

Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

Clinton Library

DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
001. memo	Carol Romo to Karen Finney; RE: Personally Identifiable Information [partial] (2 pages)	12/21/1993	b(6)
002. memo	Carol Romo to Neil Lattimor; RE: Personally Identifiable Information [partial] (1 page)	12/20/1993	b(6)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
First Lady's Office
Karen Finney (Press Office)
OA/Box Number: 11104

FOLDER TITLE:

Schulman Video

2015-0734-S

db3890

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
- P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
- P4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
- P5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
- P6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

PRM. Personal record misfile defined in accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2201(3).

RR. Document will be reviewed upon request.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

- b(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
- b(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
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- b(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
- b(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
- b(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]

December 6, 1993

Ms. Hillary Rodham Clinton
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Hillary,

Please know how grateful I am that you are working to find time in your impossible schedule for an interview for "A Century of Women." It is, simply, a terrific project - - - and one that I believe will make an important, lasting contribution.

"A Century of Women" is a six-hour documentary history of twentieth century American women. In it, we hear the voices of both famous women and of "ordinary" ones whose lives reflect the experiences (and in many cases, the heroism) of many others. We have discovered their stories by working closely with the Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe and with a panel of distinguished historians who served as our advisors. They tell us their history in their own words - - - sometimes on historical film and sometimes in contemporary interviews. In the case of women no longer living and not captured on tape, actresses bring their voices alive. (I have included the TBS press release which lists many of them. In addition, Mary Steenbergen is doing the voice of Christine Frederick; Amy Irving is playing Pauline Newman; and Jodie Foster, Jessica Lange and Michelle Pfeiffer have agreed to join the company.)

The documentary is divided into three thematic programs. The first is about work and family. The second, sexuality and social justice. The third, images of women and popular culture and the arts. It is about work and family that we hope to talk with you.

Our program looks at the work women have done both on the job and at home - - - and listens to the century-long debate over where a woman's place is. We begin with the story of Pauline Newman, who went to work in New York's sweatshops when she was eight - - - and her sisters who helped build the early labor movement. We learn of Alice McClellan Birney, who thought a woman's greatest work was with children. And hear from the philosophers of housework: Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Christine Frederick. We listen to the letters and diaries of

women keeping their families alive during the Depression.....and later of Japanese-American women keeping their families together during the internment. We talk with Tina Hill, an African-American Rosie-the-Riveter, whose wartime chance to work changed her life. And Delores Huerta tells of striking out in the farm fields to organize for the first time while pregnant with her seventh child. Former Congresswoman Martha Griffith recalls the laughter in the House when the 81-year-old Congressman from Virginia added the word "sex" to Title VII. And Elaine Jones relates the first successful court case under that law in which the Supreme Court said an employer could not discriminate against a mother. Later, Karen Nussbaum speaks of family issues as the cutting issues for workers today. We also hear from Eleanor Roosevelt (although she figures more prominently in the second episode), Maya Angelou, Frances Perkins, Florence Kelley, Betty Friedan....and many more.

Our interview with you would come near the end of the first episode, after we have brought the basic history to the present day. We would like it to be a warm, relaxed conversation about where you - - - and we - - - find ourselves as women at the end of the century. I'd like to ask about your expectations growing up in the '50's, when women were asked to play traditional roles.....and then coming of age in the '60's, when those roles were rejected. We might talk of what you've learned in the last couple of years about what the world at large expects from women (and First Ladies)....and of what you have learned (and now expect) of yourself. I'm sure we'll talk of balance between work and family. And I hope we'll talk about the lessons from your own experience that you most want to give to Chelsea.

I'm happy to send you the questions before we sit down. And if seeing the current script is helpful, we can come up with that, too.

I really have enormous hopes for the ability of these programs to inspire especially young women who come fresh to this history.

And I can't imagine anyone better to help provide that inspiration!

Marla — Heidi



A CENTURY OF WOMEN

Premieres Tuesday-Thursday, June 7-9, 1994

A CENTURY OF WOMEN, a landmark six-hour documentary series produced by VU Productions exclusively for TBS Superstation, examines the changing roles of American women against the landscape of 20th-century social, technologic and political revolution. The three two-hour segments weave three storytelling elements in a multi-generational, multi-ethnic, multi-media cinematic collage: an anecdotal narrative illustrated with archival footage and photography and voiced by contemporary performers; the historical perspectives of scholars and witnesses; and original filmed segments in which an extended family of women reflect upon the changes they've seen—and affected—over the course of their lifetimes.

