



American Conversation

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

Life as First Lady, Senator, and best-selling author

May 9, 2006

Senator Clinton was elected to the U.S. Senate from New York in 2000. She serves on a number of committees including Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, Senate Armed Services, and Environment and Public Works.

Clinton also chairs the Senate Democratic Steering and Outreach Committee. She is the author of several best-selling books including her autobiography, *Living History*, and *It Takes a Village: And Other Lessons Children Teach Us*

American Conversations is a series of informal conversations between the Archivist and people who've shaped the dialogue about the interpretation and use of American heritage.

Allen Weinstein: Good evening ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the National Archives.

[applause]

I want you to know you're not the only thing happening in the National Archives today. We're delighted tonight to have Senator Clinton with us, and just to -- little bit below us we have three or four thousand people enjoying the charters of freedom, the rotunda, and the public vaults exhibit, and it's about three or four thousand every day from now until the weather starts freezing again, but -- so bring your friends. We want them to come. We're very proud to have our guest tonight, because it's part of a series that we've felt very strongly about. We started -- I won't go through all the names and all the folks that have been here, but have had Lynne Cheney, we've had Lonnie Bunch, we've had Ken Burns, John Hope Franklin, we've had many others. We have Senator Clinton tonight, I'll introduce her in a second and bring her out. We have Cokie Roberts and her mother, Congresswoman Boggs tomorrow night. This is our special Mother's Day week. We have two Mother's Day shows, if you will, tonight and tomorrow night, and next month we have Ken Mehlman from the RNC. We've also invited the



chairman of the Democratic Party to join us at a later occasion. We have -- fourth of July, some of you come to the fourth of July, because we have a special American Conversation -- I have one then with a gentleman named Thomas Jefferson, so I'd love to see you all there. In the meantime, let me go get my guest. Oh yes, our learning center is open, and on the 23rd of the month, let me be sure of the date. 23rd of June, thank you Marvin, our new exhibit, "Eyewitness" opens in the O'Brien Gallery upstairs, so do come and take a look.
[low audio]

Hillary Clinton: Hello.

[applause]

Allen Weinstein: Now who is going to disagree with me when I say our guest for tonight, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, needs no introduction?

[laughter]

I'm going to give her one anyway, but she doesn't need it. She -- let me start with her birth state, Chicago, Illinois. She's the daughter of Dorothy Rodham and the late D. Rodham. Her father was a small businessman, her mother a homemaker. Speaking as an ex-professor at Smith College, I'm disappointed to say that she was a graduate of Wellesley, but we forgive her for that.

[laughter]

Yale Law School. I was a Yalie, so that was okay.

[laughter]

And I'm told that she's married to former President William Jefferson Clinton.

[laughter]

They have one daughter, Chelsea, an extraordinary young person, and Senator Clinton is the author of a number of best-selling books, including most recently, "Living History," but also "It Takes a Village," and a variety of other books. I was particularly impressed that in addition to the committee that she serves on in the US Senate, she's the first New Yorker -- I'm a New Yorker by profession as you can tell. I'm in exile here, but what are you going to do?

[laughter]



She's the first New York --

[laughter]

She's the first New Yorker ever to serve on the Senate Armed Services Committee, which stunned me when I realized that, and in 2004, Senator Clinton was asked by the Department of Defense to serve as the only Senate member of the Transformation Advisory Group to the Joint Force's Command. I won't go on, because there's lots to be said, but can we once again welcome our guest for tonight's [unintelligible]

[applause]

Now Senator, when Ken Burns was here, someone asked him why he was doing this new series on the Second World War, nine programs for PBS that will start next year, we're going to help him, I hope, publicize them. He said well -- he was struck when his daughter came back from class one day to say that a great many of her classmates, and apparently there's been some polls taken among the high school kids, but a very large percentage thought we fought the Second World War on Germany's side.

Hillary Clinton: Oh my.

Allen Weinstein: One fact, okay. Now, we have -- also polls have been taken that showed that more young Americans know who the three stooges were than know what the Bill of Rights contains. Those are not happy polls. At the National Archives, we have taken on as one of our missions the educational mission to try to increase civic literacy. Do you see the reduced knowledge of our history and government on the part of our young people as a major problem, and if so, what suggestions do you have for combating that?

