

Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

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Shirley Sagawa
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FOLDER TITLE:

Talking it Over [Columns of the First Lady] [Binder] [2]

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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]
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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)]

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NOTE TO HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON EDITORS: TWO PIECES OF ART FROM THE "SUPERMAN: DEADLY LEGACY" COMIC BOOK ACCOMPANY THIS COLUMN. THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION. -- CREATORS SYNDICATE, INC.

**TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

The newest comic book to hit the streets in Sarajevo is an American classic with a modern twist. Predictably, the hero wears a red cape and has a large "S" emblazoned across his chest. He has special vision, supernatural powers and a big heart.

But this Superman doesn't just fight villains in a mythical Metropolis. He is crossing the Atlantic to warn children in Bosnia and Herzegovina about the dangers of land mines in a region still emerging from the darkness of war.

Superman's arrival in Bosnia is the result of a public and private partnership involving our Defense Department, United Nations Ambassador Madeleine Albright, UNICEF and its special representative Judy Collins, Warner Bros. and DC Comics. The comic book will be a vital educational tool in a country where millions of land mines currently lie in wait for vulnerable children and civilians.

I was honored to help unveil the comic book at the White House this week and to announce a new American hospital partnership that will help boost the recovery effort in Bosnia.

Standing in the East Room with children from Bosnia -- some of them war refugees -- and watching the mayors of Tuzla, Bosnia, and Buffalo, N.Y., sign the hospital agreement, I felt pride in our nation's tradition of humanitarian assistance and our commitment to democracy in the former Yugoslavia and around the world.

The hospital partnership, sponsored by our government through the U.S. Agency for International Development and the American International Health Alliance, will involve Buffalo General Hospital and the Tuzla Clinical Center. Like other hospital partnerships that I've visited in Russia, Estonia, Ukraine and Belarus, this one will benefit both hospitals and countries involved.

Not only will American physicians and nurses be exposed to new and different medical challenges, the resources, expertise and technology they bring to Bosnia will improve the availability and quality of medical care for tens of thousands of people

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there. Many of those needing care are women, children and refugees suffering from physical and emotional traumas associated with years of violence and war.

Already, American medical personnel from Buffalo have traveled to Tuzla and worked side by side with their Bosnian colleagues, even in the midst of war and violence. They have procured \$1.5 million in supplies for use in Tuzla. And Eli Lilly & Co. has committed \$250,000 in donations for next year.

In addition to expanding pediatric services, improving pre-natal care and the treatment of chronic diseases, the hospital partnership will enable the Tuzla Clinical Center to improve its care of children maimed and injured by land mines, many of whom are taken there.

Today, one out of every eight homes in Bosnia is endangered because of a proximity to mines. In central Bosnia, one of every three acres of land is unusable because of mines. And even though the fighting is over and peace has taken hold, the detonation of land mines has become the most common cause of serious injury in the country.

The prevalence of mines prompted UNICEF to launch a mine-awareness campaign for children and civilians. Superman seemed just the sort of person to help get the message across.

The comic book, called "Superman: Deadly Legacy," tells the story of two boys in Bosnia. They are walking along a road looking for a friend when one bends down to pick up some debris from a mortar. Quickly, Superman pulls him away, and the boy narrowly misses stepping on a mine concealed underground.

As the boys continue to search for their friend, Superman teaches them how to avoid places where land mines might be hidden: bombed-out houses, abandoned buildings, old checkpoints and trench lines. Even paths and bridges are sometimes littered with land mines, Superman explains.

With Superman's help, the boys eventually find their friend but not before happening upon a wounded dog (who dies) and a playmate who has lost a leg and is wrapped in bandages. He tripped a mine while practicing soccer in an open field.

It is a chilling tale, one that reflects the chilling reality of children's lives in Bosnia. But it is also a tale of hope for the people of Bosnia who, with our help, will be able to take one more step to a stable, peaceful and democratic future.

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October 21, 1996

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TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE HAGUE, the Netherlands -- One of my first stops after arriving in the Netherlands this week was the house where Anne Frank hid during the Nazi terror of World War II.

I had read her diary when I was in school, but it wasn't until I climbed the narrow staircase of the townhouse on Prinsengracht Street in Amsterdam that I more fully understood the fear that this Jewish teenager and her family endured day after day.

I saw the wall on which a lonely Anne pasted pictures of movie stars ... the small window where she would bask undetected for a moment in sunlight ... the bookcase that concealed a trap door leading to what they called their "secret annex."

Anne was among 1 million children under the age of 16 who died during the Holocaust, and tragically, her story is far from unique. But the diary she left behind has given us a lasting reminder of the inhumanity that hatred and intolerance breed.

Anne Frank's story stuck with me later in the week, when the President and European leaders gathered here to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Marshall Plan. The assistance the United States provided after the war helped rebuild the struggling, ravaged nations of Europe.

Yet as we celebrate the success of that effort, we must recognize that Secretary of State George Marshall's vision of international cooperation is needed just as urgently now as it was a half century ago.

Too often we forget that the enduring power of Marshall's plan rested not solely in the financial commitment it represented but in its understanding of our joint opportunities and responsibilities to create a united, peaceful and democratic Europe.

Although Marshall's endorsement of assistance may seem obvious, at the time, there was no clear consensus on what role the United States should play in the world. Many Americans would just as soon have let former enemies like Germany and Italy remain in ruins. Others thought the European democracies could do fine without American help.

But Marshall prevailed. And now, on the eve of a new century, the nations of Western Europe are, on the whole, prosperous and stable. And the emerging democracies of Central and Eastern Europe are working to build vibrant civil societies and free-market economies, and to integrate their citizens into the democratic family of the West.

One reason we are close to fulfilling Marshall's vision is that the United States and our European partners are willing to support new democracies across the continent and around the globe -- not only through economic, military and diplomatic alliances but through an alliance of democratic values based on our shared commitment to freedom and human dignity.

Among the countries most committed to these values is the Netherlands. Few can match the Dutch in supporting social investments that improve the prospects for democracy and global prosperity. From building a peace in Bosnia to helping refugees in Central Africa to investing in the health, education and equality of women in their own country and abroad, the Dutch have provided inspirational leadership to nations around the world.

The Netherlands contributes seven-tenths of its gross national product to foreign assistance -- one of the most generous rates in the world. And this commitment of assistance enjoys wide support among the Dutch people.

Marshall, too, recognized that economic renewal and the flowering of democratic values must go hand in hand. As he said in his Nobel Peace Prize speech in 1953: "Tyranny inevitably must retire before the tremendous moral strength of the gospel of freedom and self-respect for the individual, but we have to recognize that these democratic principles do not flourish on empty stomachs and that people turn to false promises of dictators because they are hopeless and anything promises something better than the miserable existence that they endure."

I'm hoping that the events in The Hague this week are not simply remembered as the ceremonial commemoration of a past event, as important as that is. Instead, let us use this occasion to signal a renewed commitment to the vision beyond the Marshall Plan and to a willingness to expand that vision beyond the borders of Europe to include people and countries on every continent.

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May 27, 1997

TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SALZBURG, Austria -- The first time I ever really thought about Austria was in 1964, when my father and I saw the movie "The Sound of Music." I loved the story of the young nun, Maria, and her adventures with the widowed Capt. Von Trapp and his children as they challenged and then escaped from the Nazis. The songs from the soundtrack became an integral part of our musical life as high schools performed their versions of the story and countless piano students practiced their scales by playing "Doe, a Deer" over and over again.

Although I later learned more about the history of Austria -- its importance during the Austro-Hungarian empire and its occupation by the Allies for 10 years after World War II -- I'll never forget the sight of Julie Andrews twirling beneath the towering mountains in the lush, green meadows around Salzburg.

Years later, when Chelsea was around 4 years old, Bill and I rented "The Sound of Music" to watch at home. Over the next several years, we probably saw the movie a dozen times, and despite my well-known tone deafness, the three of us would sing the songs at any excuse.

This week, I finally had the opportunity to visit Austria. Two significant events brought me to this country, which is playing a pivotal role in the affairs of a newly unified and democratic Europe.

The first was a conference of women from Central and Eastern Europe, organized by the American Ambassador to Austria, Swanee Hunt. This gathering, called "Vital Voices: Women in Democracy," was designed to give women the chance to share ideas and strategies about advancing democracy in their countries and ensuring that women are included in all aspects of society.

What was remarkable about the conference was not only that women were joining with each other to address the barriers they face in politics, law and business, but that they were doing so in a way that would have been unthinkable under communism: forming networks, learning from one another, talking freely, taking control. Meeting those women in Vienna, I felt proud of all that America had done to support freedom in Central and Eastern Europe.

I felt similar pride in Salzburg, where I heard repeatedly about how America helped Austria rebuild itself after World War II. One 79-year-old woman showed me the intact CARE package she had received from an American pen pal in 1946. She saved it because it had done nothing less than help her transcend the wounds of war.

I came to Salzburg to participate in the golden anniversary of the Salzburg Seminar, started 50 years ago by three Harvard students. The goal of the seminar was to bring young Americans and Europeans together in a safe setting to share ideas and find ways to shape their common future. The seminar's founders believed that the strength of Europe's postwar democratic foundation would depend not solely on physical and economic renewal but on spiritual and intellectual renewal as well.

As I arrived at Schloss Leopoldskron, the 250-year-old Baroque villa where scenes from "The Sound of Music" were filmed and where the seminar has been housed from the beginning, I tried to imagine the vision it must have taken to embark on this project.

In July of 1947, Europe lay in ashes. Ideology was dividing the world into enemy camps. The fate of Austria was uncertain. Most people measured time in days and hours, fearful of putting their trust in anything more permanent. The basic premise of the seminar, that a better future was possible through dialogue, was almost too much to believe.

So, too, was the idea that men who just a short time before had faced each other on the battlefields of Europe could sit across from each other at a table and exchange ideas.

But that is exactly what happened.

As our world has widened, so has the seminar. Initially, it concentrated on relations between the United States and Europe. Then, as the Cold War cast its shadow over our lives, the seminar shifted its focus to the relationship between democratic and communist nations. Today, the seminar is concerned with how we live together in a truly global society. The group I spoke to -- experts in primary and secondary education -- came from more than 40 different countries.

Despite this evolution, the seminar's mission has remained constant: to help people come together across their differences to find common ground.

In this respect, the Salzburg Seminar shares the same core values as another initiative whose 50th anniversary we celebrate this year: the Marshall Plan. To be sure, there are enormous differences between the two. But the fact remains that both put in place the elements essential to democracy's success: in the case of the Marshall Plan, giving people the opportunity to rebuild their communities; in the case of the Salzburg Seminar, promoting tolerance and understanding.

Both initiatives helped secure peace in Western Europe. Both helped pave the way for communism's fall in Central and Eastern Europe. And both truly made it possible for the hills of Europe to come alive with the sound of democracy.

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00017

**TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

It really is a small world. Last weekend, I took a historical steamboat along the shores of Lake Lucerne in Switzerland, stopping briefly in the small town of Brunnen. Upon disembarking, I was welcomed by the Mayor, who told me he had been an exchange student in Sioux City, Iowa -- imagine that! -- and had never dreamed he would be hosting the First Lady of the United States in his hometown.

It was an invitation to speak at the World Economic Forum that brought me to Switzerland. In the mountain town of Davos, business, political, academic and media leaders from around the world met to grapple with the challenges of the 21st century. I listened as leaders discussed strategies to deal with the complexities of the new global economy and the importance of strong and stable governments. I urged them to pay serious attention not only to political and economic issues but also to the growth and nurturing of civil societies. It's our families, religious institutions, voluntary associations and cultures that will ultimately ensure our survival as thriving, free and open democratic nations.

No matter where I travel, I'm reminded of how interdependent we all are, as people and as nations. Particularly in this time of change and uncertainty, we must stand together to face the extraordinary challenges and opportunities of the future -- and work together to build democracy not only in our own countries but around the world.

My trip coincided with the 150th anniversary of the Swiss constitution, a document that draws some of its inspiration from our own. I saw the Swiss commitment to democracy on the first stop of my trip, when I visited the Children's Parliament in Lucerne.

The Children's Parliament is made up of 8- to 14-year-olds who meet every week to debate issues and decide how to distribute the funds they are given by the city. While I was there, the members were engaged in a lively discussion of whether they would fund the construction of a dragon maze on a nearby playground. The debate was lively, and supporters of the maze carried the day.

The children follow one unusual parliamentary rule: Anyone who wants to speak must be holding a stuffed monkey. I was so impressed by what these future leaders were doing -- and their ability to argue their positions -- that I promised I would

encourage mayors in the United States to consider forming children's parliaments in their own cities.

Today, the Swiss are looking into their past to examine the central role of Swiss banks in handling Nazi gold. While speaking to a large audience at the University of Zurich, I had the chance to meet not only Swiss President Flavio Cotti but also a group of high school students from the city of Bern, who have raised money to aid survivors of the Holocaust. These young citizens are determined to make a difference. Their humanitarian spirit reflects the efforts of their own government, along with the Swiss business community, to confront the tragic events of World War II and help the survivors of the Holocaust.

Every country has the responsibility to look its history squarely in the eye -- as I believe we are trying to do here with the President's initiative on race, and as other countries like South Africa, Northern Ireland and Bosnia are doing to confront the pain and divisions in their own societies. Such efforts, however difficult, can help heal the wounds of the past and remind people of what they hold in common, instead of what keeps them apart.

In my speech at the Davos Forum, I expressed my hope that, as we approach the next century, business and government leaders will do more to support civil society -- in their own countries and throughout the world. Among other things, I hope to see a much greater commitment to investment in opportunities for women, especially in developing countries. Investment in women means investment in family and community -- the foundations of a strong civil society.

I am now heading home after a busy three days and looking forward to the state visit of the leader of one of America's closest allies, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and his wife, Cherie, personal friends of ours. Even so, I can't help thinking back to the beauty of my boat ride on Lake Lucerne past the shores of Switzerland's three original cantons, which pledged their "eternal alliance" back in 1307. On the few moments when the clouds cleared, we could see dramatic mountains rising out of the lake and small villages nestled in the hills.

Most of us think only of those snow-capped Alps and deep mountain lakes when we think of Switzerland. But at the same time, we should try to remember that Switzerland -- our "Sister Republic" -- also has a long history of democracy.

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February 3, 1998

TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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No matter where I travel, I'm reminded of how interdependent we all are, as people and as nations. Particularly in this time of change and uncertainty, we must stand together to face the extraordinary challenges and opportunities of the future -- and work together to build democracy not only in our own countries but around the world.

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February 3, 1998

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

My first memory of New Year's Eve goes back to when I was around 6. My little brother and I were sitting in our kitchen eating a favorite dinner, poached eggs on corned beef hash. My mother came in, all dressed up to go out, and reminded us each to put one of our shoes outside our bedroom door before going to bed. That was so "Billy-Be-Good" could leave us a little present, like a toy car or a yo-yo, as encouragement to behave ourselves during the next year.

My mother doesn't know where she first heard about Billy-Be-Good, but she made him part of our family's New Year's tradition -- a tradition that my husband and I carried on when Chelsea was little.

Our baby sitter that night was our grandfather, Hugh S. Rodham. He asked my mother if we could stay up until midnight to celebrate. She reluctantly agreed, mostly I think, because she never thought we'd last. Once she gave her permission though, we were determined, and our grandfather became our loyal conspirator.

I loved my grandfather for many reasons -- his infinite reserve of patience while reading us books or playing endless card games; his recipe for cocoa with honey that tasted better than any other drink; the way he defended us from our parents' reprimands -- whether we deserved it or not.

I especially loved to hear him talk about his childhood. Grandpa came from England to Scranton, Pennsylvania when he was about 4 years old with his parents and 10 brothers and sisters. When he was 11, he began working at the Scranton Lace Works and retired after 50 years. He used some funny expressions, such as, "I daren't do that," which no one else I knew said.

He also maintained old-fashioned customs, like dressing up for dinner every night in a suit, complete with watch chain. On that long-ago New Year's Eve, dressed in his suit, he told us how as a little boy he celebrated New Year's Eve by going outside at midnight and making noise by banging on pots and pans. He promised that if we stayed awake, we would do that together.

Well, to a 6-year-old who had never deliberately stayed up that late, his promise held out the prospect of unimagined adventure. I could hardly believe my good fortune and anxiously waited for the moment to arrive.

We played cards, mostly War, for my brother's sake. Then we watched our small-screen black-and-white television set. Finally, the countdown started, and we ran to the kitchen, grabbed our culinary noisemakers, put on our coats and rushed outside. The night was cold and clear and no one else was around. We were certainly the only people in our suburb banging on pots and pans to start the New Year.

Since then, I've celebrated New Year's Eve in many different ways and in many different settings. Before I was married, I worried with my girlfriends about who would ask me out, what I'd wear and where we'd be when the clock struck 12:00. Some memories are better than others!

Bill and I have now spent 26 New Year's Eves together. For the last 15, we've been surrounded by friends at Renaissance Weekend in Hilton Head S.C.

Now, as the old year ends and the new one begins, we don't go outside and bang on pots and pans, but I still get the same feeling I had all those years ago, standing in front of my house with my brother and grandfather. And I even remember Billy-Be-Good and what he stands for, as I make my New Year's resolutions.

I have friends who dread the endings and beginnings represented by the new year -- who never want to go out on New Year's Eve. I've always seen change as energizing -- something to be embraced and relished. Something is ending, but a new time is being created, and I can be part of it.

That's why I've always loved New Year's Eve and wish my grandfather were still here so I could thank him for starting me off with a sense of anticipation and excitement about what was to come. Who knows, maybe this year I'll go outside and bang on some pots and pans.

Happy New Year, everybody.

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December 30, 1997

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

As with most American families, the Christmas celebration in the Clinton household doesn't really begin until every member of the family arrives.

This year, we'll have my mother and our brothers with their wives and children. We'll marvel over how the nephews have grown and trade stories about everything that's happened since we were last together.

Bill, Chelsea and I will tell our Christmas stories about the experiences we just had in Bosnia. What we saw there makes us grateful for the simple pleasures we enjoy daily.

For four years, the people of Bosnia fought a bloody civil war, grounded in ethnic hatred and violence, which displaced 2 million people from their homes.

We traveled to Bosnia for two reasons. First, we wanted to visit and thank the brave men and women of the United States armed forces stationed there and separated from their families at Christmastime. Second, we wanted to meet the Bosnian people and their leaders to encourage them to accelerate their efforts to implement the Dayton Peace Accords.

The scars of war are still evident on the landscape. Buildings are still without roofs. Painted red roses -- marking the spots where innocent civilians were gunned down by snipers -- bear grim witness to the carnage.

But everywhere we looked, there was also evidence of rebuilding: the new Holiday Inn on the road from the airport, gleaming in its fresh coat of yellow paint; electricity functioning again; glass instead of plastic sheeting in the windows; stores and cafes full of goods and lively conversation; children on the streets in safety.

More important even than the physical restoration is the sense of calm that has returned. In Sarajevo, little more than two years ago, men, women and children ran the gauntlet of snipers and shells in a desperate search for water. Now, they walk in security to school and work.

Chelsea and I spent about an hour and a half with representatives of several non-governmental organizations, some of whom I had met when I visited Tuzla in the spring of 1996. In the case of two women in particular, I was struck by the dramatic difference in their physical appearance. Instead of being marked by fear and anger, their faces radiated hope and resolve.

Bill, Chelsea and I were lucky enough to spend some time with about 10 young people in a cafe in Sarajevo. They told us they want what young people everywhere want -- a chance -- a chance to finish their education, to get on with their professional and personal lives, to see their government function again and to be part of their country's fate.

To a person, everyone we spoke with agreed none of this would have been possible without the U.S. military. As we walked down the streets, the crowds swelled behind the barricades, straining to see the President because they are so grateful for what the United States has done.

But much remains to be done, mostly by the Bosnians themselves, to rebuild their country economically and politically. And our presence is still needed for a while longer.

The job we have asked our young soldiers to perform is not easy -- especially during the holidays. The weather is cold and dreary. There are lots of jokes about the food.

Although I'd be the last to stereotype our men and women in uniform, their tents are as different as night and day. The women's tents are cheerier, with more amenities and touches of home. Some even had Christmas trees.

Many of our soldiers are sharing the spirit of Christmas with Bosnia's youngest victims by collecting and distributing toys and school supplies. Despite being far from home at the holidays, our soldiers believe in what they're doing. Outside of the cafe in Sarajevo, three American soldiers from Richmond, Va., told us, "We're really proud to be here because we know we're doing a good thing."

Comments like this make me proud to be an American.

The message these young men and women are sending to the people of Bosnia is: The world cares about you and about peace. The world is going to stick with you through this effort. But you have to lay down your hatred, let the scars of war heal and get on with building your common future.

As we celebrate the holidays, I hope you'll take a moment to say a special prayer for all the American servicemen and women stationed in Bosnia and everywhere else around the world. They are living the true spirit of Christmas, bringing peace on earth, goodwill to all people. I send them and you my best wishes for a very merry Christmas -- and a commitment to peace the whole year long.

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December 23, 1997

TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Last week, I went to Panama, and this week, I am accompanying Bill on his state visits to Venezuela, Brazil and Argentina. Since I firmly believe relationships between the United States and Latin America are critical to the entire hemisphere's future peace, I wish every American could be on these trips with us.

Then, Americans could see for themselves how what happens thousands of miles south of our border affects our lives at home. Venezuela, for example, is our biggest supplier of oil -- and home to some of the best players in major league baseball. Brazil, with more than 160 million people, is a multiracial democracy struggling with some of the same problems we face. Argentina has joined with us in U.N. peacekeeping operations around the world -- from Haiti to Bosnia.

And Panamanians and Americans are working to define our partnership after the Panama Canal reverts to Panama on Dec. 31, 1999. The United States is the principal beneficiary of the goods that travel through the canal, which allows ships to cross between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans without sailing around the tip of South America. In fact, at the Miraflores Locks, canal officials permitted me to open a set of locks for a 33,000-ton South Korean container ship on its way from Savannah, Ga., to Long Beach, Calif.

Over a century ago, building the canal was essential to improving opportunities for people all over the Americas. As daunting as that task was, we face what may be an even harder challenge today. Instead of mountains, we seek to move hearts, to change old attitudes, to banish hunger and disease, to educate all our children and to empower the women of our hemisphere to participate fully in the life of our nations.

Empowering women to make the most of their God-given promise was one of the main themes of the Seventh Annual Conference of Spouses of Heads of State and Governments of the Americas I attended in Panama City. Each year since the 1994 Summit of the Americas in Miami, we have tried to shine a spotlight on -- and take action to address -- some of the most important issues facing women and children in our hemisphere: primary education, eradicating measles, maternal mortality, family planning and women's political participation.

A few years ago, Faustina Nunez and her friends acted on their dream to make the most of their abilities. They started a business growing plants and seedlings to sell in the cities of Panama and to the government's reforestation programs. Their neighbors laughed at the idea. "They said that our nursery was going to fail, that this was something

the men did, not women," she told me and Panama's First Lady, Dora Perez-Ballardares, when we visited the 5-acre nursery in Chica, a small hilltop village at the edge of the tropical forest.

But Faustina and her partners, who called themselves the Association for Gender, Nature and Progress, were not discouraged. Within two years, the women had sold enough orchids, medicinal plants and seedlings to expand their business. They had provided seedlings to reclaim 48 acres of the deforested Altos de Campana National Park. And most importantly for them, where before they had worked for free on their husbands' vegetable farms, they were now able to contribute to the family finances, to bring in extra income to buy books and school clothes for their children.

"We grew and grew, and our community was able to see that we were playing an important role," Faustina said. "We were a society of strong-willed women, and we were not going to step back."

Part of the work Faustina and her partners are accomplishing is helping reforest the land around the grand Panama Canal. When I flew over the canal in a U.S. Army helicopter, I saw one of the world's engineering marvels and a tribute both to technological innovation and human fortitude. But I also saw some of the damage man has caused to Panama's rich tropical forest in the canal watershed.

Acres of thick, green forest tapered off into barren land dotted by tall yellow grasses, naked trees and fields abandoned by poor farmers who had moved on to clear more land. Over the past 40 years, slash-and-burn agriculture has reduced Panama's forests by half, causing soil erosion and depleting much of the fresh water supply the canal depends on to function smoothly.

Faustina, her partners and other women are part of a joint effort by Panama and the United States to turn this situation around. Our cooperation isn't limited to this. Americans and Panamanians are also working on a multinational counter-narcotics center that would monitor, track and stop drugs coming north. Just as men of imagination, talent and perseverance sought to connect the oceans in an earlier time, today, men and women of goodwill and vision are working together, within and across borders, to solve today's problems.

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October 14, 1997

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health issues

Divider Title: _____

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

If you're a parent, chances are that you don't stop to think about the medicine your pediatrician prescribes when your child has a common illness. You're probably just relieved that the symptoms can be treated and your son or daughter will feel better in time.

Yet while many medications prescribed for children are safe and effective, many other drugs have never been tested specifically for use on infants, toddlers and older children.

A wide range of asthma treatments, for example, are routinely given to children even though they were tested only on adults. This poses a particular problem because of the rise of asthma and the severe impact it has on children. As of 1994, 4.8 million children under 18 have been diagnosed with asthma. Indeed, the hospitalization rate for children under 5 has increased by 57 percent since 1980.

Likewise, it was shocking to discover that Ritalin, a drug prescribed to millions of children diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder, has never been thoroughly tested for use on very young people. The same is true for Prozac, which is used increasingly to treat children with depression.

Children and adults suffer from many of the same diseases, but this doesn't mean they will react to drugs in the same way. For many important medicines, there is a startling lack of information on safe and effective doses for children. In fact, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, less than 50 percent of the medicines that have proved helpful to children have not been tested for use on kids.

As a result, many pediatricians are forced to guess the proper dose for a child or forgo what might be the most useful treatment available. Parents are left to worry that their children are not getting the best possible care.

The terrible dimensions of this problem were made clear to many of us by Elizabeth Glaser, the crusading mother who helped found the Pediatric AIDS Foundation.

Elizabeth contracted HIV from a blood transfusion she received shortly after giving birth to her daughter Ariel in 1981. Elizabeth unwittingly passed the virus on to Ariel through her breast milk. Yet while Elizabeth was able to take the drug AZT to fight the disease, Ariel was not. The medication -- the most effective treatment at the time --

was not available for children. As one doctor told Elizabeth, "We don't even know what dose to give her. We can't just experiment. This is a toxic drug. It could kill her."

Elizabeth was put in a heartbreaking position: She was able to extend her life but not the life of her daughter. By fighting for action in Congress, the White House and around the country, she was able eventually to secure AZT for Ariel. But precious time had been lost. Ariel died in 1988. Elizabeth passed away in 1994.

This is but one example of a problem that exposes a dangerous gap in our system of medical treatment. Fortunately, it is a gap that parents, health activists, pharmaceutical companies, the medical community, the government and my husband are working to close.

This week, the President announced that the Food and Drug Administration will propose a rule to require the manufacturers of medicine needed urgently by children to study the effects in young people and provide information on dosages. The information will be displayed on drug labels to help pediatricians and other health-care professionals make good decisions about how to treat their young patients.

The President's action will apply to new medicines now in development as well as medicines already on the market. And it will extend not just to medications for critical illnesses but also to widely used treatments for conditions like asthma, allergies, ear infections and pain.

Vital medications will be tested and made available to children more efficiently than ever before. Children will get the same access to newly developed drugs as their parents. As important, better testing will point out drugs that either should not be prescribed for children or should be prescribed in far fewer instances.

The result will be simple peace of mind for doctors and parents alike. Doctors will have the information they need. When it comes to treating a sick child, they will not have to rely on guesswork.

And parents will know that if there is a medicine out there that can help their child, then they will be able to have access to it. The best medicine in the world will no longer be stuck on a shelf -- it will be put at the service of our families and our children. And that's how it ought to be.

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August 12, 1997

TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

RELEASE: WEEKEND, SEPTEMBER 30-OCTOBER 1, 1995

Before my daughter was born, I did everything I could think of to prepare for the arrival of my new baby.

I asked my doctor hundreds of questions. I read every book I could get my hands on. And my husband and I went together to childbirth classes.

Even so, I was in for some surprises.

I remember lying in bed a few days after Chelsea's birth, when I was still getting accustomed to breast-feeding. Suddenly, I noticed foam in her nose. Afraid that she was convulsing, I pushed every call button within reach.

When the nurse arrived, she assured me that I was simply holding the baby at an awkward angle, making it difficult for her to swallow the milk she took in.

That wasn't the only time nurses came to my rescue during my stay at the hospital. They taught me to bathe and feed my daughter, and also gave me a chance to recover from the emotional and physical toll of a Caesarean section.

Nowadays, experiences like mine are far more common in countries like Australia, Germany, Japan, Ireland and France than here in the United States.

As insurance companies look for ways to cut costs, new mothers routinely are rushed out of the hospital 24 hours after an uncomplicated birth and three days after a Caesarean.

I have one friend who was pregnant with twins and began hemorrhaging during labor. She had to undergo an emergency Caesarean under full anesthesia. After the delivery, she was severely anemic and was placed in intensive care.

Even so, based on a "checklist" of medical factors, her insurance company said it would not pay for more than three days in the hospital. In the end, the company did cover a longer stay, but only because her doctor spent hours on the phone arguing that it was medically unsafe to send her home.

Unfortunately, some doctors won't take on such battles because they fear being dropped by the managed care companies with which they do business.

Another friend's wife was covered for seven days in the hospital after a complicated childbirth. But the insurance company wouldn't cover the child after three days, making it impossible for the mother to nurse the baby and much more difficult for mother and child to bond.

When my friend was told the child was considered independent of its mother, he asked, "Do you expect the baby to walk down to the parking lot and drive himself home?"

Insurance companies insist that limiting a baby's time in the hospital is not only a money-saver, but it also reduces exposure to hospital germs.

Most experts agree there is little medical risk to the majority of new mothers and babies discharged in the first 24 hours. But what happens if the baby develops an infection or other complication like jaundice that only becomes apparent on the second or third day after birth? What if the new mother has difficulty learning to breast-feed properly, which could result in dehydration or other serious problems for her baby?

Insurance companies say most new mothers are entitled to home visits by a nurse who can help spot problems after they leave the hospital.

But the reality is that many insurance companies only cover one home visit per patient; others simply provide for a phone consultation with a nurse in the days after childbirth. And cases have been reported in which the nurse or home visitor simply didn't have time to show up or didn't even know the baby had been born.

A retired transit worker in New Jersey, Dominick A. Ruggiero Jr., told this story to the New Jersey legislature earlier this year:

His niece had an uneventful pregnancy and childbirth and was discharged after 28 hours. At home, however, her baby, Michellina, suddenly took a turn for the worse. A nurse was supposed to visit the home on the second day but never came. When the family called, they were told the visiting nurse wasn't aware the baby had been born.

Several times, the family called the pediatrician, who said the baby had a mild case of jaundice and did not need to be examined.

The baby died from a treatable infection when she was 2 days old.

Thanks in part to Ruggiero's testimony, New Jersey now has a law that will make sure that insurance covers mothers for a minimum of 48 hours in the hospital after uncomplicated deliveries and 96 hours following Caesarean deliveries. Maryland passed similar legislation last spring, and Congress is now considering a bill.

Although a handful of critics has suggested that this is another example of government intrusion into the health care system, I think that protecting the health of new mothers and infants is a clear case of where government safeguards are needed.

No government employee should ever decide whether an infant has jaundice or a new mother is anemic. But at the same time, no insurance company accountant should make the final judgment about what is medically best for newborns and their mothers.

That decision should be left to doctors, nurses and mothers themselves.

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TALKING IT OVER**BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON****RELEASE: WEEKEND, OCTOBER 21-22, 1995**

Every Thursday, a woman named Miriam volunteers in my staff office at the White House. She is a retired schoolteacher, mother of two, proud grandmother and caring colleague who seldom arrives at work without cakes, cookies, pies or donuts for the staff.

I wish her story ended here. But it doesn't. Like more than 2 million other women in America, Miriam has breast cancer.

She found a lump in her breast five years ago. Since then, she has undergone two surgeries, 33 days of radiation treatments and five separate chemotherapies, including the debilitating sessions she now has every week.

Miriam is not the only woman I know who is battling this disease. In fact, it is hard to find a family in our country -- or a workplace, neighborhood, church group or social club -- that has not been touched by breast cancer.

My mother-in-law, Virginia Kelley, died last year after a four-year struggle with the disease. The mother of one of my best friends was diagnosed a few months ago. Another friend just told me that his sister -- only 41 years old -- has a massive lump as well.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and if you want a chilling statistic, here it is: One in eight women in our country will develop breast cancer during her lifetime, compared to one in 20 a generation ago. And 46,000 American women will die of breast cancer this year.

Those numbers shouldn't be so high. When detected early and treated aggressively, breast cancer does not have to be an automatic death sentence. Every week, I meet women who are longtime breast cancer survivors living full and healthy lives. The key to early detection is a regular mammogram, particularly for women over 65, who account for half of all breast cancer cases.

Younger women should discuss with their doctors whether they should get regular mammograms. When I turned 40, for example, I began having one every year.

In traveling around the country to talk with women about breast cancer, I was startled to learn that only 40 percent of older women, whose mammograms are now covered by Medicare, actually take advantage of this potentially lifesaving benefit.

Why do so many women fail to get mammograms?

Unfortunately, many are reluctant to get screened because they have been told that the procedure is painful or embarrassing. Others don't realize that the benefit is covered under Medicare. Some women lack insurance coverage or the funds to pay for the test. Still others have never been told by their doctors that a mammogram is one of

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the most effective ways of detecting malignant breast lumps. Some women have even told me they didn't want to find out if they were sick because they believed there was little they could do about it.

Finally, many women are so busy taking care of their families that they forget to take care of their own health.

I know that a mammogram is not the most comfortable experience. And when you are responsible for kids, a spouse, a job and all the other pressures of daily life, taking the time to get one may seem like too much of a hassle.

But getting a mammogram is a lot more comfortable and a lot more convenient than the pain that comes with cancer and its treatments.

That's why it's important that Medicare continue to cover older women for mammograms every two years and at any other time a doctor believes it is necessary. And it would be a big step forward if communities and local health facilities also offered screenings once a year for women who don't have health insurance or would otherwise be unable to afford a mammogram.

