

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

9/24/97

Thank you very much although you did blow my cover of at least pretending to know how to use the computer. My daughter intends for us to communicate by E-mail and I did promise her that I would actually do that. But I can't make any promises about the column because I am usually finishing that late at night, in fact, what Rick didn't tell you, being the diplomat he is, is that the column that he just held up came in several hours after deadline. [laughter] But one of the great benefits of working with Rick and his staff is that they are very understanding of both my time and my schedule pressures and so when he invited me to speak about my weekly column to this audience of fellow journalists, like any good employee, I agreed to do that.

And I've been thinking a lot about future column ideas that might be exciting or at least somewhat interesting to people. To come up with why a western White House in Palo Alto is in America's interest. [laughter] How you can tell the mood of any woman in public life by her hair style. [laughter] I've read in my husband's one day that I was going to do a column on golf's score keeping according to presidents that I have known, [laughter] but he talked me out of that one and then I have also been thinking about guest columnists. I persuaded my husband to write a column on Mother's Day, and he did, and I thought it was wonderful. So now I've talked with our cat, Socks. I figure that dogs in the white House have had their voices heard and cats deserve equal time, but I don't know if I will ever write this column because the only interesting topic that Socks could come up with is my White House Prison [laughter] and that is not very exciting to me.

I also have a suggested guest column by Eleanor Roosevelt by Eleanor Roosevelt, that's her idea. [laughter] So we have a very exciting year ahead as I am trying to think through what I am going to be writing about to fill my empty nest symptoms because those of you who have sent children off to school and [Unclear] and I were talking about sending their daughter who like my daughter decided to she had to go to school on the opposite coast, 3000 miles away, because their daughter is in New York and my daughter is in California. This can lead to a lot of time on your hands. You don't have to sit up worrying about where they are and what time they are going to be in, not that they ask you to, but it comes with the job description. Even though many of you who have teenagers or can remember raising them know that you don't see much of them at a certain age, Bill and I hover around the White House endlessly hour after hour just for a sighting. [laughter] And now we don't have to worry about that, so I've got much more time on my hands.

And so I am going to turn a lot of my energy that is now leftover to writing the column every week and coming up with new and exciting things to say and trying to get in before deadline. I've also learned a lot about writing columns and about AP style, which Rick and his staff have broken me into. I've learned about the word spite, not that I am happy about having learned that word. And my math has gotten better, because I have had to calculate time in Los Angeles from places like [Unclear] in Mongolia, for example, or [Unclear] in Tanzania. And then I have had to file from Air Force one on occasion. I have also been compelled to look at the world differently because in telling any story of what I do during the week or any issue that I am concerned about I have to be much more careful about how I describe what I do and I am always being asked by Rick and his staff for details, details, what about this, what about that. The very first column that I wrote about driving a car and it was when I was home in Little Rock for an

occasion and I persuaded my Secret Service agent, but don't tell anyone this, to let me drive. I was so excited about just being able to get behind the wheel again. It is these little things that you miss, driving a car, actually going up and down the aisle of a supermarket. So I wrote this column and I sent it in and they come back and they say to me, "Well, what kind of car was it?" I have no idea what kind of car it was. [laughter] It was the experience that I was having driving the car that I was trying to convey and they ask me picky questions like what kind of car it was. So I tried to get more specific and understand the importance of description and narrative.

I outlined in that first column what I hoped to achieve and why I was doing this column. I must say that Eleanor Roosevelt's experience both encouraged me and also was daunting. She wrote a column every single day for years and years. She would retire at the end of her very long days and it was almost a diary column. For those of you who would be interested, they are fascinating glimpses into her life and into the times. I have read these columns years before and then when I was going into the White House in an effort to educate myself about what was to come, although whether I went to the wrong school or I didn't learn the lessons very well. I would study about what former women in my position had gone through and I read a lot of Mrs. Roosevelt's columns. She even has a column that I would recommend to you about how annoyed she got at the people who would only talk about her hairstyle. [laughter] I found that exceedingly comforting.