Hillary Clinton: Well, first let me thank you very much Professor Weinstein for having this series, and asking me to be part of it. It's wonderful to be back at the Archives, which I have just treasured ever since I was a little girl, and first came to see some of the real founding documents, and other materials that tell the story of America, and so for me, your question about civic literacy and knowledge of American history really strikes home, because I've seen some of those same polls. Now I don't think there's anything wrong in knowing who the three stooges are. I myself was a big fan of the three stooges, but I think it's also important you know about the founding -- you know, fathers, you know about the Civil War, you know about the depression, you know about World War II, you know about American history, because we've all been given this gift of being Americans,



either by birth or by choice, and I know we have some students from one of the charter schools here in Washington, and I'm particularly pleased to see them, and I hope you get extra credit for coming here tonight, because I'm sure there are other things that -- you know, you could be spending your time doing, but --

[applause]

But I'm happy you're here, especially at the Archives, and I want to address your question from two perspectives. I mean, first, it's not only our young people, but really all of us who need to both know more and understand better American history, because we are living it. We are making it. We are part of it, and it may not be that everyone's name will be in the headlines, or that you'll write a book, or be mentioned in the archives, but one of the unique aspects of the American experience is the role that the citizen plays, and so if you don't know about American history, it's very difficult to be an active, involved citizen who does your part to make decisions about who to vote for, what issues to advocate for, how to really understand this extraordinary American democracy we have, and how to protect and defend it, so I think it goes with being an American citizen. But secondly, I think there has been somewhat of a lost opportunity, and maybe failure of responsibility on the part of us adults, because our children and our young people learn what we teach them. They may not always act like they're learning it, or care to learn it, but it can be conveyed, and so we have to do a better job in our schools, in our media, in our homes, you know, talking about the lessons of history and democracy, because we're in a competition now, with respect to our values around the world, and we need every single person to understand how important this is, that American values be given a voice, and be protected and nurtured, and if we don't have the citizenry doing that, we're not going to be successful.

Allen Weinstein: That's true. Now I have to at least confess that the world is divided into two types of people: those who loved the three stooges when they were young, and those who loved the Marx Brothers when they were young.

[laughter]

Hillary Clinton: That's true, that's true.

Allen Weinstein: So on that point, I think we have a fundamental disagreement.

Hillary Clinton: That's right, but you know, being a good politician, I like them both.

Allen Weinstein: Good.



[laughter]

Well let's talk about politics for a second. "A political life," a Senator I know often said, quoting her, "Is a continuing education in human nature, including one's own."

Hillary Clinton: Right.

Allen Weinstein: What did you mean by that?

Hillary Clinton: Well, I've said on many occasions that being involved in politics, and this I felt long before I was ever running or holding office myself, or married to someone who was, but back when I was growing up, and became involved in politics, it was a continuing education course in human nature; how people made decisions, how they advocated for positions they held, I grew up in a family that wasn't politically active in a formal sense, but they were very active citizens, and they followed politics, both of my parents did, and so around our dinner table, we would have very vigorous conversations about what was going on in the news, and my father was, as professor Weinstein said, a small businessman, so he was very conscious of what was happening in the economy, and what the decisions were that might affect his business. My mother was a full time mom and homemaker, and yet she was -- you know, not only very attuned to raising my brothers and me, but also the quality of life, and how people treated each other, so we had very, very lively conversations. It was a conservative Republican community that I grew up in, and I have said that, you know, the gender gap started in families like mine, because my father was a very staunch Republican, and my mother was a sort of silent Democrat, and so I saw the -- you know, the discussion and debate around our table, at our school, in our community, and it really inspired me, because again, I didn't know anybody elected to office when I was growing up, but I knew people who cared passionately about who was going to be elected to office. I remember in the 1960 election, you know, coming into my seventh grade social studies class, and you know, having my social studies teacher give us a big lecture about voting in Chicago, which you know, is something that, in the old days, people wanted to die in Chicago so they could come back and vote --

[laughter]

-- time and time again, right?

Allen Weinstein: Several times, right.



Hillary Clinton: So this was a part of growing up, and in that experience, I became, you know, intrigued, entranced by how people talked about what they advocated, what they cared about, what their causes were, why some people

took one position, and somebody else took another, what came out of their experience, or their point of view, so I did see this as a continuing education course, and as I got older and became involved in politics myself, I met people I would have never met under any other circumstance. You know, it's just you're thrown together around an election, and you work side-by-side with people who come from different parts of the community, different backgrounds, and you have an opportunity to sort of see all of this unfolding before you, so I am a very strong advocate of young people at least trying it, you know,

Allen Weinstein: Senator --

Hillary Clinton: -- working for something.

Allen Weinstein: In the Bronx where I came from, you could certainly vote after you were deceased, that was fine.

Hillary Clinton: You didn't have to move.

Allen Weinstein: But the difference was you could vote anywhere in the state that you wanted. You'd be sent where you wanted to go.

Hillary Clinton: That's good, I like that, transported.

Allen Weinstein: You've had -- let's flash forward from 1980 to 1992, '96, and 2000. You've watched at extremely close quarters three presidential elections, two of them as first lady. What advice would you have for candidates, or for that matter for first spouses, based on your personal experiences in these campaigns, other than not running or running, or whatever the case may be.

Hillary Clinton: Well, there's elections and politics, and then there's presidential elections and politics, and it's of a difference in degree and kind, and so you have to sort of take that into account when you approach one of these presidential elections, and I was privileged to see two very close on the inside, and one nearly that close, but I had worked in presidential campaigns before that, as a, you know, envelope stuffer, as a telephone caller, as a -- you know, neighborhood door-knocker. I had done the work leading up to being on the inside of a presidential campaign when Bill decided to run in '92, and you have to really enjoy it, or don't try it, because it is grueling, it is overwhelmingly stressful. You have to like people, you have to care about the issues you're talking about,



you have to want to listen to people. It is the greatest experience politically you could have, but you have to go into it with your eyes wide open, because it is unlike anything else in politics or probably life that you'll ever experience.

