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Bob & Randy Reception

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REMARKS BY MRS. CLINTON
AT "AN INVITATION TO THE WHITE HOUSE"
BOOK PARTY RECEPTION

The East Room

6:15 P.M. EST

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you so very much, Carl. And since we are talking about and celebrating books, certainly Carl's books make the White House and the people who have lived here come alive. And his recent book about First Families tells stories that I'd never heard before that he documents about the events and activities of the Presidents and their families over the last 200 years. And so I thank him for his love of this house, and his understanding that it was families who lived here -- not just Presidents, but the people who were around the President, and not just immediate families, but often extended families who were really part of making the history come alive.

I want to thank J. Carter Brown for his friendship and support and his great advice over the last eight years, as we have taken on new challenges, broken some new ground together. And he has been, as he always is, an exemplary leader when it comes to the arts and culture of America. And his love of this house now over the decades is really unparalleled because he has been a part of all of the major work that has been done since the Kennedy administration.

I also want to thank the President and our daughter, Chelsea, for making this house a home. And certainly without the President -- I can speak for myself -- (laughter) -- none of us would be here. (Laughter.) And so for not only his leadership in the last eight years, but for his constant joy and excitement about this house and his history, I am very grateful, because he makes it come alive every day.

And to our daughter, I thank her for so many things, but certainly for making this house a home in every sense of the word.

This is going to be a lot of thank-yous because this book represents an extraordinary combined effort by so many people, many of whom

are here with us today. I thought about producing this book a couple of years ago, because, for me, there were so many untold stories. Every time I walked the halls I thought of the history that had happened in the past. But I also was so conscious of the history that was being made, and the care and the love and the attention to detail that was paid to the house and all of the activities that occurred here.

And when I began thinking about how to share that, we have done our best to open the house to people from all walks of life, from all over our country and the world -- not only the more than 1.5 million visitors who come through here every year, to the only home of a head of state anywhere in the world that is open to that kind of visiting by tourists and curious passers-by alike, but also to what happens inside the walls of this house -- what we've tried to do to hold conferences and convenings and meetings, get-togethers of people who were joined by a common desire to make life better for foster children, or for the victims of disease or war, who saw an opportunity to cross the lines that divide us as a nation and find common ground.

And I also wanted to share a little bit of what it's like to live here as a family -- the informal moments, the parties that we've held, the 4th of July picnics on the roof, and the surprise birthday parties for the President in the back of the house that are trumpeted by the Chief of Staff and the Deputy riding horses in, to the amusement of the rest of us.

In many ways, this house has always represented the best of America, and has always symbolized America's democracy, as it was so well named "the people's house." But I think in today's world, it's especially important for us to recognize that we have come of age as a nation in this last century. And so we wanted to represent to the entire world the best of American cuisine and arts and culture and entertainment. So we have, Bill and I, attempted to do just that.

I know I will leave some people off, and I apologize ahead of time, but there are people I'm just compelled to thank publicly for their contributions, starting with Carter and Carl, who wrote the preface and the introduction. But let me also thank everyone from Simon & Schuster, including our hardworking editor, Sydney Minor; Carolyn Reidy, who is the President of the Simon & Schuster trade division; the publisher, David Rosenthal; and the CEO who is with us, Jack Romanos. I have enjoyed working with them, and I thank them for their commitment to this project.

I also want to thank those outside the White House who lent a hand with the research and the text, including Cheryl Mercer and Christine Hagstrom, Carol Beach and Maggie Williams.

Now, within the house there is a division of labor which is necessary because there is always so much to do. As Carter said, imagine your home if 1.5 million people walked through it every year. The wear and tear on the house, the need to organize the morning tours, and then quickly turn the East Room back into a showcase for a Conference on Culture and Diplomacy, such as happened here, or a last-minute press conference to announce some international development. No house of any kind, and especially a house with 132 rooms, could run without the dedicated leadership of a staff that is without parallel anywhere in the world.

I want to thank Gary Walters, who is the Chief Usher. I want to thank our chefs, Walter Scheib and Roland Mesnier, whose delicious recipes are in this book. We've talked a lot about how the book makes you sense what it's like to live at home with history, but there's also recipes that you can use. (Laughter.) Because they represent bringing the best of American cuisine, and certainly making it impossible for -- at least I should speak for myself -- for those of us who enjoy that cuisine to stay in exactly the kind of shape one would want to be. (Laughter.) But I have enjoyed every mouthful and every calorie of the experience.

We know also that the house has been lovingly cared for by the curators, one of the real innovations that Mrs. Kennedy brought, which was to have a professional curatorial staff. And I just have to thank and single out Betty Monkman, who is our Chief Curator, whose beautiful book goes into detail about the extraordinary furnishings and furniture of the house has made it just a joy to be here; and her staff, which is so talented and hard-working.