So I was encouraged to do this and then Rick was nice enough to offer me the opportunity and I wanted to do it for a couple of reasons. To share with people some of the experiences that I have been privileged to have you know from the very mundane of being able to drive a car to meeting people like Nelson Mandela for example. And then secondly, I really do care passionately about the issues that affect Americans because I do think that they matter and I wanted an opportunity to talk about some of those issues, and frankly to advance arguments about issues that I thought make a difference in the lives of the people of our country. And of course the two are related because as I have traveled around the world and in our own country I have both met people who have symbolized a lot of what I see going on in the country and I have learned more about the issues that I care about. Whether it is meeting a Nelson Mandela or one of my childhood heroes, Ernie Banks, I always come away from the experience enriched by it and wishing that I could take every American with me. That's especially true as I travel around the world. I have often commented that if I couldn't take every American with me, I would have to take every American teenager with me so that they could see what our country looks like from a distance, they would see what other people go through to try to maintain democracy and they wouldn't necessarily take for granted, as I see too many Americans, the blessings that we have here and understand more about what we have to offer here in the United States.

Now deciding what to write about is very difficult for me. I try to make it topical in terms of what I am doing during the week, so obviously last week I had to write about taking my daughter to college and the week before that because of the extraordinary events, I wrote about going to Mother Teresa's funeral and also the week before about going to Princess Diana's funeral. But that is not a typical week. Usually my weeks are more like this week has been. I started in New York with my husband at the United Nations, we went to the Metropolitan Opera where we saw a marvelous young singer from Washington, DC, Denise Grace played Carmen, and so I do everything in a week that I find both interesting and part of my obligation and then I have to say what is it that I am going to write about. Sometimes I don't decide until very late in the day when the column is due and there have been occasions when I have written one column

and been totally unimpressed by what I had written and started from scratch, which is when Rick gets that chicken scratch coming in over the fax. I think, though, that this search for balance that I am constantly engaged in my own life, really reflects what many people go through, particularly women. Because if we were to take a snap shot of any hour of the day of our lives during any particular week, we might draw conclusions about who we were or what we did that might be very different if we took a snap shot a day later. Because we do balance and juggle so many other responsibilities during the course of our days and weeks. And so for me trying to figure out each morning what I am doing, what my responsibilities are to my family, or my public duties, and then also what to see happen or what I would like to influence in our society is something that really does fill my days and so I try to glean from all of that what of might be of interest to someone outside my family.

And I have been very fortunate to witness a lot of historic moments, certainly election day I wrote about, because I hate election day. They are difficult, you don't know what to do, you've done everything you can do, and you just have to wait. Bill and I go vote, Chelsea comes along. This year, I had to fill me time-up so I went, for those of you who have ever been to Little rock, Joe's [Unclear] Eat Place, where they give you slabs of meat and all kinds of fixings and sat around with a bunch of friends in a small back area, you know, talking about our lives and just reminiscing and then ending there on the front of the state house on that glorious Autumn evening.

Inauguration Day was so much more relaxed this year than it was four years ago. I realize how relaxed it was when we went through the same routine that we had during the previous four years, ending with a lovely lunch inside the capitol sponsored by the leadership of the Senate and the House. I know that I had been at a similar event four years before sponsored by Democratic leadership, but the event was very much the same. That I really found that I couldn't remember much about what had happened four years ago. When they handed us a picture they had taken of the Inaugural that had already been developed of the whole scene laid out in front of me, I said to Bill, "That is so sweet of them to do that, I can't believe they thought of it" and Newt Gingrich said, "I think they did it four years ago." and I said "Oh!" It was so interesting to me to have gone through with the same experience twice, but the first time being so overwhelmed by what happened. Probably one of the highlights of that inaugural lunch was that my daughter was seated in between Strom Thurmond and Tom Delay. [laughter] Now I alluded to sitting next to Strom Thurmond in my column when I wrote about inauguration, but I did not saw that he turned to her and he said "Chelsea, if I were a younger man, I'd court you." [laughter]

There have been, in addition to those highlights of our time here, some very sad moments that have been tragic in their impact on the world. Certainly the assassination and then going to the funeral of Prime Minister Rabin of Israel was one of the worst times in the White House. I have so many memories about my times with him, both he and King Hussein used to give me a merciless [unclear] because I said at the white House there was to be no smoking and both of them smoke constantly and so, I didn't realize quite how seriously they were taking my injunction, because of course I would do anything for Middle-east Peace, even let them smoke. in the White House. [laughter] But they felt, you know, as a matter of honor that if I didn't let anyone else smoke, they wouldn't take advantage. I found myself begging them to smoke in the White House. [laughter] "That's okay your majesty, you know, prime minister, please feel free" "no, no, no, no, we will not, we will not." We have many wonderful and personal memories as we went to represent our country at that terrible loss.