Allen Weinstein: Every woman in political life must develop skin as tough as a rhinoceros's. I believe you've quote Eleanor Roosevelt once or twice.

Hillary Clinton: That's right.

Allen Weinstein: You have something to do with her papers, too, if I'm not mistaken.

Hillary Clinton: Well, Eleanor Roosevelt was someone I always admired, but when Bill became president and I moved into the White House, I read a lot about my predecessors, because it is a unique experience, there's no sort of cookbook you can take off the shelf and say, "How to I become a first lady?" You know, how do you do this? But I was so impressed by so many of the women who had been there before me, and Eleanor Roosevelt was unique in every regard. She just captivated me even more so after I was in the White House. In the 1920s, when she was traveling around New York, while her husband was recuperating from polio, and many thought that his political career was over, how could he possibly, having been paralyzed by polio, expect to have an elected future? But Eleanor kept his contacts and hopes alive by traveling and exposing herself to politics. She had never been, you know, that involved with going around making speeches, and standing in front of crowds, and all that you have to do, and she wrote an article which said, "If you are a woman involved in politics," and that's not running for office, but just being in it, "you have to grow skin like a rhinoceros." And that was in the 1920s, and I see my friend Alita here, and Alita has been -- Alita Brel has been working on Eleanor Roosevelt's papers for how many years now? [low audio] Since the Archives began making that available, and so she has collected, in these wonderful volumes, everything that is -- can possibly be recovered about what Mrs. Roosevelt said, and Mrs. Roosevelt said so many wise things over so many years, it is hard to keep up with all of it, but she was an astute observer of politics. She may never have run for office herself, but she understood the political process, she understood the commitment that you had to make, the sacrifice that you had to make, and I took a lot of comfort and counsel from her example, in those years in the White House.

Allen Weinstein: Well, as you know, the National Archives runs the presidential library system. The Clinton library was not -- library number eleven. We have two candidates for library number twelve. The Nixon library will probably be out of the gate first, and then after that, President Bush 43, 13. The founder -- we began in



a rather bipartisan way, because it was Herbert Hoover who laid the cornerstone, who by the way was married to a very independent lady indeed, Lou Hoover.

Hillary Clinton: And geologist, right?

Allen Weinstein: Geologist.

Hillary Clinton: Lou Hoover.

Allen Weinstein: Who rode shotgun during the events in China early in her life, and then, of course came Eleanor Roosevelt and Franklin. Well Franklin loved this place, he loved -- he started the first presidential library, and I mention all of this to confess, if you will, that when I get out of my car there's a parking lot that has several spaces for physically disabled folks, and one space for the mentally disabled archivist who [unintelligible]

[laughter]

And -- but I'm 30 feet away from a little monument -- FDR said he wanted one monument only in Washington, just a little plaque with his birth and death dates, so we talk a little bit. I channel him, whatever, but it's [unintelligible] very useful. Now every public life has turning point moments, often moments when things change around, one changes one's values, one changes one's attitude, one's perceptions. For Franklin Roosevelt, it was contracting polio I think, in fairness. For Harry Truman, it was frankly inheriting the presidency the way he did. He said the sun and the moon and the stars fell on him when he heard that FDR had died. For JFK, I think it's probably fair to say it was the missile crisis. For George Bush, 9/11. I think you know what my question is. Turning point moments in your life.

Hillary Clinton: In my --

Allen Weinstein: Public life.

Hillary Clinton: -- public, political life. Well, in my own political life, obviously the first big turning point was deciding to move on to the political stage on my own behalf, which was a very surprising decision to me. I had never expected that I would do that. I have always loved politics, I've always loved supporting people in politics.¹³ I thought I would continue doing what I'd always done, which is to be an advocate, be a volunteer, be a -- you know, cheerleader, because I'd worked not only for my husband, but I'd worked for Jimmy Carter, I worked for Barry Goldwater. I had been involved in -- you know, political life, and I wanted to continue doing that, but I did not foresee running for office myself, and I've told



this story before, but it was a sort of -- building toward a crescendo of a turning point. In 1998, after Senator Moynihan announced that he would not run for reelection in 2000, and this was within days after the '98 midterm election. I started within literally minutes getting phone calls from New Yorkers asking me if I would consider running, and I said no. I said I thought it was sort of an absurd proposition, and said that repeatedly to everyone who tried to talk to me about it.

Allen Weinstein: Who called you first?

Hillary Clinton: Charlie Rangel.