When appropriate, doctors, regardless of their specialty, should encourage women patients to have regular mammograms. Any woman who fears breast cancer should remember that if she does have the disease, she should find out as quickly as possible so that she can begin treatment and get on with living her life.

That's what Miriam does. My staff and I often talk about how much we admire her courage and her selflessness. She tells us that she gets through her treatments by setting personal goals: getting her kitchen remodeled or living to see the birth of her new granddaughter, who was born last month. Now she is looking ahead to her 60th birthday in March.

She says she is no longer afraid of the disease and has no plans to stop her volunteer work. "I will come in until I just can't do it anymore," she said a few days ago. "The chemo hasn't knocked me down yet."

What impresses me most about Miriam is not just her grace or sense of humor but her willingness to talk about breast cancer so that others can learn from her experience.

"Get a mammogram," she frequently reminds us. "It's much less frightening than not having the chance to see your children grow up or your grandchildren graduate from high school. You owe it to yourself and your family."

We should all listen to the words of one so wise.

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TALKING IT OVER**BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON****RELEASE: WEEKEND, FEBRUARY 10-11, 1996**

I always admired Christopher Reeve as an actor. I never saw him on Broadway, but like most people, I loved his movie portrayal of Superman and his role in the fantasy romance "Somewhere in Time."

My admiration has only grown since his riding accident last May. Christopher Reeve is no longer playing a part that's heroic. He's living one.

Hooked up to a ventilator and paralyzed from the neck down, he has inspired millions with his courageous response to a tragic and freak fall from a horse. Who wasn't moved by his candor and grace in the memorable interview he gave to Barbara Walters just a few months after his spinal cord was crushed?

Now, along with his painstaking recovery, he faces medical bills totaling \$400,000 a year. With an insurance policy that limits the lifetime benefits he can receive, his coverage is due to run out after three years.

Still, he never dwells on his own situation. As a celebrity, he knows he can make a living giving speeches and directing films. He is far more worried about the tens of millions of Americans who can't get or keep medical coverage because of the misplaced priorities of our health care system.

Christopher Reeve wants to know why our country is willing to spend billions of dollars on Medicare and Medicaid payments to cover nursing-home fees for quadriplegics and those suffering from neurological diseases like Lou Gehrig's, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's but not spend the lesser amounts it would take to find cures.

I know the health care reform effort I worked on was not successful. But the issues it raised and the problems it sought to resolve are still with us today.

The United States is the only industrial society in the world where insurance companies are allowed to deny coverage to people who are sick or have lost a job. And insurance companies continue to get away with limiting people's lifetime benefits.

As Christopher Reeve said just last week, "These issues are crucial to our welfare."

There are ways to make progress without a massive overhaul of the health care system.

Right now, a bipartisan bill that deals with some of these issues is stuck in Congress. Sponsored by Republican Sen. Nancy Kassebaum of Kansas and Democratic Sen. Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, the bill would make long-overdue changes in the ways insurance companies treat Americans.

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It would prevent insurers from denying coverage to a person who already has a medical condition. It would forbid insurance companies from dropping longtime customers when they become chronically ill.

And it would require insurance companies to sell policies to workers who have been covered for at least 18 months by their employers so that they remain insured even if they lose or leave a job.

There is also an amendment to the bill, sponsored by Republican Sen. James Jeffords of Vermont, that would help the 230,000 Americans in situations similar to Christopher Reeve's. It would raise the lifetime limit on benefits to a minimum of \$10 million.

The Kennedy-Kassebaum bill has support from dozens of Republicans and Democrats. It is now ready for a vote by the full Senate. Very few legislators have publicly opposed the bill.

So why hasn't it passed?

Because a handful of senators have used parliamentary maneuvering to stall it for five months. To make matters worse, we cannot even hold the senators accountable because the Senate's rules allow them to remain anonymous.

Christopher Reeve is pushing hard for passage of Kennedy-Kassebaum and the Jeffords amendment. He also is doing his part to educate people about the failures of a system that spends far more money on expensive treatments than on preventing and curing costly diseases.

He has written to the President and House Speaker Newt Gingrich about congressional threats to cut funds for research into spinal cord injuries and neurological diseases (and is proud to have lobbied successfully against some of those cuts).

He has worked on animated diagrams for television that explain what happens to the body when the spinal cord is injured. And he recently announced an effort to establish the Reeve-Irvine Research Center at the University of California at Irvine that will support the study of spinal cord injuries and diseases. Philanthropist Joan Irvine Smith has agreed to put up \$1 million for the project to be matched with money from other sources.

"There is a humanitarian and economic rationale" for medical research and fair insurance policies, he says. "It's good for the country in every conceivable way."

If you agree with Christopher Reeve, take the time to call your senators and ask them to help us take a first step to bringing better health and peace of mind to millions of Americans. Tell them to pass the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill.

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NOTE TO HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON EDITORS: DUE TO RECENT NEWS EVENTS, UPDATES HAVE BEEN MADE IN THE FIRST, THIRD AND FOURTH PARAGRAPHS OF THE FOLLOWING TALKING IT OVER COLUMN, ORIGINALLY SENT ON FEBRUARY 13, 1996. THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION. -- CREATORS SYNDICATE, INC.

**TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

A Marine Corps sergeant I know of has a lot in common with Magic Johnson. Like Magic, he has tested positive for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Like Magic, he has small children. And like Magic, he is still healthy and feels he has a lot to give to his career.

But unlike the Los Angeles Lakers superstar, whose recent return to professional basketball after a four-year absence has been widely publicized, the Marine could be out of a job for good.

Thanks to a provision Congress inserted into the new defense budget, service members who have tested positive for HIV must be discharged within six months, whether or not they can perform their jobs. The recent news that boxer Tommy Morrison has tested positive for HIV raises serious questions about certain occupations where regular exposure to blood occurs. Precautions do need to be taken to ensure that healthy people are not endangered. But the military personnel who could lose their jobs are not boxers -- they're not even in combat. In fact, many of them work behind desks.

That Marine, for example, is an instructor who has served for 11 years, first in the infantry and then training raw recruits for combat. He says his career in the military is the fulfillment of a lifelong dream: "I'm serving my country, which since I was a child was something I always wanted to do."

Now he's in danger of losing his home, his career and his dreams before he loses his health. If Congress' new policy is not repealed, he, his wife and their young children will have to move in with his parents. He will have to find a new job. "It would throw our world into chaos," he said.

Mostly, he is saddened and angry that some politicians cling to outdated and prejudiced assumptions about people with HIV, even as Magic Johnson proves them wrong. When Magic first tried to make a comeback in the NBA after announcing that he

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had tested positive for HIV, a number of players scorned him and said they didn't want to get near him on the court. This time, he was welcomed back.

"I think it proves to everyone out there that people can live with the disease," the Marine sergeant said. "I feel I'm just as healthy as the Marine next to me. ... Who's to say they won't find something to let me live another 10 years?"

More than a thousand other military men and women are affected by this new policy. Half of them are married. Many have children to support. They include Gulf War veterans and others who have served in combat and as military engineers, lawyers, secretaries and computer programmers. On average, they have devoted 10 years of their lives to the military.

There is no justification, military or otherwise, for singling out one group for such unfair treatment. Just last week, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense characterized the policy as "unwarranted and unwise."

Discharging members of our Armed Forces who are trained and fit for duty would not only waste the government's investment in them, they said, it would "be disruptive to military programs in which they play an integral role."

Up until now, the military has treated HIV-positive service members the same way it treats people who suffer from heart disease, asthma or cancer. They can't serve overseas, in combat or aboard ship but are allowed to continue working in other jobs until they become too ill.

That will still be the case if the President and the military leaders have their way. The President signed the defense budget when Congress passed it because it contained funding vital to our national defense and to the quality of life of our men and women in uniform. But he is working hard to repeal the HIV provision.

Last week, based on the statement issued by the Joint Chiefs, the President said he believes the HIV provision is unconstitutional, and the Justice Department said it will not defend it in the almost certain event of a court challenge. He is also making sure that if any military personnel are discharged, they will receive the full benefits they would be entitled to if discharged for other medical reasons.

"I feel like I've served my country faithfully for all this time," the Marine instructor said. "I've stuck with it through thick and thin."

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February 14, 1996

**TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

At first glance, Children's Hospital No. 4 in Minsk, Belarus, looks like many other hospitals around the world. But there's one big difference: It treats children suffering from illnesses that doctors say are the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

I visited the hospital two years ago and met some of the children whose lives were changed forever when an explosion and fire at the V.I. Lenin Atomic Power Plant in Chernobyl sent a deadly radioactive cloud over Ukraine, Belarus, Russia and parts of Europe.

Singing songs and sporting the green Boston Celtics baseball caps we brought for them, the children greeted me in high spirits, despite their ailments. Many of them would not have been there if it weren't for Chernobyl.

This week marks the 10th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, a tragedy that continues to haunt us to this day. In the vast wasteland around Chernobyl, villages remain ghost towns, rivers are contaminated, and rich farmland is still unusable. I remember being warned not to eat a grape in Minsk because crop soil might be radioactive. Even the protective cover around the reactor is crumbling.

These are the obvious after-effects of Chernobyl. But what makes this tragedy so horrible is that the full extent of the damage may never be known. It will take years, if not generations, to understand the explosion's total impact on the environment, the food chain and human genetics.

Doctors and nurses in Minsk told me that they were seeing increasing rates of respiratory illness, heart disease and birth defects. They also reported abnormally high rates of thyroid cancer and other thyroid diseases in children -- diseases that before the explosion rarely appeared in people so young. Those rates are expected to climb since cancers that result from radiation exposure often do not develop for 10 to 20 years.

Pregnant women at the Left Bank Center for Maternal and Child Health Care in Kiev, about 60 miles from Chernobyl, shared worries with me about

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whether their children would come into the world with birth defects resulting from exposure to the radioactive fallout.

Infertility and other reproductive problems continue to plague couples throughout the region. In 1994, for example, Belarus and Ukraine were the only two countries in Europe that experienced negative population growth. Just last week, *Nature* magazine reported that scientists have found genetic damage in children born to parents who lived in Belarus at the time of the disaster.

As with so many tragedies, some good has emerged in the 10 years since Chernobyl. Many people around the world are coming to the aid of Ukraine, Belarus and Russia.

American doctors from Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh have traveled thousands of miles to treat patients and share new medical techniques with their counterparts in Belarus. Large boxes of blankets, syringes, bandages and medicine have been delivered to hospitals through Operation Provide Hope, a U.S. military program that sends surplus medical supplies to the former Soviet Union. When I was there, we passed out crayons and coloring books donated by American companies. This is the brighter half of the Chernobyl story.

Often at risk to their own health, doctors, scientists, religious leaders, business people and private citizens have spent the last decade aiding the victims of Chernobyl. This week at the White House, Vice President Gore and I are hosting a ceremony to celebrate these relief efforts.

We are also celebrating the resilience of the children of Chernobyl.

One of those children is 11-year-old Vova, whose family lived in a town that lay directly in the path of Chernobyl's fallout. In 1990, when he was 5, he was flown to the United States from Ukraine for treatment for leukemia.

"We should not forget the many children who need our help, who are not as lucky as I have been," he says. "Please do not forget Chernobyl."

The little Ukrainian boy reminds us that he and children like him -- the children of Chernobyl and children everywhere whose health and lives have been devastated through no fault of their own -- were and always will be our common responsibility as members of the human family.

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April 30, 1996

**TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

My late mother-in-law was a chain smoker for most of her life. Whenever she came to visit us at the Governor's Mansion in Little Rock, she always had to go outside to smoke.

After lighting up one day, she asked Chelsea, who was almost 8, what she wanted for her birthday. "I want you to quit smoking," Chelsea said.

That simple plea from a granddaughter helped end a 48-year addiction to cigarettes. My mother-in-law stopped smoking for good on Chelsea's birthday in 1988.

Children have always been the most persuasive voices in convincing adults to give up cigarettes. I don't think I've ever met a child who hasn't been blunt about his or her aversion to smoke. Consider the fifth-grader who wrote in a letter to my daughter: "I hate smoking. I can't even be around smoke. I cough and choke."

Yet somehow between childhood and adolescence, too many young people forget their better instincts and begin smoking. Adolescents account for the purchase of some 500 million packs of cigarettes a year. On any given day, 3,000 young people become regular smokers. And nearly 1,000 of them will die as a result of their addiction.

Recently, there has been renewed debate over whether tobacco is addictive. I think most of us agree that it is, and we appreciate those loud warnings that Dr. C. Everett Koop, the Surgeon General from 1981 to 1989, gave us when he talked about the dangers of smoking.

Yet while many adults -- elementary-school teachers and parents, especially -- are working to combat the lure of smoking, still others are getting children hooked for life.

Consider this: The Weekly Reader, a popular children's magazine, published articles on smoking between 1989 and 1994 that spread tobacco-industry views and offered limited information about the health effects of smoking, according to a study by a medical professor at the University of California at San Francisco.

It turns out that The Weekly Reader is owned by the same company that at the time owned RJR Nabisco, the country's second-largest maker of cigarettes.

Another study has shown that Joe Camel, the cartoon mascot of Camel cigarettes, is now as recognizable to 6-year-olds as Mickey Mouse. Joe is

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everywhere -- on jackets, baseball caps, gym bags, tank tops. No wonder Camel is the most familiar cigarette brand among 12- to 17-year-olds.

Our children can't even watch their favorite sporting events without seeing the logo of a cigarette brand on a stadium wall or in the background of the television screen. Movies today are filled with characters reaching for a cigarette -- or worse, marijuana, the next step for some kids who get hooked on tobacco. Last fall, for example, I was shocked when my mother and I watched two "family" movies in which the heroines casually smoked marijuana.

What is clear is that commercial interests -- and corporate greed -- are working against our children.

If children can get through their adolescent years without smoking, chances are, they won't light up as adults. And they are less likely to fall down the slippery slope that begins with cigarettes and leads to illegal drugs and other destructive addictions and behaviors.

To help reduce smoking among young people, the Clinton administration has proposed regulations that, if put into effect, would allow cigarettes to be sold only in face-to-face transactions with adults. Tobacco billboards would be prohibited within 1,000 feet of schools and playgrounds. Other billboards and magazines with significant youth readerships could only display black and white, text-only advertising.

Companies would not be allowed to sell or give away products such as hats bearing a cigarette logo or name. Brand names such as Virginia Slims or Winston could not sponsor sporting events (although those events could be sponsored in the corporate name). And the tobacco industry would fund a public education campaign about the dangers children face from smoking.

Whether or not these regulations go into effect, we need to be more vigilant as a society about the social costs of business decisions and how they influence our children.

While we all want to encourage competition and innovation -- hallmarks of American capitalism -- we must strike the right balance between the freedom businesses need to make profits, and the preservation of family and community values. We can't afford to sacrifice either one.

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July 16, 1996

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

What brought Princess Diana, Washington Post chair Katharine Graham, Vogue magazine editor Anna Wintour, fashion designer Ralph Lauren and dozens of his colleagues to breakfast at the White House this week?

Clothes and high fashion, of course. But also the hundreds of thousands of women living with breast cancer across America.

For the past two years, top fashion designers have spearheaded a campaign to raise funds for breast cancer research and treatment. It makes sense for an industry that caters mostly to American women to take on one of the leading threats to their health.

In 1994, I had the honor of helping kick off the Fashion Targets Breast Cancer campaign at the White House. The campaign, created by the Council of Fashion Designers of America, was a great success, raising more than \$2 million through the sale of 400,000 T-shirts emblazoned with the campaign logo.

Many of the same designers who were so crucial in that campaign's success were back at the White House earlier this week. This time, they came for a breakfast to celebrate the beginning of SuperSale 1996, a clothing sale to raise money for the Nina Hyde Center for Breast Cancer Research at Georgetown Medical Center here in Washington, D.C. The designers have donated hundreds of dresses, skirts, slacks, blouses and other items to the sale, which is being sponsored by The Washington Post, Vogue magazine and Ralph Lauren.

Needless to say, the East Room was filled with people whose names you usually find sewn into waistbands and shirt collars. I have never seen members of my staff so worried about what they would wear to work. And the entire White House was abuzz with excitement about the guest of honor, who flew in from England to serve as the honorary chair of the fund-raiser. It isn't every day that you have the Princess of Wales over for herbed eggs, roasted tomatoes and Maryland crab.

But the morning was about more than breakfast and style. It was about the one in eight American women who will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetimes. It's a disease that affects many of the women we love -- our

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mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, aunts, cousins, colleagues and best friends. It's a disease that touches all of us.

Breast cancer also touched the fashion industry. When Nina Hyde, the legendary fashion editor of The Washington Post, died of breast cancer in 1990, the people she wrote about and worked with were galvanized to conquer the disease. Her death spurred members of the fashion industry to take a more active role in the fight against breast cancer.

I never met Nina Hyde, but I've heard many moving and funny stories about her. A woman who wore little makeup and a favorite Swatch watch she once picked up at the airport, Hyde befriended both established and unknown designers from all over the world. She knew supermodels and suburban moms, kept an eye out for the latest fashion trends at chic parties in Paris and on the streets of Washington, and advised her faithful readers. A mentor to a generation of aspiring writers and fashion editors, she was also a wife and the mother of two daughters.

When Hyde found out she had breast cancer, she didn't give in to it. She worked fervently to call attention to the disease and raise money for research. In 1989, The Washington Post, her good friend Ralph Lauren and 16 other designers established the world-class breast cancer research center at Georgetown University that bears her name.

The Nina Hyde Center for Breast Cancer Research represents the fashion industry's continuing commitment to eliminating the disease. The center was the beneficiary not only of this week's fund-raiser but of several other creative efforts organized by the Council of Fashion Designers of America.

The Fashion Targets Breast Cancer campaign and T-shirts have been licensed abroad and are raising money for breast cancer research in Brazil, Argentina and Great Britain. The council is planning to take the campaign -- and the cause we championed at the breakfast with Princess Diana this week -- to Japan, Australia, Germany, New Zealand and Russia.

It was a hopeful morning at the White House. One cause -- the fight against breast cancer -- had brought an entire industry and a Princess together. They, in turn, showed the women and families living with breast cancer that many people do care about them and will never stop looking for a cure.

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September 24, 1996

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For most Americans, the Persian Gulf War, fought nearly six years ago, is a distant memory. But for thousands of brave men and women who served our country in Operation Desert Storm, the experience lingers in a variety of undiagnosed illnesses -- from rashes to respiratory problems to headaches to gastrointestinal disorders -- that befell them when they came home.

Over the last four years, Bill and I have received many heart-wrenching and haunting letters from Gulf War veterans and their families. Many veterans told us they felt that their country had forgotten them, that America was not doing enough to help them become healthy again. So in the fall of 1994, the President asked me to explore issues surrounding the health needs of our Gulf War veterans and to look into ways to improve the federal government's efforts to address their concerns.

I spoke with many veterans on the phone, in my office and at military and veterans' hospitals. I listened as they tried to describe what it was like to live day after day, year after year, not knowing why they had become sick. I heard stories of hard-working men and women who could no longer keep steady jobs and support their families because of their illnesses. One veteran officer who had been diagnosed as 100 percent disabled told me about the healthy and active life he had led before his tour in the Persian Gulf and about his frustration in seeking effective treatments for his symptoms.

I also met with officials from the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs and Health and Human Services to determine if we were doing the very best we could to respond to our veterans and to facilitate research into their illnesses. Representatives of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars shared their own observations and told me of their efforts to bring attention to these illnesses. Almost two years ago, I reported to the President on these findings.

Bill then asked some of our nation's best doctors and scientists, as well as Gulf War veterans themselves, to form a Presidential Advisory Committee that could provide an open, thorough and independent review of the government's response to veterans' health concerns. I had the privilege of

testifying at the first meeting of this committee in August 1995. And earlier this week, I watched as the committee presented its final report to the President.

The committee found that, overall, the government had acted responsibly and comprehensively. In 1994, the President signed legislation that pays disability benefits to eligible Gulf War veterans with undiagnosed illnesses. The Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs established toll-free lines and medical evaluation programs. Gulf War veterans have received more than 80,000 free medical exams. The government has approved more than 26,000 disability claims and sponsored more than 70 research projects to identify the possible causes of the illnesses.

But the committee also noted areas for improvement, especially in the realm of building trust and strengthening the lines of communication between veterans and the government agencies that serve them. It expressed concern that the Defense Department had not investigated possible chemical weapons exposure thoroughly enough in the past.

As a result, the Defense Department has intensified its investigation into this issue, tracking down veterans who may have been exposed to chemical agents and devoting millions of dollars to researching the possible effects of low-level chemical exposure. The Defense Department and the CIA have declassified 23,000 pages of documents and placed them on the Internet. And a review of more than 5 million pages of Gulf War documents has already yielded some evidence that our troops may have been exposed to chemical agents.

In the years since the Gulf War, there has been no shortage of opinions, theories and explanations about the health problems of veterans who served our country. But at least we can agree that we need to do whatever it takes to bring good health and peace of mind to the men and women who fought on our behalf thousands of miles from home.

As the President said this week at the White House, "They served their country with courage and skill and strength, and they must now know that they can rely upon us. And we must not, and will not, let them down."

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January 7, 1997

TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

I first heard about a small explosion near the Planned Parenthood headquarters in downtown Washington, D.C., a few hours before the Vice President, Tipper Gore and I were scheduled to speak nearby at a luncheon honoring women who have led our nation's efforts on behalf of family planning and protecting a woman's right to choose.

The explosion occurred on the 24th anniversary of the Supreme Court's landmark decision *Roe vs. Wade* and just one week after bombs had exploded at family planning clinics in Atlanta and Tulsa.

By the time I arrived at the Mayflower Hotel at noon, it seemed likely that the Washington blast was an accident and not a willful act of violence. We later learned that the timing and location of the explosion were indeed coincidental.

Still, the tension generated by one small incident reminded me of the degree to which emotion has shaped the abortion debate. Now, after years of fiery rhetoric, finger pointing and heated recriminations, it's time for people of good faith -- on all sides of the abortion issue -- to lower the decibel level and seek common ground.

As I told those gathered at the luncheon in Washington, abortion is always a difficult and delicate subject. I have met people who passionately disagree with each other on abortion but nonetheless recognize the complexities and anguish that women may confront in certain circumstances.

The key is to find ways to respect our differences, expand the dialogue and join together with those who do not share extremism as their rallying cry. By doing this, we can continue to make progress toward a common goal of reducing abortions, lowering the rate of teen-age pregnancy and giving women opportunities to make the choices that are best for themselves and their families.

I believe that my husband's formulation on abortion is still the right one: Abortion should be legal, safe and rare. Over the past four years, his administration has worked hard to affirm the legality and safety of the practice as well as to encourage attitudes and values that will make abortion rarer than ever before. And we should all be heartened that the rate of legal abortions in the United States has fallen to its lowest level in two decades.

One of the most efficient and cost-effective ways to reduce abortions is to promote family planning -- here and abroad. We now have ample evidence that in countries where family planning is available to women, the rate of abortion declines, the spacing of children increases and the health of mothers and their children improves.

The importance of family planning as an alternative to abortion hit home to me recently when I was reading a book about the lives of women in countries around the world. One

woman from Russia described how, after marrying her husband, she had two children and four abortions. Abortion, she suggested, was the only means she had to limit the size of her family. Family planning was simply not available.

Where family planning is not an option, women often resort in desperation to unsafe practices that threaten their health and the well-being of their families. A few years ago, I visited a maternal hospital in one of the poorest regions of Brazil. Half of the patients had been admitted to deliver their babies. The other half were there for complications resulting from self-induced or back-alley abortions. The state Minister of Health explained to me in a public meeting later that day, "We want to give poor women the same information and access to family planning that well-to-do women have always had."

That should be our goal in the United States as well -- both at home and in our foreign policy.

As Vice President Gore said at the National Abortion Rights Action League luncheon last week: "How can we as Americans, schooled in the deepest respect for a proper relationship between the individual and the awesome power of the state, say that the government of the United States of America with all of its resources, all of its distance and insensitivity to these fragile and complex circumstances pressing in upon that individual woman ... must come in and order her to do what it has decided is the right thing and not her?"

The Vice President's words are a reminder that in many countries decisions about reproduction continue to be imposed on women against their will. In China, which I visited in 1995, I spoke out against policies of forced abortion and sterilization that allow the government to decide the size of every woman's family. Some months later, I was in Romania, where the previous Communist regime had a policy requiring every woman to have five children. Some women described to me the degradation and humiliation they felt each month when they were taken, as part of their work units, to local hospitals and forcibly examined to determine whether or not they were pregnant. Those who were pregnant were then monitored by secret police to make sure they gave birth and didn't abort the pregnancy.

What we have tried to do in promoting choice in our country is to say that decisions about reproduction are among the most difficult and most intimate a woman must make. And each woman must be able to make them in private consultation with her conscience, her God, her family and her physician.

We will never reach unanimity on an issue as complex and controversial as abortion. But if we start talking to each other -- and listening to what each other has to say -- we may discover that we have more in common than we think.

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January 29, 1997

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

I first met Elizabeth Glaser in the summer of 1992. She spoke to thousands of delegates at the Democratic National Convention and millions of Americans watching at home on TV. Her forceful words about the urgency of the AIDS crisis moved everyone to silence or quiet tears. Like everyone who heard her speak, I was touched by her passion, her courage and her hope.

A blood transfusion during the birth of Elizabeth's daughter Ariel in 1981 infected her with the AIDS virus. Unknowingly, Elizabeth passed the virus to Ariel through her breast milk and later to her son Jake in the womb. Her worst fears came true when she and her husband, Paul, watched helplessly as their daughter succumbed to AIDS at age 7.

Most people would have been paralyzed by so many tragedies. But Elizabeth turned her personal battle into a fight for the life and dignity of every child and every person with AIDS. She refused to be defeated by the prejudice, fear and isolation that greet so many in her situation but instead worked tirelessly for greater understanding and awareness. With two friends, she began the Pediatric AIDS Foundation to support and encourage research into the prevention and treatment of childhood AIDS. And as a mother hoping to save the life of her son and the lives of other mothers' children, she lobbied congressmen, presidents and presidential candidates, urging them to work harder to find a cure for AIDS.

Since Elizabeth's death in December 1994, I've thought of her often. I've thought of the brave woman with the big smile whom I had the privilege of getting to know not just as an activist but as a fellow mother and friend who was exactly my age. I will always treasure the time we spent together at her home, sipping Diet Coke and talking about our children, our lives and our concerns.

After hearing the good news last week about our progress against AIDS, Elizabeth has been on my mind more than ever. On Friday, the Centers for Disease Control announced that for the first time since the AIDS epidemic began in 1981, the number of AIDS deaths in the United States dropped substantially. Late last year, the CDC also announced that the number of reported cases of mothers transmitting HIV to their babies fell by 27 percent between 1992 and 1995.

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There are many reasons for these successes, among them innovative drug therapies and aggressive treatments. Over the last four years, funding for AIDS research, prevention and care has increased by more than half. Funding for health care and other assistance to HIV/AIDS patients has more than doubled, and programs that help low-income, uninsured people with AIDS pay for treatments have grown threefold.

I know that Elizabeth would be encouraged by these efforts. But she would also be reminding us that there is still much more to do. We mustn't let up on our efforts to find a cure and a vaccine. Until we do, we need to get more lifesaving prevention information to women, African Americans, young people and heterosexuals, groups that are still experiencing high rates of infection. And we need to strengthen our prevention and treatment efforts here and around the world, especially in developing nations, where 90 percent of AIDS cases occur.

But most immediately, we need to make sure that the life-prolonging drug therapies that have already helped so many adults here in America are made more widely available to children and others around the world who are living with HIV/AIDS. Too many of these drug treatments still have not been tested on children or made into a form that children can readily take. And they still have not been distributed worldwide. The cost of these therapies has often made it prohibitive to many families both here and in developing nations, where average citizens can barely afford the price of an aspirin.

The Pediatric AIDS Foundation is Elizabeth Glaser's living legacy. It is a testament to her will and her indomitable spirit. Her spirit lives on in the breakthroughs of the scientists who have conducted and will conduct research in her name. Most importantly, it lives on in every child with HIV/AIDS who is enjoying a happy and healthy childhood today because of her remarkable courage, faith and love.

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March 4, 1997

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

When our daughter, Chelsea, was 9, she had to have her tonsils taken out. Though we knew it was a low-risk medical procedure, Bill and I were nervous wrecks. But our family was lucky because we had health insurance. Paying for Chelsea's hospital stay was the least of our worries.

Given the stress we felt when our child was hospitalized overnight for a relatively minor procedure, I can barely imagine the heartache experienced by parents who can't afford health insurance for their children each time a child becomes ill. In too many cases, they are overwhelmed by questions not only of how and when their sick child will respond to treatment but whether they will be able to afford the necessary medical care in the first place.

The time is long overdue for all of us to address what I believe is an economic, social and moral crisis in our country. The United States is the only industrialized nation that does not extend health coverage to all of its children. There is no good reason our country, which is blessed with the most advanced and innovative medical facilities and talent in the world, continues to allow so many children to grow up without regular access to basic health care.

Today, nearly 10 million American children under 18 have no health insurance. A recent study showed that 20 million children were without insurance for at least one month over a two-year period. As health-care costs and insurance premiums keep rising, fewer employers are offering health insurance to their workers. And more and more working parents are finding that, after paying the rent, heat, electricity and grocery bills, they cannot afford coverage for their children.

What is most surprising is that the majority of our uninsured children are not poor. At least two-thirds of all uninsured children are being raised by working parents whose incomes are above the official poverty level. In fact, the number of poor, uninsured children has been decreasing (thanks to Medicaid), while the number of uninsured middle-class children has been increasing.

What this means is that too many children who have trouble seeing a blackboard do not get the glasses they need to correct their vision. Too many nagging coughs go untreated until they worsen into life-threatening conditions that require costly treatments and lengthy hospital stays. And many parents,

faced with the threat of an uninsured injury, forbid their children to play sports or visit the playground.

Some people believe we cannot guarantee health care to all children because of cost. But, as other countries have already found, a sensible child health insurance system is a critical, cost-effective investment in the future. That's because most children who become seriously ill or injured are eventually treated somewhere and at a much greater cost than their parents -- or we -- would have paid if their symptoms had been treated earlier.

In negotiations over the new balanced budget, the President has made sure that as many as 5 million children currently living without health insurance can get the coverage and care they deserve. And this spring, several bills are making their way through Congress that build on innovative efforts begun in individual states to cover all uninsured children and make it easier for working parents to buy health insurance for their children.

In recent years, many states have been able to insure thousands of children by expanding Medicaid benefits to include older children and children living in families whose incomes are slightly above the poverty level. Others have created new state-funded child insurance programs or joined forces with private insurance companies to subsidize premiums for needy families.

These efforts represent a good start. But the question of whether a sick American child gets needed medical treatment should not depend on where he or she lives. We must encourage members of Congress to create a plan that ensures every single child in our country enjoys the same health care and security Bill and I are able to give our own daughter.

Providing health care to all of our children is more than just a political challenge. It is a test of our faith in the future and of whether our rhetoric about family values will be translated into action on behalf of our children.

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May 20, 1997

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

This weekend, millions of families across our country will be celebrating America's birthday with the traditional festivities -- fireworks, picnics and the nearly sacred backyard barbecue. As we load up our grills with hot dogs, hamburgers and chicken slathered in barbecue sauce, and as we chop the cabbage and carrots we'll need for our coleslaw, very few of us will be concerned that the feasts we're preparing could make us sick.

Four years ago this month, Nancy Donley had few worries as she cooked pre-formed hamburger patties at a family barbecue. She had no idea that while the grill fires had eliminated the meat's pinkness, they had not killed the deadly *E. coli* bacteria in the burger she served her 6-year-old son, Alex. Within hours, the bacteria invaded and destroyed her only son's organs, killing him after a nightmarish four days.

Today, Donley has channeled her grief into action, working to ensure that no other family ever has to endure the same heartbreaking loss. She shares Alex's story with parents across the country, reminding them that color is never a reliable indicator of whether meat is fully cooked and that hamburger must be heated to at least 160 degrees before it is safe to eat. And she continues to press our government for stronger food-safety regulations. As she wrote in a letter to me last month, "No one can bring back my son or the thousands of others who die each year, but we can save others from the same fate through prevention."

For nearly 100 years, Americans have relied on government to make sure the world's most bountiful food supply is also its safest. In the early years of this century, people became outraged at the filthy conditions in meat-packing plants. They recognized that the industry would never be able to regulate itself.

So they called on their government -- mounting protests, writing letters, signing petitions and lobbying political leaders until they put in place safeguards and standards for food production. Many of these regulations continue to protect us to this day.

This story has been repeated time and again in our century -- from the earliest protesters to the environmental movement of the 1970s, when activists finally persuaded Congress to enact landmark legislation to protect drinking water and to keep cancer-causing pesticides off food.

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While they may seem rather mundane, our food-safety regulations are a powerful example of the essential role that only government can play in our lives. The fact that fat grams and calories are often the only worry we have when we sit down to dinner is perhaps the most compelling rebuttal there is to anyone who believes that government is useless or that government regulations stifle progress rather than promote the common good.

The food we eat passes through so many hands -- from the farmer to the food producer to the store owner to the consumer -- before it reaches the dinner table. One false step such as failing to refrigerate an item promptly or to disinfect a surface, and someone can get sick. That is why a government which answers to all of us must lead the effort to ensure that our food makes its way safely through each of these stops.

Recent reports of food-contamination outbreaks remind us that we can never let down our guard. We've watched in horror as students became infected with hepatitis from frozen strawberries, as hundreds became debilitated by cyclospora found on raspberries, and as young children died after eating meat or drinking apple juice contaminated with E. coli.

In May, Vice President Gore announced a new plan to strengthen our country's food-safety protections. The plan calls for the greater use of the latest science to dramatically reduce food-borne illnesses and, in partnership with the private sector, launches a full-scale public education campaign about the dangers of food contamination. It also calls for stricter safety precautions for fruit and vegetable juices, improved seafood inspections, and increased investment in research, risk assessment and surveillance.

These changes and other recent efforts to improve food safety would never have come about without the commitment and advocacy of our scientists, public health specialists and private citizens like Nancy Donley who recognize their own power to bring about change and progress.