One of the pleasures of living in the White House is being surrounded by beautiful flowers all the time. And some of the arrangements are featured in this book, particularly the ones that I struggled over with our Chief Florist, Nancy Clarke, and her fabulous staff, to make decisions about centerpieces for state dinners.

I want to thank also the field generals who really put this together, and I have been blessed by having two of the best organized, most delightful, hardest working people you'll ever meet in your life, to serve as the Social Secretary of the White House -- starting with Ann Stock, who has been my friend and has done the most extraordinary job for me during the first term; and followed by Capricia Marshall who has carried on with that tradition; as well as the deputies, Sharon Kennedy, Kim Widdess and their predecessors who turn on a dime, and know exactly what has to be done to make something work.

The First Lady's staff, affectionately known as Hillary Land in this White House -- (laughter) -- has been unbelievable. I am taking far

too much of the spotlight because it is these people who have made it possible for us to do the policy and the work of the renovations, and travel around talking about the important issues that really matter here and around the world. My two Chiefs of Staff, Maggie Williams and Melanne Verveer, have been better than the best. No one could have balanced more balls, done more things, and carried it off with more grace. And I'm so grateful to them.

And I particularly want to mention in regard to this book, Shirley Sagawa, who really shepherded the project, my Deputy Chief of Staff, who made this happen with persistent grace. And Mary Ellen McGuire, her assistant, who has been absolutely indispensable. I want to thank Laura Schiller, who was a fabulous wordsmith and helped immensely with the text; Ellen Lovell, who is my right hand when it comes to historic preservation and cultural activities; and Matthew Nelson, who lent his talents, as well.

Now, we could not have done this without the extraordinary work of the White House photographers who capture every moment, past or present. And when I say every moment, I mean every moment. No matter how bad a hair day, or how little sleep has occurred. (Laughter.) It may not always be good for the ego, but it is great for history that these records are kept. I want to thank all of our previous White House photographers, and I want to thank our present crew, headed up so ably by Sharon Farmer, including Ralph Alswang and William Vasta and David Scull and Barbara Kinney, who did some wonderful work that's included in this book.

But I also want to thank the people who run the photo labs and organize the photographers. Organizing even one photographer is a very hard job. (Laughter.) These are independent, artistic-minded people. (Laughter.) And you want them to take a picture of you standing with the head of state -- they see a shaft of sunlight across the chandelier, that's what they want to record. So it's a constant negotiation. And the people who have organized and run that have really been doing yeomen's and yeowomen's work, and I want to thank Marilyn Jacanin and Janet Phillips and the staff in the photo lab, who literally helped us go through thousands of pictures for this book.

Now, we also include work from other talented photographers, including Robert Clark, Romulo Yanes, Todd Eberle, whom I want to thank for chronicling all the rooms of the White House, which will go into the Clinton Library and will be a wonderful record for what the house looked like when we were here; Diana Walker, and Alison O'Brien.

I want to thank the food stylists. I never knew how difficult it was to photograph a plate of food. It is not moving, it is not talking --

(laughter.) It is very hard to photograph. And Marianne Sauvion and Grady Best have made these recipes come alive and look as good as they taste.

I particularly want to thank the Committee for the Preservation of the White House who have worked, as Carter said, tirelessly to make the decisions. And believe me, it took many, many hours of discussion to figure out how to do the rug, to accurately reflect the time and the period and the colors. And that is true many times over in all of the rooms. And I particularly want to thank Kaki Hockersmith who had gone to great efforts to work on the public and private rooms, and has done just a fabulous job.

And, of course, I want to thank particularly the American people, who gave the President the privilege of serving, and the rest of us came along for the experience. And what an extraordinary time it's been. It has been not only unique, which it is in every time with every presidency, but it has been an opportunity to really share our lives and all the ups and the downs and the ins and the outs with the American people. And every day has been a blessing, because we have felt that we were really privileged to be here.

And as Bill said, I don't think that any of us have ever walked into this house without that sense of awe overcoming us. And if you ask why I would write this book, I suppose the answer is that that sense of awe is something I want to share. Because, for me, the history that has been written here that has really changed the course of America and the world for the better is something that I want everyone in our country to appreciate.

You know, not everybody even with a 1.5 million visitors a year will be able to come to the White House. But I hope that either through purchasing this book or going to the library, people will have a chance to see what we see and which I hope will never be taken for granted. Even after living here for eight years, I can still remember my first glimpse of the White House as a young girl, visiting Washington with my family. And we didn't go on the tour; we stood outside and peered through the gates, as I often see people from my windows doing. And I think back to what it felt like when I was 10 years old, peering through those gates, thinking about the people who lived there and what had happened in the years before I was even born.