Actresses voicing the narrative that reflects common experience through individual stories include Candace Bergen (as poet Edna St. Vincent Millay), Sally Field (as labor-movement organizer Elizabeth Gurley Flynn), Mariel Hemingway (as pioneer aviator Amelia Earhart), Jean Stapleton (as First Lady and humanitarian Eleanor Roosevelt) and Alfre Woodard (as C.J. Walker, America's first African-American millionaire). Jane Fonda will provide the overall narration for A CENTURY OF WOMEN.

On-camera interviews with women responsible for changing the way we work, live, think about ourselves and look to the future feature Halle Berry, Unità Blackwell, Barbara Boxer, Chris Evert, Susan Faludi, Betty Friedan, Erica Jong, Donna Karan, Diane Nash, Wilma Rudolph, Phyllis Schlafly, Grace Slick, Gloria Steinam, Naomi Wolf, among many others. In addition, noted historians Ellen Chessler, Blanche Cook, Paula Giddings, Vicki Ruiz and Susan Ware lend their scholarly expertise to the documentary.

A CENTURY OF WOMEN will air in three segments: "Union Maids and Modern Mothers," an analysis of the two most important—and frequently contradictory—aspects of women's lives since the Industrial Revolution created jobs outside the home; "Bedrooms, Boardrooms and Courtrooms," a comprehensive look at women's efforts to control their own lives and fashion a system of justice for themselves and all Americans; and "Beauty and the Best," focusing on how women see themselves and how influences dictating that vision have evolved through the years.

The executive producer of A CENTURY OF WOMEN is former *Today* senior producer Jacoba Atlas. Heidi Schulman, a former *NBC News* correspondent, serves as co-writer and producer, with Lynn Tuite serving as executive in charge of production for VU. Pat Mitchell executive-produces for TBS Productions, with Vivian Schiller as supervising producer.

Black backdrop witness style informal discussion

Our interview comes late in the first episode of our history, after we have brought the major themes of work and family in American women's lives to the present day. Karen Nussbaum will have spoken of the need to make families and work compatible. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg will have talked about the evolution of women's place under the law since Title VII, and spoken about how women's work will be truly valued "when fathers value parenthood as much as they say they value motherhood."

As a sort of "bumper," we may then use a short piece from Lily Tomlin's sketch in "The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe." In it, she is a working mother of twins, a wife, and a social activist. After her hectic daily routine, she falls into bed exhausted, only to awake and do it all over again. Finally, she collapses, saying: "If I had know that this is what it means to have it all, I would have clearly settled for less!"

Our interview, then, is about work and family.....and about what your experiences have been in a time when women are gaining greater opportunity, at least, to do it all.

What were your expectations as a girl growing up in the traditional fifties? What did you want to be? Did you always expect you'd have a career? Did you think about getting married and having children? Did your mother's own choices influence you?

What influenced you in the sixties to make the choice to become a lawyer? (Did the women's movement of the time or attending a women's college have any part?)

You made a traditional choice after law school to follow the man you loved home. How easy was that?

Did you have experiences in the seventies that illustrate the difficulty women have had being accepted as professionals? How have you seen those perceptions change?

Perhaps more than any woman in the country, you know first-hand the conflicts we still experience as women about what we expect of ourselves and what society generally expects of us. From that experience.....as a professional and a wife and certainly as a campaigner.....what have you learned about American attitudes

toward women at the end of the century? Why do you think the discussion about what a woman's role is is so emotional?

You have read an enormous amount of history of First Ladies. Are there a few pieces of wisdom from your predecessors that you hold especially close?

The choices you've made for your own work as First Lady are clearly ground-breaking. Are you being simply true to your own talents or do you hope to change public perceptions as well?

How did having a child change your priorities and your expectations? How do you find a balance in your own life between work and family? How hard is that?

From all of this experience, what are the lessons you most want to give to Chelsea as she makes her own choices as a young woman?

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Heidi Schulman
244-1418

VIA FAX: 202/456-7806



Karen Finney

From: Carol Romo

Date: 12/21/93

Re: Crew Names and Information for
Hillary Rodham Clinton Interview - 12/22/93

Paramount

V.P. In Charge - TBS

Pat Mitchell

(b)(6)

[001]

Studios

Producer - VU Productions

Heidi Schulman

(b)(6)

5555

Melrose

Camera #1

Ellen Kuras

(b)(6)

Avenue

Camera #2

Stephen Kazmierski

(b)(6)

Cooper Bldg.