A year ago this weekend, Donley stood in the Oval Office as Bill announced new meat and poultry inspection regulations that would require slaughterhouses to conduct rigorous scientific tests for salmonella and E. coli, the bacteria that killed her son. Her commitment, faith and continuing advocacy should remind us all that the government created on the Fourth of July more than 200 years ago is not something outside us or even irrelevant to us, it is us.

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July 1, 1997

NOTE TO HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON EDITORS: PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING COLUMN FOR RELEASE TUESDAY, JULY 22, INSTEAD OF THE ONE ORIGINALLY SENT FOR THAT DATE. SEVERAL CORRECTIONS HAVE BEEN MADE THROUGHOUT THE COLUMN. THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION. -- CREATORS SYNDICATE, INC.

TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Some years ago, I met a woman who ran a dairy farm in Vermont with her husband. She was required by law to immunize her cattle against disease. And each year, she dutifully complied and inoculated her herd.

Immunizing her young children, however, was another story. After buying vaccines for her cows, she said, she couldn't afford vaccines for her children. "My cattle," she told me, "are receiving better health care than my children."

Although it may seem inconceivable to many Americans, our country for years lagged behind poorer, less advanced nations in immunization rates among children. As recently as 1994, we had the third worst rate of immunization in the Western Hemisphere. Even as we led the world in new medical treatments and technologies, too many American infants and toddlers were going without simple vaccines that can prevent serious illnesses such as measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis.

Today -- finally -- we have some good news about immunizations. The President announced at a White House ceremony this week that a greater percentage of American children are getting inoculated than ever before. Most diseases that can be prevented by vaccines are at historic lows. And our nation is on track to achieve an immunization rate of 90 percent of all 2-year-olds by 2000.

We wouldn't be where we are today without a renewed federal commitment to immunizations -- and without the work of countless individuals, organizations and corporations who appreciate that immunizing children is not only a health issue but a matter of sound economics. After all, every dollar spent on the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine saves \$21 in later health-care costs, and even more for children who are protected against diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus.

The first serious effort to improve immunization rates began 20 years ago when President Carter set a national immunization goal of vaccinating 90 percent of the nation's children against diseases like measles, whooping cough and polio by the time they entered school.

He was encouraged by Sen. Dale Bumpers of Arkansas, who, along with his wife, Betty, made immunizations a personal crusade. When Bumpers was governor of the state, Betty visited every county and showed up at nearly every school to educate parents about the importance of immunizations. Not surprisingly, Arkansas became the first state to meet the immunization goal for school-age children set by President Carter.

When he moved to Washington, Bumpers continued his tireless advocacy for child immunizations, holding hearings and fighting for funding in Congress. Betty also kept the pressure on, joining forces with former First Lady Rosalynn Carter after a measles epidemic in 1989 to create a non-profit immunization education program called Every Child by Two. Together, they have traversed the country, meeting with community leaders, health providers and elected officials to establish and expand immunization programs around the country.

Even so, progress was not guaranteed, despite historically strong bipartisan support and cooperation among state and federal officials. In the late 1980s, the federal government had stopped measuring immunization rates of 2-year-olds, the age by which children should receive 80 percent of their vaccines. Whenever a new, lifesaving vaccine was added to the schedule, there was a fierce battle to obtain the funding needed to buy and distribute it.

To renew the federal commitment to child immunizations, the President set new goals for 1996 and for 2000. As part of his effort to reform health care, he put in place the Child Immunization Initiative, which helped more families afford, gain access to and understand the importance of early childhood immunization. Having exceeded our goals for 1996, we must now redouble our efforts to achieve the same success in the two years ahead. That's why the President announced steps this week to ensure that millions of children in federally funded child care receive the immunizations they need. He also called on state and federal officials to explore how immunization registries can help doctors and parents maintain up-to-date information on the immunization status of their patients and children.

And, as part of his larger effort to promote better health care of America's children, he has urged Congress to earmark new tobacco tax revenues to fund health coverage for millions of uninsured children.

We know what our children need. If we keep working together, we can make sure their needs are met.

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July 22, 1997

TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Not long ago, I saw the romantic comedy "My Best Friend's Wedding." It had a clever plot, witty lines and some unusual high jinks. It also featured a prop increasingly favored in Hollywood movies: the cigarette.

In the film, Julia Roberts, portraying a beautiful and successful career woman, smokes when she's upset. She smokes when she's tired. She smokes when she's happy. In fact, she seems to smoke throughout the movie.

This portrayal of a modern woman so reliant on cigarettes is particularly troubling given that more young women are taking up the deadly habit. The movie only adds to smoking's allure.

Whether blatant or subtle, smoking in movies is on the rise, sending a confusing message to young people about the use of tobacco products. Last year, 77 percent of all major motion pictures portrayed the use of tobacco. And in most of those movies, it was the lead actors and actresses who smoked. Every single movie nominated for a 1996 Academy Award in the categories of best picture, best actor and best actress featured tobacco use by a leading character.

These are the findings of Thumbs Up! Thumbs Down!, a project sponsored by the American Lung Association of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails, in which more than 100 teenagers spent a year reviewing current movies to gauge the prevalence of tobacco use.

These findings are bad news for our nation's children, and they should send a wake-up call to Hollywood studios to acknowledge the influence they wield in our children's lives. Just when the tobacco industry is being held accountable for advertising targeted at young people, movies are stepping in as a powerful vehicle promoting tobacco interests.

As any parent knows, children are often swayed by popular culture. During adolescence, when they are struggling to define who they are and what they want to be, they are bombarded with messages about everything from what they should wear, to how they should look, to ways they should act.

Movie stars who puff away on the screen equate smoking with status, power, confidence and glamour. That's why a dynamic woman smoking throughout "My Best Friend's Wedding," an intelligent scientist lighting up in "Contact" and Leonardo DiCaprio

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playing a chain-smoking Romeo in "Romeo and Juliet" send children the wrong message.

Perhaps not surprisingly, cigarette smoking is increasing among American teens, despite the best efforts of parents and teachers to educate children about the dangerous effects of tobacco. Between 1991 and 1995, the percentage of eighth- and tenth-graders who smoked jumped by more than one-third.

And it's not just cigarettes that are attracting children these days. Cigar use is growing among adults -- and kids, too -- thanks in part to marketing strategies that have given the cigar new cachet as an emblem of wealth and sophistication. More than one in four children between the ages of 14 and 19 have smoked a cigar in the last year, according to a study released by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation earlier this year.

Sadly, there seems to be a perception that cigars are not as dangerous as cigarettes. In fact, research has shown that cigar smokers are at a greater risk than non-smokers of contracting tongue, throat and lung cancer and suffering from strokes and heart attacks. Also worrisome are the health effects on those exposed to secondhand cigar smoke.

The statistics are troubling because nine out of 10 adult smokers begin before they are 18. Once they take up the habit, they're often hooked for life.

That's why reducing smoking among young people must remain a national priority. For the past four years, the President and his Administration have pushed for tougher restrictions on tobacco sales to and advertising aimed at children.

Now, leaders of the motion-picture industry need to join the campaign. Instead of hiding behind the excuse of artistic license, they should admit that most film scenes depicting smoking are gratuitous -- whether it's Will Smith celebrating every triumph by lighting a cigar in "Independence Day" or Kurt Russell unveiling a pack of red, white and blue cigarillos with the brand name "Freedom" in "Escape from L.A."

Rather than allow themselves to be tools of the tobacco industry, they should follow the example of the nurse Hana in "The English Patient."

"Can you get me a cigarette?" the patient asks Hana after his plane has been shot down in World War II.

"Are you crazy?" she replies.

That should be everyone's response to smoking -- including those who make and star in Hollywood movies.

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July 29, 1997

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Think about the children you know or come in contact with every day. Do any of them have parents who work but cannot afford health insurance? Do any of them qualify for Medicaid but for whatever reason don't receive it?

Last week, I met just such a family. Linda Havemann is a full-time homemaker in Williamsburg, Va. Her husband, Tom, has a good job working as a mechanic for a construction company, but they cannot afford health insurance for their sons Raymond, 6, Michael, 3, and Andrew, 18 months. The two youngest have suffered with ear infections since birth, but they've never had regular doctor's visits because they don't have insurance.

I'm sure every parent can remember feeling panicked and helpless sitting up with a sick child. I can. Imagine how you would feel if, when your child had a temperature or an ear infection, you couldn't call a doctor.

This is what Linda and Tom had to live with until a Salvation Army social worker informed them that Michael and Andrew were eligible for Medicaid. When the Havemanns finally took the boys to the doctor, they found that Andrew had already lost 20 percent of his hearing and that his speech was delayed. Two weeks ago, after surgery to insert tubes in his ears, he said his first words: "Mama," "Dada," "bubble" and "shoe."

That's the good news, but the bad news is that 6-year-old Raymond is too old to qualify for Virginia's Medicaid program. In an effort to help states extend health coverage to 5 million children in Raymond's shoes, last year's balanced budget agreement included a \$24 billion initiative. Called the Children's Health Insurance Program, or CHIP, this program targets children of working families who do not qualify for Medicaid.

There is no excuse in this country for children to go without proper medical care. And yet, 10 million American children -- that's one in seven -- do. Three million of these, like Michael and Andrew, are eligible for Medicaid, but for a variety of reasons, their parents don't enroll them. Some don't know they qualify. Some can't deal with the complex enrollment forms. Others are simply ashamed to ask for help.

We must do everything we can to find and enroll those kids who are eligible for Medicaid or CHIP. We can pass all the laws we want, but if parents don't know their

children are eligible, or if they can't or won't fill out the forms, these laws will never fulfill their promise.

Last week, the President announced a series of initiatives that will help. First, he ordered federal agencies to develop a national outreach program -- distributing information, coordinating toll-free numbers, and simplifying the application process.

To complement this effort, he also described some extraordinary contributions from the private sector. Within a month, Bell Atlantic will have up and running a toll-free number to help states enroll uninsured children. Safeway will print the number on all its shopping bags, and chain drug stores will provide it to their customers.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Kaiser Family Foundation together will spend \$23 million to research, design and fund outreach initiatives, and Pampers will offer information about available health insurance options in its childbirth education packages, which are given to 90 percent of first-time mothers.

This administration is committed to making sure that every American has access to adequate and affordable health care. In 1996, the President signed a law that keeps an estimated 25 million Americans from losing their insurance if they change jobs, are self-employed or have pre-existing medical conditions.

And just last week, he signed a directive ensuring that everyone covered by a federal health plan -- fully a third of all Americans -- will be protected by a Patient's Bill of Rights. And he announced a new initiative to eliminate, by the year 2010, the disturbing disparities in infant mortality, diabetes, cancer testing and treatment, heart disease, AIDS and immunization among various ethnic and racial groups in this country.

But no goal is more important than providing adequate medical care to our youngest and most vulnerable citizens. Everyone can help. Besides social workers, we need doctors and nurses to inform parents about programs available for their kids. In addition, teachers, guidance counselors and coaches, neighbors and friends, camp counselors and mentors, tutors and members of the clergy -- everyone in the village -- can be on the lookout for children in need.

The health and well-being of our children is everybody's concern. If we work together, our efforts will help assure that America's children get the healthy start they need to live long and productive lives.

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February 24, 1998

TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

My daughter Chelsea turns 18 this month. How vividly I remember the overwhelming feelings of love and responsibility as she lay in my arms 18 years ago. During the nine months of pregnancy, I had studied and read about parenting, but nothing prepared me for the sheer miracle of having a child.

Despite my efforts, I soon discovered that grasping child-rearing concepts in the abstract and knowing what to do with the baby in your hands are two very different things. Babies don't come with instructions. Even the most fortunate among us need some calm reassurance and a little guidance to get through those scary firsts -- breast feeding, diaper changing, bathing that slippery little creature. But what about parents who have known only poverty or neglect? What about parents without a supportive community? And what about those who have grown up trapped in cycles of abuse and low expectations?

When families lived closer together, it was easier for relatives to pitch in during the early months of a newborn's life. When women worked primarily in the home, they provided a neighborhood support system to lend a hand to new mothers. But now, relatives and neighbors aren't as readily available, and programs to help fledgling parents are few and far between.

This week, I visited the home of a single mother in Alexandria, Va., not far from the White House. Depressed and scared when she became pregnant, Felicia was referred to a program called Healthy Families Alexandria, which was launched in 1993 when the area began to experience some disturbing trends, including increasingly high rates of child poverty and abuse, teen pregnancy, low birth-weight babies and vaccine-preventable diseases.

At the heart of the program is the Family Support Worker, a trained professional or paraprofessional who visits the new mother on a regular basis, both before and after birth, to offer education, support and a patient ear. Home visitors also help with critical issues such as ensuring that the child receives regular medical attention and nutrition and that the parent is provided with referrals to peer-group activities, transportation, housing, child care, employment and medical care.

With the support of her home visitor, Felicia is now the proud and confident mother of Dominico, a gurgling, smiling and healthy 3-month-old. On the day I visited, Felicia's home visitor was checking the baby's development, offering some age-appropriate toys

and answering Felicia's questions and concerns. From her vantage point in the home, the visitor is able both to evaluate the child's growth and development, and to assess whether the child's surroundings are suitable and nurturing. When I asked Felicia if she thought home visits would help others, she said, "Oh, yes, I feel so rich. Having Lynn really helps."

Equipping parents to be the best they can be is critical to the future of our country. Long-term studies tell us that home-visitation programs can help. Researchers have just completed a 15-year study of 324 first-time mothers who participated in the Prenatal and Infancy Nurse Home Visitation Program in Elmira, N.Y. The results are dramatic: significant reductions in government assistance, child abuse, unintended second pregnancies, substance abuse and child hospitalizations. And now that these children are teenagers, there's evidence that this program can reduce incidence of juvenile crime. The costs of the program were fully recovered by the time the children were 4 years old, thanks to less use of government services and fewer subsequent pregnancies.

I believe that one of our greatest challenges is to identify programs like this that work and make them more widely available to families who would benefit from them. This week, I spent some time with the lead researcher on the Elmira study, Dr. David Olds. We agreed that we must invest more in research, replicate proven models and make existing programs better.

Because children's experiences in the earliest years of life are central to their healthy development, the President has proposed increasing our investment in activities that promote early learning and improve the quality of child care in our country. A major element of the President's child care proposal is the Early Learning Fund, which will provide challenge grants to communities that promote early learning, including home-visiting programs.

I don't think I know a mother who hasn't sought help and support in those first months and years after having a child. Most of us have help available, but sadly, too many don't. I met one young woman who told me that, without the advice of her home visitor, she would never have known that talking and reading actually improve the development of her newborn daughter's brain. Raising healthy children is the most important and the hardest job any of us will ever have. Home-visitation programs can make that job easier. And that means healthier children, healthier families and healthier communities.

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February 10, 1998

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

It's fairly easy to disregard dangers to ourselves. We might go out with a fever or cross against the light, but we would never let our children do the same.

When it comes to kids, the rules are different. Our concern for children -- if not for ourselves -- should enable us to face the facts about climate change. Global warming, as we learned at a conference my husband convened this week at Georgetown University, is not just an abstract scientific issue. It is a fundamental health and safety issue that will have a profound impact on the lives of children the world over.

At Georgetown, scientists presented research making it clear our climate is changing. Rising concentrations of carbon dioxide and other gases released when fossil fuels are burned are warming the Earth's atmosphere. While we don't know exactly how much or how fast temperatures are rising, we do know that global warming is taking place.

Today, one of the biggest threats to children is disease -- particularly disease rooted in environmental causes. Millions of children under the age of 5 die every year from preventable, easily treated conditions. As I learned at the conference, these health problems are likely to get worse if we do not do something about climate change.

Let me give you just one example: the spread of infectious diseases.

In 1995, infectious diseases -- like malaria, cholera and yellow fever -- killed more than 17 million people worldwide. Nine million of those were children.

Increases in temperature hasten the spread of infectious diseases for two reasons. First, they shorten incubation periods. That means disease-carrying viruses, bacteria and parasites can reproduce and spread faster. Second, cool temperatures protect parts of the world from certain diseases, serving as an important line of defense. Tropical diseases that can survive in hot, humid climates just aren't going to make it in colder ones. Unless temperatures rise.

Take a disease like malaria, which is spread primarily by mosquitoes. There are half a billion cases of malaria every year. In 1995, 2.1 million of these resulted in death -- mostly to children under the age of 5.

For this reason, higher temperatures should be a matter of real concern. Areas that were previously free of malaria mosquitoes, such as mountainous regions in Rwanda and Kenya, are now reporting an influx of the insects. In Costa Rica and Colombia, mosquitoes that were never seen above 1,000 meters have been spotted at twice that altitude.

In fact, according to one study, as a consequence of climate change, the percentage of the world's population at risk to malaria could increase from 45 percent to 60 percent. And the United States is not immune.

Climate change has the potential to exacerbate other problems that imperil children, including respiratory conditions like asthma. Already, nearly 5 million American children suffer from asthma, and that number is rising.

This is one important reason why the President is working to forge a plan of action to address this threat. Any approach to reducing greenhouse-gas emissions will take time, however, for it will require the cooperation of all sectors of society and the participation of governments around the world.

Fortunately, any one of us can act now. There are simple things we can do in our daily lives to help slow global warming.

For starters, we can conserve energy, reducing the emissions linked to climate change. We can insulate our houses; we can make sure the appliances in our homes are energy-efficient; we can do what my dad used to do every time he left an empty room -- turn off the lights.

While Bill and I don't have a house of our own, we have taken steps at the White House to cut energy usage.

The new energy-efficient lights that illuminate the White House at night have reduced energy consumption by 51 percent. New lighting inside the White House complex is also cutting power usage substantially. There's a state-of-the-art refrigerator downstairs that exceeds energy-efficiency standards by 30 percent, and a new air cooling system that is projected to save more than 400,000 kilowatts of electricity every year.

Not only are these changes saving a lot in energy bills every year, they are expected to keep more than 5.5 million pounds of global-warming greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere by reducing the need for electricity generated by fossil-fuel-burning power plants.

I know these are small steps. But sometimes, small steps can walk us a long way toward solving a big problem. Every time my dad turned off a light switch, he saved something for his children. By acting now to reduce climate change, we can each, in our own way, safeguard the world for our children, their children and generations beyond.

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October 7, 1997

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**holiday/
occasions**

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TALKING IT OVER**BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON****RELEASE: WEEKEND, AUGUST 19-20, 1995**

When I was a child, my family took the same vacation every summer to visit my father's relatives in Pennsylvania. We would always leave Chicago at the crack of dawn. My two brothers and I would pile into the back seat of whichever land barge my father was driving and immediately begin arguing about who got to sit where.

As the oldest, and as one who felt carsick at even the sight of a moving car, I would try to claim most of the seat. When I was old enough to get an allowance, I resorted to bribery, promising to pay my brothers a dollar each if they would let me lie down during the trip.

There was nothing exotic or luxurious about these vacations. My father drove for hours on end, my mother relieving him for brief spells so that we could cover 750 miles without spending the night in a motel. We played word games using license tags and road signs. We took breaks at roadside restaurants and turnpike rest stops. And we often detoured onto side roads to visit historic sites.

Although I complained, especially as a teen-ager, about spending endless hours in the car, I loved those trips.

Even now, I can shut my eyes and see my father driving through the night or my mother laying out a picnic at the side of the road.

And when we arrived at my grandfather's lake cottage, there were long games of pinochle, swimming, fishing in the Susquehanna River and walks through the countryside.

Today, it seems harder for people to take such simple family vacations. Although vacation travel is up this year because of a stronger economy, too many parents can't afford to take even a few days off.

Others travel but never really get away. With fax machines, cellular phones, pagers and laptop computers, work stays with them even if they are halfway around the world.

When Chelsea was a little girl, we often took vacations by car. We carried lots of tapes with stories to share and songs to sing together. And, unlike my father, we stopped at motels to sleep.

I also miss the easy, carefree vacations I took as a student. When I was 25 years old, I traveled abroad for the first time. Over the next 15 years, Bill and I went four more times. I will always remember the wonder I felt touring the lake country in England,

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visiting Guernica in Spain, wandering through Paris and exploring the great monuments and museums of Florence.

Of course, taking vacation is not so simple for me these days. Traveling as First Family means traveling heavy: We can't go anywhere without dozens of staff and security people. And it's hard to sneak in and out of town on Air Force One. Worst of all, our security requirements inevitably disrupt the places we visit.

The best part is that my mother and daughter have been able to join us for some wonderful trips. When we went last year to Latvia, Poland, Germany, Italy, France and England, I watched enviously as they spent their days shopping, sightseeing and dropping into restaurants for pasta, pirogi and pastries without ever being noticed. Then again, I had more fun than my husband, who can never go anywhere without a crowd swarming around him.

I have always admired the European approach to vacations. The first time I traveled there in late summer, I was surprised to find that all the shops were closed. Everyone -- from construction worker to Prime Minister -- was away on vacation.

It's not that the Europeans don't work as hard as we do. It's just that vacation is ingrained in their culture. It's understood that time off is vital to one's spirit, family and work life.

When I accompany my husband to meetings with foreign heads of state, I am often asked about our vacation plans.

I remember once explaining to German Chancellor Helmut Kohl that we were hoping to get a few days off later in the year. He was going to spend a rejuvenating month in the forest.

Jacques Chirac, the new President of France, told me that he had spent a recent vacation exploring the countryside of Japan. British Prime Minister John Major often blocks off the whole month of August for vacation.

Right now, our family is beginning a two-week vacation in Wyoming. It's a place where the three of us can take long hikes, visit Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks, swim and fish. (And I'm sure my husband will manage to play some golf!) The time away will give us moments like the ones I remember from earlier years with my family.

The only problem is: The phone, fax and laptop are on vacation with us.

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TALKING IT OVER**BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON****RELEASE: WEEKEND, OCTOBER 7-8, 1995**

On Oct. 11, my husband and I will celebrate our 20th wedding anniversary. I know it sounds corny, but we love each other more now than when we married. Like any couple that has been together a long time, we have worked hard and endured our share of pain to make our marriage grow stronger and deeper. We have encouraged and motivated each other, and we've had a lot of fun, too. And of course, most important, we've had Chelsea.

It nearly didn't happen at all. Making the decision to get married took time for me. Bill and I had begun dating in law school, but even after things got serious, I just could not bring myself to take the leap that marriage requires.

He actually proposed more than once. I never doubted my love for him, but I knew he was going to build his life in Arkansas. I couldn't envision what my life would be like in a place where I had no family or friends.

After we finished law school, we carried on a long-distance romance between Massachusetts and Arkansas that made money for the telephone companies but wasn't very satisfying for us.

Then, a year later, I took a deep breath and moved to Arkansas to teach law. It wasn't long before I found myself enjoying my work, new friends and a beautiful place to live.

One day in the summer of 1975, I had to go out of town for a few weeks, and Bill drove me to the airport. On the way, we passed a tiny brick house with a "for sale" sign out front, and I remarked in passing how pretty it was.

When I returned from the trip, he said, "Do you remember that house you liked? Well, I bought it, so now you'd better marry me because I can't live in it by myself."

That's when I finally said yes.

The house was only 1,000 square feet and had no air conditioning, but it did have a big attic fan, a screened-in porch, a living room with a beamed cathedral ceiling, a fireplace and a big bay window.

Bill had started furnishing it with some old furniture and a cast-iron bed he found in an antique store. He had gone to Wal-Mart and bought sheets with green and yellow flowers. To this day, he still jokes that he doesn't know what he would have done with that house if I had said no. We got married in the living

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room of that pretty little house on a glorious fall afternoon and started on the adventure our life together has been.

What I've learned over the years is that there is real glory in marriage. It is a feeling that comes from knowing that no matter what trials and tribulations you have been through, you look at your spouse after all this time and still love what you see.

My husband and I rejected long ago the idea that marriage was a 50-50 proposition: We see it instead as 100-100, where both partners have to give their all and persevere through the crises and challenges that inevitably arise in any couple's lives.

I'm sometimes asked, "What's it like being married to the President?" I reply that I didn't marry an office but a man and it's great being married to him.

Of course, being married to a public figure -- especially a President -- has its own challenges. For one thing, people assume they know everything about your relationship, when in reality, every marriage, including ours, is made up of moments that no one else can ever see.

There are practical concerns, too. How do you ever get any privacy as a couple? How can romance thrive when you live above the office with a 'round-the-clock staff?

Well, you improvise.

One night last summer, for example, when it was extremely hot and humid, we thought it would be nice to go for a dip in the White House swimming pool.

It was very late. Chelsea was away at camp. So we grabbed our towels, left the mansion, tiptoed through the Oval Office, and snuck through some bushes in pitch black. Without anybody around, we went for a midnight swim.

It will be a little too cold this week to celebrate our 20th anniversary with a dip in the pool. But I think I've come up with an equally romantic way to mark the day.

You might be able to guess what it is.

But sorry, I'm not telling.

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TALKING IT OVER**BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON****RELEASE: WEEKEND, NOVEMBER 25-26, 1995**

This Thanksgiving, my family and I had a lot to give thanks for as we sat around our dinner table. The past year has given us personal blessings, like Zachary, my brother's newborn son, and our continued good health. We also are grateful for the opportunities we've had to work and travel on behalf of America. Seeing other people in other places always adds a new perspective to our vision of our own country and our own lives.

In particular, Chelsea and I were moved by the trip we took together through South Asia last spring. As the mother of a teen-ager, I felt very lucky indeed that my 15-year-old was willing to spend 10 days with me. We had an unforgettable time everywhere we went.

We wore "shalwar kameez," the native dress of Pakistan, to an exotic dinner in an ancient fort illuminated by candles, where we were entertained by dancing camels. When we visited the Taj Mahal in India, Chelsea wanted our guide to tell us every story about its construction and tragic past. We rode elephants in Nepal, visited a village of Hindu untouchables in Bangladesh and watched a colorful parade at a Buddhist temple in Sri Lanka.

We were impressed by the progress each of the five countries we visited is making against overwhelming poverty and internal political strife. We saw evidence of this at Mother Teresa's orphanage in New Delhi and when we talked with women college students who were pursuing business careers in Lahore.

We saw it at a rural bank founded and run by poor women in Ahmedabad and when we made our own pilgrimage to the birthplace of Gandhi, the father of Indian independence.

Throughout our visit, we saw grass-roots efforts to bring basic health care to pregnant women and their babies and expand economic and political opportunities for women and the poor.

During our travels, I thought about what it means to be an American and about the many blessings we take for granted. In each country, we met democratically elected leaders who had suffered imprisonment, torture or exile under prior governments and survived the assassinations of husbands, fathers, sons, mothers and daughters.

Many people told us how much they admired our country. Some quoted leaders like Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Others

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expressed appreciation for their education in our universities, their association with our businesses and the assistance they received from our churches and private foundations.

The comment I remember most, however, came from a young Peace Corps volunteer I met in Katmandu.

She had walked 10 hours to catch a bus from the remote village where she lived in a house without running water or electricity. She described her work at a school where nearly all the students were boys, since most girls were still denied schooling and were often married by the age of 12 or 13.

She loved her experience in Nepal but missed her family and all the parts of daily life in America that she had taken for granted. She missed safe drinking water that came from a faucet, baths anytime she wanted and electricity available around the clock. She also missed being able to eat meats and vegetables without worrying they would make her sick, paved roads and working cars, and especially free public schools that taught both boys and girls.

I was glad Chelsea was with me so she could see for herself how other people live and work around the world. In fact, I wish I could have taken every American teen-ager on that trip. We have so many blessings here in the United States -- mostly because millions of other people paid the price for the life we enjoy today and because we have a stable democratic government that provides public services which benefit us all.

I realize how easy it is for Americans to overlook what we have achieved through government and what our government does for us every day. Few among us remember the time when many Americans didn't have electricity, roads or enough food. We don't worry about the dangers of unsafe water unless we hear about a temporary problem somewhere that we assume government will soon remedy. We take for granted the cleaner air we breathe and the lakes and rivers we can swim and fish in today that were polluted a few years ago. We forget the positive ways our lives have been improved during this century because we have a government willing to solve problems people face in their daily lives.

Every time I complain -- or hear someone criticize our government -- I think about the places I've visited and the people I have met in other countries who only dream of the freedoms and privileges we enjoy. And I try to remember how blessed America is, not just at Thanksgiving but throughout the year.

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TALKING IT OVER**BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON****RELEASE: WEEKEND, DECEMBER 2-3, 1995**

The White House Christmas tree arrived from Ashe County, N.C., last week. It's an 18 1/2-foot Fraser fir that was delivered to the South Lawn on a horse-drawn cart. Now, it's standing in the Blue Room, decorated with ornaments from all over the country.

The presentation of the tree marks the beginning of the holiday season at the White House, but planning for Christmas actually gets underway months before.

In 1993, our first year in the White House, Head Usher Gary Walters told me we had to start planning in May. Being the type who's relieved if my own tree is up and decorated by Christmas Eve, I was shocked to hear this. But, with his help and the creative leadership of our social secretary, Ann Stock, we began meeting about mistletoe and holly just after Washington's cherry blossoms had started to fade.

Ann and her staff help me figure out the kinds of events we will have, draw up guest lists, prepare and send invitations and plan the entertainment. Chef Walter Scheib begins dreaming up menus for the dozens of receptions, buffets and dinners held here during the few weeks before Christmas.

And pastry chef Roland Mesnier starts drawing blueprints for his annual gingerbread masterpiece. This year, he is baking an 80-pound house made of gingerbread, chocolate, marzipan and sugar. It will be wired with a working chandelier and adorned with scenes of children dreaming of sugarplums and Santa landing on the roof. (Knowing Roland, it will probably have a few other surprises, too.)

One of the first things we do when we start planning is choose a theme for the year's celebrations. In 1993, we used angels, and last year, the theme came from one of my family's favorite carols, "The Twelve Days of Christmas." This year, we are choosing another of our personal favorites. Bill, Chelsea and I have made a Christmas Eve tradition of reading the poem by Clement C. Moore, "A Visit From St. Nicholas." We thought it would be fun to borrow the poem's first line, "'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house ..." as the official theme.

Once we settle on a theme, we rely on the creativity of thousands of Americans from across the country, including quilters, needlepointers, embroiderers, architects, crafts people and students, to help make it come to life. They make wreaths, ornaments, bows, stockings and tree skirts — all the ingredients of a White House Christmas. Some even come and play music for visitors during the holiday season.

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We also depend on an army of volunteers who spend several weeks opening boxes of ornaments that are then sorted by color, photographed and catalogued in a computer.

This year, as always, there are some wonderful creations. Architects and architecture students from all 50 states designed 500 ornaments that ranged from miniature models of the White House to a Florida beach house complete with palm trees decorated for Christmas to a spiral staircase with children climbing upstairs to bed.

We received stocking ornaments from members of the American Needlepoint Guild and the Embroiderer's Guild of America, who didn't shy away from adding local touches, like a Texas flag motif and cowboy boots warming by a fireplace. Elementary school students from across the country also sent in decorations, many of which offered reminders of childhood Christmases spent making colorful paper chains and other homemade ornaments.

None of the holiday celebrations would be possible without the volunteers who come from as far away as California to help tie burgundy and gold bows, make wreaths, string lights and garlands and hang ornaments for the 30 trees scattered throughout the White House complex. (We have our own tree in the private quarters on the second floor and, thanks to some cat-loving volunteers, a special Socks tree on the third floor.)

Under the direction of White House florist Nancy Clark, 80 volunteer florists and decorators broke open boxes of greenery -- about 1,200 feet worth -- and molded them into 5-foot-tall wreaths for each of the White House's 147 windows. They spent four days in a warehouse outside Washington getting the wreaths and garlands ready for hanging. Teams of volunteers then transferred the wreaths and ornaments to the White House and started decorating.

The house is transformed into a Christmas wonderland and opened to the public for the first reception of the season -- a tribute to the artists and entertainers selected as the year's recipients of the Kennedy Center Honors. Two nights later, the President and I host the annual Congressional Ball for all the members and their spouses. There will be events every day, and in all, we are expecting about 150,000 people over the next few weeks -- some for candlelight tours, others for parties, still more for special Christmas celebrations.

It is one of the prettiest and most festive times of the year to come to the White House. I hope you will have a chance to visit, if not this year, then some other holiday season. But, whether you do or not, I hope your own holiday is filled with peace and happiness.

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Attn: Leslie Ballentine

TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

RELEASE: WEEKEND, DECEMBER 23-24, 1995

It's hard to believe Christmas is here again, with a new year right around the corner. I love the holiday traditions I grew up with and am always swamped by nostalgia every time I hear a familiar carol or unpack an ornament.

In my home, we waited until close to Christmas Eve to put up our tree and usually didn't finish decorating until late that night. We made ornaments out of papier mache, tin foil, pipe cleaners and anything else we could imagine. My mother would praise our creations, and my father would ask which side was up.

Over the years, I played most of the parts in our church nativity pageant. And one night, I even suffered the indignity of having my halo fall off as I fainted in an overheated sanctuary.

When Bill and I married, we melded our traditions, and then after Chelsea was born, we created new ones for her. We put up our tree a little earlier and make special Christmas cookies together. It seems like every year we watch Chelsea perform in "The Nutcracker" and church pageants. We still talk about the bitterly cold night the pipes froze in our church. The fire department arrived right before one little angel's hair caught fire from the candle she was holding, causing her father to vault over his seat to smother the flames with his hands.

Bill and I are happy to be over midnight hunts on Christmas Eve for toy batteries we'd forgotten. But we still wait too long to buy and wrap our presents, and as we get older, we spend more time searching for the stocking stuffers we cleverly hid away in July.

We've always been blessed at Christmas, but we know that's not the case for many children whose families have fallen on hard times. Instead of feeling excited about Santa coming, they are worried he will never find them.

These children can only hope that somebody -- anybody -- will remember them during the holidays.

This year, there is a soaring demand for clothing, shelter, food and toys, according to nearly every major charitable organization in the United States. Here in Washington, one church even had to turn away hungry families over Thanksgiving after running out of food.

Those seeking help are not just the poor and homeless. Increasingly, they are working families beset by medical catastrophes, lay-offs and economic factors beyond their control.

"There are simply more needy people," says Robert A. Watson, the national commander of the Salvation Army. "We're frantically trying to make the available resources go as far as possible."

Americans are responding to needs here and around the world.