Allen Weinstein: That's what I thought, Charlie [unintelligible]

Hillary Clinton: Yeah, Charlie Rangel was a friend of mine and my husband's, has been a friend for a long time, the dean of our New York Congressional delegation, Congressman from Harlem, I mean -- I mean the phone just rang immediately --

Allen Weinstein: And you said what to Charlie when he [unintelligible]

Hillary Clinton: Well, Charlie called, and he said, "Senator Moynihan's going to resign,"

[laughter]

"And he's not going to run again, and we really want you to think of running." And I said, "Charlie, that is ridiculous. I'm not going to do that. I can't do that." "Oh yeah, you really have to think about it," and so then he started like a phone chain, so people were calling me and you know, some of them were calling because they wanted me to run, they thought it would be a great race, they thought I'd be a good senator. A lot of them were running because they couldn't find another Democrat to run against Rudy Giuliani, who was running for the Senate, and so it was -- I mean I -- this is -- goes back to the -- you know, continuing education of human nature, you kind of learn to listen. "Well, even if you don't win, it would be a great race." Well, you know, thank you very much, you know.

[laughter]

"Besides, we can't find anybody else." Well, yeah I guess that's right.

[laughter]



So it -- you know, I would say absolutely not, and it wouldn't go away, and people would keep calling me, or they would come and visit me, and then at that time, the way the Senate runs, there's something called -- there's a Republican and a Democratic Senate campaign committee, and a Senator of each party runs it, and they are responsible for recruiting candidates and raising money for

candidates, and at that time the person running the Democratic campaign committee was Senator Torricelli from New Jersey, and he was calling me and calling me, and urging me to run, and I kept saying, you know, " I'm not going to do it, I'm sorry, it's just not a good idea." And then he told a reporter that he was convinced that I would do it, and it just --

[laughter]

"You know, you just had to keep talking to her, we're convinced that we can persuade her."

Allen Weinstein: Do you have a Bob Torricelli imitation as well, or --

[laughter]

Or a Chuck Schumer?

Hillary Clinton: Not one I can share, no.

[laughter]

Allen Weinstein: Okay.

Hillary Clinton: He's a great friend of mine, but he was relentless, you know, pushing, pushing, pushing, and he -- he was now, you know, on the case, and he enlisted other Senators, many of whom I had worked with on children's health and other issues, they started calling, they asked me to if they could come see me. So now we're into '99, and this has not let up, and I keep saying no, and they keep saying yes, and they say, "You've got to talk to one more person," and I would say, "You know, I don't think that's a good idea," and they'd say, "Oh yeah, we've invited the -- you know, him or her to come," and so it went on like that for weeks and weeks, and every time I would say, "No, I'm not going to do it. I absolutely am not going to do it," something would happen unexpected, because of course the press was just eating this up, you know, " Will she or won't she?" "Should she or shouldn't she?" And you know when you're in public life, -- it's like an out of body experience. You know, you stand there and people are talking about you that you've never met, who have never met you, people are relating



conversations with you that have never taken place, and you know, occasionally I'll read these things and I'll think, "Well maybe I'm forgetting. Maybe I had that conversation."

[laughter]

I remember just as a little aside, one time Bill and I were on a state visit, we were in London, and I picked up one of the London papers, and just flipping through it, and big headline: "Exclusive Interview With First Lady Hillary Clinton," and I mean it was question and answer. The reporter was saying, "And then I said to Mrs. Clinton," and you know, it would be like, "And then she said," and I read this and I turned, you know you get to feel like maybe you're missing out on your own life.

[laughter]

When did I give that interview? When did this happen? So --

Allen Weinstein: So in this parallel universe, when did you finally decide to run?

Hillary Clinton: I -- you know, I finally decided to look at it seriously in March of 1999. I was in New York City, and I was at an event, at a high school appropriately in this Chelsea section of New York, which surprisingly is next door to the Clinton neighborhood.

[laughter]

When we named our daughter Chelsea, people started sending us the "Chelsea Clinton News," which we didn't even know existed before we named her Chelsea, and I was at an event to introduce an HBO special about women in sports, and it was to celebrate women have to be given equal opportunities to compete in sports, math, science, trying to equalize education, and the title of the HBO special was, "Dare to Compete," and so we were on this stage with a big banner which said, "Dare to Compete," and Billie Jean King was there, who was one of -- you know, our great women sports heroes of that -- my time, and the captain of the girls' basketball team introduced me. Her name was Sophia. So she introduced me, and I went up to the podium, and she was, you know, about seven inches taller than me, and she -- and I went to shake her hand to thank her for introducing me, and she leans over, and she whispers in my ear, "Dare to compete, Mrs. Clinton, dare to compete." And you know, I had spent so much of my adult life urging young women to be whatever they wanted to be, to do whatever they could do, to go to college, to run for office, to -- you know, try out for this or that, and, you know, when this young woman said that to me, I thought,



you know, Maybe that's it. Maybe, you know, maybe -- I need to explore this, and really decide if it's something that I want to try or not.

Allen Weinstein: What a great story.

Hillary Clinton: So I did.