#116

Sound Recordist

JT Takagi

(b)(6)

Los Angeles

Asst. Camera #1

Ruth Sergel

(b)(6)

California

90038

Asst. Camera #2

Niels Alpert

(b)(6)

213 956-3968

Clinton Library Photocopy

Gray Chevy Astro
VA 246-569
John Tanzer

(b)(6)

Withdrawal/Redaction Marker

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Via Fax: 202/456-7805

To: Neil Lattimor
 From: Carol Romo *CR*
 Date: 12/20/93
 Re: Crew names and SS#'s for Hillary Rodham Clinton Interview - 12/22/93

Paramount

Studios

5555

Malrose

Avenue

Cooper Bldg.

#116

Los Angeles

California

90038

213 956-3968

Listed below please find the names and social security numbers for VU's crew. The crew will arrive at 11:00am to set up for the 1:00pm interview:

Vice President In Charge - TBS

Pat Mitchell

(b)(6)

[002]

Producer - VU Productions

Heidi Schulman

(b)(6)

Camera #1

Ellen Kuras

(b)(6)

Camera #2

Stephen Kazmierski

(b)(6)

Sound Recordist

JT Takagi

(b)(6)

Asst. Camera #1

Ruth Sergel

(b)(6)

Asst. Camera #2

Niels Alpert

(b)(6)



FAX TRANSMITTAL COVER LETTER

PLEASE DELIVER THE FOLLOWING PAGES TO:

Name: Neil Lattimore

Company: _____

FAX #: _____

TOTAL # OF PAGES INCLUDING THIS COVER SHEET: 2From: CAROL ROMODate: 12-20-93Message: HERE'S A STAFF LIST FORTHE INTERVIEW THIS WEDNESDAY -PLEASE CALL IF YOU NEED ANYFURTHER INFORMATION -THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP -CAROL ROMO
213/956-3968IF YOU DO NOT RECEIVE ALL PAGES AS INDICATED OR HAVE ANY QUESTIONS,
PLEASE CALL (213) 956-3968.

TRANSMISSION COMPLETED:

DATE: _____ TIME: _____ BY: _____

Paramount

Studios

5555

Melrose

Avenue

Cooper Bldg.

#116

Los Angeles

California

90038

213 956-3968

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

I, _____, recognize the importance and sensitivity of my role as a White House volunteer. In consideration of the opportunity to provide voluntary services to the White House, I hereby acknowledge and agree to the following:

- (i) I may have access as a volunteer to nonpublic, privileged and/or confidential information. I agree not to share such information with anyone outside the White House complex, unless such disclosure is required by law.
- (ii) I agree that all materials, documents, and/or information conveyed to the President are government or private property, and I agree that I will not duplicate, remove from the White House complex, or otherwise appropriate any such materials or information without duly authorized written permission to do so. I acknowledge that doing so may subject me to criminal liability.
- (iii) I understand that I have no authority to make policy or to speak on behalf of the White House. I further acknowledge that I am not authorized to discuss official matters with any persons outside the White House.
- (iv) I agree that I may not use my position as a volunteer to obtain benefits for myself or for others that are not available to the general public.
- (v) I agree to complete all necessary forms and documents required by the Volunteer Office, the Office of White House Personnel Security, or the United States Secret Service.
- (vi) I agree that I will not work on White House matters that could directly affect my financial interests, or those of my family or any organization or entity with which I am affiliated.
- (vii) I agree to comply with all applicable laws and regulations while performing my services as a volunteer.
- (viii) I agree that I am volunteering my service of my own free will without compensation from the Federal government or the expectation of such.
- (ix) I understand that my services as a volunteer may be discontinued at any time and for any reason.

- (x) I agree to commit to one full year of volunteer service.
- (xi) I agree to work a minimum of sixteen hours per month.
- (xii) I agree to restrict myself to certain locations within the White House Complex, i.e. the Volunteer Office, volunteer assigned work area, the restroom and cafeteria.
- (xiii) I agree that I must receive authorization from the Counsel's Office (202-456-6229) before I provide assistance on matters of policy or accept discretion to exercise independent authority in the White House complex. I understand that if my duties change to include such responsibilities, I may be required to attend ethics training, file financial disclosure reports, and/or comply with other conflicts of interest requirements.