Mary Damron of Ikes Fork, W.Va., began collecting toys, medical supplies and candy and putting them in shoe boxes after watching pictures of the war in Bosnia on television one night. After two weeks, she and members of her community had filled 1,200 boxes, which were delivered to children in Bosnia last Christmas. This year, she collected over 6,000 boxes. When Mary came to the White House to tell us about her work, she gave me a shoe box to fill.

In St. Louis, Catholic Charities has started a Secret Santa program with kids in shelters, day care and community centers writing letters to Santa Claus asking for specific gifts for Christmas. "I live in a shelter, so I know my mom cannot give me what I am asking you for," an 8-year-old boy wrote. "I want a remote control car. Thank you." One little girl asked for a Barbie doll to share with her twin. A girl named Adrienne wrote, "I love you, Santa Claus, and say a prayer for my family." A 10-year-old named Anthony asked for a football, and a 12-year-old boy wrote, "Santa, I want you and Mrs. Claus to have a merry, merry Christmas."

The letters are sent to members of the community who agree to buy a gift along with something practical, like mittens, a hat or a scarf.

When we lived in Arkansas, we bought presents for families who had written letters as part of a similar Secret Santa program. On Christmas Eve, we drove to their houses and delivered the gifts of food, clothes and toys in person.

We saw the desperation of mothers who were recently widowed or whose husbands had deserted them. We found couples struggling to provide for their children on minimum-wage jobs. Once, we ended up in a tiny room over a honky-tonk bar where a 55-year-old woman lived all alone. Someone who knew of her difficult situation had written a letter on her behalf. She never dreamed that anyone would care enough to visit her on Christmas Eve.

Celebrating Christmas can create wonderful traditions for our own children as well as for boys and girls who might otherwise be left out. But if the season is to have any lasting meaning after the wrapping paper is picked up and the tree is taken down, its spirit should live in our hearts throughout the year.

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TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

RELEASE: WEEKEND, DECEMBER 30-31, 1995

Like most people, I've made my share of New Year's resolutions. How many times in the past have I promised to do a better job of staying in touch with old friends, finishing my Christmas shopping before Dec. 24 and laying off the chips and cookies? More times than I care to remember. But that isn't stopping me from making faithful pledges again this year. Herewith, my resolutions for 1996:

-- I will try to keep the same hairdo for at least 30 days.

I know this will be a disappointment to late night talk show hosts, but I'm running out of new 'dos.

-- I will try to show more enthusiasm for my husband's golf game.

I know many spouses can relate to this. It's not that I don't like golf. In fact, I have taken lessons twice (to little effect). But being married to a man who played over 200 holes during our last vacation, I know how hard it can be to get excited about a daily critique of wedge shots, drives and putts.

-- I will try to act nonchalant when my daughter's 16th birthday approaches and the issue of a driver's license becomes more important to her than breathing.

I know growing up is inevitable, but it sure happens fast.

-- I will try to live up to Dr. C. Everett Koop's admonition to "Shape Up America."

After more than 20 Christmas parties in the last few weeks, I'm overdue for some time on the treadmill.

-- I will try to learn the difference between a hard drive and a floppy disk.

Having written a 320-page book in longhand over the last six months, I'm ready to join the ranks of the computer-competent.

-- I will try to show new appreciation for my friends in the press.

As every person in public life knows, this could be a difficult resolution to keep. But now that I write a weekly column, I have come to understand how deadlines are the root of all evil.

On a more serious note, I also want to share some of my hopes for 1996:

-- I hope all women age 65 and over will get a mammogram each year.

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I miss my mother-in-law, who died of breast cancer two years ago this coming week. Please remind the older women you know -- whether they are family members, friends, neighbors or co-workers -- to take advantage of this lifesaving technology.

-- I hope all Americans will vote in next year's elections, whatever their political persuasion.

Too many people around the world have been imprisoned, exiled and even tortured to win the right to vote, and we should never take our hard-won freedoms for granted.

-- I hope more political leaders and governments will respond to and respect the rights and needs of children, women and families here and around the world.

Having visited countries where girls and women are not fed, not schooled, not allowed to own property, not protected by laws, not provided with medical care and not given a voice in their governments, I feel more strongly than ever that our future as a world depends on correcting these inequities.

-- Finally, I hope people across our country will remember our troops in Bosnia and the families they have left behind.

Beginning Jan. 18, you can write to members of the Army and Air Force serving in Bosnia by addressing an envelope as follows: Any Servicemember; APO; AE 09397. Letters to men and women in the Navy can be sent immediately to: Any Servicemember; FPO; AE 09398. Mail for the families of our Armed Forces serving in Bosnia can be sent after Jan. 18 to: Any Family Member; APO; AE 09399. If you have any questions, please call the Military Postal Service agency at 1-800-810-6098.

Please limit your mail initially to cards and letters to make it easier for the military to deliver the mail in Bosnia. It's fine to mail cookies and candy a few months from now, as long as they are sent in parcels no bigger than a shoe box.

Thanks for your support in this crucial effort. And most of all, best wishes for a happy and healthy new year!

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TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

This week, for the first time in American history, the White House hosted a celebration of an Islamic holiday. It was long overdue.

To mark the end of the holy month of Ramadan, the most important Muslim holiday of the year, I welcomed 200 men, women and children (and even some sleeping babies) from across the country to the Indian Treaty Room of the Old Executive Office Building.

There were prayers and speeches, and a feast of traditional dishes, including meat dumplings, pita bread, hummus (a spicy garbanzo bean dip), baba ganoush (an eggplant dip), tabbouleh (a salad of parsley, tomatoes and cracked wheat) and pastries.

Like 1 billion other Muslims around the world, these American Muslims had just finished fasting from sunrise until sundown for 30 days. Ramadan is a special time for families, when parents and their children practice self-discipline and deny themselves food and water to gain greater compassion for the poor.

As I shared in this historic celebration of joy, love and family life, I couldn't help thinking of how we, as a society, too often mischaracterize Islam and those who adhere to its teachings. Think back to the Oklahoma City bombing, and some of the reactions that immediately followed, and you'll know what I'm getting at. Moments after the explosion, Muslims were publicly presumed to have been responsible. While police searched for suspects, many Muslims in this country felt afraid to leave their homes. Mosques and Islamic centers received threatening phone calls.

While news stories about Muslims often focus on extremists like those responsible for the World Trade Center bombing and other acts of terrorism, it's not fair to apply such a negative stereotype to all Muslims.

The reality is that the vast majority of the estimated 4 million Muslims in the United States are loyal citizens whose daily lives revolve around work, family and community.

People who find spiritual guidance and sustenance in Islam represent all walks of American life. They range from well-known celebrities like Houston Rockets star Hakeem Olajuwon to community leaders like Dr. Laila Al-Marayati, a California physician who served on the U.S. delegation to the Women's

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Conference in Beijing, to Chaplain Abdul-Rasheed Muhammad, the first Islamic chaplain in the U.S. Army, who offered a prayer at the White House ceremony.

They are also children like Marwa Al-Khairo, a Girl Scout and aspiring doctor who loves books by Judy Blume and Mark Twain. She, her two younger brothers and her Iraqi-born parents joined many other families at the White House celebration.

Standing on the dais, her green felt hat barely reaching above the microphone, she offered the most poignant reminder of why a celebration of Ramadan at the White House was as important to all Americans as to those in the room.

"Only in America, people from different parts of the world can come together and become one community," she said. "I am proud to be an American. And I am proud to be an American Muslim," she added, before ending her speech with a plug for her mosque's baklava, a favorite pastry.

Marwa's life is no different in many respects from that of other American sixth-graders. But listening to her, I thought about how hopeful it is for our country that children here can grow up like Marwa, fluent not only in the ways of America but also in their own cultural and religious traditions.

I am grateful that my own daughter has had the chance to study Islamic history in high school, certainly not an option for my generation. In fact, Chelsea was so enthusiastic about the course that when we traveled to South Asia together last year, she provided a running commentary on everything we did and saw.

Learning about all of the cultures that have enriched our society also enhances our understanding of what it means to be American. We are, after all, a nation of immigrants and diverse religious beliefs.

In the past, children of other faiths have had the opportunity to observe their major holidays at the White House. There have been parties at Christmas and a ceremony to light the menorah at the beginning of Hanukkah. And thousands of children come to the annual Easter egg roll on the South Lawn in the spring.

Now, I hope, Marwa and other Muslim children will also feel that their religion has a place in their President's house.

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February 20, 1996

NOTE TO HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON EDITORS: HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON HAS THE DAY OFF. THE FOLLOWING COLUMN WAS WRITTEN BY PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON. THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION. -- CREATORS SYNDICATE, INC.

**TALKING IT OVER
BY PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

For Mother's Day, I thought I'd give Chelsea's mother a day off from her weekly column. Besides, I wanted to write about my own mother, Virginia Kelley, who died in 1994. I miss her every day, but especially when Mother's Day rolls around.

I remember, as a small child, watching my mother on a railway platform in New Orleans, sobbing and waving goodbye to me and my grandmother. As the train pulled away, she sank to her knees.

At the time, my mother was studying in Louisiana to be a nurse-anesthetist while I lived with my grandparents in Arkansas. Widowed three months before I was born, she was determined to get the skills she needed to provide for both of us. The image of her at the train station has stayed with me throughout my life, a powerful memory of her constant love.

Mother taught me about family, hard work, sacrifice and putting your children first, and about always being positive for them even on the bad days. For her, those bad days included my stepfather's alcoholism, the deaths of three husbands, my brother's struggle with substance abuse and her own fight with cancer.

As a child, I saw her go off to work each day in an era when it wasn't easy to be a working mother. As an adult, I marveled as she threw herself into politics to help me through victory and defeat, and encouraged my brother in his career while never giving up her unshakable belief that he could recover from his drug problem. And I watched with admiration as she endured her own disappointments with good humor and determination, always enjoying life and living it to the fullest, even as she battled the breast cancer that finally took her from us when she was 70 years old.

If you ever met my mother, or saw her on television, or read her autobiography, "Leading With My Heart," you know that in many ways she wasn't typical. She worked before most mothers did -- she had to. She wore lots of

makeup, including bright lipstick -- the brighter the better, she liked to say -- and layers of Max Factor. Hillary used to comment that my mother was the only person she had ever met who wore false eyelashes every day.

No matter what adversity she faced, she always tried to enjoy herself, and she loved seeing other people lap up life, too. She never begrudged other people their success and happiness. She just wanted the same for herself and her children.

She loved her work. She also loved parties, Elvis Presley and the racetrack. Even when her health was failing and she was in pain, she insisted on going to Las Vegas to see Barbra Streisand's magnificent concert on New Year's Eve in 1993.

I tried to call Mother for a couple of days after the concert to find out how it went, but I couldn't track her down! She was always out of the hotel room or on the phone. Then, after she got home, she called me. Hillary, Chelsea and I were at the dinner table so we had a four-way conversation. She told us about how great the concert was and what a wonderful time she had.

It was the last time I ever talked to her. Just a few hours later, she died in her sleep. And while I regretted not having the chance to say goodbye before she died, I knew in my heart that we had said all we needed to say. There were no accounts to settle, no words or emotions left unsaid. I feel lucky for that, and even luckier for the life and legacy she left me: love and respect for family and work, and for other people, regardless of their station in life or how different they seem on the surface.

This Mother's Day will be my third without my own mother. I still miss her. I miss our long talks at the kitchen table and on the phone. I miss her laugh and her hugs. I miss the fire in her eyes and her never-say-die attitude. There are still some Sunday evenings when I have the urge to pick up the phone to call her and suddenly realize that I can't do that anymore.

But this Sunday, as I watch my daughter and my wife talking and laughing at the dinner table, I know I'll hear echoes of my own conversations with my mother. And I'll be grateful for my mother's love and for every mother's love. Our mothers' spirits stay with us always.

Happy Mother's Day.

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May 7, 1996

TALKING IT OVER**BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Father's Day always reminds me of my father's favorite sayings. He was a fountain of advice and cautionary words, most of them designed to keep me and my brothers on a straight track in life.

"When you work, work hard," he used to say. "When you play, play hard. And don't confuse the two."

He constantly reminded us of the advantages we had over his generation and over most people in the world. "You will never know how lucky you are" was a constant refrain.

It was clear to me and my brothers that our father's stern advice was his way of giving us the tools we needed to survive in a tough, competitive world.

To him, part of being a good father meant moving the family to a suburb with good schools, even though the property taxes were higher. It also meant exposing us to some of life's harsher lessons: More than once, he drove us down to skid row to see what happened to people who lacked self-discipline and motivation.

My father probably couldn't have explained what "quality time" was. But he was always there for us -- at meals, on weekends, during holidays -- a fixture in our daily lives.

History and circumstance helped. Fathers in the 1950s had more time to be with their kids. The pace of life just wasn't as hectic then, and economic pressures on families were not nearly as great as they are today.

My father was also blessed to own a small business. He set his own hours and never had to worry about getting permission to go to his children's school and sporting events. If he needed time off, he took it.

Nowadays, meeting one's parental responsibilities is not so simple. Not only do parents have to work longer hours to make a living, they likely have to commute farther to and from their jobs. The trade-off between time and money has become harder and harder for many parents.

Still, I've met fathers at the bottom of the pay scale who make extraordinary sacrifices to spend meaningful time every day with their kids. I've also seen millionaire fathers who are so busy talking on their cellular phones that they ignore their children altogether.

No one can force a father to take responsibility for his children. But there are things that can be done to help fathers become more involved in family life.

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That's what the President and Vice President had in mind when they launched the Fatherhood Initiative last year to find out how the federal government can help fathers fulfill their parental obligations.

So far, the findings are encouraging.

At the Department of Defense, for example, there are many programs that help service men and women cope with being separated from loved ones. Not only does the military offer counseling and support programs for fathers, on some ships, there is a special video room where parents can tape bedtime stories for their children.

A local program sponsored by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in Hartford, Conn., provides jobs for low-income fathers if they attend parenting classes, spend time with their children and avoid drugs. In some cases, fathers get help from the state in paying child support if they take full responsibility for their children.

The Healthy Start program in Baltimore, sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services, serves women with high-risk pregnancies. But it also involves fathers by requiring them to attend prenatal and pediatric appointments in return for family-planning counseling, jobs and training to use and repair computers.

Through Goals 2000, Even Start and the Family Involvement Partnership for Learning, the Department of Education promotes parental involvement in education. Nearly half of the participants in Even Start are fathers.

Perhaps most important, the federal Family and Medical Leave Act, which the President signed in 1993, guarantees American workers time off for family emergencies.

The President wants to make sure that the federal government practices what it preaches when it comes to the role of fathers in their families. Now, many federal agencies, such as the Department of Transportation, offer parents the options of telecommuting, alternative work schedules, parenting classes and child care.

On this Father's Day, my father won't be here, so I can't thank him for all the love and attention he gave me when I was growing up. But I can thank my husband and the Vice President for being such good fathers to their own children and for helping so many other fathers be the best parents they can be.

Bill and Al, Happy Father's Day.

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June 11, 1996

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A political campaign is like any high-stakes contest. Whether the arena is sports, academics, entertainment, business or politics, people have to prepare themselves, adopt a strategy and follow through. But there are big differences. In politics, there is no final game, test, performance or presentation.

There is a day of reckoning, like Super Bowl Sunday, but the candidates are passive observers rather than active participants. After months of hard work, the candidates don't take the field. They can only wait for the voters to pass judgment.

It is an odd sensation and one that I've never liked. There should be something else to do -- another voter to persuade or speech to make. But there isn't. So all that's left is the waiting. Over the years, I have tried many ways to fill those hours. I've gone to the movies, gone shopping, slept late and cleaned closets. Nothing works.

But this last Election Day was special. We were in Little Rock to vote. We arrived at 2:00 Tuesday morning from a marathon fly-around that had taken us from New Hampshire to Ohio to Kentucky to Iowa to South Dakota.

As the plane landed, I could see a crowd of several hundred friends and supporters who had gathered to welcome us home. The night was warm, and Bill, Chelsea and I hugged and talked our way through the crowd. We visited with childhood friends who had driven in from all over the country to be with us. We met college students who had worked on the campaign and had figured out that coming to the airport in the middle of the night was the best chance they might have to meet the President. One young man had his friend photograph his handshake with the President, just as Bill had done years before with John F. Kennedy.

After we arrived at our hotel, Bill was too excited to sleep, so he organized a game of hearts with some of his senior staff. Chelsea and I went to sleep around 4:00 a.m., and Bill finally ended the day an hour later.

When we woke up, the three of us went to vote, a family ritual ever since Chelsea was a baby. She always helped her father pull the levers. This time, there were no curtained booths or levers but ballots that could be fed into a computer. I needed my reading glasses just to read the ballot. Luckily, I had

decided how I intended to vote on all the Arkansas initiatives and constitutional amendments before I arrived, or I might still be there trying to decipher all the small print. I propose ballots use bigger print for all us aging baby boomers.

After Bill and I voted, Chelsea went out with five of her girlfriends, two from Washington who had come with us and three from Little Rock. The girls had permission to miss school and took full advantage of the day. They introduced Chelsea's Washington friends to the city, stopping to see favorite haunts and ending up, you guessed it, at the mall.

I went to visit my optometrist and order some new bifocals, an unpleasant duty. I've always been nearsighted. After years of wearing thick glasses, I finally figured out how to wear soft contacts when I was around 35. Now that I'm nearing 50, I often need reading glasses on top of contacts.

Once that errand was run, I headed to Doe's Eat Place, a familiar hangout that serves steaks, burgers, fries, tamales and all the food we're told to shun. A bunch of my friends and staff were sitting at tables outside telling stories and digesting their lunches. One of the gifts of my life is that I have people around me who are quick to laugh and don't mind doing so at anyone's expense -- especially mine.

We told stories of the last four years, made fun of each other and quite forgot we were waiting to learn who would win the election. Whenever a cell phone rang with news of exit polls, I made it clear I didn't want to hear the numbers. I don't believe in exit polls. They're often wrong. They invade voters' privacy, and they can interfere with voter turnout in later time zones.

Joining us at Doe's was my mother. When my friends learned she had recently remodeled her living room, we all piled into cars to go take a look. I drove, one of my favorite activities whenever I get the chance. When we got there, one friend played the piano, while others received a guided tour. I just sat there watching the sun go down on the hills behind the river, feeling relaxed for the first time in weeks.

Once I returned to the hotel, I was caught up in the excitement and tension of election night. Our suite had four television sets, and people gathered in front of them to watch and discuss the results. When the President won Florida, everyone cheered. When he was declared the winner, we started congratulating each other. Some of us even cried.

By then, it was time to get ready for Bill's speech. After Sen. Dole called to congratulate my husband, we left the hotel for the short ride over to the Old

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State House, Arkansas' first capitol. Standing in front with the Gores and their four children, we were overwhelmed by a huge crowd stretching as far as we could see. The big trees in front were draped in little white lights. As Bill spoke, leaves gently floated down across the podium as though they, too, wanted to play their part in this historic night.

I looked out into hundreds of faces I knew and loved, feeling very blessed to be in that place, proud of my husband and my country. It didn't even matter that I still had three more receptions to attend and that my feet were throbbing. It all seemed just right, and not a bad way to end this Election Day.

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November 12, 1996

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

I'm writing this column on Christmas Eve, in the little room on the second floor that I use for my study. It's where Eleanor Roosevelt and Bess Truman slept and where Jackie Kennedy wrote letters.

The official part of Christmas at the White House, with daily receptions, tours and parties, is over. Now Bill, Chelsea and I are rushing madly about trying to finish our own preparations. Most of our family is with us, and this year, for the first time, both our nephews, Tyler and Zachary, are old enough to understand (sort of) and react to the decorations, presents and excitement. Earlier this week, the boys discovered a present from a friend of mine -- a stuffed frog that croaks "Jingle Bells" when you squeeze its foot -- and have already spent hours squeezing and laughing.

We celebrate privately on the second and third floors of the White House. Our own 17-foot tree goes up in the Yellow Oval Room, right above the official tree that stands in the Blue Room downstairs. Over the years, we have collected boxes and boxes of ornaments. We try to find a special spot for each one, which is one of the reasons we're grateful for a room that can hold a big enough tree.

White House elves put our tree up a few days ago and strung it with lights to help us get started. As we decorated the tree to the sounds of our favorite carols, Bill, Chelsea and I -- with a little help from friends and family who dropped by -- reminisced about the ornaments and past Christmases. As usual, I was the first to collapse from exhaustion and retreat to an observer's position on the couch. Then Chelsea followed me to bed, leaving the President of the United States to hum and putter for a few more hours. Anyone who knows my husband marvels at his extraordinary energy, but he surpasses even his usual levels during the few days leading up to Christmas. He loves everything about the season, especially the rituals our family follows. And one of those rituals is that he will finish the tree!

Another ritual for Bill is a last-minute shopping trip to the mall. I have noticed over the years that many men of my acquaintance become frantic mall-stalkers as they hunt for Christmas gifts. I worked in stores a few Christmas seasons as a teen-ager, and I always loved to see men charge in on Christmas Eve with that crazed look that told me they would definitely buy something in our

store -- whether or not they needed it for anyone on their list. I'm sure my husband gives the same joy to sales clerks today.

This afternoon, we will take the family to see Chelsea perform in the "Nutcracker." We have done this every year since she was 3. Earlier this month, I took some friends and their 3-year-old twins to watch a dress rehearsal. The little boy loved the battle between the mice and toy soldiers. The little girl was enchanted as she stood on her toes in front of her seat and twirled along with the ballerinas on stage. I had tears in my eyes as I watched them, remembering the first time I took Chelsea and how the ballet had captured her imagination.

This year, Chelsea has an added experience for the holidays -- finishing her college applications, which are due in early January. So, between tree-decorating and pirouetting, she's been at the computer, trying to write essays that explain -- in 500 words -- who she is. Like every mother, I want to write my own essay about how wonderful my daughter is, but I know that this process is another stage of her growing up -- and away. It's a passage she has to take herself. Bill and I are still trying to persuade her to stay in Washington and take correspondence courses.

And tonight, our extended family will have dinner at the home of our dear friends, Ann and Vernon Jordan. Their house will be filled with their children and grandchildren, and all the adults will take turns reading stories, singing carols and soothing toddlers impatient for the arrival of Santa Claus. After dinner, Bill, Chelsea and I will attend Christmas Eve services at the National Cathedral, one of our favorite places in Washington. The majesty of the setting and the familiarity of the hymns and words remind us of what this time is all about. When we finally arrive back at the White House around midnight, we'll finish wrapping our gifts and stuffing the stockings. We will also pause to count our blessings before we fall into bed for a few hours' sleep before waking up to the joy of another Christmas in the White House.

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Final

I've often wondered whether the traditional greeting this time of year should be posed as a question instead of an exclamation: "Happy New Year?" After all, none of us knows what 1997 will bring. We can hope that it will be a good year for all we hold dear, but, no matter what we do, there will be unintended consequences from our actions and much that will be beyond our control and understanding. So then how should we ring in this new year and prepare ourselves for whatever awaits?

Bill and I found ourselves in a familiar pattern after Christmas. We were exhausted by the holiday whirl, and felt a little overwhelmed by all that was left undone -- friends not visited, work incomplete, letters unwritten, closets unorganized, prayers unsaid -- despite our best efforts.

I find great satisfaction in getting my house in order before the start of a new year. Last week, I spent four days cleaning out drawers and closets, rearranging furniture and giving away clothes and other things we neither needed nor used. One day, in the middle of my cleaning spree, a friend called to check in. She asked what glamorous party we were attending that night. I disappointed her expectations about our social lives when I told her Chelsea was home finishing college applications, Bill was working in the Oval Office, and I was doing housework that had piled up over the last busy months.

Obviously, I don't do the cleaning, cooking and housekeeping everyday that my mother

and friends do. One of the pleasures of living in the White House is to be surrounded by dedicated people who serve the President and his family. But I have to do some of the work myself in order for our living quarters in the White House to feel like our home.

Just as I need to clean out physical space -- for instance, holding up a pair of shoes that have served me well and deciding whether or not they can still do the job -- so too do I need a time for spiritual cleansing. That time comes when Bill, Chelsea and I spend the last few days of the year at Renaissance Weekend in Hilton Head, S.C. It's our chance to evaluate the past year and consider where we are and what we want for the year ahead.

Renaissance Weekend was started by our friends, Phil and Linda Lader. Fifteen years ago, they decided that the typical New Year's celebration wasn't satisfying enough. They wanted a period of reflection and discussion to help think through their own priorities for the future. So they got together with some friends to talk about what was on their minds and hearts.

The next year they invited others -- some people they knew, others they'd only heard about. In the spirit of the Renaissance, they sought out people from different walks of life whose interests, knowledge, and experiences could bring varied perspectives to their discussions. They hoped to create a time of renaissance -- of renewal -- that would give busy people the chance to stop and speak about matters great and small, to sing songs and play games, to take a time-out so they might begin the new year feeling new themselves and ready for whatever challenges they would face.

During the last 12 Renaissance Weekends, Bill, Chelsea and I have made many wonderful friends, learned about matters we'd never thought about before and explored our own feelings and opinions about subjects ranging from spirituality to mathematics to corporate takeovers. No matter how tired we are when we arrive, we always become stimulated by being around people who for a few days are also stepping out of their busy lives to remember what's most important in any life.

One of the participants I've come to know well over the years is Dr. Estelle Ramey, a retired professor at Georgetown Medical School. One day, after recounting her life's journey from poor child of the Depression to renowned professor, she said something I will never forget: "I have loved and been loved; all the rest is background music."

At the start of 1997, I wish all of us more love and less of the "background music" that too often crowds our lives. Happy New Year!

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TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Inauguration Day for Bill and me ended early Tuesday morning after a whirlwind tour of 15 Inaugural Balls. We arrived at the White House around 2 a.m. exhausted but exhilarated. We were also famished. We hadn't eaten since lunch and headed straight to the refrigerator in our private living quarters. As we ate leftovers from a family dinner Bill and I had missed earlier that night, we chatted and recalled our favorite moments of the day.

It all began with a prayer service at the historical Metropolitan AME Church in Washington. I couldn't have thought of a better way to start Inauguration Day and the day honoring Martin Luther King Jr. As Bill prepares for another four years in office, he knows that he won't be able to do his job alone. He needs his faith and people of faith to support him.

The morning service, which brought together representatives from Christianity, Judaism and Islam, boosted the congregation's spirits and reaffirmed my belief that much more unites us than divides us. Friends from throughout Bill's life spoke and sang at the service.

Bill Hybels, pastor of Willow Creek Community Church outside Chicago, spoke of the visits he and my husband have shared every month for the past four years, praying and talking together, strengthening their faith and building a friendship. Jesse Jackson and Tony Campolo, an evangelist minister from Philadelphia, delivered sermons challenging us all to remember our obligations to the poor. And Jennifer Holiday closed the service with a rousing rendition of "Amazing Grace" that lifted the roof and our hearts.

After the service, Bill and I returned to the White House, where we greeted congressional leaders who had come to escort Bill to the Capitol. As we drove to the Capitol, I looked out the window and saw people already staking out seats along the parade route. I also saw a few protesters, who reminded me of the greatness of our democracy and our right to disagree with each other openly and peacefully.

It was cold and overcast as Chelsea and I took our seats with Tipper Gore and her children at the oath-taking ceremony. I held Bill's Bible open to a passage he had selected -- Isaiah 58:12 -- which he later used in his speech when he said we should all be "repairers of the breach." When he repeated his name after Justice Rehnquist, "I, William Jefferson Clinton," tears welled up in my eyes, and I thought I was going to cry. I felt proud and awed as I watched my husband walk toward the podium on the West Front of the Capitol, looking out toward the mall and the Washington monument.

I had been worried about Bill's voice for three days. It had turned hoarse on Friday, and I had pleaded with him to stay in for the weekend. (I am known in my family as an incurable worrier.) But Monday, his voice was strong and clear. As Bill began his speech, the sun emerged from the clouds and bathed him in light. Chelsea and I were amazed by the weather's good timing.

After the ceremony, we went to Statuary Hall, one of the most historic rooms in the Capitol for lunch with members of Congress. The menu was composed of dishes Thomas Jefferson served 200 years ago while he was in the White House. I sat between my husband and House Speaker Newt Gingrich (who, ironically, was seated to my left). Chelsea sat next to Strom Thurmond, who at 94 is still one of the Senate's greatest charmers.

When Sen. Warner presented the President with the traditional gift of an already-framed picture of the morning's ceremony, I did not remember the same event occurring four years ago. Looking back, I realize I was too anxious and overwhelmed to take in the details of my husband's first inauguration. This time, I was much more relaxed and savored every moment.

I was thrilled at the number of people who had come out on such a cold day to watch the inaugural parade. Bill, Chelsea and I walked the last few blocks to the White House. We saw familiar faces in the crowds and waved to them. Bill even caught sight of a man he had worked with on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee while he was a student at Georgetown University 30 years ago.

The parade itself had everything from mariachi bands to polka dancers to gymnasts. I was especially pleased to see groups that I had personally invited, including Florida A&M's prized marching band and the Yelm, Wash., Elementary School Choir.

The hardest part of the day was finding the energy to change into our formal wear for the evening's balls. I was afraid to nap between the parade and the balls for fear of not being able to get up.

But before we knew it, Bill and I were in the motorcade, dropping in on one ball after the other and dancing to "Unforgettable."

The energy of the people having a good time kept me going, even as my feet protested with every step. And when Bill and I returned to the White House, we realized we had carried all of the day's good feelings home with us.

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January 21, 1997

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

My mother will be embarrassed when she hears that I'm writing a column about her. But it's Mother's Day. And given that my own daughter will be leaving for college soon, I've spent more hours than usual thinking about mothering, motherhood and the passage of time.

One reason my life has been blessed is because my mother believed so firmly in creating a stable family for her children. She made sure my brothers and I had the love and attention we needed, even though she wasn't lucky enough during her own childhood to enjoy the same.

My mother was born to a 15-year-old mother and a 17-year-old father, teen-agers far too young to manage their duties as parents. When the marriage failed, my mother, then 8, and her 3-year-old sister were sent alone by train to Los Angeles to live with their paternal grandparents.

My mother's grandmother was a rigid and arbitrary disciplinarian who constantly put her down. Her grandfather gave her little time or attention. Her own father seldom visited. And her mother disappeared from her life for the better part of a decade.

Thankfully, my mother came in contact with adults who helped her along. One teacher noticed that my mother often came to school without money for milk, so she bought an extra carton each day and gave it to my mother, saying she was too full to drink it herself. A great-aunt gave my mother gifts and tried to protect her from her grandmother's harsh treatment.

When my mother was 14, she went to work as an au pair, taking care of a family's children in return for room and board. She had to get up early each morning to make breakfast and get the kids ready for school. At night, she stayed up late to do her homework.

The woman who employed my mother saw her special way with children and encouraged her to pursue her education. She gave her books, stimulated her intellectually and became a role model of what a responsible and caring parent is like.

I've often wished I had met that generous teacher, or my Aunt Belle, who was so kind to my mother, or the woman she worked for as a teen-ager. I would tell them how grateful I am for the nurturing they provided and for the faith they

placed in my mother at a time when she was filled with distrust and disappointment. These adults (whom I like to think of as part of my mother's "village") helped her recover from emotional wounds that could have lingered for a lifetime.

And even though it still makes me angry to think about the pain my mother endured as a child, I have come to recognize that the hardships shaped her strong sense of caring, compassion and respect for all people. They instilled in her a love of learning. And they taught her lessons about life that she still imparts to me and my brothers today.

I remember once, when I was about 4, my family had just moved to the suburb of Park Ridge, outside of Chicago. I was trying to make new friends in the neighborhood. But every time I went out to play, I was pushed, shoved and teased mercilessly.

After several weeks of this, I burst into tears one afternoon and raced back inside to avoid my tormentors. My mother was waiting for me at the door. "There is no room for cowards in this house," she said. Then she sent me back out.

I couldn't believe it. Neither could the other kids, who weren't expecting me to return that day, if at all. When they started teasing me again, I stood up for myself. That's when I finally won some friends and some respect. Only later did I learn that my mother watched the whole episode from behind the dining room drapes, shaking with worry over what might happen.

In the years since, my mother's love and wisdom have guided me through many difficult times. She is a frequent visitor at the White House, and when she's not around, I call her often to talk about everything in our lives.

Like many women of her generation, she had few of the opportunities and choices that my peers and I take for granted. But if caring, commitment, common sense and an endless supply of unconditional love are hallmarks of good parenting, then there isn't a mother in the world who has outdone my own.

So, Mom, here's to you and to the millions of other mothers who are irreplaceable in their children's hearts and lives.

Happy Mother's Day.

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May 6, 1997

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

I've watched my husband deliver hundreds of speeches over the years, from informal chats in town halls to national addresses on Inauguration Day.

But I've never seen him as nervous as he was last week, when he gave the commencement remarks to Chelsea's graduating high school class.

Nor have I seen him as overtaken with emotion, especially when our daughter doubled back after receiving her diploma on stage and threw her arms around her father.

I know from my relationship with my own dad how important fathers are to their daughters. And it's certainly true for Bill and Chelsea. From the moment she came into the world, Bill has been an anchor in her life, and she in his.

Bill never knew his own father, who was killed in an auto accident three months before he was born. That may be one reason he has been so attentive to his own daughter and so determined to provide her with the love, support and care that every child needs.

Bill was with me in the delivery room when Chelsea was born. In the months afterward, he willingly took turns changing diapers, giving bottles, telling bedtime stories and rocking her to sleep.

As Chelsea grew older, his role expanded. He had no rivals when it came to cheering in the stands for her grammar school softball team. He spent hours late at night helping her with her homework. And he wouldn't dream of missing her annual ballet recital.

Whenever his schedule permitted, he also took Chelsea to work with him, starting when she was 3 or 4. He set up a little desk in the corner of his office where she sat and colored. I remember walking in one day and seeing him earnestly explain some complicated issue to her as she played with the telephone. I think of that today when he talks with her about some matter on his mind while we sit at the dinner table.

Today, we recognize more than previous generations the importance of fathers in their young children's daily lives, whether it is reading a book to an infant, attending a parent-teacher conference or chaperoning a teenager's birthday party. We are also discovering that many men want to spend more time with their children, only to face the same obstacles that women do when it comes to balancing work and family life.