Allen Weinstein: What a great story. Is Sophia in the audience, by the way, anybody --

[laughter]

Okay now, when someone first asked me, after I became Archivist, what my vision was, I answered as any sensible person would, "It's 20/20 with glasses."

Hillary Clinton: Right.

Allen Weinstein: What's your vision for America?

Hillary Clinton: Same, 20/20 with glasses.

Allen Weinstein: 20/20 with glasses.

Hillary Clinton: Absolutely.

Allen Weinstein: Keeping away from the vision question.

Hillary Clinton: You know, I gave a speech last summer in which I actually talked about that, Allen. I said, you know let's imagine what America is like in 2020.

Allen Weinstein: Okay.

Hillary Clinton: And try to have a clear-sighted vision of where we want to be, and you know, we have some big challenges that we have to address. I mean, how do we keep our economy growing in a much more competitive world? How do we keep our country safe in a much more dangerous world, and how do we further our values in a rapidly changing world? How do we do all of that? And so if we were to fast forward into 2020, I would hope that our country's economy would have continued to create jobs and opportunity for the vast majority of Americans, and not have moved into a two-tier economy, where we have the rich and everybody else. That's the direction we're heading right now if we don't change course. I would hope we would be fiscally responsible, and have really



taken hold of our finances again, as we had in the 90's, and with our resources, been able to make smart investments. Obviously, I think we're on the wrong course now, so I would hope we would be back on the course of fiscal responsibility, and with our smart investing, I would hope that we would be energy self-sufficient to a great degree by then, that we would have taken action

to halt and begin to reverse the effects of global climate change, that we would have a healthcare system that provided quality, affordable healthcare to every American, and that we would have an education system that prepared every young person to take his or her place in this much more competitive world, and provided second chance training in education to every adult, because as the jobs change, we would have to be, you know, prepared to change with them, and I would hope that America's strategic position in the world would be one where we had built new alliances, and made more friends than enemies that we were prepared to deal with the challenges of global terrorism, but also of genocide, of disease, of environmental degradation, of the continuing oppression and impoverishment of, you know, hundreds of millions of people, and that we had reasserted our moral leadership, and were seen as the kind of country that we like to think of ourselves as being.

Allen Weinstein: And yet Senator, despite the hint of partisan commentary that we've just heard, the buzz in our little village is that you have a particular interest in consensus these days, that you've sponsored a number of bills with the Republicans, that you've led a solid bipartisan life. I'm not counting your votes, but how do you account for this? Is this accurate, or is this inaccurate? Is there a – what's the perspective behind it?

Hillary Clinton: Well I have always respected and relished problem solving. I mean, I think that if you're in public life or private life, you have a choice. You can either mark time, and just hope that nothing upsets your apple cart, or you could throw yourself into the work you do, the debates that are around you, and try to, you know, look for solutions to the problems that you face, and you know, when I was practicing law, when I was involved in nonprofits, like the Children's Defense Fund, when I was first lady of Arkansas, when I came to Washington, I thought that the job was to try to create an evidence-based decision-making process that would bring people together to find common ground, and reach consensus about solving problems, and it's been challenging in Washington in the last, you know, years, because we've veered away from that, and so as a Senator from New York, I think it's my job to try to work with people, to try to find that common ground, and create what I view as at least some efforts at solving problems, and obviously on many issues that's hard to do, but on some you can find people who are willing to work with you, if you are willing to work with them.



Allen Weinstein: It was once said of Abraham Lincoln that you could find Lincoln always at the absolute moral center of his party, whatever the issue was. There was sometimes said of your husband, in the presidency, that if you're looking for President Clinton, look toward the center of the Democratic Party. Have you located yourself anywhere?

Hillary Clinton: Well, I think I have done what I believe was right, on the votes that I've had to cast, on the issues that I've been involved in since I came to the Senate. People can agree or disagree, but at the end of the day, having been around politics for so long, as I have, I think it is the better course to take to struggle with these decisions, to weigh the pros and cons, and make a decision, and you know you might say, "Well, I wish I'd known this, or I wish I'd done that," but in politics, as in life, oftentimes you don't have that luxury. You make a decision based on what you know at the time, and for me, that's how I tried to sort of define my public role, and sometimes, you know, it might be to the right, it might be to the left, it might be in the center, but it's been historically important for people on both sides of the aisle certainly, to try to find common ground in that center. That's when America works better, when, you know, we can come to decisions that, you know, may not satisfy the ideologues, the extremists, or the people who have a commercial or partisan stake, but which are, to the best of our ability, where we think we should be, in order to move the country forward, and I think that's the best place to be. It's the most comfortable place for me.

Allen Weinstein: Well, speaking on behalf of my fellow raving moderates in the audience I --

Hillary Clinton: [laughs]

Allen Weinstein: I appreciate that now. Whenever this may occur, do you have any plans for post-political careers, and activities?

Hillary Clinton: Well, you know, I was thinking about that.

