

[At this point, the President left the reporters to speak with his fellow hunters. He then resumed speaking with reporters.]

The President. We didn't see many today, but we got two shots. There were a couple more that came in close, but they came in so fast that we weren't ready. But these were really the only two we could shoot at. And I had the charity—this crew over there, they all sat there and let me shoot at it. [Laughter]

Q. Are you glad to be home?

The President. Yes. I really started feeling like a person when I was about 5 minutes out on the water today.

NOTE. The President spoke at approximately 9 a.m. at the Robinson farm. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Exchange With Reporters at Cotham's Mercantile Store in Scott, Arkansas January 3, 1995

The President. We have a lot of people who come in who still use it as a country store, but as you can see, a lot of people come in and eat every day. We have people drive every day from Little Rock. But it's a regular pharmacy.

Q. It reminds me of the stores along that one street in Plains, Georgia, where Jimmy Carter lived. They had stores like this.

The President. They've even got a little museum here that I helped them put together, Plantation Museum. You saw that land coming back, all that farm land you saw, this is the heart of our rice country. We grow about 40 percent of America's rice on the land that we came across today.

Q. Forty percent?

The President. Yes.

Q. Wow.

The President. Arkansas is the number one rice-producing State in the country, more than California or anyplace. And you can see why, because of all the little—you see all the little rivers and creeks and everything.

Q. You've got the paddies.

The President. Yes. Good topsoil, and it's also a lot of high-tech stuff. They literally flood those rice fields. They have a little laser beam that they go down and throw that laser beam across that rice field to make sure the water level is just right, not too low so that the crop—[inaudible]—not too high so it rots. Just right. It's amazing.

Anyway—and we also went through—did you see the cotton field we went through?

Q. Sure did.

The President. And the name of the nearest town to where we were hunting today was Cotton Plant.

Q. Right. In fact, that's the dateline on all our stories.

The President. And cotton was a big crop here, but closer to the river, going back before the Civil War, but back here all the way up to the point. But that land, most of that land we saw today, we drove across was hardwood forest until the twenties. The timber companies came in and tore all the hardwood down. But because the topsoil was so thick, because the water was so great, it became great agriculturally. Fifty-three percent of this State is still covered with timberland. You couldn't tell that from today. It's a very different place. But anyway, that's—

Q. You sound homesick for—

The President. This was all a big part of my political base, all these places we've been through here today. I never lost—this State.

Q. [Inaudible]—county?

The President. Woodruff County. Benton County is the next—

Q. Woodruff County is where we were this morning.

The President. Woodruff County.

Q. Do you have a recommendation for us for lunch?

The President. All of our counties here have big sportsmen, like Tom's sponsor of Ducks Unlimited. With all these ducks, the sky is full of ducks and geese, and they come down from Canada down what's called the Mississippi Flyway, right down the river. And the reason

that they're now here is that it's gotten colder up north. The colder the weather is, the more birds fly south.

Q. Will they winter here or move on? They'll winter here?

Q. *The President.* No, they'll go further.

Q. Do you do any other kind of hunting here?

The President. Yeah. I usually go hunting—when I was living here—my ears are bad so I don't hunt very much. But I'd usually go hunting—I'd usually go duck hunting once a year and usually do something else once a year.

Q. Do you have pheasant hunting here?

The President. No. Turkey hunting, a lot of turkeys, a lot of deer, quail—lot of quail.

Q. Good fishing around here, too, isn't there?

The President. Wonderful, wonderful. Bass, trout.

I don't know if you guys saw the—when we were coming up, there were hundreds of ducks just like that. That's illegal to stop along the side of the road and shoot them.

Q. Because it's not fair or—

The President. Because it's not fair and because you can't just stop on the road and shoot them. And of course, there's a limit. You can only shoot two mallards a day.

Q. Do you ever feel like a sitting duck resting on the water sometime? [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes, I do—

Q. I think that's a political—

The President. [*Inaudible*]

Q. What is the deal with—our driver said if you shot the female first, that was it; you don't get to shoot anymore. How can you tell what you shoot first?