Now, some of the rooms that you've seen on this tour have, of course, changed over time. As Carter said, it used to be the custom that exiting Presidents and First Families would take parts of the White House with them, or auction them off, so there wasn't any sense of continuity, as there is today. But it's equally true that tastes have changed. When we redid the State Dining Room, there were, I have to say, some purists among

us -- not me, but others -- who said that we should go back to the original Teddy Roosevelt renovation.

So I called Betty Monkman and I asked for the pictures. And I'm getting older and I don't see as well as I used to, so I was peering at these pictures and so I put on my reading glasses. And I think I said to Betty or whoever was standing near, are these heads on the wall? (Laughter.) We called for enlargements, and there surrounding the diners in the State Dining Room were the head of a moose and the head of an elk and head of nine other big game -- (laughter) -- that President Roosevelt had bagged and wanted to share with his guests. (Laughter.)

And we had a couple of very vigorous discussions in the Committee for the Preservation of the White House because there were those who thought we should call the Smithsonian and call Teddy Roosevelt's Library and ask for the return of the heads. (Laughter.)

But there's a certain -- I haven't done it often, but there's a certain privilege of position that goes with being First Lady. (Laughter.) There are -- not that you would notice -- there are some down sides in being First Lady -- (laughter) -- but every once in a while you can say, I'm sorry, no heads on the wall. (Laughter.) And people will say, well, we really don't want to upset her, we won't bring back the heads. (Laughter.)

Now, the Blue Room used to be red, and the Red Room was once yellow. But the colors that you see now are pretty much the colors that have stayed the course over the last more than a hundred years. But it's not so much the color of the room, or really even what's on the walls as the ideals and values that are passed on and live within the White House.

We know that this house is a symbol of our democracy. It's a living museum for the best in American art. It's a place for entertaining in the best traditions of American cuisine and culture. It's a house of ideas that generate all kinds of energy that we then take out into the larger world and try to put to work for the betterment of the people and our country. And every First Family has tried to honor the traditions of this house. And we certainly have done that as well.

I hope that this book in some small way conveys that. And I hope it also shows how important it is to recognize the people who keep it going behind the scenes. All of the staff, the more than 90 people who love this house as though it were their own; who come to work every day prepared to serve the President and the country, and who take such pride in that service. And that's why throughout this book, you'll see faces that are not in the headlines, there will never be a book or movie, perhaps, about

them. But they are the ones who really keep the White House looking the way it looks and running as it does.

I've donated the proceeds from this book to the White House Historical Association, which does an excellent job in conveying to the public information about the house and educating people. I know that Bob Breedan couldn't be here today, but Neil Hortsman is, and I want to thank them for the work they've done, and most recently, the extraordinary symposia and celebration that we held in this room, where we had four former Presidents all speaking, their spouses, and Lady Bird Johnson. And it was a particularly poignant moment to demonstrate the continuity of the American presidency, the resilience and strength of our institutions. And it was something that I think meant a great deal to Americans. And I thank the Historical Association for doing that.

I hope that this book will also inspire young people to learn more about our history, and they will also learn by looking at Betty Monkman's wonderful new book, also David Finn's beautiful pictures of the White House Sculpture Garden, which he developed and worked on, along with Phillipa Polskin and Shannon Crownover. And they produced a pamphlet that really illustrates the work that we've tried to do on the arts.

Each of you will be receiving a copy of the book, along with a copy of that pamphlet. And the Save America's Treasures Project that was previously mentioned, as well, which was done with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Geographic, brings to life 50 of the nation's great landmarks, buildings and artifacts. This one gets a book of its own, but each of those deserves the attention that is paid to it.

Now, as Bill and I prepare to leave this house, we're obviously overcome by quite a bit of retrospection and memory and nostalgia. I think neither of us wants to sleep for the next weeks because we don't want to miss a moment. And we keep seeing things that we've seen a million times in different ways.

At the end of the book, I wrote about the children's garden, which is at the end of the South Lawn over by the tennis court, and the small pond which is there. It's surrounded by little handprints made by the grandchildren of First Families who have lived at this house. Now, every First Family has left their handprints on this house in some way or another. That's what I have tried to convey in this book -- the contributions and the ongoing commitment and love that this house inspires.

But I could spend many lifetimes and never fully recapture or, indeed, repay the honor and privilege it has been for my family to spend the last eight years here, at home with history, in the people's house. So

I thank all of you for coming. I look forward to greeting you after the program. I hope you'll stay and talk and eat and walk around and look at everything you can see here on the State Floor.

The chefs have prepared some of the recipes from the book, and I guarantee you they taste as good as they look. So, with that, let me not only thank you, but in some small measure, express our gratitude for the privilege that this book represents, and for the extraordinary strength that this house represents whenever its picture is shown anywhere, anytime in the world, as to what truly democracy means, here in this venerable house.

Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

END 6:40 P.M. EST