I also have tried to give people a sense of what goes on in the White House, by talking about the behind the scenes of preparing for a state dinner, of preparing for Christmas. If you are a last minute Christmas person, and Bill and I are, you know how absolutely horrified I was to be told in June of 1993 that I was late in preparing for the upcoming Christmas in the White House. I went into total shock when the usher said to me "Mrs Clinton, when do you think that you'll start planning seriously." and I said "its June" and he said "Yes but we have much to do and we start taking the theme for the Christmas and we take the decorations and the ornaments, we start collecting them, we start putting together the wreaths in August in a big warehouse in Maryland." Well it was more than I could take, and it took me months to recover, but we finally made it through that first Christmas and we've enjoyed every one since.

I have also tried to highlight people who I think are emblematic, about what happens in our country, and frankly to tell some of the good news about what is going on and the terrific energy that I find as I travel around the United States. People whose names will never appear in your newspapers but who are leading, in my view, lives of courage because of the odds against which they struggle. I wrote about Miriam, an older women who volunteers in my office. Any of you who knows how the White House works know that you could not run the White House without volunteers and interns, that is one of the closely guarded secrets, because we don't have the staff for example to answer the hundreds of thousands of letters that we get if we did not have volunteers and Miriam was a very faithful volunteer who despite struggling with breast cancer showed up for work even though she was undergoing very painful and difficult treatment. She seldom would arrive without cookies, pies, or other baked goods that kept all of my staff and the interns from the entire White House well fed during the time she was there. And then when she died, I was honored to be asked to speak at her funeral. I thought about what she and her family had gone through and it just made my concern and advocacy on behalf of breast cancer and other diseases that ravage not only individuals, but entire families even more personal. When I talk about issues, I try to bring somebody personal into them.

Micro credit which is hardly a subject that gets blood pulsing through people's veins, is something that I feel very strongly about and that we don't often hear about. I try to tell the story of being in Denver and how a women said to me "More good ideas die in the parking lots of banks than anywhere else in the world and how we needed to create more opportunities for entrepreneurs to have the credit they need to create better future's for themselves."

I also have tried to bring to a wider audience what I know is happening in the lives of Americans, particularly working women and try to say you know this a very difficult undertaking: to be working, to be raising a family, and try to be involved in one's community. So I try to profile, in these columns taking about policy changes, individuals who I know will be effected. I really have appreciated the response that I have received from the people as I have gone around the country. One column that provoked a tremendous response was on adoption, when I wrote about working with Mother Teresa when she started a home here in Washington for infants who have been abandoned and are to be given up for adoption. People stop me on streets, I was in Jackson Hole hiking and a man grabbed my hand and thanked me for writing about adoption because he and his wife had just gone through a very difficult effort to try to adopt a child. And then because of my concern about adoption we've been able to link some policy changes that will make a difference in kids' lives and to have events in the White House so that I could write both about personally about what I have learned and then from a policy perspective.

So I hope that these stories have touched cords in people. But as Rick said, this column is

read around the world, so I try every couple of columns or so to talk about what goes on on my travels or something that would affect readers in other parts of the world and I also believe that is important for Americans back home to realize how important our engagement is. We were talking at the lunch table about how now at the end of the Cold War, we won, we have all these new emerging democracies struggling with problems we know they are facing, we can't give them a lot of aid, we are not going to give them a Marshall Plan to build their institutions, but we can pay respect and give them attention and make it seem as though we are empathizing with their struggle to become a fully democratic nation. Probably one of the most moving trips that I have taken that I have tried to write about was when I went to Bosnia. I wrote about our troops there and what I found when I talked to them personally about their commitment to building democracy in that very troubled place. When I went to Ireland, I met a woman named Joyce McCartlin in a Fish and Chip Shop. Her son Gary had been shot to death in his Belfast home one month shy of his eighteenth birthday, but she didn't give in to [Unclear] She helped for the Women's Information [Unclear] Center in Belfast where catholic and Protestant women came together on behalf of peace and in November or at the end of October now, I will go back to Belfast since he died in the interim since I met her and the University in Belfast is creating a chair in honor of Joyce and I will be giving the Inaugural lecture so there will be a continuation of that story which meant a lot that I wrote about in terms of McCartlin [Unclear] in Ireland, particularly the women of Ireland who have taken so much grief for their courage in crossing those religious lines and I feel like I owe her that honor in telling her story.