The President. You can tell when you go pick them up. [*Laughter*] There are different rules for different kinds of ducks, too. It changes every year. But one of the things that—one of the best organized things in America is the wildlife preservation. The hunters and fishermen are, in a way, the best conservationists in the country. They worked hard on this whole way of replenishing the duck species. You can see it—primarily, in America you see it here on the Mississippi Flyway. And then where we are, over on the Eastern Shore of Maryland you see a lot where the ducks fly down that way, along the coast, you see a lot of that. But there's been an enormous amount of money invested, some through public funds, largely through private funds, for things like that to replenish the species. And the length of the season, the timing

of the season, and the daily limits are carefully calibrated to allow maximum enjoyment of the sport while keeping the supplies replenished.

When I was Governor, I used to have a picture on my wall of a place in this country about 20 miles from here, back in the thirties, one of those open ponds with all the stumps like you saw today. Literally a hundred thousand ducks covered it, blanketed as far as you could see. And the population went way down. Now it's all been—[*inaudible*]—I don't think it will ever be able to—[*inaudible*]—we do the same thing with the deer population, very carefully managed. And it's a big deal. We still have factories that close—

Q. [*Inaudible*]—selection of the duck stamp each year now?

The President. No, I know that—my role in all this when I was Governor was to stay up—[*inaudible*]—fish commission. In a State like ours, it's an enormously important thing. Over half the adults in the State have a hunting or a fishing license.

Q. And you do, too, sir?

The President. I have a lifetime license. After I served as Governor for 10 years—you still have to buy the stamps every year, which we did. We're legal today. You still have to buy the stamps every year. But I've got a—they gave me a lifetime hunting and fishing license. Sort of like a gold watch—get to use it.

Q. Really. That's quite a perk.

Q. When is the last time you had this much fun?

The President. Oh, I don't know.

Q. Never. [*Laughter*]

The President. It's been a while. I had a good time. And the people I was hunting with today, they've been my friends for 20 years. That makes a difference. They're good people, farmers, people I've known for a long, long time.

Q. You said you felt like a real person.

The President. Yes, I liked it there. Old Bobby Robinson, he came out and talked to you—

Q. He was great.

Q. Yes, he was great.

The President. He's the salt of the Earth.

Q. He was bragging up his wife's breakfast. Was that pretty good?

The President. Unbelievable. I told Bobby, when I come over to see her I don't—it doesn't matter to me what happens, as long as she feeds me. [*Laughter*]

Q. Is it a combined license in Arkansas?

The President. You can. You can buy combined; you can buy separate. You can buy licenses—in the hunting season you can buy a hunting license, or you can buy a license to hunt separate things by season if you want. And also, you can buy different fishing licenses. We have a lot of people coming in on weekend fishing trips, tourists and all that, so there is a whole—the game and fish commission has a whole different menu of things depending on what it is you want to hunt, whether you want to hunt or fish, what you want.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. That's "American Gothic." Have you ever seen it?

Q. Oh, yes, the original. I hadn't seen this version of it.

The President. That's just sort of a tongue-in-cheek thing that an Arkansas artist did.

Q. Your favorite?

The President. Yes, yes. We've got one. We've got the original back at the White House. And they've got an old Governor's picture of me, and another one about 10 years old, unsigned.

Q. When you only hunt once a year, how do you keep your timing to be able to lead a duck?

The President. I hit the one. It was on the fly. And the other one I hit at a very long distance. It was almost—but it was a very long distance. I just—it was a good gun. I had a good gun. It was a little Remington with a shorter barrel, three-shot limit.

That's another interesting thing about this assault weapons deal. Some of these people that were opposing the 10—magazine limit on the assault weapons overlooked the fact that they were very happy to have a three-shot limit on the semiautomatic for shooting ducks. That's the law today. And when I was in Maryland last year, I was laughing—some of the folks up there—

Q. You can only put in three cartridges?

The President. Yes. You put in three, and you've got to—if they hold four, you put in three instead of four.

Q. Are you tickled about the school dedication tomorrow?

The President. Oh, yes. Yes, I'm real happy about that.

[At this point, the President finished his lunch and then went outside, where he again spoke with reporters.]

Q. You're ducking us. [Laughter]

Q. Thanks, Mark [Mark Knoller, CBS Radio]. Now you've wrecked his mood. [Laughter]

The President. I'll tell you what, I heard you on that duck call, it was like a magnet—[laughter]—come flying into the pond. [Laughter]

Q. We went out shopping last night. We had to go to three stores to get them. We went to Montgomery Ward, and they were sold out of duck calls.