I understand that others are depending on me to be in attendance during the times that I have committed to do so. I will do my best to meet these obligations. If I am unable to be present when expected, I will call the White House Volunteer Office at 202-456-7756 and/or my supervisor as early as possible so that a replacement may be obtained.

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

D.O.B. _____

PLACE OF BIRTH: _____

SUPERVISOR'S AGREEMENT:

The above volunteer will provide only clerical, administrative, or other assistance of nondiscretionary nature. I understand that volunteers providing assistance on matters of policy or given discretion to exercise independent authority in the White House complex must be cleared through the Counsel's Office.

SUPERVISOR'S NAME: _____

OFFICE: _____

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

DRAFT

April 10, 1995

Ms. Angela Kraus
Producer
The Oprah Winfrey Show
Post Office Box 909715
Chicago, Illinois 60690

Dear Ms. Kraus:

It has come to my attention that you have invited Mr. Alan Gordon to be a guest on the Oprah show to discuss celebrity mail. Please be aware that Mr. Gordon does not represent or speak for the White House or any member of the First Family.

As you may know, Mr. Gordon is one of more than a thousand volunteers who assist the White House in processing correspondence sent to the First Family.

I know you have been in contact with Mr. Jim Dorskind, Director of Correspondence, and I will reiterate that Mr. Gordon will not be bringing to the program any letters, photos, or other correspondence sent to or from the White House.

Sincerely,

???

DRAFT

April 11, 1995

Mr. Alan Gordon
USSAH 616
3700 North Capitol Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20317

Dear Mr. Gordon:

It has come to my attention that you are planning to appear on The Oprah Winfrey Show to discuss the topic of celebrity mail. Please be advised that you do not represent the White House or any member of the First Family and are not authorized to speak on their behalf.

As you know, ALL correspondence that is sent to or from the White House is confidential. Incoming correspondence and samples of outgoing correspondence are the sole property of the White House and may not be used for any unauthorized purpose. You may not take any materials, including letters, cards, photos, or any similar items with you should you decide to appear on the program.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mr. Jim Dorskind, (202) 456-5460, or Ms. Lori Abrams, (202) 456-7487.

Sincerely,

DRAFT

April 10, 1995

MEMORANDUM TO MARVIN KRISLOV, NEEL LATTIMORE, KATHI WHALEN

FROM: LORI ABRAMS
ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR, PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGES

JIM DORSKIND
SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT
DIRECTOR OF CORRESPONDENCE AND PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGES

RE: OPRAH WINFREY, ALAN GORDON, USSAH, AND MAIL TO SOCKS

The department of Presidential Correspondence has a volunteer operation at the United States Soldiers and Airmen's Home (USSAH). The great bulk of the mail addressed to Socks is processed there. When the First Lady visited the USSAH, the pool reporter (AP) interviewed Alan Gordon (article attached). Mr. Gordon has proclaimed himself to be "Secretary to Socks." This story has prompted the Oprah Winfrey show to invite Mr. Gordon to be a guest on a program about celebrity mail. He has accepted.

Mr. Gordon, we believe, plans to speak on behalf of Socks. He will be doing this with no support from the White House.

Kerri Childress, Public Affairs Officer, USSAH, has tried to dissuade Mr. Gordon from appearing on the program, but to no avail. She recommends that someone from the WH call Mr. Gordon and spell out for him what he can and can't talk about. She believes this will change his mind.

To this point, our guidelines for talking about correspondence with the press have been as follows:

VOLUNTEERS ARE NOT TO TALK TO THE PRESS ABOUT THE MAIL UNLESS REQUESTED TO DO SO BY THE WH PRESS OFFICE

MAIL SENT TO ANY MEMBER OF THE FIRST FAMILY IS CONFIDENTIAL.

WE DO NOT SHOW RESPONSE CARDS ON TV.

NOTHING CAN BE SHOWN THAT IDENTIFIES ANY SENDER (THIS INCLUDES PHOTOS, ENVELOPES, ETC.)

The White House Mail Troops

At the Soldiers' Home, Veterans Take On Another Mission

By Richard Leiby
Washington Post Staff Writer

After you've torpedoed Japanese men-of-war in the Aleutian Islands, braved the bone chill of 19-below to establish the Korean DMZ, and peed your pants while plummeting into a Bac Lieu rice paddy in a shot-down Huey, there's probably not much more fighting you'd care to do for your country.