In a new book titled "Working Fathers," Dr. James A. Levine suggests that a lot of fathers are just as torn about meeting their responsibilities to their jobs and their families as women are. The difference is that most men have been conditioned not to talk about the conflicts they feel. And many continue to confront an age-old stereotype of fathers as providers for the family who can't risk taking time off from work to accompany a child to the doctor or a piano lesson.

As a result, the concerns and anxieties that men feel go unstated in discussions about how to create family-friendly work environments. Too often, there's an assumption that new work strategies such as flex time, parental leave and telecommuting are designed for mothers, not fathers, when in fact they can be beneficial to both.

The good news, according to Levine, is that several major corporations have taken steps to help mothers and fathers integrate their family and work lives. And increasingly, men are making their voices heard, too, turning down promotions or job changes that would put unwanted pressure on their families.

More men are understanding how fast the child-rearing years go by and how much they will miss if they don't participate fully in raising their children. As the old saying goes, "No one on his deathbed ever says he wishes he spent more time at the office."

Given the shifting roles of parents these days, and the inevitable stresses and strains that modern life imposes on families, I hope we will use this Father's Day to encourage all fathers to reap the rewards that engaged and active parenthood can bring.

Most of all, I hope we will give fathers the love and support they need as they try to fulfill the many roles that we have come to expect from them.

To fathers like my own who believed their primary responsibility was to provide financial security, and fathers like my husband who have consciously tried to combine work and family activities, and fathers-to-be in the next generation who may find the best balance yet -- let's all join in saying: Happy Father's Day. And from Chelsea and me, Happy Father's Day, Mr. President.

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June 10, 1997

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TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

This week begins the holiday season at the White House, the fifth Bill and I have been privileged to celebrate in the "people's house." Christmas at the White House comes with many wonderful challenges -- from decorating dozens of trees to entertaining thousands of people to preparing for the season the summer before it happens.

Last June, for example, I had to decide on this year's theme. Because my childhood memories of Christmas are so happy, I wanted to recreate the holiday through the eyes of a child. After all, early memories of Christmas never seem to fade, and the entire season of hope and light is meant to honor the birth of a homeless child who became the Prince of Peace.

Every year, artists from around the country create ornaments for the official Christmas tree in the Blue Room. This year, glass artists, needlepointers and fashion designers were all invited to work around the theme of a child's Christmas -- and to focus particularly on the place that always seems to be an object of fascination for children: Santa's workshop.

In October, the ornaments started coming in. After Thanksgiving, volunteers arrived to work with the White House staff to make bows and wreaths and to find a place for each ornament on the 18-foot Fraser fir that reaches up to the Blue Room's ceiling.

Near the top of the tree, there's a needlepoint creation featuring Socks as a Jack-in-the-Box. It is just one of the hundreds of needlepoint works stitched by members of the National Needlework Association. There are colorful renditions of toys and animals. There's a version of Santa's workshop -- complete with miniature tools -- put together by 20 people from Pittsburgh. And there's an authentic-looking Big Mac, sesame seeds on top, dedicated to my husband (even though I can vouch for the fact that he has not eaten one in years).

The lights on the tree are reflected in the beautiful creations donated by glass artists who belong to the American Craft Council. One sent an igloo made from antique glass. Another created a regal sphere of metal and glass, dotted with dark-blue glass beads, in memory of Princess Diana. An artist from West Virginia made something she called "The Ornament of the Universe" -- an elegant globe with the constellations superimposed on it.

Members of the Council of Fashion Designers of America were invited to create their own tiny suits for Mr. and Mrs. Claus. The result was sequined Santa outfits that

would be right at home at the Academy Awards. One designer produced an ornament that consists of a red scarf wrapped around a happy-looking reindeer; a purse-maker made a red purse edged with white fur; a swimwear designer offered a bright-red Yuletide bikini.

What makes these ornaments especially wonderful is that each one is the work of an individual or a small group of people who spent hours -- even days -- forming a vision and then turning that vision into reality. The stories of the men and women who made the ornaments that grace our national tree are often as inspiring as the season itself.

One needlepoint artist from Maryland designed an ornament depicting the person who inspired her to pursue her craft: her grandfather, who was a tailor in Washington, D.C., at the turn of the century. Another honored her grandmother, who arrived in America from Italy in 1908, by creating a needlepoint portrait of a peasant woman holding a bouquet of flowers.

Instead of looking back to his childhood, a glass artist from New York state reached out to second-graders at his local elementary school to help him design his ornament. The children sent him cutouts of snowflakes and drawings of their vision of Santa's workshop. He created a beautiful glass piece, reminiscent of a snowflake, with images of the children's drawings embedded in the glass. The ornament arrived last month along with a big red scrapbook filled with photos of the students and their drawings.

Though it is not in the Blue Room, there's another holiday symbol that illuminates our hope for children. This year, to celebrate Hanukkah, there will be a special menorah in the West Wing. The menorah was sent to Bill by an Israeli man whose 18-year-old son was killed in Israel's 1973 war with Egypt. Because the young man was born on the last night of Hanukkah, the father decided he would honor his son's memory by making menorahs and "pour his grief into copper, bronze and white metal." Inscribed in Hebrew on the knotted arms of the menorah are the words of Isaiah urging us to beat swords into plowshares. The menorah commemorates both the memory of this man's son and the hope of peace for all children.

Christmas and Hanukkah represent different faiths but similar hopes. Not only do these celebrations ask us to see the world through a child's eyes, they also challenge us to shape a better world for those eyes to see.

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December 2, 1997

TALKING IT OVER

Y HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

I met the Cat in the Hat this week. On Monday, the Cat and I celebrated Dr. Seuss' birthday with children's author Rosemary Wells and some tiny Head Start students in District Heights, Md.

Dr. Seuss was a beloved author and illustrator who brought joy to and instilled a love of reading in generations of children and their parents. I can still recite from memory the lines of some favorite Dr. Seuss books that Bill and I read to Chelsea -- over and over again. Remember this? "The sun did not shine. It was too wet to play. So we sat in the house all that cold, cold, wet day." And what about "People are people no matter how small"? Here's my personal favorite: "You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose."

On March 2, the National Education Association organized "Read Across America" to honor Dr. Seuss and to spark a love of reading in a new generation of American children. All across the country, millions of teachers, parents and volunteers participated in events designed to encourage reading aloud to children.

We know that students who read for enjoyment outside of school do better in school. Unfortunately, we also know that the number of older children who read for pleasure outside of the classroom is gradually decreasing and that 40 percent of this country's 8-year-olds cannot read even at the basic level.

Last year, in an effort to reverse this trend, the President launched the America Reads Challenge to make sure that all children can read on their own by the end of the third grade. In response, tens of thousands of volunteer tutors are already at work giving our children the intensive reading help they need. More than 900 colleges are committed to granting work-study credit for tutoring children. And this year, 3,000 new AmeriCorps members and thousands of new senior volunteers will recruit more than 100,000 volunteer reading tutors for our children.

With the help of dedicated volunteers like these, we can teach our children to read. But learning to read must start even earlier -- as soon as a child is born.

Instinctively, we know that reading aloud strengthens the bond between a parent and child. Last April at the White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning, new scientific research proved our instincts correct.

Not only does reading aloud strengthen emotional bonds, it also helps a baby's brain develop and grow by stimulating the neural connections that are the basis for language and learning.

When I talk to young parents about the importance of reading and talking to their infants, many ask why they should be talking or reading to a child¹ who can't talk back.¹ Some parents worry that they're not good readers themselves. Some confide that they can't read at all.

It doesn't matter.

Reading and talking are as important to children's brains as car seats and immunizations are to their health. Parents who can't read or don't think they're good readers should just hold open a book, point to the pictures and make up a story.

Because new parents are generally inclined to follow the advice of their pediatricians, last January, I issued a challenge to hospitals, pediatricians, health centers, booksellers, publishers, libraries and others to make sure that every child who sees a doctor has access to books. As a result, several groups joined forces to launch the Prescription for Reading Partnership.

During the past year, the Prescription for Reading Partnership has distributed 2 million books to over a million children through hospitals, pediatrician's offices and health centers around the country.

One of the Partnership's most successful endeavors has been the Read to Your Bunny Campaign. Supported by the American Booksellers Association, the campaign contacted doctors and asked them to give reading "prescriptions" to their young patients. The prescriptions could be redeemed at over 1,500 participating bookstores for copies of Rosemary Wells' new book "Read to Your Bunny." I'm pleased to report that over 200,000 prescriptions have been filled, placing copies of this delightful poem in the hands of children all over the country.

The Partnership can help put a book in a child's hand, but it's you -- the parents and grandparents, older sisters and brothers, aunts and uncles, friends and neighbors -- who must take the next step. It takes only 20 minutes a day.

One of my favorite Dr. Seuss books is "Oh, the Places You'll Go!" Let me share the first lines with you:

Congratulations!

Today is your day.

You're off to Great Places!

You're off and away!

Celebrate reading with your child every day, and you'll both be off to Great Places, too.

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March 3, 1998

TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would have turned 69 this week. On Dr. King's birthday, in a fitting tribute to his memory, the President will award the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, to 15 distinguished Americans.

It was Dr. King who told us, " ... everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve." The 15 honored this week have lived lives of service and greatness as civil rights, business, government and military leaders, philanthropists and environmentalists:

Civil rights leader Arnie Aronson joined Dr. King as one of the 10 leaders of the 1963 March on Washington. Philanthropist Brooke Astor has contributed to the revitalization of the New York Public Library for decades. And Harvard professor Robert Coles has been a leader in the call to citizen service.

Justin Dart is considered the father of the historic Americans With Disabilities Act, James Farmer is one of our nation's most influential civil rights leaders, and Frances Hesselbein's leadership from 1976 to 1990 transformed the Girl Scouts of America.

The efforts of Fred Korematsu during World War II served as the underpinning of the redress movement for Japanese Americans. Ambassador Sol Linowitz and philanthropist David Rockefeller co-founded the International Executive Service Corps, a volunteer program that sends American executives to provide managerial and technical expertise to developing countries.

Wilma Mankiller was the first elected female leader of a major Indian tribe, the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. The work of environmental activist Mardy Murie led to the passage of the Alaskan Lands Act. And Mario Obledo has been at the forefront of the struggle to ensure the civil rights of America's Hispanic citizens.

Elliot Richardson has served his government with distinction through some of its most difficult times, Al Shanker, until his death last year, served as President of the American Federation of Teachers, and as Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Elmo Zumwalt issued tough directives to end discrimination in the Navy.

Each of these has lived a life in the tradition of Dr. King's call to service. And what about the rest of us? I don't want you to be intimidated by these examples but rather inspired. We all have gifts to share in service.

As we remember Dr. King this week and on his holiday Monday, I will recall the words of his widow, Coretta Scott King: "The greatest birthday gift my husband could receive is if people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds celebrated the holiday by

performing individual acts of kindness through service to others. Remember, it's not a day off -- it's a day on!"

Four years ago, the President signed legislation transforming the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday into a national day of service. On Monday, Americans from Cape Cod to Honolulu will fan out into their communities to clean, plant, spruce up, collect and distribute food and clothing to the needy. They'll join thousands of AmeriCorps volunteers who are already working and challenging others to volunteer in '98.

My husband and I plan to participate in two AmeriCorps-sponsored service projects here in Washington. Bill will take up his brush and join students and volunteers painting 25 classrooms at Cardozo High School. Along with 250 elementary school-age children, I'll visit the new MCI Center downtown for a Literacy Fair. We'll be reading, assembling bookshelves, signing the children up for library cards and remembering Dr. King.

The President has returned national service to the national agenda. In 1993, he created the Corporation for National Service. First under the leadership of Eli Segal and now former Sen. Harris Wofford, the Corporation involves more than 1.2 million citizens of all ages and backgrounds in service. In October, Congress increased funding to these programs by \$68 million. And in November, the President proposed strengthening and extending these programs for five years.

Last April, at the Summit for America's Future, my husband, joined by former Presidents Bush, Carter and Ford, Mrs. Reagan and Gen. Colin Powell, called for all young Americans to have the opportunity to give back to their communities through their own service. Later this year, the President will bestow the first Student Service Awards on students who perform more than 100 hours of service annually. By the year 2000, we hope to have 2 million young people winning this award each year. It's never too early to get the service habit.

Earlier this month, in his first radio address of the new year, my husband called for an increase in the size of the Peace Corps from 6,500 to 10,000 volunteers. President John F. Kennedy created the Peace Corps in 1961 following one of the most dramatic and memorable calls to service in this country's history: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

As we approach Dr. King's holiday, a national day of service, let us not only honor the 15 men and women who will receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom, but let us also heed Dr. King's call to service in our own lives.

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January 13, 1998

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

My first memory of New Year's Eve goes back to when I was around 6. My little brother and I were sitting in our kitchen eating a favorite dinner, poached eggs on corned beef hash. My mother came in, all dressed up to go out, and reminded us each to put one of our shoes outside our bedroom door before going to bed. That was so "Billy-Be-Good" could leave us a little present, like a toy car or a yo-yo, as encouragement to behave ourselves during the next year.

My mother doesn't know where she first heard about Billy-Be-Good, but she made him part of our family's New Year's tradition -- a tradition that my husband and I carried on when Chelsea was little.

Our baby sitter that night was our grandfather, Hugh S. Rodham. He asked my mother if we could stay up until midnight to celebrate. She reluctantly agreed, mostly I think, because she never thought we'd last. Once she gave her permission though, we were determined, and our grandfather became our loyal conspirator.

I loved my grandfather for many reasons -- his infinite reserve of patience while reading us books or playing endless card games; his recipe for cocoa with honey that tasted better than any other drink; the way he defended us from our parents' reprimands -- whether we deserved it or not.

I especially loved to hear him talk about his childhood. Grandpa came from England to Scranton, Pennsylvania when he was about 4 years old with his parents and 10 brothers and sisters. When he was 11, he began working at the Scranton Lace Works and retired after 50 years. He used some funny expressions, such as, "I daren't do that," which no one else I knew said.

He also maintained old-fashioned customs, like dressing up for dinner every night in a suit, complete with watch chain. On that long-ago New Year's Eve, dressed in his suit, he told us how as a little boy he celebrated New Year's Eve by going outside at midnight and making noise by banging on pots and pans. He promised that if we stayed awake, we would do that together.

Well, to a 6-year-old who had never deliberately stayed up that late, his promise held out the prospect of unimagined adventure. I could hardly believe my good fortune and anxiously waited for the moment to arrive.

We played cards, mostly War, for my brother's sake. Then we watched our small-screen black-and-white television set. Finally, the countdown started, and we ran to the kitchen, grabbed our culinary noisemakers, put on our coats and rushed outside. The night was cold and clear and no one else was around. We were certainly the only people in our suburb banging on pots and pans to start the New Year.

Since then, I've celebrated New Year's Eve in many different ways and in many different settings. Before I was married, I worried with my girlfriends about who would ask me out, what I'd wear and where we'd be when the clock struck 12:00. Some memories are better than others!

Bill and I have now spent 26 New Year's Eves together. For the last 15, we've been surrounded by friends at Renaissance Weekend in Hilton Head S.C.

Now, as the old year ends and the new one begins, we don't go outside and bang on pots and pans, but I still get the same feeling I had all those years ago, standing in front of my house with my brother and grandfather. And I even remember Billy-Be-Good and what he stands for, as I make my New Year's resolutions.

I have friends who dread the endings and beginnings represented by the new year -- who never want to go out on New Year's Eve. I've always seen change as energizing -- something to be embraced and relished. Something is ending, but a new time is being created, and I can be part of it.

That's why I've always loved New Year's Eve and wish my grandfather were still here so I could thank him for starting me off with a sense of anticipation and excitement about what was to come. Who knows, maybe this year I'll go outside and bang on some pots and pans.

Happy New Year, everybody.

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December 30, 1997

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

As with most American families, the Christmas celebration in the Clinton household doesn't really begin until every member of the family arrives.

This year, we'll have my mother and our brothers with their wives and children. We'll marvel over how the nephews have grown and trade stories about everything that's happened since we were last together.

Bill, Chelsea and I will tell our Christmas stories about the experiences we just had in Bosnia. What we saw there makes us grateful for the simple pleasures we enjoy daily.

For four years, the people of Bosnia fought a bloody civil war, grounded in ethnic hatred and violence, which displaced 2 million people from their homes.

We traveled to Bosnia for two reasons. First, we wanted to visit and thank the brave men and women of the United States armed forces stationed there and separated from their families at Christmastime. Second, we wanted to meet the Bosnian people and their leaders to encourage them to accelerate their efforts to implement the Dayton Peace Accords.

The scars of war are still evident on the landscape. Buildings are still without roofs. Painted red roses -- marking the spots where innocent civilians were gunned down by snipers -- bear grim witness to the carnage.

But everywhere we looked, there was also evidence of rebuilding: the new Holiday Inn on the road from the airport, gleaming in its fresh coat of yellow paint; electricity functioning again; glass instead of plastic sheeting in the windows; stores and cafes full of goods and lively conversation; children on the streets in safety.

More important even than the physical restoration is the sense of calm that has returned. In Sarajevo, little more than two years ago, men, women and children ran the gauntlet of snipers and shells in a desperate search for water. Now, they walk in security to school and work.

Chelsea and I spent about an hour and a half with representatives of several non-governmental organizations, some of whom I had met when I visited Tuzla in the spring of 1996. In the case of two women in particular, I was struck by the dramatic difference in their physical appearance. Instead of being marked by fear and anger, their faces radiated hope and resolve.

Bill, Chelsea and I were lucky enough to spend some time with about 10 young people in a cafe in Sarajevo. They told us they want what young people everywhere want -- a chance -- a chance to finish their education, to get on with their professional and personal lives, to see their government function again and to be part of their country's fate.

To a person, everyone we spoke with agreed none of this would have been possible without the U.S. military. As we walked down the streets, the crowds swelled behind the barricades, straining to see the President because they are so grateful for what the United States has done.

But much remains to be done, mostly by the Bosnians themselves, to rebuild their country economically and politically. And our presence is still needed for a while longer.

The job we have asked our young soldiers to perform is not easy -- especially during the holidays. The weather is cold and dreary. There are lots of jokes about the food.

Although I'd be the last to stereotype our men and women in uniform, their tents are as different as night and day. The women's tents are cheerier, with more amenities and touches of home. Some even had Christmas trees.

Many of our soldiers are sharing the spirit of Christmas with Bosnia's youngest victims by collecting and distributing toys and school supplies. Despite being far from home at the holidays, our soldiers believe in what they're doing. Outside of the cafe in Sarajevo, three American soldiers from Richmond, Va., told us, "We're really proud to be here because we know we're doing a good thing."

Comments like this make me proud to be an American.

The message these young men and women are sending to the people of Bosnia is: The world cares about you and about peace. The world is going to stick with you through this effort. But you have to lay down your hatred, let the scars of war heal and get on with building your common future.

As we celebrate the holidays, I hope you'll take a moment to say a special prayer for all the American servicemen and women stationed in Bosnia and everywhere else around the world. They are living the true spirit of Christmas, bringing peace on earth, goodwill to all people. I send them and you my best wishes for a very merry Christmas -- and a commitment to peace the whole year long.

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December 23, 1997

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

This week begins the holiday season at the White House, the fifth Bill and I have been privileged to celebrate in the "people's house." Christmas at the White House comes with many wonderful challenges -- from decorating dozens of trees to entertaining thousands of people to preparing for the season the summer before it happens.

Last June, for example, I had to decide on this year's theme. Because my childhood memories of Christmas are so happy, I wanted to recreate the holiday through the eyes of a child. After all, early memories of Christmas never seem to fade, and the entire season of hope and light is meant to honor the birth of a homeless child who became the Prince of Peace.

Every year, artists from around the country create ornaments for the official Christmas tree in the Blue Room. This year, glass artists, needlepointers and fashion designers were all invited to work around the theme of a child's Christmas -- and to focus particularly on the place that always seems to be an object of fascination for children: Santa's workshop.

In October, the ornaments started coming in. After Thanksgiving, volunteers arrived to work with the White House staff to make bows and wreaths and to find a place for each ornament on the 18-foot North Carolina Fraser fir that reaches up to the Blue Room's ceiling.

Near the top of the tree, there's a needlepoint creation featuring Socks as a jack-in-the-box. It is just one of the hundreds of needlepoint works stitched by members of the National Needlework Association. There are colorful renditions of toys and animals. There's a version of Santa's workshop -- complete with miniature tools -- put together by 20 people from Pittsburgh. And there's an authentic-looking Big Mac, sesame seeds on top, dedicated to my husband (even though I can vouch for the fact that he has not eaten one in years).

The lights on the tree are reflected in the beautiful creations donated by glass artists who belong to the American Craft Council. One sent an igloo made from antique glass. Another created a regal sphere of metal and glass, dotted with dark-blue glass beads, in memory of Princess Diana. An artist from West Virginia made something she called "The Ornament of the Universe" -- an elegant globe with the constellations superimposed on it.

Members of the Council of Fashion Designers of America were invited to create their own tiny suits for Mr. and Mrs. Claus. The result was sequined Santa outfits that

would be right at home at the Academy Awards. One designer produced an ornament that consists of a red scarf wrapped around a happy-looking reindeer; a purse-maker made a red purse edged with white fur; a swimwear designer offered a bright-red Yuletide bikini.

What makes these ornaments especially wonderful is that each one is the work of an individual or a small group of people who spent days -- even weeks -- forming a vision and then turning that vision into reality. The stories of the men and women who made the ornaments that grace our national tree are often as inspiring as the season itself.

One needlepoint artist from Maryland designed an ornament depicting the person who inspired her to pursue her craft: her grandfather, who was a tailor in Washington, D.C., at the turn of the century. Another honored her grandmother, who arrived in America from Italy in 1908, by creating a needlepoint portrait of a peasant woman holding a bouquet of flowers.

Instead of looking back to his childhood, a glass artist from New York state reached out to second-graders at his local elementary school to help him design his ornament. The children sent him cutouts of snowflakes and drawings of their vision of Santa's workshop. He created a striking glass piece, reminiscent of a snowflake, with images of the children's drawings embedded in the glass. The ornament arrived last month along with a big red scrapbook filled with photos of the students and their drawings.

Though it is not in the Blue Room, there's another holiday symbol that illuminates our hope for children. This year, to celebrate Hanukkah, there will be a special menorah in the West Wing. The menorah was sent to Bill by an Israeli man whose 18-year-old son was killed in Israel's 1973 war with Egypt. Because the young man was born on the last night of Hanukkah, the father decided he would honor his son's memory by making menorahs, pouring "his grief into copper, bronze and white metal." Inscribed in Hebrew on the knotted arms of the menorah are the words of Isaiah urging us to beat swords into plowshares. The menorah commemorates both the memory of this man's son and the hope of peace for all children.

Christmas and Hanukkah represent different faiths but similar hopes. I hope this year's holiday decorations at the White House reflect this. Not only do these celebrations ask us to see the world through a child's eyes, they also challenge us to shape a better world for those eyes to see.

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December 2, 1997

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thanksgiving is a uniquely American holiday. When we give thanks this week, most of us will focus our gratitude on the blessings God has bestowed on our families, friends and nation. But this Thanksgiving, I will also be grateful for something else -- for the blessings that are taking place around the world.

Nowhere are these blessings clearer than in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Russia and Ukraine -- countries of the former Soviet Union I was privileged to visit earlier this month. The President and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright asked me to take this trip to see firsthand the democratic and economic progress these countries are making in their historic transition from communism to freedom. While the task remains daunting, their achievements in the six short years since communism's collapse left me filled with hope for the future.

Imagine for a moment that you lived in a place where you could not speak your own language, practice your own religion or choose your own leaders. Imagine you were told what to read, what to say and what to think. And imagine that you could not start a business, own a home, travel freely or shape your own destiny. That was what life was like in these countries not so long ago.

As hard as it is for an American to imagine living under the shadow of the Iron Curtain, it may be even harder to think about how these countries will reckon with the challenges and opportunities freedom poses: to transform state-controlled economies into free-market ones; to move from totalitarian societies into democracies; to create functioning civil societies out of disparate cultural, ethnic and religious groups.

And yet, that is exactly what these people are doing. Reforms are taking place at all levels of society, but I was particularly impressed by what young people, women and non-governmental organizations are doing to build democracy.

Despite crumbling schools and rising tuition, the students I talked with on my trip were some of the brightest and most energetic I've ever met. Speaking in excellent English and with self-confidence, they were hungry for information about America and how best to prepare for their future. They seemed to understand that an educational environment that encourages critical thinking and initiative was vital not only to their future but to the future of their countries as well.

In Kyrgyzstan, I sat with six women in a traditional Central Asian tent, or yurt. Over the last six years, the transition to independence has created new obstacles for women: Too often, they are the first to lose their jobs and the last to get new ones. But these

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women did not despair. Under the sponsorship of a microcredit organization, they received small loans that enabled them to buy food, spices and other goods to sell at market. A 20-year-old student explained she was earning money to pay her way through college; a single mother of six recounted how she had been able to buy her own house.

Many of the women and young people I met have been able to weather the challenges of change because of the growing strength of non-governmental organizations. We in America know the importance of the private sector in sustaining democracy, and that lesson is being learned in these newly independent nations as well. I met with non-governmental organizations that are cleaning up the environment, expanding health care, strengthening educational opportunities and supporting a free press and an independent judiciary.

I also visited renewed religious communities, which are playing a central role in nurturing civil society. In L'viv, Ukraine, I went to St. George's Cathedral and the Gilad Synagogue. Not only are these Catholic and Jewish congregations openly practicing their faiths -- something that was prohibited under communism -- they are also reaching out to strengthen their communities. At St. George's, there's a program to care for children with disabilities. At the synagogue, there is a new Jewish school.

On my trip, I saw how the newly free people of the former Soviet Union are doing the hard work of building a new architecture of democracy. I saw, too, how U.S. aid and investment are helping to sustain their effort. Direct support from the United States has opened up health clinics and provided loans to start small businesses. Many of the students I met had come to the United States on exchange programs. Scientists I spoke with at one of Russia's great science academies in Siberia were learning, with the help of U.S. programs, to adapt their highly sophisticated defense-industry skills to the civilian marketplace. Through Operation Provide Hope, American businesses and voluntary organizations have donated pharmaceutical and medical supplies for hospitals and clothing for children.

After seven decades of communist oppression, the countries I traveled to this month are free and on their way to becoming full democracies. America is working with them in partnership as they make this unprecedented transformation -- one that will lead to a safer, more prosperous, more peaceful and more democratic world. On any Thanksgiving, that's something to be grateful for.

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microcredit

Divider Title: _____

**TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

The pregnant woman wore an alpaca shawl over her blouse and full skirt, the traditional Indian dress in Bolivia. She looked about 35 and was attending a prenatal class at a health clinic I visited this week in the Bolivian capital, La Paz. She was nursing a 3-month-old baby and expecting her eighth child, who she hoped would be her last.

I was in Bolivia to attend the Sixth Conference of Wives of Heads of State and Government of the Americas. Women from countries throughout the Western Hemisphere got together to talk about strategies to eliminate measles, promote education reform and improve maternal health in our region.

Bolivia, a country of majestic beauty in the heart of South America, was an auspicious location for such a discussion. More women die in Bolivia during pregnancy and childbirth than in any other country in South America. But in the face of this human tragedy, Bolivia has become a model of how one nation can respond to the crisis of maternal mortality by galvanizing the government, non-governmental organizations and the medical establishment to launch a nationwide family-planning campaign.

In a country where half of all expecting mothers go through pregnancy and childbirth alone -- without medical attention of any kind -- Bolivia's aggressive effort to educate women about their own health and their options for childbearing is resulting in safer pregnancies, stronger families and fewer abortions. Without access to family planning, women in Bolivia -- and in many developing nations -- often turn in desperation to illegal, unsafe abortions that can end in death or serious injury. Deaths from abortion complications account for half of all maternal deaths in Bolivia.

As Bolivia has ably demonstrated, voluntary family planning teaches women about the benefits of spacing children several years apart, breast-feeding, good nutrition, prenatal and postpartum visits and safe deliveries. It also decreases the number of abortions.

Bolivia's success at preventing mothers from dying and lowering abortion rates has been possible, in part, because of help from the United States and other countries. The U.S. Agency for International Development has provided financial and technical assistance to help Bolivia establish a network of primary health care clinics.

The clinic I visited in La Paz is one that the United States helped start. Called PROSALUD (which, loosely translated, means "for the good of health" in Spanish), the clinic has doctors and nurses who offer round-the-clock prenatal, obstetric and pediatric services, as well as counseling about family planning in a poor neighborhood of 15,000 people. In the first six months of this year, the clinic staff provided 2,200 medical consultations, delivered 200 babies, registered 700 new family-planning users and immunized 2,500 children.

There are obvious benefits of such a program to Bolivian women, children and families, but health and family-planning services also help alleviate poverty and contribute to the economic stability of a democratic ally in our hemisphere. Yet opponents of foreign assistance and particularly of family planning in Congress are trying to eviscerate U.S. funding for programs like the one I saw at PROSALUD. Some argue that the United States has no national interest in the health and well-being of other countries' citizens. Others mistakenly suggest that family planning is being used to encourage -- rather than decrease -- abortions. In fact, our government has prohibited funding of any overseas project that promotes abortion since 1973.

Ignoring this, Congress last year approved draconian cuts in family-planning assistance amounting to a 35 percent reduction in funds. To add insult to injury, the cuts were accompanied by new restrictions that delayed delivery of aid for the first nine months of the fiscal year.

Similar harsh cuts and delays are included in the current budget, meaning that many organizations could again be denied assistance for months and then receive it only in monthly installments.

According to a recent analysis by five population organizations, the funding cuts alone will result in an increase of 1.6 million abortions, more than 8,000 maternal deaths, and 134,000 infant deaths in developing countries.

Family-planning campaigns at work in Bolivia and elsewhere represent sensible, cost-effective and long-term strategies for improving women's health, strengthening families and lowering the rate of abortion. My husband's administration remains committed to the continuation of these investments. And I will do everything I can to ensure that U.S. support for these initiatives continues. If you share my concern, I hope you will add your voice to mine and give all women everywhere the same opportunities for their lives we take for granted in ours.

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December 3, 1996

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A few years ago, I met a group of extraordinary women. They were all entrepreneurs in Denver. One of them ran a desktop publishing business, another owned a bakery, and a third was in the computer business. Each of these women had pulled herself out of poverty or off welfare.

For years, they were among the thousands of people in this country who can only dream of getting a bank loan to start a small business. The reality is that "too many great ideas die in the parking lots of banks," one woman told me.

But given the opportunity -- and a small cash loan -- these women were able to open businesses that helped them become self-sufficient and move off welfare and into the economic mainstream.

This concept of extending modest business loans to low-income citizens who are willing to work hard -- but have little or no collateral -- is called microcredit. And though it's called "micro," microcredit is really a big idea. Modest loans can transform lives, reclaim cities and rural areas from decay, and reduce the number of people living in poverty.

Just ask Connie Evans. Evans is president of the Women's Self-Employment Project, an organization that has provided business training, technical assistance, loans and moral support to thousands of women in Chicago. As a former community counselor in a public housing development, Evans met many women who needed a little jump start for their ideas. "It was clear that what they needed wasn't counseling but money," she said.

For more than a decade, Evans has watched low-income women build successful businesses and self-esteem with modest loans and the encouragement of other women. The Women's Self-Employment Project's success can be measured in countless ways -- in day-care centers, in catering businesses, in hair salons and in the hopeful eyes of children who have watched their parents work hard and succeed.

"I like being in control of my own destiny, my own fate," said Arinez Gilyard, a mother of three who started an in-home day-care center with business training and a \$200 loan from the Women's Self-Employment Project in Chicago. "I believe I will be self-employed the rest of my working life."

Why does microcredit work? Because it's a concept that provides opportunity, demands responsibility and strengthens communities. Many of the loan programs are built around peer-support networks. Borrowers become members of groups that meet regularly to discuss their challenges and seek and offer advice. The members also make sure that the loans are repaid on time. No new loans can be made unless all group members have kept up with their payments. As a result, most microcredit organizations can boast loan repayment rates of more than 90 percent -- a rate that is the envy of many commercial banks.

I've seen firsthand how providing credit to people on the margins of society can reap economic and social benefits. I have met with women worldwide who have told me how their lives changed from destitution to inspiration because community banks gave them the opportunity to start small businesses. These women live in the most remote parts of India, in the poorest barrios of South America and in places that have weathered civil wars and earthquakes. They now have the tools to secure better livings for their families and, in turn, strengthen their countries' economies.

While microcredit was conceived in the developing world, it can be an important "tool of opportunity" for many Americans -- for farmers whose livelihoods have been undermined by bad luck or bad weather, inner-city parents who are struggling to balance a job on the night shift with family responsibilities and welfare mothers eager to move off the public dole into work.

Last week, the President and Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin presented the first Presidential Awards for Excellence in Microenterprise Development to organizations that have pioneered efforts to extend credit and economic opportunity to needy yet promising entrepreneurs. The Small Business Administration has awarded \$70 million in grants to non-profit microlending organizations. The President announced last week that he is requesting a \$1 billion increase over the next five years for community banking.

All of these efforts will be crucial to making sure no one is left behind in the new millennium. In an era of greater competition and scarcer resources -- an era when the gap between rich and poor is widening in many parts of the world -- microcredit can help our poorest citizens take control of their lives and their futures, and ultimately make the world a better place for us all.

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February 4, 1997

TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bill and I spent a week in Mexico for our honeymoon. Like most American tourists, we reveled in Mexico's rich history, lively culture, warm people and great food. (And like many Mexicans, we also honeymooned with our parents.)

We were particularly excited about returning to Mexico last week, this time for an official state visit that also took us to summits of Central American leaders in Costa Rica and Caribbean leaders in Barbados. Each stop reminded us how much this vast region has changed in the last two decades and how its future is inextricably tied to our own.

We are connected to our Latin American neighbors by both geography and history: The United States now claims the fifth largest Hispanic population in the world. But we are also bound together by technology, trade and the forces of global economic integration. And we share many of the same concerns, from drugs, crime and environmental decay to strengthening democracy throughout the region.

For decades, Central America was torn apart by civil wars, bloody coups, repression and poverty. With the historic signing of the peace accords in Guatemala in December 1996, the region is finally free of war and conflict. Democracy now exists in every country in Central America. Political and economic reforms are leading to new hope for lasting peace and increasing prosperity from the Pacific Ocean to the Caribbean.