Allen Weinstein: You gave me an opening to ask that question

[unintelligible]

Hillary Clinton: Yeah, well, I was thinking about it when we were getting close to the end of Bill's term, certainly before I ever thought about running for office myself, I mean I have a passion for children's issues, and for women's empowerment around the world, which I actually think go hand-in-hand, and so I had envisioned, you know, working on behalf of these issues that I've been involved in for -- you know, 35 years, and that's what I would -- that's what I



would want to do, you know, maybe teaching, writing, speaking, advocating. There's so much work to be done, and I have a great deal of respect for the not for profit sector, which is increasingly important as many governments fail in their responsibilities to take care of their own people, to advance a positive agenda that will improve the lives of their people. We've got to have a vigorous, charitable, faith-based, not for profit, nongovernmental sector in order to make the case on behalf of, you know, what I think are core human values, and I would certainly want to be a part of that.

Allen Weinstein: Let me shift ground to another subject. We're coming up soon on the fifth anniversary of 9/11, easily the most traumatic event of recent memory. What has happened, as you see it, you go back and forth to New York - - from New York to Washington, both in terms of New York response to this event, in terms of national response, because you traveled the country a great deal. Is it fair to say, for example, that most Americans have moved on psychologically, in terms of their response to this event? To what extent does it still condition actual behavior on the part of our countrymen? To what extent does -- is it taking on a kind of iconic status that doesn't really affect actions to any great extent? I'm trying -- I'm searching for -- basically something that would get you to respond to New York, and the country that way.

Hillary Clinton: Well, when you asked me before about turning points, I certainly would have said that the biggest turning point once I became a Senator, as opposed to making the decision to run for the Senate, was 9/11, and you know, I am a Senator from New York. I see this through the prism of the people that I represent, and the people who lost family members, the people who were grievously injured, the people who lost businesses, the devastation in lower Manhattan, the ongoing health problems because of the first responders and the volunteers and residents who were subjected to the toxic air, and the impact that's had on their health, the stress and trauma from being part of that event, so it is very much alive in everything I do. I still spend a considerable percentage of my time on issues directly and indirectly related to 9/11. Just a few weeks ago I was in New York on these health-related issues, because I'd warned that the air wasn't safe back after 9/11, and the administration basically covered that up, and refused to deal with it, and we now finally have someone appointed to be the overseer of all of the ongoing health and even mortality issues related to the impact that the toxins had on people's breathing, so I'm very conscious of this every single day, so New Yorkers have simultaneously demonstrated resolve and resilience, people are back to work obviously. People have moved forward, but nobody has forgotten, and it is something that is very close to everybody that I run across, everybody that I deal with. In the rest of the country, I think that the specter of terrorism and the necessity of preventing that, of preparing to be vigilant is a big part of people's, you know, mindset, but it's very intense and



personal in New York, I mean we live it every single day.

Allen Weinstein: For a few years -- you'd probably agree a few years after 9/11, the country felt the way it felt to a kid at the start of the Second World War, myself and others, it felt united, because it was united, to a very great extent.

Obviously, the war has created the confrontations over the policy toward the war, and yet when last year at the fourth of July, which we celebrate here at the National Archives, the parade begins out here. We normally have five, ten thousand people out front, and we invited two wounded veterans of the Iraq War to come and read the Declaration of Independence, and there wasn't a dry eye in the house, so that the country, whatever one's view of the war, we support the troops, they're a symbol of unity in the country, and I just wonder as we come back toward the fifth anniversary of 9/11, are there any -- are there things that can be done to restore, if you will, at the metapolitical level, a sense of coherent American identity that you see happening, or do you see a continued fragmentation going on?

Hillary Clinton: Well, you know, Allen, I regret deeply that the unity we had after 9/11 did not deepen and expand, and become the overarching experience that we all took out of the trauma of 9/11. There was every reason to believe in the immediate aftermath that that would happen.

Allen Weinstein: Right.

Hillary Clinton: And certainly I, and many others were ready to offer absolute support to the president to do what had to be done in order to protect our country, to rebuild New York, Washington and the Pentagon, and the whole world was with us. I mean, this was not just an American experience. We had so many people from one end of the world to the other, saying, "We're with New York, we're with America, we stand with you," and that was squandered, you know, and I say that very, very regretfully, because it didn't have to be. I think it is very important to rebuild the sense of trust and unity that is important for us to have as a nation, for us to feel with respect to our elected leadership, in order to confront the challenges that we have, you know, we have a lot of really serious, difficult challenges ahead that are not going to disappear by, you know, us denying them, or ignoring them, or by regretting who's in charge of our government now, or anything else. They're American challenges, and America has to rise to the occasion, and so it's my hope that we can begin to repair some of the damage that's been done to our body politic, to our standing in the world, because I think that we have to be united as a nation to deal with our domestic and international threats and opportunities. We have great opportunities, but we have to step up and meet them, and we're not doing that, and obviously energy



comes to mind, because you know, we are ignoring our energy future at our peril. You know, we need, you know, very aggressive, smart leadership to begin to move away from our dependence on foreign oil, and a carbon-based -- exclusively carbon-based economy to all extent and purposes, and begin to, you know, really incentivize and accelerate the development of, you know, homegrown energy. That's just one example, abroad we've got to figure out how we're going to deal with Iran and North Korea and Hamas and China and Latin America, I mean the list is pretty daunting, so we need to get back to a sense of unity and commitment.