The President. Well, they would be, here.

Q. Well, they were.

The President. This is our pastime at this time of year. But you can buy—you can have a duck call, pay anywhere from \$5 to \$125.

Q. We saw that, \$40 for a duck call. The one around your neck looked like an expensive one, too.

The President. Yes. Well, like I said, those are hand-made. And the guy that hand-made that is the mayor of Stuttgart, which is where they have the international duck calling championship.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Oh, yeah. You know, I've worked like a dog for the first 2 years. I worked every weekend. I worked at night. And I think I need to do a little more of this. And I'm glad I did the work, and I'm glad we got done what we did, but I also think it's important to kind of keep your batteries charged, your roots watered.

Q. Batteries charged for the start of a Republican Congress tomorrow?

The President. I'm looking forward to it.

Q. Somebody has to ask that question, right?

The President. I'm looking forward to it.

Q. Not dreading it?

The President. No. I just don't want to talk about it until tomorrow. [Laughter] I want to enjoy my—

Q. So much for the duck call.

Q. Got everything?

The President. No, no. These guys don't have their hamburgers yet. They said 5 minutes they'd have everybody's. I'm sorry, I thought you all had been fed.

Q. It's been a great day, Mr. President. Thank you.

The President. It has. I'm sorry it's raining on us. I guess I'd better not go play golf. [Laughter]

Q. [Inaudible]—worse than when you played golf in Martha's Vineyard on Labor Day?

The President. Yes, I've played golf in a lot worse. I've played golf here in 35 degrees sleet. But I had my uniform. It takes a special uniform for that.

Q. You can't golf in a duck uniform, is that it?

The President. You know, Hillary gave me a great Gore-tex suit that you can wear in the rain. It's rain-repellent. I've played a lot of golf in it.

Q. Doesn't it restrict your movement?

The President. No, because it's a double extra large. It's too big, so you can just swing away. [Laughter] But it's a—yes, it cuts down on your distance. But when you're out there in a hail-storm, you don't expect to hit it very far. [Laughter]

Are we ready?

Q. Can we get one picture?

The President. Oh, sure. This young lady made it all the way from here to Mount Vernon College. Good for you. Good luck to you. What do you teach?

Q. English, 12th grade.

The President. Hang in there.

Q. Are you going to go to the Plantation—

The President. I'm going to go home and put on some different duds and talk to Hillary about it. Then I'll go down to the Plantation Museum. Did you see it down there?

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 11:50 a.m. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Question-and-Answer Session With Students at William Jefferson Clinton Elementary Magnet School in Sherwood, Arkansas

January 4, 1995

The President. Well, good morning.

Students. Good morning.

The President. It's cold out there, isn't it?

Students. Yes.

The President. But it's warm in here.

Students. Yes.

The President. Do you like your new school?

Students. Yes.

The President. I want to congratulate you on being in positions of leadership in this school. I want to say how glad I am to be in this media center and how pleased I am it's named for my wife, who did a lot of work to try to help make sure we created schools like this magnet school that children and their parents could choose to come to, and it could give you very special learning opportunities. I'm very, very happy about that. And I'm glad to see all of you.

Hillary Clinton. I'd like to ask how many—are there any kindergartners here? Good. Now, this is your first year of school, and you're already going to be helping to lead the school. That's great.

How many first-graders do we have? Congratulations, first-graders. How about second-graders? That is wonderful. Now, some of you who are in first and second grade, you were

at different schools last year, right? So you're here. That's good. You get to help create the school.

How about third-graders? Ah, third-graders, that's really important. And I see a T-shirt that goes with the school. That's nice.

The President. Stand up, and let's look at that T-shirt.

Hillary Clinton. That's really nice. How about fourth-graders? Where are the fourth-graders? You have a lot of responsibility, I know. How about fifth-graders? Fifth-graders—great. I can see we get more and more as we move up the classes. And then, how about sixth-graders?

Well, thank you. This is really an exciting opportunity to help start a school, which is what all of you are doing, and to try to make sure it gets on the right track. So I want to thank you for doing that. It's a big responsibility.

I once was in the first class of a new school when I was in high school, and you really have a lot of chances to set the standards for everybody who comes after you. So thank you for doing that.

The President. Are you excited about starting a school?

Students. Yes.