From the moment I landed in Merida on Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula to the day we left Bridgetown, Barbados, eight days later, I could see that many men and women are responsible for brightening the prospects for our hemisphere's future. The people of Merida welcomed me with a program of music and folkloric dance staged before one of the oldest churches in Mexico. Choruses sang in Spanish and Mayan, the language of the ancient culture that produced great pyramids like those I visited the next day at Uxmal.

I met with several hundred women from across the country, many direct descendants of the Mayans, Aztecs and other Indigenous people of MesoAmerica. Thanks to small loans they have received through microcredit projects, they have been able to earn a living for themselves and their families selling goods as varied as ceramics, honey, coffee, hammocks and clothing.

These women, who might otherwise have been left on the outskirts of opportunity, have discovered their potential to take control of their lives and their futures, not through a handout but through their own hard work. At the same time, they are helping preserve their indigenous heritage, giving people the world over a chance to enjoy the products they create and becoming better integrated into the society and economy of Mexico.

I saw the same tremendous entrepreneurial spirit in Costa Rica at a forum sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development and the InterAmerican Development Bank. One woman had started a thriving business in rare orchids; another makes clothing for children; and one man described how he and his father used small loans to become organic farmers.

Most memorable, however, was an Indian woman from Guatemala who proudly told a large crowd that she had started out selling mangoes on the street when she was 12. With microloans, she expanded her line of goods and now employs others. Her profits enabled her to send her children to school, including a son to the University of North Carolina.

Economic participation, which microenterprise ensures for countless poor men and women around the world, is a human right essential to the success of any democracy. But so too are all human rights, which have often been violated in Latin America, sometimes with the encouragement or indifference of my own country. To highlight the U.S. commitment to human rights, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and I visited the Institute for Human Rights in Costa Rica, which has dedicated itself to ensuring political and legal rights.

Throughout the region, men and women have risked -- and lost -- their lives to fight for freedom and social justice. Fortunately, their work and sacrifice contributed to Central America's movement away from the repressive regimes and human rights abuses of years past. Still, the transition to democracy remains incomplete -- particularly when it comes to the rights of women. Seated around a simple table at the institute, women from Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador reported about the obstacles they face, ranging from violence in and out of their homes to a lack of laws protecting them.

From Central America, we traveled to the Caribbean, a region from which many Americans trace their roots -- and to which many Americans return for vacations. Countries there have been particularly hard hit by changes in the global economy. At a regional microenterprise forum, I announced a grant that, as part of the President's initiative to help the region, will expand Caribbean microcredit projects.

Luckily, the trip was not all business and meetings. Bill and I were able to spend one wonderful day relaxing on Barbados, which reminded us of our honeymoon. We slept, read, sunned and swam. He graduated from crutches to cane. And we came back refreshed and more convinced of the importance of strengthening our ties with our friends and neighbors in this hemisphere.

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TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

When I first arrived in Arkansas in 1974, I didn't know what to expect.

My impressions of the state had been formed by what I had seen on television nearly 20 years before -- in the autumn of 1957.

That year, nine black teenagers in Little Rock tried to go to school but were turned away by an angry white mob that threatened, hit, kicked and spat at them.

The reason? They wanted to go to the same school, take the same classes, learn from the same teachers and enjoy the same opportunities as white children.

The Supreme Court had declared an end to segregated schools in America with its landmark 1954 decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education*. Yet, three years after the ruling, most public school systems in Arkansas and throughout the South continued to keep black and white children apart. When a federal judge ordered the integration of Central High, nine black students stood up to make justice real. They were blocked not only by belligerent crowds but also by the Arkansas National Guard, which was called in by Gov. Orval Faubus to keep them out of the classroom.

President Eisenhower had to bring in soldiers from the 101st Airborne to enforce the court-ordered integration. Protected by troops with bayonets, these teenagers -- the Little Rock Nine -- walked through the doors of Central High.

When I first walked through the doors of Central High in 1977, things had changed. Black and white students sat next to each other in classrooms. They played on the same teams. They appeared in the same school plays.

By 1987, the student body was nearly half black. In fact, when the Little Rock Nine returned to Central for the 30th anniversary of the crisis that same year, they were met at the school's door by the president of the student body. And he was black.

This week, Bill and I will go back to Little Rock to mark the 40th anniversary of Central's integration. When Bill speaks from the front steps of the imposing brown-brick building, he will be celebrating the progress we have made, but he will also talk about what more we must do.

While many of the formal barriers to equality have come down, many informal ones remain -- in the workplace, in the schoolhouse, in the courts. Perhaps the most formidable of these, however, is the one that exists in our hearts. Although we are free to walk together, many Americans of all races choose to go their own way. Many even question the value of integration.

It is for this reason that my husband launched his race initiative last spring. He asked all Americans to join him in an effort to promote an honest dialogue about our history and our future as a multiracial society. This is an important discussion for all Americans but especially for our children. If our children learn early to respect people regardless of their differences, then they will keep that lesson for life.

That's what happened with Bill. He was 11 and attending a segregated school in Hot Springs when the Central High crisis erupted. But unlike many of his friends, he was a fierce defender of integration. As a young boy in Hope, Bill had spent a lot of time in his grandfather's store, watching the older man treat everyone -- black and white -- with equal dignity and respect. Bill learned by example that segregation and prejudice were wrong.

I learned another way. Growing up in an all-white suburb in Chicago, I was exposed to children of different races and backgrounds through my church. Our youth minister created opportunities for us to go into Chicago together to worship with black and Hispanic youngsters. We would discuss civil rights and other controversial issues, and in the process, we opened each other's eyes and tested our own assumptions and biases.

In the beautiful memoir "Warriors Don't Cry," Melba Pattillo Beals describes her experience as one of the Little Rock Nine. During her year at Central High, acid was thrown in her eyes, students tried to set her on fire in a bathroom stall, and her phone rang nightly with death threats. Yet she never fell prey to racism or hatred. She survived the year with courage and kindness because of the loving example set by her mother and grandmother.

Of course, it can work the other way around. Children can be taught prejudice. When we hear the story of how a group of angry mothers chased Melba down and tried to attack her, we can see why their children believed it was acceptable to terrorize her, too.

Perhaps one measure of how far we've come is that most of those children's children think a little differently. This should give us confidence that we can do even better. Forty years ago, the Little Rock Nine carried a tremendous burden. On this anniversary, and in their honor, let each of us renew our commitment and help shoulder the load.

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September 23, 1997

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The evening before the President was to sign the historic balanced budget agreement, there was a discussion at the White House about who would attend the South Lawn ceremony. With members of Congress and other dignitaries set to come, space would be tight.

There was concern that there might not be room for the interns -- the young people who spend the summer as volunteers at the White House. Someone pointed out that the interns were the most important guests of all. They had to be invited for the simple reason that the balanced budget was for them and for the entire generation that will lead our nation into the 21st century. Extra chairs were brought in. And as I looked out over the crowd at the signing, it gave me real joy to see their young faces.

The balanced budget the President signed is historic. There has never been a national budget that has done more to support America's parents in the hard work of raising their children and sending them to college. The budget meets this responsibility in three crucial ways.

First, it is good for our economy, and a strong economy is good for our families. Since my husband came to office, the federal deficit has been reduced by more than 80 percent. That, in turn, has sparked the prosperity we enjoy today. By finishing the work of balancing the budget, we will continue to keep interest rates down, investment up and our economy on track.

What's more, by putting our fiscal house in order, we will see to it that when it is our children's turn to lead America, they will have the freedom to invest in their national priorities. They won't have to expend resources paying off reckless spending run up by previous generations. Children should not be responsible for their parents' bills. This budget sees to it that they won't be.

Second, this balanced budget makes it easier for families to raise their children. Roughly 27 million families that earn less than \$110,000 and have children under the age of 17 will be eligible for a \$500-per-child tax credit. For hard-working parents -- from firefighters and nurses to police officers and teachers -- that could mean extra money for a mortgage, school supplies or repairs on a car that doesn't act quite as reliably as it used to.

One of the biggest concerns parents have is health care. I've been told by countless parents that their main worry is whether they will be able to afford medical

attention for a sick child. This balanced budget will help extend health insurance coverage to up to 5 million children -- for everything from regular checkups to antibiotics to major surgery. Our \$24 billion investment -- paid for in part by a 15-cents-a-pack tax on cigarettes -- marks the largest expansion of children's health coverage since the passage of Medicaid in 1965.

Another big concern families have is education. Parents wonder if their children are learning what they need to know; they worry about how they will pay for a child's college tuition.

This landmark agreement will help. Now, parents will get added support sending their children to college, with \$35 billion in tax relief to help pay for education and training. That includes a \$1,500 HOPE Scholarship for the first two years of college as well as a 20 percent tuition tax credit for the last two years of college and for education throughout a lifetime.

This balanced budget also contains the most significant increase in education funding in more than 30 years. It will expand Head Start and fund the President's literacy initiative for children.

Combined with other reforms that will make it easier for families to buy and sell a home or to save money in tax-free accounts for education, these tax credits and initiatives will lighten the heavy load America's parents are carrying.

Third, this balanced budget helps families by supporting those sectors of society that support us all. Families can't go it alone. It takes a village. And this budget strengthens the village in important ways.

The budget agreement will help to make our neighborhoods safe by continuing the President's effort to put 100,000 community police officers on the streets. Public schools that are falling down will be rebuilt. By tripling the number of empowerment zones across the country, this budget will bring new hope to families who live in hard-pressed inner cities and rural areas. The budget also includes funds to clean up toxic waste sites and to preserve the National Parks that millions of families visit on vacation.

This balanced budget is about more than dollars and cents; it is a reflection of who we are as a people. The bipartisan agreement shows that our leaders can come together across party lines to do the right thing for America. It shows that we will support our parents and families as we prepare for the 21st century. It shows, truly, that we can put our values into action.

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August 5, 1997

TALKING IT OVER**BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON****RELEASE: WEEKEND, SEPTEMBER 2-3, 1995**

As you read this column, I am traveling to Beijing for the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women.

The United States is sending a delegation of 45 men and women. I am the honorary co-chair, and I know many of our members personally. One is a former Republican governor of New Jersey. Another is an Ursuline nun. There is a nurse, a law professor and the editor in chief of Ladies Home Journal. Among the group are mothers, fathers, Democrats, Republicans, liberals and conservatives.

What unites this group and thousands of others travelling to Beijing is a desire to focus world attention on issues that matter most to women, children and families: access to health care, education, jobs and credit, and the chance to enjoy basic legal and human rights and participate fully in the political life of one's country.

Our ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright, is the head of our delegation. A distinguished scholar, public servant and mother of three daughters, she knows more than most about the meaning of freedom and democracy. She and her family were forced to flee both Hitler and Stalin.

Tom Kean, the president of Drew University, is a delegation vice chair. I first met him when he was governor of New Jersey and my husband was governor of Arkansas. Although he is a Republican and my husband is a Democrat, they joined forces to improve education for America's children.

The women's conference is about making the world a better place by helping women live up to their God-given potential at home, in school, on the job, in their communities and as mothers, wives, learners, workers and citizens.

It is also a celebration of families, the bedrock of any society.

Families are undermined when women and children lack the opportunities they need to thrive. In some places around the world, for example, girls are still valued so little that they are left to die at birth, denied health care and education, or sold into prostitution by their families.

Figuring out ways to remedy these wrongs and provide women opportunities to lead healthy and productive lives will be the key issue for 50,000 women and men who gather in China this week.

It saddens me that a historic event like this is being misconstrued by a small but vocal group of critics trying to spread the notion that the U.N. gathering is really the work of radicals and atheists bent on destroying our families.

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The composition of our delegation refutes that charge. It is a broad-based, family-oriented group committed to the mainstream agenda of the conference.

The deputy chair of our delegation, Marjorie Margolies-Mezvinsky, is one of America's most devoted moms. A former television news correspondent and member of Congress, she and her husband are raising 11 children -- two are adopted and three are refugees from Asia -- in their home in Pennsylvania. "I don't get involved with things that don't celebrate the family," she said recently.

Even if you agree with me that the conference is a good thing, you may be asking yourself why Americans should care about it.

After all, don't American women have more political freedom and economic opportunities than women anywhere else in the world?

There are several reasons why we should care. First, the conference represents a rare opportunity to educate world leaders about the challenges women confront in trying to improve their own lives and the lives of their families.

Improving opportunities for women everywhere is very much in our self-interest. When other countries become more democratic and all citizens more prosperous, our future brightens too.

Second, the meeting will give voice to women all over the world, including American women who are trying to raise children on jobs that pay \$4.25 an hour, can't afford health insurance or child care, or are bumping up against a glass ceiling at work.

Third, the gathering will help convey the silent terror endured by millions of women victimized by violence, including violence in their own homes.

Concerns about education, health care, the minimum wage and domestic violence often are written off as "women's issues" unrelated to pressing economic and political challenges.

In fact, these "women's issues" are crucial to the progress of families everywhere.

If women and girls don't flourish, families won't flourish. And if families don't flourish, communities and nations won't flourish.

The United States has long played a leading role in protecting the human rights of all citizens and affording women new opportunities to contribute to the economic lives of their families and the civic life of their communities.

For that reason, the voices of American women must be heard. And they will be heard.

Along with our delegation, thousands of women from the United States are traveling to Beijing, many at their own expense.

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A group of CPAs from Virginia is making the trip. So are school principals from Maryland, women business owners from Florida, optometrists from California and YWCA leaders from across the country.

Even representatives of the Girl Scouts of America are traveling halfway around the world to take part.

Indeed, the future of all girls is what this conference is about.

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TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

RELEASE: WEEKEND, NOVEMBER 11-12, 1995

I am writing this aboard Air Force One, travelling home with my husband after attending funeral services for Yitzhak Rabin, the assassinated prime minister of Israel. This is not the column I had intended for today; that will have to wait until next week.

I want to share some of the feelings and questions this awful experience raised for me. I was in the White House when my husband and I learned that Rabin had been shot at a nationwide rally for peace. Together, we prayed that the assassin had failed. Soon, we learned he had succeeded.

The grief and outrage the President and I felt was deeply personal. Prime Minister Rabin and my husband had developed a warm friendship built around their shared commitment to a Middle East peace. I am very fond of Leah Rabin and always treasured the time I spent with her and the Prime Minister, even when he kidded me for not letting him smoke in the White House.

At the funeral service, one could not escape the enormity of loss suffered by the Rabin family. This was captured best by his 18-year-old granddaughter's brave and eloquent tribute to her grandfather. She hailed him as her hero and the pillar of fire in her family's camp.

The loss for Israel was evident in the moving words of the Prime Minister's aides. One held the blood-stained copy of the peace song that Rabin had sung at the rally and was carrying in his pocket when he was shot. The loss for the cause of peace in the Middle East was manifest in the dignified tribute by Egypt's president Hosni Mubarak and the moving eulogy by King Hussein, who had come to consider Rabin as his brother in the struggle for a new future in the Holy Land.

But the assassination was more than a personal loss and more than a loss for the peace process. It was an attack on democracy. In the midst of Israel's grief, there are still those who share the gunman's extremism and applaud the murder.

What have we come to in America, Israel or any democracy if those who disagree with an elected leader's political position choose bullets over ballots as the way to bring about change? When the electronic media carry hate-filled messages of extremism, they give these zealots far more prominence than their numbers justify. How, then, can legitimate political differences be expressed without encouraging those who might be moved to violence in Tel Aviv or in Oklahoma City?

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Under Rabin's leadership, Israel signed a peace treaty with Jordan and agreements with the Palestinians. When he was criticized for dealing with these former enemies, he said forthrightly that you don't make peace with your friends.

Every step in the peace process was ratified by a majority of parliament, although sometimes by only one or two votes. In a democracy, that is enough. In our own country, the President's deficit-reduction plan in 1993 passed by only one vote in the U.S. Senate, and a ban on assault weapons in the anti-crime bill became law last year with only two votes to spare. The recent separatist vote in Quebec lost by less than 1 percent.

Everywhere I travel in the world, I hear the same concern in democracies -- hard decisions are dividing people right down the middle. In difficult times like these, extremists often find a larger audience than they should because they simplify the solutions to the problems we face. If, as they claim, God or Holy Scriptures from the Bible or the Koran tell them to do something, who can argue?

Democracy flourishes when individuals are free to express differing and controversial positions. Democracy flounders when any one person or group proclaims there is only one right answer to complex issues. Democracy fails when extremists believe violence aimed at elected officials is a legitimate means for resolving disagreements.

Each of us who values democracy knows it is a messy and imperfect process. As Winston Churchill once said, "Democracy is the worst form of government except all other forms that have been tried from time to time." We should treat our elected leaders with respect -- even when we disagree with them. Here in America, churches pray every Sunday for those who lead us. More of us should reflect that spirit during the other six days of the week.

And we all should speak out against hateful speech and actions directed at our leaders. In Israel, the extremists who opposed Rabin distributed posters of him dressed in a Nazi uniform and called him a traitor. Those fanatics should have been condemned by all reasonable people whether or not they liked Rabin or agreed with his policies. Hate begets more hate and can create a climate of violence in which extremists may get pushed over the edge to bomb buildings or assassinate prime ministers.

How do we express our strongest views without resorting to violence in word or deed? That is a question for all of us to answer.

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TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

I am writing this week's column on Air Force One, still in the pale blue evening suit I wore to the state dinner hosted by the King and Queen of Thailand at the Grand Palace in Bangkok. My head is spinning -- and not just because it's past midnight and we're about to fly halfway around the world to get home in time for Thanksgiving. I'm mentally digesting the memorable experiences I had in Australia, the Philippines and Thailand.

I'll never forget my first sight of the Opera House in the harbor, in Sydney, Australia, the solemn splendor of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, or the visual power of the aboriginal art. I'll never forget the feel of a kangaroo's fur or the expression in the eyes of a koala bear named Chelsea, the rainbow colors of the Great Barrier Reef through my snorkeling mask, or the sounds of friendly Australian voices saying "G'day" -- just like in the movies!

In the Philippines, we stayed in the MacArthur Suite in the Manila Hotel, which was Gen. MacArthur's home after he returned during World War II. In one room, there is a collection of memorabilia, including a display on the wall of all his medals and decorations. I walked around the room imagining the history that was made there. Meanwhile, history was also being made at the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting my husband attended. Manila was alight with Christmas decorations to welcome the heads of state who had come to discuss trade issues.

At the city's new cultural center, I felt the warmth and friendship of the crowd of more than 12,000 people -- most of them women. I spoke about progress being made around the world to protect women's rights and applauded the actions taken in the Philippines to promote family planning and reduce domestic violence.

After Manila, I headed to Northern Thailand, where I planned to see two projects designed to educate girls and protect them from child prostitution. When I landed at Chiang Rai, I was greeted by a troupe of 200 dancers in traditional Thai costumes and hundreds of children waving American and Thai flags.

The first project I visited, Thai Women of Tomorrow, pays families a small stipend to permit their daughters to attend school. As I stood in front of the rows of schoolgirls dressed in uniforms of white blouses and blue skirts, I thought about how young they were and how thousands of girls their age all over the world are denied not only the opportunity to learn but the chance to be young before they grow old.

In the hills above Chiang Rai, I visited a hill-tribe village where some of the students are from. Hill-tribe girls, whose families are desperately poor, usually illiterate and frequently stateless, are especially vulnerable to exploitation. I spoke with several girls, who were clothed in their native dress, and their parents, who explained how they had decided education and job training could prepare their daughters for better and longer-lasting careers than potentially deadly lives as prostitutes.

When I returned to the airport, the full moon was up and the dancers and children were still there. Music filled the air, and the tarmac was a sea of dancing lights. The dancers had strapped candles to their delicate wrists, and children waved paper lanterns.

As our plane approached Chiang Mai, Thailand's second largest city, the sky was full of tiny red stars, which turned out to be hot-air paper lanterns launched as part of the annual Festival of Lights held during the last full moon of the lunar year. It is a three-day celebration of fireworks, lanterns and candle-lit floats made of banana leaves and flowers. The Thai people believe they can load the sins of the past year and wishes for the future onto these floats. After asking for forgiveness, they then cast the floats off into a river or lake. I lit one and placed it in the Ping River, where it joined the procession.

I thought about forgiveness and hope the next day when I visited the second project of my trip, the New Life Center. Run by Rev. Lauren Bethel, an American missionary, the center gives girls rescued from prostitution a second chance at life. I also met girls from the House of Love, a shelter for former prostitutes dying from AIDS. One 18-year-old girl came in a wheelchair. She had been sold as a maid when she was 10 and then forced into prostitution. Even after she became HIV-positive, she had to keep working. Only after she became too sick with AIDS to function was she taken to the hospital. As I knelt beside her, I could see the skin stretched tightly across her face. She tried to speak but could not be heard. She was not expected to live out the week.

Despite witnessing the ravages of AIDS and the cruel reality of how girls are still being exploited, I came away from the center hopeful and heartened. I was encouraged by the commitment of private individuals, like Rev. Bethel, the organizations that support such work and the growing willingness of governments to combat sexual exploitation and the economic and social problems that lead to it. The Thai government has enacted legislation and adopted a plan to end child prostitution. The United States has passed a law permitting the prosecution of any citizen who engages in such illegal activities. No one who saw the face of that dying girl in the wheelchair could doubt the urgency of persuading more countries to take similar steps.

So, as I fly home to my daughter, I want to give thanks for her and for all our children -- and wish all of you a happy Thanksgiving.

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November 26, 1996

**TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Every spring, I'm reminded of how hard it is to write and deliver a commencement address. Graduates are thinking much more about getting their diplomas than digesting sage advice from some wise and knowing elder. Those of us assigned the task of giving the speech inevitably find it a humbling experience -- a bit like being parsley on a dinner plate.

Now I'm sure everyone who reads this column has a message of their own for graduates, and if you want to pass yours on to me, please do. I know I'll need some new ideas for next year.

In the meantime, I'd like to share some of what I said to graduates of the University of Arkansas, Drew University and the University of Maryland in commencement addresses earlier this month.

I talked about the importance of politics and government in a pluralistic democracy like ours, particularly at a time of such momentous change.

Just looking at the world around us, we see a new global economy taking shape, offering Americans the potential of greater prosperity but also the challenge of stiffer competition.

We also see how new technology is bringing the world closer together, changing the ways we communicate and do business but also reminding us that virtual reality will never substitute for human relationships.

Family dynamics are being transformed as most families send both parents -- mothers and fathers alike -- to work outside the home, posing the critical question of who is supposed to do what within our most intimate relationships.

And the world itself is changing. Communism has given way to capitalism, tyranny to democracy, closed markets to free trade, all of which is causing us to redefine the ideological labels and geographic boundaries that have framed our thinking for most of the last century.

At times like these, it's tempting to seize on easy answers, pat generalizations and stereotypes.

You know the stereotypes I'm talking about:

If you're under 25, you're an apathetic Generation X-er.

If you're over 40, you're a self-indulgent Baby Boomer.

If you're a liberal, you're a bleeding heart.

If you're a conservative, you have no heart.

If you're a Democratic President from Arkansas, you're all of those things, depending on what day it is.

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And if you're the wife of a Democratic President from Arkansas, well, you just better make sure your hair is in place.

The truth is, there is no single label that applies to any of us. Our world is too complicated for that. So I urged the graduates I spoke to -- and I urge all graduates -- to stand up for the values that have brought our country and our democracy to this point.

So urge them to get involved in politics and government, not just as pundits and pollsters, just as government is about more than buildings and bureaucrats.

Politics with a small "p" is the process that brings us together to work toward common ends peaceably. As I said to the graduates, when I talk about politics, I'm talking about you.

It's fine to bash those who believe government is the solution to every social ill. And it's fine to bash those who believe that every government power should be curbed. But one thing we can't do is reject politics and government in the process.

That's a cop-out.

Government and politics are not perfect. They may even be boring. Their achievements often seem minuscule in comparison to the issues we face.

But we are a better country today because generations before us paid the price to establish and maintain a stable, democratic government that protects our rights and expands opportunities that enable all of us to make the most of our lives.

My challenge to the Class of '96 is to go forth as active, committed citizens who believe that they have a stake in our government and our political system.

Now I can just see some of them rolling their eyes and saying to themselves, "Oh, c'mon, Mrs. Clinton. Really. I've got to pay off student loans. I need to find a job. I want to fall in love. I want to start a family. How am I going to find time for politics? You come from the Sixties. Your generation had higher hopes, bigger dreams. We're past that now."

My answer is: Give it your best shot. Work hard and love your spouses and your children. And make time for your neighbors, your communities and your government as well.

You may never run for office. You may never marry someone who runs for office. But go into the future thinking of yourselves as stewards of our democracy and as men and women who will keep the flame of freedom and justice alive.

If there is one message that I hope gets across it's that citizenship can't be dismissed as someone else's responsibility. Each of us has a role to play.

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May 28, 1996



TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

If you are an Olympics fan who has never heard of William Milligan Sloane, you're not alone. Even in his prime, Sloane wasn't a track star, swimmer, gymnast, cyclist, soccer player or sensation on the basketball court. But more than almost any other American, he is responsible for the great diversity and success of our nation's Olympic tradition.

Sloane was a professor of history at Princeton and Columbia Universities, a humble and unassuming scholar who believed that sport was a vital part of the human experience.

Not only was he the only American delegate to the 1894 convention in Paris that re-established the modern Games, Sloane was a persistent voice for making the Olympics an all-inclusive affair. Throughout his 31 years on the International Olympic Committee, and during his tenure as president of the United States Olympic Committee, he argued that athletes of all races from all over the world -- including women -- should be allowed to compete.

The reward for his courage was bitterness from his fellow Olympic committee members. They resented Sloane, the son of an abolitionist preacher, for his belief in the equality of women and minorities, a view not popular at the time.

When Sloane died in 1928, there was no tribute to him, no mention of his leadership in the Olympic movement, no acknowledgment of his efforts to strengthen the Olympic ideal.

Now, 68 years after his death, Sloane is finally getting the recognition he deserves. The Olympic torch, carried by his great-grandson, stopped at Sloane's grave in New Jersey on its way to Atlanta.

And last week, Bill, Chelsea and I had the privilege of meeting his grandson and namesake, 78-year-old William Milligan Sloane. Together, we visited the 667 members of the United States Olympic team and 100 of our country's previous gold-medal winners at the Olympic village.

As the President told our athletes, Sloane didn't just help renew a 2,500-year-old tradition. And he didn't just pave the way for men and women from all continents to participate in the modern Olympics. He also helped organize the first American Olympic team to go to Athens when the Games resumed in 1896.

Sloane began by recruiting Robert Garrett, a young man who had never competed in sports in his life but responded to a notice Sloane posted on the bulletin board at Princeton University. Garrett had once seen a picture of an ancient Greek discus thrower, and he was game to give the Olympics a try. So, he found a blacksmith who agreed to make a discus for him.

The discus weighed 13 pounds, and Garrett practiced feverishly until he could hurl it 49 feet. Still, he knew he would be no match for the Europeans, who routinely threw 87 feet. But he went off to Athens anyway, determined to make his mentor, Sloane, and the United States proud of his efforts.

Good fortune was on his side. It turned out that the discus used in Olympic competition weighed only 2.5 pounds. Garrett heaved it 98 feet -- almost out of the stadium. And he won.

Americans also placed first in 10 other events, including the 100-meter dash, the 400-meter run, the hurdles, the broad jump, the high jump, the pole vault, the shot put, the hop, skip and jump, and two shooting competitions. In those days, each winner received a silver medal and an olive branch.

Sadly, Sloane wasn't there to see this extraordinary triumph. He had given his tickets to two American athletes who couldn't afford the trip to Greece.

Sloane finally made it to the Olympics in Paris in 1900, and for most of the next three decades, he kept up his crusade to make sure that "all the youth of the world" could participate in the Games.

Now, almost a century later, his vision is being fulfilled in Atlanta, and I'm proud that Bill, Chelsea and I have had a chance to share in it. Watching the competition and spending time with the 280 women and 387 men who make up the American team, we have seen that William Milligan Sloane's Olympic spirit lives on. It lives on in the hearts and dreams of our athletes and in the pride they showed when they and their compatriots from 196 other countries marched into the Olympic stadium for the opening ceremonies last week.

As Americans, we can all be proud that our team -- comprised of athletes of all complexions, backgrounds and cultural traditions -- offers such a fitting tribute to the man who started us down the Olympic road 100 years ago.

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July 23, 1996

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The past 10 days have been an emotional roller coaster for all of us who've been following the Olympic Games. Our hearts have leapt, fallen and then soared again as the greatest athletes in the world sought to claim the rewards of years of discipline and practice.

Sitting transfixed before our TV sets or in the Olympic venues in Atlanta, we've witnessed great acts of heroism, self-sacrifice and courage. Who will ever forget gymnast Kerri Strug landing her final vault on an injured ankle to clinch the gold medal for her team? Or Turkish weight lifter Naim Suleymanoglu lifting more than three times his body weight for a third gold medal in as many Olympic Games? Or swimmers Amy Van Dyken and Tom Dolan overcoming lifelong struggles with asthma to win gold medals in their races?

These triumphs of the Olympic spirit were nearly eclipsed last week when a pipe bomb exploded in Centennial Olympic Park, where people had gathered to participate in this celebration of international goodwill. Two innocent people lost their lives, and more than a hundred were injured. The blast introduced terror and fear into a place where it didn't belong. And all of us were left grappling with the question of why any person or group would commit such an evil act.

The 48 hours before the bombing had been both heart-wrenching and heart-warming for Bill and me. On Thursday, we flew to New York to visit the family members of the 230 people killed on TWA's Flight 800 just days before the start of the Olympic Games. Mothers, fathers and children had pinned pictures of their lost loved ones to their shirts or wore them on strings around their necks. One woman showed me a photo of a large family posing in front of the White House. Five of the people in that picture died when the plane exploded.

Later that same day, we flew to Atlanta to meet and cheer on members of our Olympic team. Bill, Chelsea and I sat on the edge of our seats as the U.S. women's swimming team won the 800-meter freestyle relay and set a new Olympic record.

The joy was short-lived. Early Saturday morning, we awakened to news of the blast in Centennial Park. Why did some coward try to destroy the good

feelings of brotherhood and teamwork generated by the Olympic Games? Why did some coward seek to undermine the freedom that we so cherish in our American democracy?

There is no room for terror at the Olympics or anywhere in our world. We must stand against it wherever it appears, whether on the streets of Belfast, on the fields of Bosnia, in the skies of New York or in a park in Atlanta. For inspiration, we need only look to the continuing triumphs of the Olympic athletes, to the courage of the rescue workers who saved lives at the park, to the strength of the families of Alice Hawthorne and Melih Uzunyel, the two victims of the blast, and to the commitment of the spectators who continue to come to the Olympic stadiums in solidarity against terrorism.

Less than 24 hours after the bombing, Gail Devers won her second Olympic gold medal in the 100-meter dash. The other night, I watched as four-time Olympian Carl Lewis surpassed all expectations and leapt to his fourth straight gold medal in the long jump. Moments earlier, Michael Johnson had won the 400-meter dash and dedicated his triumph to the memory of Alice Hawthorne.

Their accomplishments reminded me that you don't win Olympic medals by thinking of who you need to defeat, demonize, criticize or hurt. Instead, you reach deep down inside yourself and bring your best to show the world.

As I write this column, Centennial Park is open again. It is full of people from all over the world who lined up before dawn. They are trading pins, enjoying the entertainment, keeping the Olympic spirit alive in Atlanta for all the world to see. I plan to share in their spirit when I return to Centennial Park and Atlanta this week.

Like so many around the world, I'll be glued to my TV set until the Olympic flame is finally extinguished. And when it is all over, I'll remember the grace of the athletes, the faces of the bereaved families and the courage of all the people who refused to allow terror to reign in Centennial Park or in their hearts.

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July 30, 1996

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

In the weeks leading up to my speech at the Democratic National Convention, I got a lot of advice about what I should do and say in my hometown.

One friend suggested that I bring along a typical tough-on-the-outside yet warm-on-the-inside Chicagoan: Binti, the child-saving gorilla from the Brookfield Zoo. Another friend, knowing the public's endless curiosity about my hairdos, suggested that I have my hair cut and colored orange -- then, I could introduce myself on stage as Hillary "Rodman" Clinton.

After considering these suggestions, I decided to do what I've been doing for years -- talk about what matters most in our lives and in our nation: children and families.

Right now, in our biggest cities and smallest towns, there are parents worrying about how they will pay for child care or college. There are parents afraid that gang members and drug pushers are waiting to tempt children in their own neighborhoods. There are parents troubled by the effects of a popular culture that glamorizes smoking, drinking and worse -- and a consumer culture that teaches children to value the logo on their jeans more than the generosity in their hearts.

But also right now, there are dedicated teachers preparing lessons for the new school year, volunteers mentoring children in their homes, doctors and nurses agonizing over children who are sick, and police officers risking their lives to help kids stay out of trouble and off drugs.

Parents, first and foremost, are responsible for their children. But we are all responsible for ensuring that our children grow up in a nation that doesn't just talk about family values but acts in ways that value families.

As Christopher Reeve said on the first night of the convention: We are all part of one family -- the American family -- and each one of us has value. Each child who comes into the world should feel special -- every boy and every girl.

Chelsea will graduate from college in 2001, at the dawn of the next century. Though that's not so far away, it is hard for any of us to know what the world will look like then, much less when Chelsea is my age -- in 2028.

But one thing we do know is that while change is certain, progress is not. Progress depends on the choices we make today and tomorrow and whether we meet our challenges and protect our values.

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We can start by doing more to support parents at home and on the job. Over the past four years, Americans have benefited from new laws that strengthen families. The Family and Medical Leave Act has allowed parents time off for family emergencies, including the birth or adoption of a child, without fear of losing their jobs. The Kennedy-Kassebaum law will enable 25 million Americans to keep their health insurance -- even when they switch jobs, lose a job or have a family member who's been sick. The minimum-wage bill the President just signed offers a tax credit for parents who adopt and abolishes the barriers to cross-racial adoptions.

We can do more by electing people who will recognize that helping children means helping parents -- especially our working poor -- to find affordable health insurance for their families. It means expanding Family Leave to allow workers time off for parent-teacher conferences or to take their children to doctor's appointments. It means strengthening our nation's public schools and making sure every child is equipped with the education he or she needs to succeed in the 21st century.

