

thing that would be done. I don't think anything's going to come out other than what you already know.

Q. What will you say about your friend in Arkansas?

*The President.* That he was a wonderful person. That I don't think that any of us will ever know exactly why his life ended the way it did. But today I think that we should all determine not to judge his life by the way it ended solely. He was a terrific friend, a great father, a great husband, a great lawyer. He was one of the ablest and best people I ever knew in my life. That's what makes this day the more painful. But we have to accept the fact that there are many things we're not in control of, many things we don't understand, and we have to be grateful for what his life was.

Thank you.

#### *Midwest Disaster Assistance*

Q. The floods—what about the funds, and are they playing politics on the flood issue?

*The President.* Who?

Q. The House?

*The President.* I don't think we should read too much into that. Let's wait and see what happens next week. There are people in the House that have very strong feelings about the procedures by which matters should be brought to vote and debated, and I think that's what's going on. I wouldn't read too much into that one way or the other. Let's wait and see what they do. I think they'll work through it next week.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:15 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House prior to his departure for Little Rock, AR. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## Exchange With Reporters in Hope, Arkansas July 23, 1993

Q. How are you feeling?

Q. Can you tell us—what are these water-melons?

*The President.* They're the best. It's a little early yet. They'll be big in about a month. Four weeks from now we're going to have the water-melon festival here. And I used to come down here every year and run in the 5K run and enter the cow chip throwing contest, which I won one year, I'm embarrassed to say. The year I won it they said I shouldn't be rewarded because I have an unfair advantage, since politicians do it for a living. [*Laughter*] That's what they said.

But anyway, they're pretty good yet, but it's a little early in the season, and we need a little more rain.

Q. Is this your first trip back to Hope since the Inauguration?

*The President.* Yes. Yeah.

Q. How is Mrs. Foster doing, Mr. President?

*The President.* I think they're doing pretty well. You can see they've got a very wide circle of friends here in this State, up in Little Rock and here. I think it will really help them a lot.

Q. How are you doing?

*The President.* I'm all right. I'm pretty sad, but I'm all right.

Q. Does it help you to come home?

*The President.* Oh, a lot. We were all standing out there at the cemetery today, and all these people showed up we went to kindergarten and first grade with and people that all of us have shared the last 20 or 30 years with. It helped them a lot, I think, and it helped me. And then getting to go by and see my uncle meant a lot to me. He'll be 89 in December. Yes, he's a remarkable man, remarkable man.

Q. He's 89?

*The President.* December. He's 88; he'll be 89 in December. He had lung cancer like 15 years ago, had a lung taken out, and just rolled right on. He lost his wife a couple of years ago.

Q. Your mother wasn't in that picture?

*The President.* Yes, she had to go back. She's doing something now.

Q. Did he have any advice for you?

*The President.* He said, "You remember at

Christmas,” he said, “I told you you were grabbing hold of a big hog by the tail.” He said, “The problem with grabbing hold of a big hog by the tail is a hog’s tail gets smaller and smaller and smaller. You just can’t let one start to get away from you.” [Laughter]

Q. What does that mean?

*The President.* It means hold tight, I think.

Q. You’re not really going to have a haircut on Air Force One, are you?

*The President.* No. No, but my barber, he’s going to cut my hair.

Q. You’re going to him? What time?

*The President.* I’m going to meet him somewhere, wherever he says to meet. I told him I’d either come there, or he could come to me. He’s going to decide. He’s closing up at 6 p.m. He ends at 6 p.m. on Saturday. He works all day Saturday because it’s convenient for working people to go in there. So when we get back, he’ll have been down about 30 minutes, so we’re just going to go wherever he says go.

Q. Were you surprised the limo was down when you went out to the house today? Did you expect to spend 15 minutes in the street there?

*The President.* Oh, I didn’t know whether they were back or not, but I knew I’d have to spend a little time with the neighborhood kids anyway, so it was fine. And then a lot of people came up that don’t live in the neighborhood that I knew. That was Win Rockefeller, you know, came up—

Q. I saw, yes.

*The President.* He’s an alltime, longtime friend of mine and Hillary’s. I reappointed him the State police commissioner. Senator Pryor put him on the State police commission.

Q. It’s the only Corvette police car in the country.

*The President.* Yes. He loves the State police. He did when I first met him in 1969, when his father was the Governor and he and I were students. And I was fixin’ to go—I had been in England, and he was fixin’ to go. He was already in love with the State police. It was his number one passion even when he was a young boy. So it was nice to see him.

Q. Are we going to get some of these watermelons—

*The President.* You bet.

Q. —back to Washington?

*The President.* Everybody on the plane. You’re on the plane, aren’t you?

Q. Oh, absolutely.

Q. I didn’t realize they had yellow meat. I think of watermelons as just red.

*The President.* Yes, you can breed them for yellow, too. The seeds—yeah.

Q. Are they sweeter?

*The President.* They’re sweeter. You’ll see. They’re going to load up. I’m going to ask Jack how many yellow-meated ones he put on. But I had him put one or two on.