So in all of my travels, I pay particular attention to women and children and to talk about the positive stories I see and also the negative ones. One of the columns that I filed from Air Force One, I wrote after the state dinner in Bangkok and I was there dressed up and had a wonderful time with the King and the Queen and we were back on Air Force One flying home and I had to get the column in after I had calculated the time difference. I wrote about how we had been to the state dinner but what had really stuck in my mind was how I had gone to Northern Thailand. I met a number of women who had been sold in prostitution by their families and had been used repeatedly until they were infected by HIV, and then they were continued to be used until they developed symptoms of AIDS and then they were basically turned out and sent home and of course their families which had profited from their sales would not take them in. In fact, if you would travel through these small villages in northern Thailand, you could see visibly the families that sold their daughters and those who had resisted, because their houses were better, they often had TV antennas and there was a great deal of conflict in the community about his terrible decision that some of these families were making and I was there to support a program that our government is helping to support where we are helping to pay small stipends to families to send their daughters to school, so that the families that get some financial compensation and are not tempted to sell their daughters and also working with the Thai government to enforce the laws of our own [Unclear] against prostitution. This one young woman who I met was dying, she was in a wheelchair, she wanted to meet me, they wheeled her out, she could not even speak, we took our picture together and I got the picture developed when we got to Bangkok where I could get it back to her immediately and she dies shortly after that. I felt that her story made more than any speeches about why the Thai government and our government should join together to fight against the exploitation of girls to make that point.

So for me this column has not only been an opportunity to communicate with people, but also to find out what touches me and what I am thinking about. Certainly the last three weeks

have been filled with a lot of memories. My association with Princess Diana which led to my going to the funeral and writing about her was one that I think for all of us we saw the out pouring of emotion after her death caused a lot of thinking and talking to close friends about what that meant. Then the lose of Mother Teresa, shortly after, going to Calcutta where I had never been before, and which I am still digesting. The President will be going to India next year and I want to be sure that he doesn't just see the inside of palaces and hotel rooms, but also has some sense of what is happening in the largest democracy in the world

And then finally, writing a column about my daughter going to college, helped me to sort out my own feelings as I was told while I was at Stanford by people doing Orientation we're the ones that are sad, we're looking back, we're thinking about the first day of school and all of the little milestones along the way. They are looking forward and to try to both bring to the surface and write about some of my concerns about the first time at college was very helpful to me.

So, I am very grateful, although there are some nights when I am sitting there with that pad of paper in front of me that I don't feel that way. I am very grateful for this opportunity. I am also grateful that I have had wonderful help, my staff has pitched in, as they always do, and helped with research, helped out in writing drafts on policy matters that I could later incorporate into the column. So it has been a real team effort from my end and from the creators as well. So I want to thank you for giving me an opportunity, those of you who have carried it regularly or on special occasions, to you know get out a little of what I see and feel from my vantage point. And I want to thank creators for taking a chance on me, my only real journalistic experience came in the eighth grade when I was editor of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Junior high School Newspaper. [laughter] So this has been a real learning experience for me and I want to thank you all for having me here today.

[Applause]

Question and Answer:

We have time for just a few question, who would like to start off?

Q: Welcome to the wacky and terrifying world of syndicated columnists. Its exhilarating and deadlines are terrifying, aren't they?

A: Yes they are.

Q: Do you have any advice that I can pass on to my readers to any parent who has sent their child off to college for the first time?

A: You know that is a wonderful question because I have been the recipient of many helpful hints, some of them are so absurd that I couldn't possibly repeat them in public. [laughter] I think that the best thing for me is to just keep in mind how excited and happy she is at this opportunity in her life and be willing to join that excitement and then to keep myself very very busy. I have found that in the times that we talk with her so far, there is just all this energy coming across the phone line and excitement about what she is doing and who she is meeting and to be available and to listen to be a part of what she is going through. But then to know that this is really a chapter

of her life and I have to let that happen and I used to take, as many of you did, Chelsea to the first day of school starting in kindergarten and I cried every year. Finally it got to be eighth grade and she said that's it and I never want you taking me to school again. I realized it was more for me than for her in so far as for me to appreciate how not only was she growing up, but you know her need for us as day to day [Unclear] with her life was diminishing. Very good natured about it and stay busy.

Q: I know that you have a prestigious list of newspapers for clients, but when you received that letter of cancellation, back in October, of all of those columns, what was your reaction?