For Bill and me, there has been no experience more challenging, more rewarding and more humbling than raising our daughter. Nothing has brought home the lessons about what children need from us like becoming parents ourselves.

And we have learned that to raise a happy, healthy and hopeful child, it takes other family members, teachers, clergy, business people, community leaders and those who protect our health and safety. Or, as I am prone to say, it takes a village.

But it also takes a President -- a President who believes not only in the potential of his own child but of all children, who believes not only in the strength of his own family but of all families, and who believes not only in the promise of each of us as individuals but in our promise together as a nation.

It takes a President who holds these beliefs -- and acts on them.

Sometimes, late at night, when I see Chelsea doing her homework, or watching TV, or talking to a friend on the phone, I think to myself: Her life -- and the lives of millions of other boys and girls -- will be better because of what all of us are doing together. They will face fewer obstacles and more possibilities. That is something we should all be proud of.

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August 27, 1996

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Every day across our country, thousands of men and women perform deeds that help make our world a more just place. They don't do it for fame or money. They do it because they believe in the individual worth and dignity of every human being. Their selfless acts of courage and service show the rest of us what we can do in our own lives to strengthen America's tradition of freedom.

Earlier this week, the President honored a handful of these citizens with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the United States. Only 344 people have received the award since its inception in 1963.

I'd like to share the stories of this year's honorees with you.

-- Joseph Cardinal Bernardin. Throughout a distinguished career in the Roman Catholic Church, Cardinal Bernardin's voice and conscience have set an example for all people. Guided by his faith in God, he has fought tirelessly against some of the greatest enemies of freedom: racial discrimination, poverty and ignorance. As the President said, he is "a remarkable man of God and a remarkable man of the people."

-- James Brady. The freedom to walk the streets and neighborhoods of America in safety is what former White House Press Secretary James Brady and his wife, Sarah, have worked for these past 15 years. Paralyzed by a would-be assassin's bullet in 1981, Brady recovered to fight for stronger gun control laws in this country, including passage of the law that carries his name.

-- Millard Fuller. The founder and President of Habitat for Humanity, Millard Fuller has spent 20 years improving housing for low-income Americans. His organization has recruited thousands of volunteers (including Bill, Chelsea and me) to help 50,000 low-income families build their own homes.

-- David Hamburg. David Hamburg has devoted his life to understanding human behavior, preventing violent conflict and improving the health and well-being of children. As a physician, educator and most recently the President of the Carnegie Corp., he has given voice to the issues that matter most in the lives of children and their families.

-- John H. Johnson. Through Johnson Publishing Co., which prints leading African-American magazines like Ebony and Jet, John H. Johnson has raised the profile of African-Americans in our nation's daily life and discouraged negative racial stereotypes. An Arkansas native and self-made man, Johnson continues to inspire

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young people to believe in themselves and to take advantage of available opportunities.

— Eugene Lang. Fifteen years ago, businessman Eugene Lang promised to pay the college tuition of any member of a sixth-grade class at his East Harlem alma mater who graduated from high school. That promise led to the creation of his "I Have a Dream" foundation, which is helping 15,000 underprivileged students in 59 cities prepare for college with tutoring, mentoring and financial aid.

— Jan Nowak-Jezioranski. Jan Nowak-Jezioranski is revered in both his native Poland and his adopted United States for his lifelong dedication to the cause of freedom and democracy. In World War II, Nowak risked his life to carry vital information from Poland to the allies. Later, he directed Radio Free Europe's Polish Service, a voice of freedom and hope for millions of Poles.

— Antonia Pantoja. The driving force behind innumerable efforts to empower and strengthen the Puerto Rican community, Antonia Pantoja founded ASPIRA 35 years ago. This organization promotes education, leadership training and community service for Latino youth.

-- Rosa Parks. By refusing to surrender her seat on a bus to a white man one evening 40 years ago in Montgomery, Ala., Rosa Parks symbolized a civil rights revolution that forced our country to honor our ideals of equality and justice. Parks continues to work to extend more opportunities for young people through the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self-Development in Detroit.

-- Ginetta Sagan. Imprisoned and tortured during World War II, Ginetta Sagan has devoted her life to saving others from unjust and inhumane imprisonment. Through Amnesty International and her own Aurora Foundation, she has drawn the world's attention to the plight of prisoners of conscience and their families.

-- Morris Udall. A 30-year veteran of the House of Representatives, Morris Udall led our nation's efforts to protect America's natural resources, wildlife and environment. In addition to his skills as a lawmaker, Udall was revered in Congress for the sense of humor and civility he brought to his office.

Like so many other Americans whose names we will never know, the winners of the Medal of Freedom look beyond their own needs to serve the needs of others. Their lives and accomplishments reflect the best of the American character and spirit -- and the best that our democracy has to offer.

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September 10, 1996

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

My husband wrapped up the final campaign of his political career this week. I was at his side 22 years ago in northwest Arkansas when he ran for Congress -- and lost. And I have been a part of every single one of his subsequent campaigns -- for attorney general, governor and president -- endeavors that have taken us to all corners of Arkansas and America. This last campaign was a remarkable, moving experience that made me very proud of my husband and proud to be an American.

For most of this fall, I was on the road, traveling across our country from Florida to Missouri to Oregon, asking Americans to re-elect Bill Clinton and Al Gore. I'll always remember the sights and sounds of the past few months: college campuses covered in homecoming banners and the colors of fall, schoolchildren in Yelm, Wash., debuting a song written by one of their teachers, "It Takes a Village to Raise a Child," and a chorus of 4,000 voices led by Garrison Keillor in an impromptu rendition of "Home on the Range" in Faribault, Minn.

Sometimes, it seemed like I was eating my way across the country. I was invited to sample the local specialties everywhere I went -- from barbecued ribs in Kansas City to tacos and enchiladas in San Antonio to deep-dish pizza in Chicago to lasagne and spaghetti in Bangor, Maine. I also carried a little bottle of hot sauce to rev up each meal. After 18-hour days, the sauce provided just the kick I needed to keep going. For my birthday, I took hearty helpings of at least six different cakes at my various stops.

Luckily, my stomach was empty when I tried out the new "Tower of Terror" ride during a stop to celebrate Disney World's 25th anniversary. The ride, which sends you down a 13-story elevator shaft, was no shock after four years in Washington.

But at the heart of all these campaign experiences were the people. This campaign was about the thousands of Americans I met in schools, community centers, churches, restaurants and rallies. They took time from their busy schedules to learn about the candidates and share with me their own hopes and dreams for the future.

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At a rally in Iowa, I had the chance to catch up with Ryan Moore, a 10-year-old boy living with several birth defects whom I met two years ago during the health care debates on Capitol Hill. I was heartened to see that time hadn't dimmed the bright smile and happy disposition Ryan had charmed me with in 1994. Ryan stayed by my side for a whole day of campaigning.

In Arizona, I dropped in on Barry Goldwater, the first politician I ever campaigned for. Though much has changed since my "Goldwater Girl" days, it was a great honor to see him. I also met many other dedicated men and women willing to take on the challenges of running for office.

Looking back, I realize that almost every person I met, whether he or she was a senior citizen, a college student or a working mom, had similar aspirations and concerns. I believe that most people play by the rules and are trying to do the best they can to support their families. We all want to be good parents and to be able to give our children the time, love and discipline they need. We all want to be able to send our children to good schools. We all want to live in safe neighborhoods. We all want to be able to see a doctor when we get sick and to retire in security when we grow old.

This fall, I met people all over the country who are rolling up their sleeves and working together to make these things happen. They are forming partnerships to fight crime in their neighborhoods, improve their local schools, clean up the environment and expand opportunities for young people.

At an elementary school in a poor section of Lynn, Mass., I met parents, teachers and administrators who had pulled together to improve their school. They set up night classes for adults, special family nights, and after-school and Saturday enrichment programs for students. The parents and the teachers told me the spirit of working together had spread beyond the school to the whole community.

"Ten years ago, people all looked the other way and said, 'It's not my problem,'" one woman said. "We don't have that feeling anymore. We feel empowered. We help each other out."

No matter who you voted for, our country needs every one of us -- not just those whose names appeared on ballots -- to work to build America's future.

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November 5, 1996

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A political campaign is like any high-stakes contest. Whether the arena is sports, academics, entertainment, business or politics, people have to prepare themselves, adopt a strategy and follow through. But there are big differences. In politics, there is no final game, test, performance or presentation.

There is a day of reckoning, like Super Bowl Sunday, but the candidates are passive observers rather than active participants. After months of hard work, the candidates don't take the field. They can only wait for the voters to pass judgment.

It is an odd sensation and one that I've never liked. There should be something else to do -- another voter to persuade or speech to make. But there isn't. So all that's left is the waiting. Over the years, I have tried many ways to fill those hours. I've gone to the movies, gone shopping, slept late and cleaned closets. Nothing works.

But this last Election Day was special. We were in Little Rock to vote. We arrived at 2:00 Tuesday morning from a marathon fly-around that had taken us from New Hampshire to Ohio to Kentucky to Iowa to South Dakota.

As the plane landed, I could see a crowd of several hundred friends and supporters who had gathered to welcome us home. The night was warm, and Bill, Chelsea and I hugged and talked our way through the crowd. We visited with childhood friends who had driven in from all over the country to be with us. We met college students who had worked on the campaign and had figured out that coming to the airport in the middle of the night was the best chance they might have to meet the President. One young man had his friend photograph his handshake with the President, just as Bill had done years before with John F. Kennedy.

After we arrived at our hotel, Bill was too excited to sleep, so he organized a game of hearts with some of his senior staff. Chelsea and I went to sleep around 4:00 a.m., and Bill finally ended the day an hour later.

When we woke up, the three of us went to vote, a family ritual ever since Chelsea was a baby. She always helped her father pull the levers. This time, there were no curtained booths or levers but ballots that could be fed into a computer. I needed my reading glasses just to read the ballot. Luckily, I had

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decided how I intended to vote on all the Arkansas initiatives and constitutional amendments before I arrived, or I might still be there trying to decipher all the small print. I propose ballots use bigger print for all us aging baby boomers.

After Bill and I voted, Chelsea went out with five of her girlfriends, two from Washington who had come with us and three from Little Rock. The girls had permission to miss school and took full advantage of the day. They introduced Chelsea's Washington friends to the city, stopping to see favorite haunts and ending up, you guessed it, at the mall.

I went to visit my optometrist and order some new bifocals, an unpleasant duty. I've always been nearsighted. After years of wearing thick glasses, I finally figured out how to wear soft contacts when I was around 35. Now that I'm nearing 50, I often need reading glasses on top of contacts.

Once that errand was run, I headed to Doe's Eat Place, a familiar hangout that serves steaks, burgers, fries, tamales and all the food we're told to shun. A bunch of my friends and staff were sitting at tables outside telling stories and digesting their lunches. One of the gifts of my life is that I have people around me who are quick to laugh and don't mind doing so at anyone's expense -- especially mine.

We told stories of the last four years, made fun of each other and quite forgot we were waiting to learn who would win the election. Whenever a cell phone rang with news of exit polls, I made it clear I didn't want to hear the numbers. I don't believe in exit polls. They're often wrong. They invade voters' privacy, and they can interfere with voter turnout in later time zones.

Joining us at Doe's was my mother. When my friends learned she had recently remodeled her living room, we all piled into cars to go take a look. I drove, one of my favorite activities whenever I get the chance. When we got there, one friend played the piano, while others received a guided tour. I just sat there watching the sun go down on the hills behind the river, feeling relaxed for the first time in weeks.

Once I returned to the hotel, I was caught up in the excitement and tension of election night. Our suite had four television sets, and people gathered in front of them to watch and discuss the results. When the President won Florida, everyone cheered. When he was declared the winner, we started congratulating each other. Some of us even cried.

By then, it was time to get ready for Bill's speech. After Sen. Dole called to congratulate my husband, we left the hotel for the short ride over to the Old

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State House, Arkansas' first capitol. Standing in front with the Gores and their four children, we were overwhelmed by a huge crowd stretching as far as we could see. The big trees in front were draped in little white lights. As Bill spoke, leaves gently floated down across the podium as though they, too, wanted to play their part in this historic night.

I looked out into hundreds of faces I knew and loved, feeling very blessed to be in that place, proud of my husband and my country. It didn't even matter that I still had three more receptions to attend and that my feet were throbbing. It all seemed just right, and not a bad way to end this Election Day.

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November 12, 1996

TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

It seems somehow fitting that when the first miraculous pictures came in from Mars, Bill and I were in Spain with King Juan Carlos and his wife, Queen Sofia. Spain's history of exploration -- with Columbus, Magellan and Ponce de Leon -- opened new frontiers and changed the way people thought about the world.

So, in a few short days, did the Mars Pathfinder.

There was an almost universal reaction to the photographs. First came awe. Pure, unadulterated awe. This is Mars!

Then came something else: the strange feeling that grows out of the realization that the landscape of a planet millions of miles away is utterly recognizable.

The rocks looked like they could be from the Southwest. (It would be hard to call them "Barnacle Bill" and "Yogi" if there weren't something familiar about them.) So did the colors -- the reds, browns and oranges. There was an open sky. And then, there were the mountains in the distance, the "Twin Peaks." They made me wonder fancifully what might be on the other side.

The pictures were incredible. But so, too, were the talent and ingenuity that brought them to us. Just think what NASA and its Jet Propulsion Laboratory achieved. Five years ago, they conceived of this mission. Seven months ago, they launched it. Then, they had Pathfinder travel 300 million miles and land on Mars, in the very area they had targeted, on a planet twice the size of our moon, and on the precise day they had scheduled for touchdown: the Fourth of July.

Moreover, a few glitches notwithstanding, everything worked -- air bags, batteries, communications equipment, cameras.

This triumph is all the more remarkable because NASA conducted the mission on a tight budget. There is no better example of this than America's newest hero: Sojourner, the plucky Mars rover that is about the size of one of those little remote-controlled cars you inevitably trip over when you walk through a Toys "R" Us. To keep down expenses, the rover's designers built it primarily from off-the-shelf parts rather than developing new ones. To conserve energy, the rover goes no faster than it needs to. In fact, on its first day, it traveled only 16 inches. That small distance, however, is going to propel science miles ahead.

It is also a triumph that Sojourner was the dream of a woman -- Donna Shirley, head of Mars exploration at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Shirley's vision should

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inspire everyone interested in science. But I hope it will have particular resonance for girls, who traditionally have participated less in science than boys. With role models like Shirley and astronaut Shannon Lucid -- and with committed schools -- we'll succeed in teaching girls that they truly belong on the final frontier.

Pathfinder is just one of many ground-breaking NASA projects, and it makes me proud of my husband's commitment to a strong space program. He has worked to keep the shuttle flying, to build the international space station, to develop the X-33, which will replace the shuttle, to continue robotic exploration of the solar system, and to cement the alliance we have formed with Russia in space.

Our work with Russia alone has yielded enormous returns -- not just in terms of science but also in terms of global understanding. Since a cargo vessel crashed into the space station Mir two weeks ago, knocking out much of its power, that truth has been more apparent than ever. In the face of this great challenge, Americans and Russians, in space and on the ground, worked together heroically. Two cosmonauts and one astronaut were on board. We prayed for each of them when they were in danger, and we celebrated for each of them when an emergency cargo vessel docked perfectly with Mir earlier this week. All of a sudden, our differences seemed insignificant.

Sometimes, it takes going to space to show us we all share a common home. That was true in 1962, when the first pictures of Earth came back from space. It was true on that July day in 1969, when the world watched Neil Armstrong step onto the moon. And it was true this week, when people around the globe were transfixed by the photos coming back from Mars.

Last summer, Americans delighted in the movie "Independence Day." In the film, the people of Earth united despite their differences to fight a common enemy. This Independence Day, we started to watch an equally amazing story, one that is bringing us together around a common success. Only this one, happily, isn't fiction.

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July 8, 1997

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thousands of people worldwide witnessed history in the making last week -- the first cybercast from the White House. When noted Harvard historian Bernard Bailyn, who has written extensively on colonial and revolutionary American history, delivered the first Millennium Lecture, his remarks were simultaneously broadcast by satellite and over the Internet. People all over the world were able to turn on their computers and literally watch as Professor Bailyn delivered his lecture. They could then send e-mail questions, some of which I read off the screen for him to answer right there in the East Room.

If you missed Professor Bailyn's talk, you can find his remarks by going to the White House web site at www.whitehouse.gov and selecting the Millennium home page. If you want to actually see and hear the lecture in its entirety, you can go to the Sun Microsystems web site at www.sun.com/980126/whitehouse/

I urge you to try this, not only because it is technologically remarkable but also because I hope every American will listen closely to what Professor Bailyn has to say as we prepare to enter the new millennium.

The professor began by pointing out that we are a young nation with a short history but in fact we "live remarkably close to our past." When he said, "A spark was struck two centuries ago which lights the way for us still," it brought to mind the theme that the President and I have chosen for America's Millennium celebration: "Honor the past; imagine the future."

Jan. 1, 2000, not only marks the beginning of the millennium year but also coincides with several significant historical milestones in American history: the 200th anniversary of the occupancy of the White House by American Presidents, the 200th anniversary of the creation of the Library of Congress, and the 200th anniversary of the first meeting of Congress in the new Capitol.

What a remarkable opportunity for America to pause and consider the best of our nation and the things we want to preserve -- for our children and for our children's children. What an opportunity to rekindle our spirit of democracy, renew our commitment to citizenship, and unleash the full creative and intellectual potential of the American people as we chart our common future.

The White House Millennium Council is busy planning events here in Washington and around the country to celebrate this milestone. Professor Bailyn

kicked off the Millennium Evenings at the White House, a series of lectures and cultural showcases designed to highlight America's ideas, art and scientific discoveries. On March 6, world-renowned physicist Stephen Hawking will deliver the second Millennium Lecture, on creativity and science in the 21st century. It, too, will be cybercast from the White House.

A few weeks ago, I wrote about another Millennium project called "Save America's Treasures," a public-private partnership to preserve the nation's documents, artifacts, monuments and historic sites that are most in danger of deterioration. In his budget, the President has proposed a Millennium Fund to stimulate this national effort, but there will also be a parallel private effort, supported by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. More information, as well as an opportunity to share your ideas, is available on the Trust's website at www.nationaltrust.org.

Last week at the White House, I was thrilled by the announcement of the first major private contribution to this effort. The Pew Charitable Trusts will donate \$800,000 to help re-encase the nation's Charters of Freedom -- the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights and the Constitution -- and \$5 million for the restoration of the most revered symbol of this country's struggle for freedom, the Star-Spangled Banner.

You might ask, as did UPI's White House reporter Helen Thomas, "Why does it take \$5 million?"

Actually, the entire flag project will cost \$18 million. You may not realize that the flag, sewn by a Baltimore widow and housed in the National Museum of American History in Washington, is four stories tall. Because it's been without a protective case, it has suffered from exposure to pollution and sunlight. The Smithsonian plans to take down the flag from its current exhibit and place it in an on-site conservation laboratory where it can be cleaned and treated. During the entire process, the flag will never be out of public view, and after the restoration is complete, it will be encased in 7 tons of protective glass.

I hope you will take a look at the web sites I've listed to learn how you can participate in this grand Millennium celebration. By honoring our past and making gifts to the future, we can be sure that when the new millennium finally comes, we will be honoring not only a new year but also the values that make this country great and that will remain long after the fireworks have faded.

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February 17, 1998

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TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

In the short span of a week, the world lost two remarkable people: Princess Diana and Mother Teresa. Though separated by a multitude of differences, these two women were united by their desire to help others. As I flew to London to attend Diana's funeral, I thought of the pictures I had seen of the two of them together. Like so many others, I was left to wonder what we were going to do to keep the spirit of service they embodied alive.

Long before I ever met Mother Teresa, I knew of her work and mission to bring love and comfort to the poor and afflicted in India and around the world.

Still, nothing I had heard or read about her prepared me for the diminutive, determined and joyful woman I met at the National Prayer Breakfast in February 1994. Bill and I greeted her before the program started, and when she asked if she could see us privately afterward, we quickly agreed.

Standing on a step so she could see over the podium, Mother Teresa mesmerized an audience packed into the largest ballroom in Washington. She spoke without notes, calling on all of us to care for the poor and defenseless in society and making a plea against abortion.

After her speech, Bill and I sat together with Mother Teresa on folding chairs in the work space behind the curtain at the back of the stage. She took my hand in both of hers and told me she had been praying for me and my husband and for the work we were trying to do, especially in trying to provide health care to the poor. We also discussed abortion. Though we disagreed respectfully about birth control and whether abortion should be legal, we agreed that adoption should be promoted. We talked about doing more to make adoption a realistic option for pregnant women who do not want to keep their children -- and to make adoption easier for qualified adults who want to provide a child with a permanent, loving home.

Then, Mother Teresa asked me to help her open a shelter in Washington, D.C., for infants and young children awaiting adoption or placement with foster families. I said I would, though I had no idea how. I did, however, have the feeling that keeping my promise to Mother Teresa would involve a fair amount of hard work.

To find a way through the complicated legal and regulatory issues that surround opening such a home in the District of Columbia, I set up a coalition of community leaders and government representatives. The process took a year and a half. Over

that time, I had the joy of corresponding with Mother Teresa. Letters would arrive, written in her own hand, telling me where she had been and what she had been doing and asking, of course, how we were coming with the house for children -- "the gift of love" she called it. At the top of each letter was an inscription: "As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren. You did it to me."

I saw that Scriptural lesson in action when Chelsea and I traveled to India the following year. In New Delhi, we visited a home for children run by the Missionaries of Charity -- the order Mother Teresa founded in 1950. The building we walked through was crowded with cribs holding babies. As I examined the surroundings, I thought about the struggle I was having back in Washington trying to fulfill my promise to open a home for babies there. There is no way the New Delhi home could have passed muster with the regulators in D.C., but the crowded rooms contained something no regulation could ever provide: enormous love for children who had been left to fend for themselves.

The next time I saw Mother Teresa was back in Washington for the long-awaited opening of the Mother Teresa Home for Infant Children on June 19, 1995. Before the ceremony, Mother Teresa and I toured the home with the Sisters who would staff it. We were delighted by the sunny rooms filled with bassinets, changing tables and rockers. Before we went outside to cut the ribbon, she said to me: "This is a gift of love but I've been told I cannot give the gift of peace because I don't give peace to anyone." What she meant, I believe, is that her work compelled her to "disturb the peace," to upset the complacency of the comfortable to help the poor.

From the moment she received a calling from God "to serve Him among the poorest of the poor" to the moment she passed away at 87, Mother Teresa gave selfless service, love and, yes, peace to countless others. It is in honor of her memory and her work that I will travel to Calcutta on behalf of the President to attend her funeral on Saturday. It is only fitting that people of different faiths from all over the world will come together to express their sorrow at her loss -- and to be reminded, once again, that feeding a child, healing a wound and caring for the dying ultimately help repair the human spirit.

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September 9, 1997

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Before long, Princess Diana will enter into legend. Millions of words will be written about her, but the woman I knew was much more than a fashion plate, an icon or even a princess. She was a person who, like so many of us, worked to raise her children, shape her identity and use her own special gifts to make a difference in the world. Since her tragic death last weekend, I've been thinking about what she meant to me and to all of us.

I first met Diana at official ceremonies commemorating the 50th anniversary of D-Day in June 1994. Shortly afterward, she told a mutual friend that she wanted to talk with me. I was eager to get to know the woman behind the dazzling smile. But, given our busy schedules, it took months to arrange a meeting. We finally got together in October of that year for a luncheon in her honor at the British Embassy in Washington. During the meal, we sat near one another -- and at a table with Colin Powell and Prince Bandar, the Saudi Ambassador. They are both charmers who could take anyone's mind off her troubles. Diana bantered throughout the lunch, and then, after bidding goodbye to the other guests, we met privately.

We talked of the challenges of public life and the struggle to protect our children from the scrutiny of the world. She told me of her new hopes and plans for using her position to focus attention on the needs of suffering people. Although she seemed vulnerable and unsure about the direction her life was taking, I sensed in her a reservoir of resilience and determination that would help her take charge of her own life and help others, despite great obstacles.

Over the next few years, we stayed in touch. I saw Diana for the last time in June of this year, when she was visiting Washington to highlight her campaign to ban anti-personnel land mines. Over tea in the Map Room of the White House, she spoke passionately about her recent trip to Angola and her upcoming one to Bosnia. We shared our thoughts about the progress being made worldwide in the fight against AIDS, and I described my impressions of the efforts to end forced prostitution in Thailand, a place she planned to visit in November. I kidded her that the upcoming auction of her gowns for charity was the smartest closet-cleaning strategy ever devised.

And we talked, as always, about our children. She brought me up to date on her sons William and Harry -- how quickly they were growing and how she was working to provide them with childhoods as normal as possible. She asked me about Chelsea's college plans and wanted to know more about the American university system.

Our time together passed too quickly. We walked out into the ground floor corridor, sometimes called the Hall of First Ladies, where I introduced her to the excited teenage daughter of a family staying with us. A White House photographer took our picture standing in front of the portrait of one of my predecessors from more than a century ago, Frances Cleveland. Like Diana, she was a young bride who quickly found herself drawing on her own reserves of grace and poise as she became the obsession of a national media that tracked her every move. I will always be struck by the poignancy of that photograph.

Diana and I hugged goodbye. I watched her walk away a more outwardly confident and effective young woman than the one I had met three years before. I was impressed by her courage and persistence in getting up and going on whenever life knocked her to the mat. And I was delighted that she appeared happier and more at peace with herself.

I will miss seeing her, miss hearing the pride in her voice as she talked of her sons, miss listening to her accounts of the people she tried to help, and miss watching her build a life of integrity on her own terms.

I am reminded of what she once said about the "disease" of not being loved. What she meant was that the absence of love could make anyone less than fully human. I hope all who mourn her passing will honor her memory by reaching out and bringing love and comfort to all who suffer. Few, if any of us, will ever look as beautiful on the outside as she did, but all of us can strive to develop that inner beauty of the heart and soul that she valued and understood was more lasting and important.

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September 2, 1997

TALKING IT OVER**BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON****RELEASE: WEEKEND, SEPTEMBER 23-24, 1995**

It's amazing what you miss when you are on vacation or traveling out of the country. Until recently, I hadn't even heard about the controversy over the new Calvin Klein ads.

Now that I'm back in Washington, I'm finally tuned in. Friends have sent me clippings and news stories. I've seen the ads myself, which show young people in sexually suggestive poses, their underwear in view beneath their shorts and skirts.

From what I can tell, most of the controversy centers on definitions of pornography, First Amendment rights, and the boundaries of artistic expression.

All of those things are important. But I think we're missing a larger point.

Not every question of morality and taste is a question of the Constitution or the law.

The Calvin Klein ads are disturbing because they feed on the innocence and vulnerability of children. And the cynical message delivered to young people is that their value as human beings depends on looking sexy and acting cool.

It's hard enough for kids these days to grow up feeling confident and secure about who they are. What we should be doing as a society is helping young people focus on schoolwork and other positive activities that build self-discipline and character -- not adding to the confusion and anxiety that are part of growing up.

If you care about your family's values, as I do, you have to be concerned about values in the marketplace. You have to be concerned about the messages conveyed through the things we buy and sell.

Let's face it: Business decisions affect how people think and behave. In his recent book, "Selling Out America's Children," David Walsh points out that careful calculation -- and billions of dollars -- go into advertising campaigns in order to shape opinions and change tastes.

Advertising, he says, is really "adver-teasing."

And "adver-teasing" is usually driven by a yearning for profits more than any concern for decency, civility, taste or morality.

That is why raising our voices about how a company sells blue jeans can be just as important as the values we teach in our own homes.

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The Calvin Klein ads are merely the latest proof that some businesses are willing to push the envelope of gratuitous sex and exploitation of children as far as possible if it's good for the bottom line.

But they are not the only ads we need to worry about. The pervasive influence of exploitative advertising touches every aspect of our lives.

We all know what it is like to drive along the highway and see a pile-up of cars. You slow down. You can't resist looking, even though you know that your own rubbernecking could cause another accident.

Today, it's as if our society is a highway full of car wrecks. Only worse. Nobody purposely causes an accident to attract the public's attention. But in the case of commercial marketing, we are purposely teased and titillated with sex and violence, simply because they sell.

What modern culture desperately needs are internal values that call on us to exercise our responsibilities, as well as our rights, as citizens. Instead of trying to justify inappropriate behavior, people in positions of power must start to behave responsibly and show restraint.

Sadly, we seem to be a long way from that. This fall, new movies and television shows that go further than ever before in showing graphic images of sex and violence will appear in theaters and on prime time. No doubt, they will make lots of money from the controversies they generate.

We can only hope there is a silver lining here. Maybe -- just maybe -- we, the public, finally have had enough of seeing children and women depicted as victims and sexual objects.

Calvin Klein was forced to pull his ads last month because of public outrage. And hopefully, in the weeks ahead, those of us who go to movies and watch television will stay away from the theaters and turn off our sets because we are so offended by the gratuitous violence, sexual degradation and bad taste we are subjected to on the screen.

But let's not wait for the marketers of sleaze to wrestle with questions of taste and morality. As parents and consumers, let's make it clear where we stand.

If you don't like the message, don't buy the product. Don't let your kids buy it. And remember that even if your own child doesn't fall for the marketing ploys, millions of other children are being exploited and devalued because adults can't control their own greed.

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TALKING IT OVER**BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON****RELEASE: WEEKEND, OCTOBER 14-15, 1995**

One thing I've learned since becoming First Lady is that wherever I go, Eleanor Roosevelt has surely been there before me.

I've been to farms in Iowa and factories in Michigan where Mrs. Roosevelt paid a visit a half century ago. I've been to schools and colleges named for Mrs. Roosevelt and walked the halls of hospitals she toured before I was born.

Even when I go to other countries, Mrs. Roosevelt has doubtless been there first. When my daughter and I went to Pakistan and India last spring, we discovered that Eleanor Roosevelt had traveled there in 1952, and even had written a book about her trip.

Now I'm in South America, following in Mrs. Roosevelt's footsteps yet again. She came here several times and visited several countries, sharing her vision of justice and compassion with all who would listen. The United States, she believed, had a vested interest in helping any neighbor in our hemisphere that sought to build a democratic way of life.

"Our obligation to the world is primarily our obligation to our own future," she once said. "Obviously, we cannot develop beyond a certain point unless other nations develop, too."

Traveling now through South America, I find myself thinking often about Mrs. Roosevelt - who was born 111 years ago last Wednesday. And I'm convinced that if she were still alive today, nothing would thrill her more than coming to watch children perform at the Circus School in Brazil.

It's a place I'm visiting on this trip where runaway children learn the principles of discipline and teamwork, and build self-confidence through acrobatics and trapeze training. Not only do these children show a renewed interest in education and improved attendance in school, they perform before sellout crowds every weekend.

Mrs. Roosevelt also would be right at home chatting with the poor women I met at a neighborhood center in Santiago, Chile, or listening to women in Managua, Nicaragua, talk about the sewing businesses they started with \$100 loans from the local bank and support from the U.S. government.

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Wherever she went, Mrs. Roosevelt celebrated the richness of the human experience. She appreciated every person's potential to do something great with very little. Perhaps that is why people all over the world, including here in South America, remember her with such admiration and fondness.

She was, in the words of historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, "a woman for all times and all people."

I know I will think about Mrs. Roosevelt again during the last leg of my trip, in Paraguay. There, I'll be participating in a conference of First Ladies from the Western Hemisphere. We'll be talking about ways to improve the health and education of children and families throughout the Americas.

It's a conversation that began last December in Miami when we met during a summit the President hosted for all the democratic nations of North and South America.

We have much at stake when it comes to building relations with our neighbors to the south. Many men and women in our country trace their roots to Latin America. And people living in those countries are among the biggest consumers of American goods and services.

Just last week, we hosted the President of Mexico for a state visit at the White House. As you may recall, our government offered loans and loan guarantees to Mexico to help that nation's economy stay afloat earlier this year. Already Mexico has paid back a significant portion of the loans ahead of schedule.

On a personal note, I am looking forward to spending time over the next few days with women from North and South America who are willing to devote their energy and ideas to nurturing the next generation. I think it's a wonderful way to celebrate Mrs. Roosevelt's birthday. After all, it was her example in both words and deeds that showed us how to bridge national boundaries and cultural traditions to achieve our common goals.

Talking to these First Ladies of today, I know I will be thinking of my inspiring predecessor.

Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt.

And happy birthday.

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TALKING IT OVER**BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON****RELEASE: WEEKEND, OCTOBER 28-29, 1995**

When I first began writing this column more than three months ago, I hoped to occasionally use this space to respond to the many people who write to me.

So far, I have received more heartwarming and thought-provoking letters than I can count. I also have received a few angry letters whose contents cannot be published in a family newspaper.

I've heard from a class of second- and third-graders in Kansas who are concerned about pollution, a man from Illinois who is campaigning against tobacco use, and a retiree in Florida worried about the high cost of health care.

A boy from Texas wanted to know what Socks eats (dried cat food) and a 10-year-old in Minnesota asked how many rooms are in the White House (132).

I wish I could respond to all of these letters in this column. Instead, I can only answer a few.

Many readers wrote in response to my column in July about our nation's complicated system of adoption and the thousands of needy children who are waiting for permanent, loving homes. Not surprisingly, I heard from lots of people who said they were eager to adopt children but had become overwhelmed by the long wait, red tape and high cost involved.

A Florida woman, frustrated by a lack of communication among adoption agencies and government social workers, summed up the feelings of many prospective adoptive parents: "I know there is a little girl in this country somewhere waiting for my home."

One couple from Oregon, trying to adopt through a county agency, was told that it might take several years before a child was available. Their alternative, to adopt through a private agency, could cost \$16,000 or more.

Because these problems are so widespread -- and because so many children continue to languish in foster care -- I recently got together a group of experts, adoption advocates and concerned parents to help people learn more about adoption and to make the process simpler and more efficient for waiting parents. There is no reason so many loving parents cannot be united with children desperate for their care and attention.

I also have received mailbags of letters about my trip to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September. Some people were

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concerned about my participation, and many others were enthusiastic about it. A few expressed their outrage over infanticide and coerced abortions in China, problems that people became more aware of because the conference was held there. Others wondered if the conference would really make a difference in improving women's rights around the world.