Allen Weinstein: I have a question I think no one's ever asked you before, which is what do your friends least understand about you?

Hillary Clinton: My friends?

Allen Weinstein: Those who know you.

Hillary Clinton: My friends understand me.

Allen Weinstein: They do.

[laughter]

Hillary Clinton: I think it's everybody else.

Allen Weinstein: [unintelligible] what do your -- what do your supporters least understand about you?

Hillary Clinton: I have no idea. I mean, I'm the wrong person to ask.

Allen Weinstein: I just wondered.

Hillary Clinton: I don't know.

Allen Weinstein: Okay. Well, the next question I suppose I had for you was the question of what -- you wouldn't care to make news tonight, would you?

[laughter]

I have another way [unintelligible]

Hillary Clinton: Well, what do you have in mind?



[laughter]

[applause]

Allen Weinstein: Well, even the fact that my wife is about ten feet away –

[laughter]

[unintelligible]

Hillary Clinton: And her doctor, so we both better be careful.

Allen Weinstein: Two -- two things in mind, obviously. One is whether you care to do your Schumer imitation, but --

Hillary Clinton: [laughs]

Allen Weinstein: [unintelligible] The other question, would you care to say something nice about President Bush?

Hillary Clinton: Sure.

Allen Weinstein: Okay, what would that be?

Hillary Clinton: He --

[laughter]

You know, I really don't think it's in our interest to personalize so much of our politics. I think it's a mistake. I certainly thought that in the 90's, and I think it in the 21st century, and you know in my personal dealings with the president on a range of issues, he's been very willing to talk. He's been affable, he's been good company. On a personal level, he is someone who has a lot of, you know, charm and, you know, charisma, and I -- you know, I think that after -- in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, I was very grateful to him for his support for New York. You know, Senator Schumer and I went to see him on September the 13th, after having gone to ground zero on the 12th. We couldn't have gone without the President's -- without the White House agreeing to send us in a plane, because there were no planes running. There was no way into Manhattan, so they flew us from Andrews Air Force Base to LaGuardia. We were -- other than the fighter jets circling over, we were the only plane in the sky. We landed at LaGuardia, and helicoptered to the heliport on the west side, and went back to see the President -- went to see the President the next day to both report on what we'd seen,



because it was so much worse than what I'd seen on television. You know, television did a great job covering it, but it's a screen, you know, you just see whatever the inches on the screen are, and we circled over the burning disaster of the ground zero site, and it was just beyond description. It was really like any narrative that I'd ever read in literature class about what hell must have been like, by Dante or anyone else, and when we saw the president the next day, it was a

very personal, very emotional discussion, and when we asked him for the help that New York needed, he immediately said yes, and over the next months, there were often second thoughts by some people in the administration, or some people in the Congress about the promise that the president had made to Senator Schumer and me about the \$20 billion we'd asked for, but he always kept it on track. He made sure that we got the resources that we needed, and I'm very grateful to him for that, and obviously we have many disagreements about many, many issues, but I am, you know, very appreciative that in a time when, you know, the people I represented really needed his help, he was there for us.

Allen Weinstein: That's very elegant. Thank you very much for that. I guess I had a couple other questions, but they'll have to wait for our next go around, I'm told we're running out of time, but I wanted to mention two things that might be of interest to you. I did want to ask you about -- the one question I wanted to ask you about President Clinton, about the new relationship with President Bush 41. I had the privilege of being in Houston when they announced the first money they were giving away to the tsunami victims, and listened to Barbara Bush do her own take on that particular --

Hillary Clinton: [laughs]

Allen Weinstein: -- which was hilarious, as she introduced her son, Bill the president, and her husband the president, and there was another son who was president in Washington.

Hillary Clinton: [laughs]

Allen Weinstein: And I thought your husband can't have a comeback to that, but he did, of course. He got up there and said -- turned quickly and turned to Barbara Bush and said, "Thank you mom."

[laughter]

Hillary Clinton: Right.



Allen Weinstein: But it worked. Any thoughts on the odd couple?

[laughter]

Hillary Clinton: It is so wonderful. It's a very small group of people who are ex-presidents, and Jerry Ford and Jimmy Carter have forged a great friendship, despite the fact that President Carter defeated President Ford, and my husband and the first President Bush have equally forged this wonderful working

relationship, and it was an idea that the current President Bush came up with after the tsunami, when he called and asked Bill if he'd be willing to work with his father to try to not only raise money for tsunami victims, but demonstrate America's concern for people that had suffered because of the tsunami, and you know, when the president asks you to do something like that, even if you're an ex-president, or even if you're the president's father, you pretty much agree, because it's something that, as a patriotic American, you feel compelled to do, and I'm not sure either one of them quite expected what would happen, but they have the best time together. They are -- you know, they travel together, they socialize together, Bill has been at Kennebunkport and spent the night, he's gone speed boating --

[laughter]

-- with President Bush, he's gone golfing, which is also speed golfing with President Bush.