But there is still something called patriotism, sir, and there is something called service. And, yes, they also serve, these old soldiers who sort the mail of the cat that belongs to the president of the United States.

"Allan H. Gordon, USN, Ret., Secretary to Socks, Meow," says the scrapbook wielded by Allan H. Gordon, USN, Ret., a 77-year-old side of beef who doesn't mind taking credit for sinking "a total of 30 Jap ships" and now proudly serves in the White House Auxiliary Mail Room, which is nowhere near the White House. It's way up on North Capitol Street, on the little-known campus of the United States Soldiers' and Airmen's Home, where you can find a retired veteran to fit any Veterans Day angle you can think of.

But forget for a moment the World War I doughboy who just turned 100. Never mind the many aged enlisted men who make do in dorms built at the turn of the century. Overlook the shabby state of An-

VETERANS, From D1

derson Cottage, the summer home of President Lincoln, where old Abe drafted the Emancipation Proclamation. The USSAH, which houses 1,800 vets, average age 71.6, has its money woes, but it asks nothing of the taxpayer. Never has.

Instead, some old soldiers prefer to keep giving to the government, serving a president who is not wildly popular among military folk or anyone else these days. So this Veterans Day we pause to note the contributions of Chief Petty Officer Gordon and his comrade-in-mail-handling, Sgt. 1st Class William Woods, who sums up his life this way: "Sixty-four and a half, from Boston, put in 22 years in the Army, Korea and Vietnam, got out in 1970, had a dry-cleaning store, sold it after I had two bypasses."

And now he's boss of the White House Auxiliary Mail Room.

The Sarge and the Chief aren't the type to sit around and watch the grass grow and grouse about arthritis or whatever else ails them. Which explains why President Clinton this week honored them and 30 other mail room volunteers who've processed more than 1 million pieces of correspon-

in the White House Auxiliary Mail Room, veterans Jim Stygar, Dick Aldrich, Harold Hopkinson and Layne Whitman address correspondence. President Clinton this

dence during his tenure. That includes the tens of thousands of letters that arrive for Socks.

"This cat gets mail from 43 foreign countries!" marvels Gordon, a former postman. Many letters are sent with unbearably cute photos of other cats (and, who knows why, dogs), which are dutifully catalogued in the Chief's scrapbook. Lots of the mail comes from school kids. The volunteers answer each letter with a paw-printed post card bearing an equally adorable photo of Socks and the message: "I am honored to be your 'First Cat.'"

The pensioners started handling White House mail back in the administration's glory days, March of '93, when the Clintonites were overwhelmed with unanswered correspondence piling up in the hallways. Initially the White House staff was not keen on farming out the mail, but the retired military men (and women—there are 93 at the home) were eager to help.

Woods, a slim, brisk-talking model of military precision, soon got the mail room going seven days a week, 12 hours a day, handling at its peak more than 50,000 pieces a month. "Now make it clear that there's never a case where we sit down and actually write a reply," says Woods. "We don't answer the mail."

All mail addressed to the White House is received there and cleared by the Secret Service. A portion goes to the soldiers' home, where the volunteers open, staple and sort it. (Box designations include "Hardship," "Teachers" and "Special Day.") Eventually, mail is routed back to the White House to be further analyzed, stamped and mailed.

The volunteers also hand-address envelopes for the standardized notes sent by Clinton: "Thank you for your thoughts on [fill in the blank—health care, the economy etc]." And they process the presidential greeting cards from Bill and Hillary that any citizen has the right to receive. Just send a request, and the White House will mail birthday wishes (to anyone 80 or over), a get-well or sympathy card, a congratulatory note for a birth or adoption, a wedding or anniversary or retirement, even an Eagle Scout honor or Girl Scout gold award.

"It's a program they're very proud of and we're very proud of," says Lori Abrams of the Department of Presidential Correspondence. And you'd think that everyone would be very happy, but mail room workers have heard gripes about whether the soldiers' home should be supporting this particular president, who has never served a day in uniform and protested the Vietnam War.

Woods, truth be told, cast his ballot for Ross Perot in '92. But he says: "Bill Clinton's the 42nd president of the United States, and we're gonna give him all the support that's necessary. And we'll give the 43rd president all the support that's necessary. And the

week honored these and other volunteers, who have handled more than a million pieces of mail since the effort began in March 1993.