I believe the conference was an important and historic first step in giving women the tools they need to lead productive lives. More than 180 nations agreed for the first time that women are integral to the economic, political and social life of every country and that global peace and prosperity depend on the well-being of women.

However, the conference in Beijing will only be a lasting success if governments, institutions and each of us in our own lives work to ensure that women are full and equal partners in society. Here at home, for example, the President has created a special White House Council on Women that will enable government agencies to work together and reach out to private organizations to fulfill the goals of the women's conference.

Health issues were on the minds of many readers. I heard from scores of Gulf War veterans and their families, who were concerned about the government's response to illnesses commonly referred to as Gulf War Syndrome. I hope those families, many of whom have suffered greatly, know that the President has established an advisory committee to investigate Gulf War veterans' illnesses.

Perhaps the most gratifying health-related letter I received came from Miriam Murtha, a Virginia woman who got a mammogram as a result of our breast cancer awareness campaign that began earlier this year. Her screening found two malignant tumors before they could spread to other parts of her body. "I will be having regular checkups from now on," she wrote.

Children also wrote to me with suggestions and questions. Many wondered if I could raise their allowances, lower the voting age or send them free tickets to Washington. (Sorry, I can't.)

And quite a few offered their own editorial comments. "I think there should be no more drugs. I don't want any more guns and no more pollution," wrote Brandon Jackson, a second-grader from Kansas.

To Brandon and everyone else who wrote to me over these last few months, thanks for talking things over with me.

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TALKING IT OVER**BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON****RELEASE: WEEKEND, NOVEMBER 4-5, 1995**

When I was 10, my family took a trip to New York. One of my best memories of that trip was a visit to the United Nations building. I remember thinking how beautiful it was and loving the wooden doll my father bought me in the gift shop.

Other than collecting money for UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) at Halloween, that was my only firsthand experience with the United Nations. Of course, I knew the United Nations was a body of representatives from nations around the world, and occasionally, I watched on television as our U.N. delegates debated with those from other countries.

Since my husband became president, however, I've learned more about the United Nations and the things it does every day that we don't hear about on the evening news.

Not long ago, when an epidemic of ebola virus threatened to spread out of Zaire, doctors and nurses coordinated by the U.N.'s World Health Organization and our Centers for Disease Control went in and sanitized hospitals filled with disease and death.

When people around the world were stunned by the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl in 1986, the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency took action, sending professionals needed for the cleanup.

Today, in countries like Bangladesh, UNICEF is dramatically improving literacy rates among girls and boys in the poorest regions of the world through financial and technical help to schools.

And generations to come will be able to learn about the history and share the beauty of cultural treasures such as the pyramids in Egypt and the Taj Majal in India thanks to the preservation efforts of the United Nations.

On another front, a U.N.-sponsored immunization campaign has succeeded in wiping out polio from the Western Hemisphere, which is good news for those of us who live here. When I visited Latin America last month, the results of the campaign were evident in every country.

In the aftermath of disasters like the earthquake in Armenia in 1988 and the floods last year in Nigeria that displaced 400,000 people, the United Nations was there, feeding the hungry, tending to the sick, healing the wounded and sheltering the homeless.

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Still, I know from my mail that if you ask many Americans for their view of the United Nations, you are likely to get an earful about the failure of U.N. peacekeeping troops to stop ethnic conflict in Bosnia.

You might also hear some grumbling about why the United States remains so involved in an organization that focuses on problems worldwide when we have so many of our own challenges here at home.

While the U.N.'s difficult and sometimes unsuccessful peacekeeping missions grab the headlines, its humanitarian efforts are quietly saving lives and ending bloodshed around the world.

We don't, for example, hear much about war and carnage in Cambodia or Mozambique anymore or about refugees streaming out of Afghanistan. Why? Because the United Nations helped resolve those conflicts through courageous peacekeeping and humanitarian activities that in some cases stretched over years.

I've had a chance over the past three years to see for myself the work of the U.N. in many different countries. And I am convinced that U.S. support for the United Nations is very much in our own country's interests. Not only does this international body offer the world a moral alternative to war, it helps bring economic and political stability to nations and regions whose futures are tied to ours.

Clearly, like many of our homegrown institutions, the United Nations needs reform. Just as we are working to make our federal government smaller and more efficient, the U.N. needs to do away with unnecessary bureaucracy and streamline its operations. Americans, who support the U.N. more generously than people from any other country, have a right to demand as much.

The United Nations is far from perfect. But it offers a forum where talking instead of fighting is valued. It provides assistance that helps people around the world and even here in the United States. And it holds out the promise of peace, prosperity and democracy, which make the world safer for Americans.

My husband is fond of saying, "Progress can spread quickly, but trouble can too." In a world far more complicated today than it was when the United Nations was founded 50 years ago, we Americans are faced with this choice: Either we pool our resources with other countries to promote peace, eradicate hunger and disease, improve education, protect the environment, assist refugees, and fight terrorist and international drug cartels, or we venture forward alone.

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TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

RELEASE: WEEKEND, NOVEMBER 11-12, 1995

I am writing this aboard Air Force One, traveling home with my husband after attending funeral services for Yitzhak Rabin, the assassinated prime minister of Israel. This is not the column I had intended for today; that will have to wait until next week.

I want to share some of the feelings and questions this awful experience raised for me. I was in the White House when my husband and I learned that Rabin had been shot at a nationwide rally for peace. Together, we prayed that the assassin had failed. Soon, we learned he had succeeded.

The grief and outrage the President and I felt was deeply personal. Prime Minister Rabin and my husband had developed a warm friendship built around their shared commitment to a Middle East peace. I am very fond of Leah Rabin and always treasured the time I spent with her and the Prime Minister, even when he kidded me for not letting him smoke in the White House.

At the funeral service, one could not escape the enormity of loss suffered by the Rabin family. This was captured best by his 18-year-old granddaughter's brave and eloquent tribute to her grandfather. She hailed him as her hero and the pillar of fire in her family's camp.

The loss for Israel was evident in the moving words of the Prime Minister's aides. One held the blood-stained copy of the peace song that Rabin had sung at the rally and was carrying in his pocket when he was shot. The loss for the cause of peace in the Middle East was manifest in the dignified tribute by Egypt's president Hosni Mubarak and the moving eulogy by King Hussein, who had come to consider Rabin as his brother in the struggle for a new future in the Holy Land.

But the assassination was more than a personal loss and more than a loss for the peace process. It was an attack on democracy. In the midst of Israel's grief, there are still those who share the gunman's extremism and applaud the murder.

What have we come to in America, Israel or any democracy if those who disagree with an elected leader's political position choose bullets over ballots as the way to bring about change? When the electronic media carry hate-filled messages of extremism, they give these zealots far more prominence than their numbers justify. How, then, can legitimate political differences be expressed without encouraging those who might be moved to violence in Tel Aviv or in Oklahoma City?

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Under Rabin's leadership, Israel signed a peace treaty with Jordan and agreements with the Palestinians. When he was criticized for dealing with these former enemies, he said forthrightly that you don't make peace with your friends.

Every step in the peace process was ratified by a majority of parliament, although sometimes by only one or two votes. In a democracy, that is enough. In our own country, the President's deficit-reduction plan in 1993 passed by only one vote in the U.S. Senate, and a ban on assault weapons in the anti-crime bill became law last year with only two votes to spare. The recent separatist vote in Quebec lost by less than 1 percent.

Everywhere I travel in the world, I hear the same concern in democracies -- hard decisions are dividing people right down the middle. In difficult times like these, extremists often find a larger audience than they should because they simplify the solutions to the problems we face. If, as they claim, God or Holy Scriptures from the Bible or the Koran tell them to do something, who can argue?

Democracy flourishes when individuals are free to express differing and controversial positions. Democracy flounders when any one person or group proclaims there is only one right answer to complex issues. Democracy fails when extremists believe violence aimed at elected officials is a legitimate means for resolving disagreements.

Each of us who values democracy knows it is a messy and imperfect process. As Winston Churchill once said, "Democracy is the worst form of government except all other forms that have been tried from time to time." We should treat our elected leaders with respect -- even when we disagree with them. Here in America, churches pray every Sunday for those who lead us. More of us should reflect that spirit during the other six days of the week.

And we all should speak out against hateful speech and actions directed at our leaders. In Israel, the extremists who opposed Rabin distributed posters of him dressed in a Nazi uniform and called him a traitor. Those fanatics should have been condemned by all reasonable people whether or not they liked Rabin or agreed with his policies. Hate begets more hate and can create a climate of violence in which extremists may get pushed over the edge to bomb buildings or assassinate prime ministers.

How do we express our strongest views without resorting to violence in word or deed? That is a question for all of us to answer.

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TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

RELEASE: WEEKEND, DECEMBER 9-10, 1995

Joyce McCartan's youngest son, Gary, was shot to death by terrorists in his Belfast home one month before his 18th birthday.

His mother had already lost other loved ones to the violent conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. She buried her "baby" in the new suit he had planned to wear at his wedding.

Joyce refused to give in to bitterness. After Gary's death in 1987, she founded the Women's Information Drop-in Centre in a poor neighborhood in Belfast. She continues to work for peace throughout Northern Ireland, bringing Catholic and Protestant women together to share their grief and to find ways to break the cycle of violence in their communities.

I met Joyce during a trip to Belfast with my husband last week. The President went there and to Dublin and London to convey American support for the peace brought to Northern Ireland when Catholic and Protestant leaders agreed to a cease-fire after 25 years of violence and death.

At a small fish and chips restaurant run by members of Joyce's community organization, I met with seven women united in their commitment to honor the memories of the more than 3,200 men, women and children who have died during "The Troubles."

They told me about their hopes and efforts for a lasting and just peace. They believe it can bring economic prosperity and social progress to both Catholic and Protestant communities.

The women I met are not high-level diplomats or professional negotiators. Nor are they elected officials. But it is clear that there would be far less hope for Northern Ireland if women like Joyce had not worked tirelessly among their friends and neighbors to knock down barriers, overcome suspicions and defy history.

Women were and are a driving force behind peace in Northern Ireland.

What unites them is their knowledge that, no matter their background or beliefs, they share the same tragedies: the loss of loved ones to bombs, to assassinations, to random gunfire, and the painful task of preserving families in the midst of poverty and political unrest.

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Women are dropping ancient grudges that have caused so much pain and terror. They are finding ways to make their faith a source of strength, not division. Mothers are integrating schools and summer camps, bringing together Protestant and Catholic children for the first time and refusing to pass on old traditions of hate, fear and mistrust.

Women in organizations like the one Joyce McCartan founded are working to solve the problems that have caused many young people to resort to violence -- poverty, limited education, joblessness and hopelessness.

They have created job training programs for young men and women who do not plan to go to college, counseled families, worked on ways to raise women's self-confidence and civic participation, and helped each other launch small businesses in Belfast's poorest neighborhoods.

"We have worked together over the years from both sides of the community. Nothing separates us," Joyce said.

On the same day that I met these remarkable women, my husband spoke at the Mackie plant in Belfast where Catholic and Protestant workers enter through separate doors but work side by side. Two children, one Catholic and one Protestant, introduced him.

"My first daddy died in the Troubles," said 9-year-old Catherine Hamill. "It was the saddest day of my life. I still think of him. Now it is nice and peaceful. I like having peace and quiet for a change, instead of people shooting and killing. My Christmas wish is that peace and love will last in Ireland forever."

That should be our hope not just for Ireland but for the Middle East, Bosnia, Haiti and the streets in America -- anywhere children are at risk of losing their innocence and lives because of violence and hatred. If Joyce McCartan and Catherine Hamill can avoid hatred and bitterness, why can't all of us open our own hearts now and in the days and months ahead?

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TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

RELEASE: WEEKEND, JANUARY 13-14, 1996

I was 14 years old the first time I saw Martin Luther King Jr. It was 1962, and my church youth group went to hear him speak at Orchestra Hall in Chicago. When he finished, we waited in the auditorium until everyone was gone, just so we could shake his hand.

We were teen-agers living in a secure middle-class neighborhood that was virtually all-white. But even from that suburban cocoon, I could not mistake his passion and conviction. Here was a man who had weathered persecution and harassment to stand up for what he believed was right: racial tolerance, social justice and non-violent change.

On every continent, ordinary people are heeding Dr. King's message that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Whether they are residents of a Moslem town in Central Bosnia who have pledged to share their harvest with their Croat neighbors or mothers in northern Ireland who have organized their neighborhoods to help end a quarter-century of sectarian violence, they are refusing to give in to ancient grudges and traditions of hate.

Take a look at Billings, Mont., where citizens closed ranks against purveyors of bigotry when a series of hate crimes scarred their community.

It started when headstones at a Jewish cemetery were desecrated in the fall of 1993. Then, parishioners at a black church were harassed by three white men during a service. A few weeks later, a Native American woman found swastikas and epithets spray-painted on her house. Soon afterward, a beer bottle smashed through a glass door at the house of the local symphony director, who had immigrated from Israel.

One incident in particular struck a nerve. A cinder block was hurled through the bedroom window of a 5-year-old boy, where a menorah had been placed to celebrate the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah. The boy was not hurt. His bed was covered with shattered glass.

The community of Billings mobilized as if every citizen's rights had been violated. Members of the painters union volunteered their time to paint over the graffiti. Some local churchgoers wore Stars of David, and a group of concerned citizens held a vigil across the street from the local synagogue.

The Billings Gazette printed a full-page picture of a menorah, which thousands of non-Jewish residents clipped out and pasted in their windows in a show of solidarity for their Jewish neighbors. A Catholic high school put up a sign saying "Happy Hanukkah to our Jewish Friends." And a local sporting goods store displayed a message that said: "Not in Our Town."

Like Dr. King, the people of Billings had the power to imagine what it is like to be in someone else's shoes.

For children today, who are growing up at a time of new cultural tensions and divisions, the King message of compassion, unity and tolerance is especially urgent.

The power of imagination shines most brightly in children and young people. Without the idealism of youth, we would never have had a civil rights movement. Inspired civil rights workers were often in their teens and early 20s. Martin Luther King himself was a young man when called to a life of service.

One way we can spark imagination in our children is to read stories to them about people who stand up for their convictions. In hearing accounts of other people's lives, children learn that each of us can make a difference in our world.

In "A Call to Character," Colin Greer and Herbert Kohl have pulled together a collection of stories, including one by Ossie Davis called "Just Like Martin," in which a 14-year-old not only commits himself to the non-violent civil rights struggle but wins his father's reluctant admiration and support for doing it. In the end, they march together, Daddy coming to respect his son's sense of responsibility and his courage against the billy clubs he will face.

There is also a story by the renowned scholar and theologian Rabbi A.J. Heschel, an ally of Dr. King during the civil rights movement. He remembers how, as a 7-year-old boy, he heard the Old Testament tale of Isaac's narrow escape from sacrifice.

"Supposing the angel had come too late?" he cried.

"An angel cannot come late," his teacher comforted him.

How many times in our own lives do we put off helping others, either out of a lack of empathy or a failure to understand their situation?

Martin Luther King was right, if only we would hear his message. "I've decided to stick with love," he once said. "Hate is too great a burden to bear."

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TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

RELEASE: WEEKEND, FEBRUARY 10-11, 1996

I always admired Christopher Reeve as an actor. I never saw him on Broadway, but like most people, I loved his movie portrayal of Superman and his role in the fantasy romance "Somewhere in Time."

My admiration has only grown since his riding accident last May. Christopher Reeve is no longer playing a part that's heroic. He's living one.

Hooked up to a ventilator and paralyzed from the neck down, he has inspired millions with his courageous response to a tragic and freak fall from a horse. Who wasn't moved by his candor and grace in the memorable interview he gave to Barbara Walters just a few months after his spinal cord was crushed?

Now, along with his painstaking recovery, he faces medical bills totaling \$400,000 a year. With an insurance policy that limits the lifetime benefits he can receive, his coverage is due to run out after three years.

Still, he never dwells on his own situation. As a celebrity, he knows he can make a living giving speeches and directing films. He is far more worried about the tens of millions of Americans who can't get or keep medical coverage because of the misplaced priorities of our health care system.

Christopher Reeve wants to know why our country is willing to spend billions of dollars on Medicare and Medicaid payments to cover nursing-home fees for quadriplegics and those suffering from neurological diseases like Lou Gehrig's, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's but not spend the lesser amounts it would take to find cures.

I know the health care reform effort I worked on was not successful. But the issues it raised and the problems it sought to resolve are still with us today.

The United States is the only industrial society in the world where insurance companies are allowed to deny coverage to people who are sick or have lost a job. And insurance companies continue to get away with limiting people's lifetime benefits.

As Christopher Reeve said just last week, "These issues are crucial to our welfare."

There are ways to make progress without a massive overhaul of the health care system.

Right now, a bipartisan bill that deals with some of these issues is stuck in Congress. Sponsored by Republican Sen. Nancy Kassebaum of Kansas and Democratic Sen. Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, the bill would make long-overdue changes in the ways insurance companies treat Americans.

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It would prevent insurers from denying coverage to a person who already has a medical condition. It would forbid insurance companies from dropping longtime customers when they become chronically ill.

And it would require insurance companies to sell policies to workers who have been covered for at least 18 months by their employers so that they remain insured even if they lose or leave a job.

There is also an amendment to the bill, sponsored by Republican Sen. James Jeffords of Vermont, that would help the 230,000 Americans in situations similar to Christopher Reeve's. It would raise the lifetime limit on benefits to a minimum of \$10 million.

The Kennedy-Kassebaum bill has support from dozens of Republicans and Democrats. It is now ready for a vote by the full Senate. Very few legislators have publicly opposed the bill.

So why hasn't it passed?

Because a handful of senators have used parliamentary maneuvering to stall it for five months. To make matters worse, we cannot even hold the senators accountable because the Senate's rules allow them to remain anonymous.

Christopher Reeve is pushing hard for passage of Kennedy-Kassebaum and the Jeffords amendment. He also is doing his part to educate people about the failures of a system that spends far more money on expensive treatments than on preventing and curing costly diseases.

He has written to the President and House Speaker Newt Gingrich about congressional threats to cut funds for research into spinal cord injuries and neurological diseases (and is proud to have lobbied successfully against some of those cuts).

He has worked on animated diagrams for television that explain what happens to the body when the spinal cord is injured. And he recently announced an effort to establish the Reeve-Irvine Research Center at the University of California at Irvine that will support the study of spinal cord injuries and diseases. Philanthropist Joan Irvine Smith has agreed to put up \$1 million for the project to be matched with money from other sources.

"There is a humanitarian and economic rationale" for medical research and fair insurance policies, he says. "It's good for the country in every conceivable way."

If you agree with Christopher Reeve, take the time to call your senators and ask them to help us take a first step to bringing better health and peace of mind to millions of Americans. Tell them to pass the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill.

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**THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON**

March 1, 1996

MEMORANDAUM FOR FIRST LADY STAFF

FROM: LISA CAPUTO

RE: HRC COLUMN

Attached is HRC's additional "bonus" column for the upcoming week. Enjoy!

**NOTE TO HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON EDITORS: THE FOLLOWING IS A
BONUS COLUMN FOR YOUR USE. THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION. --
CREATORS SYNDICATE, INC.**

**TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

As one of the few mothers in the room when the President met with leading entertainment executives at the White House Thursday, I can tell you how encouraging the discussion was.

The heads of companies that produce our movies and television shows were all there. Cap Cities/ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, PBS, Disney, Turner Broadcasting, DreamWorks, Warner Bros., Sony and Viacom, along with other major media companies, cable stations and the creative guilds, joined together to launch plans for a television rating system.

They pledged to develop a system by early next year that will help parents gauge the amount of violence, sex and profane language used on shows. Also discussed were ways to improve the quality of children's programming.

During the meeting, I had a strong sense that these executives are listening to America's parents.

They are the people who run the networks, operate the cable stations and produce the shows -- the men and women who are, as one executive put it, "setting the cultural agenda for the world."

Just getting these entertainment executives to sit down at a table together was remarkable. After all, the entertainment industry is highly competitive, and many of these professionals have conflicting interests. A few weeks ago, there were doubts that such a meeting could ever take place, let alone at the White House.

This is an impressive step forward. Information is power. And right now, parents don't have enough information or power when it comes to the programs their children watch on television.

I know this from experience. As hard as I tried to be vigilant about my own daughter's viewing habits when she was younger, I couldn't monitor the television screen 24 hours a day.

Today, the majority of American children live in houses with three television sets. The typical family watches 51 hours of television a week. They can get shows on up to 70 channels, making it even harder for parents to control the messages and images their children absorb.

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A rating system may not be the perfect solution, but it certainly will help. Ratings will be encoded so that parents can use the new v-chip to block out programs that are inappropriate for their children. As part of the telecommunications bill the President signed into law last month, v-chips will be required in all new television sets starting in 1998.

As the President said at Thursday's meeting, "We are handing the TV remote control back to America's parents -- so that they can pass on their values and protect their children."

The industry leaders know it will be a daunting task to give ratings to hundreds of thousands of television shows. Yet, to a person, they seemed ready and willing to rise to the challenge.

At the same time, nobody in the room was under any illusion that a rating system or the v-chip will end violence in America or get rid of all the guns on our streets.

Even with ratings and a v-chip, parents have to take more responsibility by turning the television off sometimes. They have to work harder to engage their children in other activities. They have to take the time to talk to their kids instead of parking them in front of the tube at every opportunity.

Vice President Gore told the broadcast executives that parents have to take primary responsibility "for raising their children in an era of information overload."

Better programming is also part of the solution. One of the legitimate concerns of the industry representatives is that educational and quality programming on commercial television is not always watched as much as the alternative. Parents must not just screen out bad programs but tune in good ones.

One executive emphasized that education and entertainment are not mutually exclusive and that quality programming can be profitable. The Discovery Channel, for example, has started a 24-hour children's educational channel with no commercials.

Nickelodeon, Disney and A&E are staples of our household, and I'm sure that's true for many other parents and children who want a steady diet of family-friendly programming.

This is all happening because millions of parents across the country have let the entertainment industry know that there is an audience out there for quality programming. Violence, sex and profanity are not the only things that sell.

Now, with a rating system in the works, the industry has taken its biggest step ever on behalf of parents and children. For the commitment they made to the President and the American public Thursday, the leaders of our media and entertainment industry deserve our thanks and praise.

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February 29, 1996

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 20, 1996

MEMORANDUM FOR FIRST LADY STAFF

FROM: LISA CAPUTO

RE: HRC COLUMN

Attached is HRC's column for the upcoming week. Enjoy!

TALKING IT OVER
BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

It's impossible to be in Washington in the spring without thinking of Lady Bird Johnson.

Every time I see daffodils on the parkways, I think of Mrs. Johnson. Whenever I see cherry trees blossoming along the Potomac River or tulips dotting the monument grounds, I think of Mrs. Johnson too.

I think of her because, more than anyone else, Lady Bird Johnson was responsible for planting hundreds of thousands of flowers and trees in our nation's capital and inspiring millions of Americans to do the same in their communities.

Now that I find myself in the role she filled so gracefully three decades ago, my admiration for her only grows.

When I talked to Mrs. Johnson recently, she told me about her love of nature and the environment, and her belief that our natural surroundings play an important role in our lives.

Flowers, she said, kept her company as a girl growing up with few playmates in the East Texas countryside.

"To walk through the woods and see the understory of dogwood, it was like fairyland," she said. "To see the first violet -- it was big news for me."

Thirty years ago, during President Johnson's administration, Mrs. Johnson decided to share her love of nature with the nation. "Beautification," as it was called, became her special cause.

Parks, town squares, playgrounds and even highways across the country came alive with newly planted trees and flowers. Garden clubs enjoyed new clout. Litter became a national enemy.

As Mrs. Johnson explains it, beautification was not just about gardening and landscaping. Conservation, city planning, waste management and urban renewal were all part of her effort to encourage Americans to make their environment more pleasing to the eye and to the spirit.

Mrs. Johnson traveled across the country, giving speeches, visiting local beautification projects and touring national parks.

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"I hoped this would be a rippling wave -- all this feeling and talk and work about enhancing the environment -- that it would spread out across the land," she said. "Raising the level of awareness was most important."

The federal highway beautification bill, which focused on cleaning up junkyards and removing billboards along highways, was so strongly identified with her efforts that it was nicknamed "Lady Bird's bill."

President Johnson made no bones about who was the driving force behind it. When he signed the measure, he handed the pen to the First Lady.

Transforming the nation's capital was one of her most energetic campaigns. When she first arrived in Washington, she remembers, the city's landscape was "pretty bare." There were "a few shrubs here and there, a few random tufts of grass, a sagging bench."

Through her Committee for a More Beautiful Capital, Mrs. Johnson worked with philanthropists and the Park Service to re-landscape, plant trees and flowers, and clean up parks, streets, schools and other public areas.

Mrs. Johnson wasn't only interested in beautifying the tourist spots but also the depressed inner city. The committee's motto was: "Plant masses of flowers where the masses pass."

"You want (flowers) to be seen and enjoyed. You want them to be used, to give pleasure," Mrs. Johnson said. "I hoped to add color to the city."

In all, nearly 2 million daffodil bulbs, 83,000 flowering plants, 50,000 shrubs, 137,000 annuals and 25,000 trees were planted in Washington. Ten thousand azaleas lined Pennsylvania Avenue. Mrs. Johnson planted a new group of cherry-blossom trees, a gift from the Japanese Embassy.

At the White House, she always enjoyed looking at the trees that different Presidents had planted on the grounds, especially the Andrew Jackson Magnolia that she could see from the second-floor Truman Balcony.

"I did so want to plant one that was a resident of our own part of Texas for Lyndon to name," she said. "The live oak doesn't grow that far north, so I chose a willow oak and planted it right close to Lyndon's office."

Mrs. Johnson has lived in the Texas hill country for many years now, but she says she still misses spring in Washington.

"It is just a great long symphony. The progress of spring always just lifted me a good bit. At the first faint green of the willows along the Potomac ... you knew it was not fall," she said. "Then pretty soon, there'd be that graceful yellow

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forsythia in people's yards. I miss it. It was a sort of a signature of Washington. It was a story that never grew old, and I loved every chapter."

Now 83, her passion for beautification has never waned. She founded the National Wildflower Research Center in Austin, which, she says, is "my last hurrah." And she continues to encourage Americans to do more to protect and enhance the natural environment we all share.

"It is joy giving," she said. "One can think of it as an inheritance for your children and grandchildren and the future of our nation.

"It's a plus for your town, a plus for your heart. It's just a good thing to do."

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March 19, 1996

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

April 10, 1996

MEMORANDUM FOR FIRST LADY STAFF

FROM: LISA CAPUTO

RE: HRC COLUMN

Attached is HRC's column for the upcoming week. Enjoy!

TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

I'm not sure I can ever fully put into words the emotions of the past week. Who can adequately describe the painful shrieks of a young boy for his dead father or the sight of 33 flag-draped caskets being loaded silently -- one by one -- into shiny black hearses?

Who can make sense of any tragedy?

When I was in Turkey with Chelsea two weeks ago, I was on board an Air Force T43 flying from Ankara to Istanbul, with a stop in Ephesus. It was a perfect day for flying: sunny and clear with breathtaking views of the Aegean Sea and the Turkish landscape below.

The same plane -- and some of the same crew -- was also on duty seven days later, flying Commerce Secretary Ron Brown's group from Bosnia to Croatia in a violent rainstorm.

When that T43 crashed into a rugged mountainside near the Adriatic Coast, the President and I lost close friends and colleagues. And all of America lost noble citizens whose lives were devoted to spreading peace and prosperity around the world.

I knew Ron Brown because he was a friend and also a member of my husband's Cabinet -- the best Secretary of Commerce our nation has ever had.

He had a laser-like intelligence and an infectious smile that lit up every room he entered. To Ron, no hurdle was insurmountable, whether it was growing up in Harlem or serving as chairman of the Democratic National Committee.

When the President asked Ron to promote American economic opportunities worldwide, he embraced that challenge because he understood that expanding trade abroad meant creating jobs at home.

He traveled tirelessly, hunting for new markets for American goods and services. Business leaders who traveled with him not only brought home orders but also a greater understanding that economic competition in today's world involves countries as well as companies.

Ron was excited about the mission to Bosnia. It was not primarily about American trade and jobs but about American ingenuity and how it could help rebuild lives shattered by war. Whenever I think of Ron Brown and the extraordinary life he lived, I will always think of his grace, brilliance and profound humanity.

Adam Darling, only 29, was also aboard the plane. I first met Adam during the presidential campaign in 1992, when his parents hosted a political gathering at their bed and breakfast in Santa Cruz, Calif. Adam was spunky and optimistic and interested in

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politics. I encouraged him to work for my husband's campaign. To my delight, he did and stayed on after the election as an assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Commerce.

Adam was filled with a desire to help others. When he moved to Washington, he immediately got involved in the community, helping convert abandoned buildings into livable housing. He was also an active member of our church. At Easter services last Sunday morning, Bill, Chelsea and I shared a pew with Adam's parents and sister. We sang Adam's favorite hymn, "This Is My Song."

Like Ron Brown and Adam Darling, every one of our countrymen whose life was lost in that horrible plane crash embodied the American ideals of citizenship and service.

There were committed public servants like Assistant Secretary of Commerce Charles Meissner, who left a prestigious position in banking to work in government, and Steve Kaminski, a 20-year veteran at Commerce who had won the department's Gold Medal Award.

There were talented and eager young government staffers like Naomi Warbasse, who was fluent in Czech and German and on the path to a promising career in international affairs. She would have turned 25 this weekend.

There was Duane Christian, the Secretary's Chief of Security and a 10-year employee at the department who also coached baseball in the inner city. There were devoted professionals Gail Dobert, Carol Hamilton, Kathryn Hoffman, Kathy Kellogg and William Morton, whose talent, vision and energy helped make Ron Brown's staff one of the most effective and admired in Washington.

There was Lee Jackson, who worked for the Treasury Department promoting economic development in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and James Lewek, a government intelligence analyst specializing in European economic matters.

There was a highly esteemed correspondent for The New York Times, Nathaniel Nash, whose brave 8-year-old son attended the memorial service at Dover Air Force Base last weekend in his Cub Scout uniform.

And there were six dedicated members of the United States Air Force: Captains Ashley Davis and Timothy Schafer, Staff Sergeants Gerald Aldrich and Robert Farrington Jr. and Technical Sergeants Shelly Kelly and Cheryl Turnage.

Twelve leaders of American businesses also accompanied the Secretary, not simply because they wanted to increase their companies' profits but because they knew that democracy could not fully take hold in Bosnia if the country's economic infrastructure is not repaired.

Each of these business leaders brought expertise and experience sorely needed in Bosnia.

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David Ford's company had donated glass for a hospital in Sarajevo, and he was going to see it being installed.

Robert Donovan, Frank Maier, John Scoville and Robert Whittaker were interested in promoting power generation projects. Claudio Elia's company was involved in pollution control, and Walter Murphy was an expert on telecommunications. Stuart Tholan and Leonard Pieroni had worked on engineering and reconstruction in Kuwait after the Persian Gulf War. Donald Turner's company specialized in building low-income housing. Paul Cushman was a banking executive who was exploring investment opportunities. And Barry Conrad was a lover of the Balkans who was determined to build hotels and promote tourism in the war-torn region.

Finally, there was Lawry Payne, one of the Commerce Department staffers I had come to know best over the last few years. He had first worked for me organizing several trips, including my visit to the 1994 Olympics in Norway, and he was a close friend of many members of my staff.

Lawry had owned a chain of ice cream stores in Massachusetts and New Hampshire and worked on Wall Street before joining the administration. He wasn't supposed to be on the Secretary's trip to Bosnia. But he was a bachelor, and given the danger of the mission to the former Yugoslavia, he volunteered to go in place of a colleague who had a wife and children.

These were the lives our country lost in Croatia last week. These were the lives of 33 patriotic men and women who, as the President said in Dover, "show us the best of America."

"They knew what their country had given them," the President said, "and they gave it back with a force, an energy, an optimism that every one of us can be proud of.

"Even as we grieve for what their lives might have been, let us celebrate what their lives were, for their public achievements and their private victories of love and kindness and devotion are things that no one -- no one -- could do anything but treasure."

May God bless each and every one of them, and the loved ones they have left behind, for through their lives they have blessed us, our country and the ideals we cherish.

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April 9, 1996

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

April 17, 1996

MEMORANDUM FOR FIRST LADY STAFF

FROM: LISA CAPUTO

RE: HRC COLUMN

Attached is HRC's column for the upcoming week. Enjoy!

TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For all Chicago Cubs fans, every new baseball season means another season of optimism. Just 162 games stand between us and our first pennant since 1945.

Ryne Sandberg is back. The Cubs are at the top of the Central Division. Wrigley Field and its green ivy walls are as poised as ever to host the World Series. I'm hopeful.

I have been a Cubs fan since I was a child growing up in the Chicago suburbs. Despite more than half a century of frustrated pennant dreams, the Cubs are still my favorite team. Even when baseball has tested my patience and allegiance, I've always managed to hold on to my soft spot for the Cubs.

In our household, rooting for the Cubs was a family affair. My father talked about the Cubs in the same way a parent talks about an errant but still loved child. "I know they can do it if they don't blow it, which they probably will, so we've got to stand behind them all the way. Who knows? Maybe this is the year."

On rainy summer afternoons, my brothers and I often watched the games on television. We'd act out the plays that had just happened and yell and scream and imitate announcer Jack Brickhouse. And then as soon as the sun came out, with my mother's encouragement, we'd all go out into the backyard and play the game all over again.

It is that atmosphere of enthusiasm, support and continuing hopefulness that I think unites all Cubs fans. Not many of us can re-create what it felt like to be a kid or a teen-ager watching the Cubs play. I can't remember any of the statistics I'd memorize and discuss with my friends, but the Cubs gave us wonderful memories that we can draw upon when we need them.

Since leaving Chicago, I've discovered that Cubs fans are everywhere, connected by a set of complicated emotions and attachments that only Cubs fans fully understand.

It doesn't matter what city we're in. We quickly recognize each other. We're the ones with a look of undaunted optimism on our faces. Some might call it foolishness or naivete, but we prefer to call it what Ernie Banks calls it -- positivism.

We know that being a Cubs fan prepares you for life (and, I've discovered, for Washington and politics). Season after season, we learn that even though our faith will