

Exchange With Reporters After Duck Hunting Near Cotton Plant,
Arkansas
January 3, 1995

The President. Good morning, everybody.

Q. Was it a fair fight?

The President. Two for two. We only saw two.

Q. You've got two there?

The President. Yep.

Q. Is that the limit?

The President. No, but it was our limit today because it's all we saw.

Q. And are you responsible for their demise, sir?

The President. Yes, I shot them both. They let me shoot them, so I shot them.

Q. It's cold and it's wet out there. Where's the fun part?

The President. Well, the most fun part is just being out there when the light comes up and seeing the ducks come across. We had a lot of geese, too. You know, the geese fly in these huge V formations; they're really beautiful.

And we all shot them with weapons, I might add, that were not affected by the crime bill, except they were protected.

Q. What kind of weapons?

The President. We all had our different shot-guns. But I just want to make that point to all the sports men and women who are watching this. Contrary to what some of them were told in the last election, we're all still hunting and nobody has lost their gun. And we did the right thing to ban the assault weapons.

But I had a great time out there today. The best thing, like I said, about it today was just watching—on a cloudy day like this the ducks can see the hunters, so they're less likely to come down in large numbers, but we saw a huge number of them flying around. It was quite beautiful.

Q. Are they fooled by the duck calls?

The President. On a clear day, the duck calls help.

Q. Can we hear your technique?

The President. The duck call? No. I got this—this duck call is made in Stuttgart, Arkansas, which is close to here, where they have the international duck calling championship every year. And the man that made this call is now the mayor of the city.

Q. Does it work?

The President. It works fine.

Q. Six dollars at the Wal-Mart.

[At this point, a reporter blew a duck call.]

The President. Do it! Do it! [Laughter]

Q. What do you think?

The President. A little more down here.

[Laughter]

Q. I'm from Brooklyn.

The President. For Brooklyn, it's good.

[Laughter]

Q. Do you feel like you're really on vacation now, sir?

The President. Yes—well, I wish I had a little more time to spend. But it was wonderful. We had a great time out there, and I'm here with some old friends.

Q. The male bonding kind of thing?

The President. Well, the guys I was here with, the ones I was here with today, we bonded a long time ago. They may be interested in unbonding. [Laughter]

Q. Do you eat the ducks?

The President. Oh, yes. Yes, we're just trying to figure—I'm sitting here trying to figure out how I can get them back to the White House.

Q. Do you clean them?

The President. No, not lately I haven't. When I was younger I did that. I probably—maybe I'll do it again.

Q. How far off are they when you shoot them?

The President. How far were these away?

Hunter. The white one was a long way.

The President. One of them was—how far were they, Bob?

Bob Robinson. Oh, anywhere from 70 to 80 yards. The President made two great shots.

The President. I got lucky today.

Q. And who retrieves them?

The President. Actually, Bob went out and—no, you didn't go. They went out—we had a boat and got them today. Sometimes you have dogs get them but today we—people retrieved them in a flat-bottom boat. But it was a wonderful morning.

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[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