A: Oh, I just assumed it was political. [laughter] Rick had sparred me from the really painful details, but of course, you know, some people were very honest. During the 1996 election campaign, some people who had carried the column, said you know, we can't do it because we don't want to look like we are favoring the Clintons in any way. I understand that completely. I mean, I am in a very unusual position which I appreciate. There may be a lot of reasons why newspapers may feel a little reluctant, but I think if you look at the column and read them, and the fact that my husband is not running again, which is certainly a big difference in my life, I think that they are not political in any sense that should cause anybody to be in an uproar. But I understand it completely. We have kind of gone back and forth on that but I have been very surprised by the number of people around the world who have kept going and have carried the column and I have been very gratified with people who have picked up individual columns.

Q: [Unclear]

A: OH my goodness. You know, I was very fortunate to have very good teachers as our partners. Chelsea went to the public schools in Little Rock. Her kindergarten teacher was an old fashioned woman who really loved children and became a great ally with me in understanding what the child goes through and she was very helpful in giving advice about encouraging your child to love learning. Not being so concerned about whether they are reading or whether their little letters look like letters, but to be constantly interested to show up every time the school doors open and parents are invited to come. I will never forget going to Chelsea's kindergarten class Christmas play and all the children were singing songs, they were all in the front of the room, and Bill and I were there, and the room was packed with parents and grandparents. The children were pointing out there parents and grandparents and there was one little boy nobody had come for and it just broke my heart. You know, part of the reason, and there may have been a very good reason, because for all I know that boy had a single mom who nobody let off work. But the effect on the youngster was really powerful, you could feel the pain. So I think showing that interest, being there, volunteering in the school, letting the child know how important school is to you, but not in a heavy handed way, where you have to do this and you have to do that. I also think reading for a child, which I am a very big advocate for, is one of the most important ways to convey the interest in reading and we did that all the way up until late grade school, we read every night, and then as she wanted to read, we would alternate and she would help read. I think those are the kinds of things that if you do at home and you participate in school, your child gets the message that learning should be fun and my parents really believe that it is important.

Q: Do you or your husband have any favorite comic strips?

A: [laughter] I have to ask all the comic strip creators to leave the room after that question. Yes we do, but that is one of those secrets you are going to have to read about in my memoirs.

Q: [Unclear]

A: You know, I think that is something that I haven't thought about a lot. The only thing that Rick and I have in common is he does a lot of work with my lawyers and they have to be here. Not for me, but for him. [laughter] I can't stand here and say that there is never a bad day, but those days are far outnumbered by all the others that happen and when Bill was first in public life, it seems like a hundred years ago, but it was 1974, and when he was first elected to office in 1976, I remember being very upset by what I saw or felt were unfair attacks or criticism and the like. I guess I decided fairly early on that I can either spend my time being upset or bitter or resentful over something that I had no control over whatsoever or I could just go on with my life and enjoy everyday best I could. I try to follow that. Early in his political career I learned to try to take criticism seriously, but not personally. If somebody has something to say that has some merit, you have to pay attention to it, you could really learn from good criticism. If somebody has a personal agenda to wound you personally or undermine you for commercial reasons or for partisan reasons or ideological reasons, it would be foolish to spend my time worrying about what they have to say. So trying to create that distance enables you to get up each day and do what you have to do. I am also very fortunate to be married to someone who is so resilient, and so optimistic and so resilient about life that, you know, we have the same attitude about life. So, we don't drag each other down, we lift each other up. And he couldn't do his job if it weren't for... I look back now at some of the President's (unclear), and you get consumed by what is said about you on television or in the newspaper, and you can't do your work. When we moved into the White House, and I am a great admirer of the Bushs, they had five television sets in their bedroom. And they used to start their day very early in the morning I'm told, they would get up at 5:30 in the morning. They were early risers and we are not, you might guess. My husband stays up very late. But they would start the day by reading all the newspapers and turning on the television. Well if you're the President of the United States, that is bound to put you in a bad mood (laughter). The better practice, it seems to me (unclear) is to become very focused on what you're trying to do, and do your job, and let people judge for themselves and go from there, and that is what we have to do.

Q: (Unclear)

A: Where do I start? You know I have been tempted, and I've written one or two columns that you might construe as sort of answers. But the other thing is that in this dynamic environment, (unclear) there is something to do today, there is something to do tomorrow and you spend all your time doing that, so I can't wait for the dust to settle and don't get too agitated by whatever the latest dust storm may be, and there usually is no even answer, and so I haven't been

compelled to do so. And there may be occasions in the next five years that again, I will use the column to respond to something, or put out a different version of events that I think accurately

reflect what actually went on. But I don't much of an impulse to do that. Thank you all very much.

(applause)