Q. They just filled the van up right behind you.

*The President.* I had him put one or two yellow-meated ones on so everybody could get a chance to taste them.

Q. Yes, I’ve never had one.

*The President.* Now, in August, when they start having the contest for the biggest melon, they’re really not much. They don’t taste very good after they get about 65 pounds or bigger than that, they’ve got so much water in them. But you can almost literally watch them grow. I mean, they get up to 50, 60, 70 pounds. And you just have to keep pouring water—and they grow in real sandy soil—and pour water in them. The stalk is there, and it just sucks the water out of the ground, literally, like a vacuum cleaner. The water will go in and just suck it back out into the melon. It is amazing.

Q. It looks kind of dry here, Mr. President.

*The President.* Yes, it’s been dry. We may not get many big melons this year. A lot of it is the seeds and the sand, the seeds and the soil and just proper care. It’s really interesting to watch them get into the contest the last week or two because if the skin splits at all, if there’s the tiniest rend in the fabric of the skin, then the melon is disqualified from the contest. It doesn’t matter how much it weighs. It has to have a uniformly smooth skin, and yet the water is just bursting at it, you know. So they get down—it’s really scientific—you thump it, you just have to have a—you have to know when to quit. General rule of life.

Q. I guess that’s it.

Q. I still like your uncle’s advice about the hog by the tail.

*The President.* He said a lot of smart things to me. When I was in my first term as Governor, the one I lost, he told me I was in a world of trouble. He called me one day, the only time he ever called me the whole time I was in public life. He said, “People are mad

at you for raising car licenses.” I said, “They said they wanted the road fixed.” He said, “They didn’t mean it.” He said, “Most people like me,” he said, “I don’t give a rip about politics, as long as I can go hunting, fishing, rivers are clean.” He said, “They did want it, but not”—he said, “It just didn’t work.” He said, “You need to undo it.” He’s really smart. He’s a very smart guy.

Q. Has he figured out the deficit?

Q. Are you sure you don’t need him in Washington?

*The President.* He’s like a lot of people down here. He’s got a high IQ and not a lot of formal education but a world of horse sense. I mean, he’s really a smart man. And when I was a child living down here and then after I moved to Hot Springs when I was 6, I used to get on a bus, a Trailways bus, and take the bus back down here—stop at every little town along the way, you know—and come down and spend a weekend with him. He and his wife, they would feed me. And Chelsea wasn’t in that house 10 minutes till he had her in the back giving her peanut brittle.

Q. See, that’s what the world is all about.

*The President.* Yes. But I loved to go down here.

Q. We passed the house they said you were born in.

*The President.* Well, I was actually born in a hospital, which, funny, was torn down before the election. Somebody of little faith put an office building up there. Now they wish they didn’t. But that’s where I lived. And my mother, of course, was widowed by then, so my grandparents lived in that house. And my grandmother was a private-duty nurse. She lived down the block, and my granddaddy had a little country store out across from the other cemetery where Mack’s father and my father are buried. It’s parallel to the road we’re taking now. I think Mack went over there today—and where my grandparents are buried. But anyway, my granddaddy had a store out there, and my grandmother walked down the street to work every day. And Mother and I lived there. And then when I was 2, she went away to get her nurse’s training finished.

But Vince Foster’s house was around the corner. It was that sort of nice brick house around the corner. I don’t know if you noticed, but it had two-tone brick. It’s kind of ugly now,

but when he lived there they painted it white and it was perfectly beautiful. And for some reason—I never have understood why they took the white paint off, because it’s not near as pretty now. But anyway, that’s where Vince lived, around the corner.

Q. But that white house that’s being worked on is the one where you lived when you were little?

*The President.* Yes. When my mother left the hospital with me, we went there. We lived there until I was 4. When I was 4, my mother remarried Roger Clinton, and we moved out on the other side of town, a little bitty house on 13th Street. And I understand they’ve got a sign out front of that, too.

Q. I want to know why she let you play with knives at the age of 4, Mr. President. [Laughter]

*The President.* I don’t think they knew. I’m not sure they knew. It was a dull knife. It was a dull knife.

Q. Mr. President, what have you learned about life this week?

*The President.* I think what I said in the service and what I said to my staff: There are a lot of things that we’re not in control of and a lot of mysteries we don’t understand. And I think all of us need to work a lot harder not to be so pressured by whatever we’re doing that we don’t pay enough attention to ourselves, our families, and our friends, people we work with. I think we all need to not deaden our sensitivities by working too hard. It undermines how well you work for the people, and it obviously undermines the quality of life.

No one will ever know whether there was anything any of us could have done to avoid this, but it certainly gave me a lot of renewed sense of humility about how we should all conduct ourselves and what we should do.

But Vince Foster had a lot of friends. You can see that today. A whole lot of people really cared a lot about him.

Ready to go? We got it? Let’s roll.

NOTE: The exchange took place in the late afternoon at Jack Still’s watermelon stand. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.