[laughter]

One day of the blue, President Bush dropped by Bill's office in Harlem, unannounced, he just thought he'd drop in, and Bill was not there, but you know, President Bush came in, introduced himself to the whole staff, 'cause he'd worked with some but not all of them, sat at the desk, and called Bill, and said, "Well Bill, I'm sitting in your desk in Harlem."

[laughter]

They are having a great time. It is absolutely genuine. They have respect for each other, and you know, and Barbara Bush was so funny when she, you know, made that joking introduction of, you know, she picked up another son along the way, but it is -- it's turned into a very close relationship, and the current President Bush is always kidding about it. You know, he'll say things, "Well I guess I'd better check with my brother, you know, the -- 42, to see what 41 wants to do."



It's all – it's all in [unintelligible]

Allen Weinstein: And they say the same things at firsthand. I've heard both presidents talk about it in the Clinton Library, I was talking with President Clinton, and at the Bush Library, with President Bush, my favorite line, if you'll forgive me for sharing it, because we are among friends, is when he shook his head, he's just come from a meeting with President Clinton, and Bush came and [unintelligible] and said, "You know, one of the great things about my meetings with President Clinton," he says, "Once we said to hello to everybody, I don't have to say another word for the rest of the day."

[laughter]

Hillary Clinton: That's really funny.

Allen Weinstein: And -- no, we -- we're going to have to end now, but I wanted to end with two gifts for you, one a gift for New York, because one of the things that National Archives is doing is we're getting much involved in New York with the Foundation for the National Archives, which is our sister, brother, compatriot in this process, but we are under the stewardship of Marvin Pinkert, our great museum director, and you've got to see -- all of you have to stop to see the public vaults tonight or some other time. But we -- we're going to open an exhibit, a special exhibit, and then continue with other exhibits at Federal Hall, which of course is where George Washington took the oath, where the Bill of Rights was written, where the first Congress met, etc., so New York, you will see more of us in the years ahead, and we're going to have a gateway presence throughout the city, including -- we've offered assistance to whatever work is done at the 9/11 site on one condition, that we'll just do the work, we don't want any money for it -- do a one year -- one dollar a year contract, but we don't want to define what New Yorkers do. New Yorkers will do it, we'll be there to help, but --

Hillary Clinton: Well Allen, can I also say thank you to your staff, you know, as you said, the Clinton Library Museum is under the National Archives system, and you have the most wonderful people working here, people who love history, who treasure the artifacts who are so --

[applause]

You know, so committed to the American experience, and preserving it in every way and I wanted to say thank you to all of them.



Allen Weinstein: Senator, that's very kind of you, except you just cost the federal government a lot of money. Now I've got to give them all raises.

[laughter]

But in any event, we have for you, hopefully things that would be of some interest, a whole series of letters from Eleanor Roosevelt to Harry Truman.

Hillary Clinton: Oh my.

Allen Weinstein: -- and from Truman to Eleanor Roosevelt. She got irritated when President Truman did not follow her Mid-east Policy. Mrs. Roosevelt basically thought she had a policy and the administration had one, they would sort of keep each other informed of these things, and so she threatened to resign, and then she got into a correspondence with the Secretary of State, George Marshall, with Truman -- it's a fascinating collection of letters. In addition, we have some Dolley Madison materials here.

Hillary Clinton: Oh, another one of my favorite predecessors.

Allen Weinstein: Exactly so, and she got the freedom to visit the House of Representatives whenever she wanted to have that freedom. I don't know if you have the same freedom or not, you are in the Senate.

[laughter]

It's the other --

Hillary Clinton: I get a visa.

Allen Weinstein: Okay.

[laughter]

But in any event, here they are, and I hope they are things that you will find --

Hillary Clinton: Thank you so much.

Allen Weinstein: Thank you.

Hillary Clinton: Thank you.



[applause]

Allen Weinstein: I wanted to mention, before thanking our guest and letting her go back to her responsibilities, I wanted to mention two things about ex -- former presidents. We are honoring President Ford here on the 19th of June with special seminars involving a number of folks from the administration and journalists and others. There will be a dinner that evening. There's a whole batch of events going on. I don't know if we'll get any other ex-presidents then, but we're honoring him. We still have an open invitation to President Clinton, and to President Bush 41 to be here, President Bush 43, the current president, has been here several times, and we hope to see him again soon. President Carter -- we await President

Carter, and on behalf of everybody here, for your incredibly candid and interesting performance tonight, I thank you very much for taking your time.

Hillary Clinton: Thank you.

[applause]

Thank you all, thank you.

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