-hosted with Governor Romer and we sat and talked for about three hours with a group of children ranging in age from like 8 to 18 about what was happening in their lives. We talked with experts who work with them every day. We talked with people in the audience and the same kind of concern and energy that you saw in the forums here was exhibited there at home but it is not considered newsworthy at home.

At it gets local coverage. I mean people in the local communities are very interested in it because they like knowing that people in their communities are trying to solve problems. And somehow, what I've been trying to do for the last three years, and particularly the last year and a half is to point out solutions to problems in America. So that just as we tried on this trip to encourage people dealing with difficult problems in their own countries I want to encourage people dealing with difficult problems in my own country. And it is a little frustrating, I think, for the people who are involved in these programs and issues because they want more people to know what they are trying to achieve and yet it does not get that much attention. So I will continue going around and supporting what I see as very important efforts and hope that through my visits and the attention more people will take heart and do more on behalf of themselves.

Q I need to follow up on a — question. When did you first meet — when did you become aware that you —

A Gee, I don't have any idea. I don't recall meeting him for the first couple of years we were in the White House. I just don't know him. I have met him since then but my best memory is sometime within the last year is the first time I ever put a face and a name together.

Q What surprised you on this trip, what do you know now that—

A I am not surprised but I am very heartened at how people look to the United States and how what we do really does matter and how the kinds of investments that we've made in this region in the last several years both through our Government and through private business and our own not to profit sector are really making a big difference and helping people in these countries. And I guess the help I have is that these relationships that have been built up both between governments but even more importantly between people are going to really stand the test of time. And that a lot of the people we met on this trip are going to continue to commit themselves to their own countries' future and to their democratic institutions. And you know, I'm always amazed when I come from places like these, how much we take for granted at home. You know we met people who were imprisoned, we've met people who were exiled, we've met people who were physically mistreated and intimidated and a lot of them are real optimists. Not that they are not realists, also. They understand how hard life is and cruel history can be and how difficult it is for people to really have the opportunity to live their own lives. But they get up every day and they believe that and they work for that. And I think that is what we need to be doing at home as well because we certainly have so much to be grateful for.

Q In that same vein, you have met ... and the context is different but being in the position that you are in, has taken a certain toll. People died, people have been indicted, some people from Arkansas who came with you, you have had difficulties (inaudible). Do you think that ... What kind of price do you think you had to pay, you

know, being in the position that you are in right now?

A Oh, I think life is filled with costs and benefits and you know, you just do the best you can. I don't think about my life that way. I am just, I feel so lucky to be doing what I am doing and meeting the people that I am meeting and learning what I am learning that I consider it to be a very positive experience for me despite, you know, the obvious ups and downs that come with any one in public life these days.

Q When you, a little on the same vein, you have talked a lot about admiring Eleanor Roosevelt. Eleanor Roosevelt has had a legacy. That was not necessarily clear at the time. There were people who absolutely loathed her when she was alive even though she did remarkable things that people look to now. And likewise, in some ways, regardless of what you have tried to do, you have become a lightning rod for all the divisions, ideological divisions that people in this country, in the United States, seem to feel at this time. What would you like your legacy as First Lady to be? What would you like 25 years from now that people say about you when the dust has cleared?

A I don't know yet because I don't ... I hope we are not done. I hope my husband will be re-elected and that there will be, you know, additional time for him to work on what he is doing and for me to help. So I don't know, I don't, I don't have a real good idea about that. I can only tell you that what I have done for more than 25 years is what I care about. And if it has helped people or if it has raised issues or if it has provoked people to think more about the rights and responsibilities of women and children and what we need to do for families, then maybe that is a good contribution. But I don't have anything beyond that to really say to that.

Q Lets go back a little bit. Omar Palo (?) as you know expressed concerned about the safety about her husband and family, talked about the letters she had had, about the angry bitterness there. As a result thereof she was afraid for her husband's safety. As a wife and a mother is that something that has worried you?

A Well, you think about it but I don't let it worry me. There is nothing I can do about it. I mean that is what the Secret Service is for. That is what the people who are supposed to look out for all of those concerns do all day. You would be paralyzed, you would not do anything, if that is what you thought about day in and day out and so I don't.

Q I really don't want to belabor this, but did I understand you on the Livingston question, that you really don't have a memory of knowing him until this all happened?

A Ron. I did not know his mother. I did not know him. I did not have anything to do with his being hired. And I do not remember even meeting him until some time in the last year. So it does not mean I did not run into him. It does not mean that I didn't shake his hand in a receiving line. All of that could have happened. But in terms of

any connection with this young man or any kind of relationship with him there was none.

Q You talked yesterday at the maternity hospital in Tallinn about the health care reform. Do you still believe there is a place for sensible government regulation. If your husband is re-elected do you see that issue being revisited.

A Well, I think that, you know, Bill has already said that he would the Kassenbaum-Kennedy bill passed which would be good, sensible regulation. He has already proposed some efficiency measures for Medicare and Medicaid. So I think there are definitely steps that he has already talked about that can and should be taken in the next four years to make sure that our health care system remains of the quality that it has been. And I believe that we also have to make sure that people can afford to use it in the future.

Q But that quality is declining as the country moves towards (inaudible). Do you see a role for yourself again in getting into this thing trying to reform the system in a way that (inaudible)

A Well, I am going to continue to speak out. I mean I happen to have very strong feelings about what we need to do in our health care system to make sure it is there for all of us with the quality and accessibility that Americans have come to take for granted. So any role that I can play in advocating any changes that would benefit Americans I am going to continue to do that.

Thank you.

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