44th, if we're still alive."

What keeps them alive is work and camaraderie. Two-thirds of the home's residents are either divorced or never married. The service is their family, so no wonder they ended up here with their own kind, on the 320-acre wooded estate that includes its own golf course and funeral chapel.

The retirement home, established by Congress in 1851, is funded by a 50-cent monthly deduction from all active-duty paychecks, and by fines and forfeitures that result from court-martial. Residents also kick in a percentage of their pensions. The military drawdown and zooming health care costs have hurt, but the facility never seeks public funds—which is why capital improvements to the ancient buildings keep getting deferred over the years. Including private bathrooms, which an old guy might want in the middle of the night instead of shambling down the hall.

Still, you get three squares and a furnished 10-by-18 room of your own. They've had worse.

Woods is a modest man who plays down his combat service in Korea: "Many times I left the skin of my lips on the canteen cup in the winter of '51, but it was nowhere near as unbearable for us as it was for the guys in the winter of '50." He also did duty in Vietnam, '64-65, Mekong Delta, and '68-70, the Highlands. Never wounded, but isn't ashamed to say, "As far as going down in a helicopter, I know what it's like to pee in your pants."

Gordon, a submariner who enlisted in '34, enjoys playing the old salt and lets you know right out of the box:

"We participated in the search for Amelia Earhart! And the evacuation of North China! We were the first to strike a retaliatory blow for the bombing of Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian Islands. In our first war patrol, we sank two Japanese destroyers and heavily damaged a third—in 6½ minutes! They fired a torpedo and I heard it go right over our heads. It was July 4, 1942."

War stories. Go up to the U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home some day and you'll hear many, told with all the guts, grit and glory you came for. It doesn't have to be Veterans Day. You see, the president's mail has been real slow lately—not one piece to process yesterday—and guys like the Sarge and the Chief have got plenty of time to talk.



BY TYLER MALLORY FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

First cat needs staff to answer mail

'Secretary to Socks' handles lion's share of the duties

By Lawrence L. Knutson
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Allan "Tugboat" Gordon, a retired Navy chief petty officer, looks out over his Christmas-red string tie and tries out his growl: "I spent most of my life in submarines and now I work for a cat."

Not that Mr. Gordon, 77, is displeased at that fate — it's not just any feline celebrity he works for.

Mr. Gordon handles the mail for Socks, the presidential cat, and he takes his self-proclaimed title of "secretary to Socks" seriously.

Mr. Gordon presides over the "Socks Corner" of the sun-splashed room at the U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home, which has served since January as the volunteer-run White House Auxiliary Mail Room.

While he waited for a special visitor, Mr. Gordon showed off the hundreds of cat photos that cat lovers have sent Socks, thumbed through the albums with his favorite letters to Socks and bragged of the three visits Socks has made to see the mail room in operation.

"Dear Socks: Come to Colorado and I'll take you mouse hunting."

Soon he was showing his treasured "cat books" to first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, who had come to say a personal thank-you to Mr. Gordon and the scores of volunteer veterans who have sorted and responded to hundreds of thousands of letters sent to members of the president's family over the past two years.

"You have been working very hard in the mail room, and we are very grateful for that," Mrs. Clinton told the veterans at their mail-sorting slots around the room.

As of Saturday afternoon, the veterans had handled 1,018,998 pieces of mail.

"Our busiest month was July," said William Woods, 66, the retired Army sergeant 1st class who runs

the mail operation at the home.

May E. Jodey looked up at the first lady, smiled and said the volunteer job has kept her energized.

"Every day, I come down here and have my finger on the pulse of the nation," she said.

Signs on the walls give instructions for handling "milestone" mail, the requests the Clintons to acknowledge birthdays, anniversaries, retirements and new babies, and "adult mail," which includes comments on issues and even threats.

A life-size cardboard likeness of the president gazes out at the mail room's bustle.

"It's the heart of the nation, and it's fascinating," said veteran Lee Cruze of the letters she reads.

At one table is a life-size and working Socks telephone. It was awarded to the person who opened the millionth piece of mail.

Back at Socks Corner, Mr. Gordon is reading letters from fans.

A favorite: "Dear Socks: Come to Colorado and I'll take you mouse hunting."