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Q. Sucking up the salt air on the west coast.

The President. Brie and cheese?

Q. No, tennis.

The President. Okay.

NOTE: The exchange began at 7:27 a.m. at the Ridgewood Country Club. In his remarks, the President referred to Roland Betts, owner, Chelsea Piers, L.P. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With Students at Crawford Elementary School and an Exchange With Reporters in Crawford, Texas *August 23, 2001*

The President. Thank you, Linda. Thanks for having me come. It's—what I thought I would do is just say a few words and maybe answer some of the questions—some questions from some of the boys and girls here, if you have any.

First, thanks for inviting me, Linda, and thanks for being so patient. And also, thank you all for hosting the national press corps. [*Laughter*] I know they've appreciated it very much, and on their behalf, I would like to thank them. They are, most of the time, well behaved. But they're an important part of our country, because in order for people to be able to know what's going on, they report the news. Sometimes they exaggerate; sometimes they don't. But they're an important part of our democracy. And I appreciate so very much you welcoming them here into your school.

I want to thank all the teachers who are here. Teaching is a noble profession, and we can't say enough good words about the teachers, not only here in Crawford but in Texas and across America. So thank you very much for being a teacher.

I want to thank the parents who are here. You're right, some of the sweetest—one of the sweetest words in our vocabulary is "mom." And my advice to you is, listen to your mother. [*Laughter*] That's about as good advice as a fellow can give, because your mom always has good advice.

I want to ask you a couple of questions. Do any of you read more than you watch TV?

Students. Yes.

The President. Well, that's important. The reason I asked that question is, it's so easy to watch TV, and it's hard to read. But you need to do it the other way around. You need to read more than you watch TV, because when you get to be a good reader, and I know you will be, it makes learning so much easier. And then when you learn a lot of things, it helps you realize your dreams.

And let me ask you this question. Some of you are too young to have probably thought about this question, but some of the older kids, how many of you dream about going to college?

[*At this point, the students indicated their interest in college.*]

The President. Oh, that's great. That means you'd better practice reading. That means you'd better read more than you watch TV if you want to achieve that goal. That means you've set a goal, right? That's what that is. You've set a goal, and now you're going to work hard to achieve the goal.

A couple of other points I want make, and then I'd be glad to answer some questions. In order to go to college or to realize your dreams, you have to make right choices in life. As you grow up, you've got

to learn to say yes to the good things and no to the bad things, like saying no to drugs. That's going to be important in order to realize your dreams. No to alcohol, excessive alcohol. You've just got to learn to make the right choices when you get older.

And guess what is going to help you learn that? Not only your moms and your dads but your teachers. And so I hope when you—in school, listen to the people that care about you a lot. Read more than you watch TV, listen to the values that you are being taught, and study hard, and then you will be able to realize your dreams.

I'll be glad to answer a couple of questions, and I'm going to answer some questions from the press corps, too.

You got any questions? Yes, sir.

Secret Service

Student. Where are your Secret Service? [*Laughter*] [*Inaudible*]

The President. Yes, that's right, let's see. There's a few of them in here. They're important because, unfortunately, there are some people in our society that don't think right, that are interested in harming people. And they do a great job, and they're good citizens, too, and I bet you get to see a lot of them around Crawford. They like to eat the hamburgers downtown here.

Yes, ma'am.

President's Golf Outings

Student. Where did you play golf at?

The President. I played golf at Ridgewood Country Club in Waco. This morning I played with my friend Senator David Sibley. He is your State senator. He just—he's not going to run again, he told everybody the other day. But we had a good time playing golf. And then I played at Clifton the other day. But I'm through playing golf—[*laughter*]—for a while.

Yes, sir.

Former President George Bush

Student. Was your dad the President?

The President. My dad was the President. He was the 41st President, and I'm the 43d President. And there has been one other time in which a dad and his son were Presidents. Do you know who that was?

Student. John Quincy Adams?

The President. John Quincy Adams was the son, and the daddy's name was John Adams.

Yes, ma'am.

The Presidency

Student. What is it like being President?

The President. Well, it's a great honor to be the President. It's one of these jobs where you can help people help themselves. It's a job that requires an understanding of where you want to lead. You've got to know who you are and where you want to lead the Nation, which means you've got to know what you believe in. And I believe in family, and I believe in faith, and I believe in personal responsibility. I believe that we ought to trust local people to make the decisions for schools in their cities and counties. I trust the people of Texas and all the other States across the country to make right decisions. It's a great job. Thank you for asking. It's a lot of work. But that's okay. People in Crawford are used to work.

Yes, sir.

President's Daily Activities

Student. What do you do on a regular basis?

The President. On a regular basis? Well, that's kind of a regular basis today. [*Laughter*]

I'm going back—I'm going to go back to our place right around the corner here, and I'm going to meet with Condoleezza Rice, who is the National Security Adviser. I'm going to give a phone call to President de la Rua, who is the President of Argentina, to talk about the recent financial package that has been developed on behalf of his nation, so that his nation doesn't default

on debt, which would then affect other people in the hemisphere.

I'm going to have lunch with First Lady Laura Bush, who sends her very best, by the way. I'm going to see Barney the dog and Spot the dog and India the cat.

I'm going to have a phone call this afternoon with my personnel office. One of the things the President does is name people to different positions of responsibility in Washington. We've got about an hour conference call to go over the names they've recommended to me to be nominated for a variety of positions.

We've got a horticulturist coming out from Texas A&M to help us identify the hardwood trees on our beautiful place. We've got about 12 or 13 different types of hardwoods out there, so he is going to educate us about the land. So I've got a lot going on today.

Tomorrow, interestingly enough, here in Crawford, Texas, the Secretary of Defense is coming down, and I'm going to hold a big, major press conference tomorrow morning to discuss defense matters. And that's very important because one of the jobs of the President is to be the Commander in Chief, which means we've got to have a strong military and a strong vision about our military. And we will discuss that tomorrow with the pool press corps, tomorrow morning. The Nation will be interested in the announcements we make as well as the discussion we have, I'm confident.

But when I get back—by the way, the interesting thing about Crawford, it's just like I've moved my office from Washington to Crawford. See, the thing about a President is, is that you're always the President, and there's always an issue, and somebody is always calling, and somebody needs to visit, and somebody is flying into town to come by, to sit down and talk about variety of issues. And so it's just like I moved my office from the Oval Office right out here to Crawford. And I'm glad I did; I love being here.

Let's see. Yes, sir.

2000 Election

Student. Did you——

The President. Yeah, you. Go ahead.

Student. Did you ever get mad at Al Gore during the election? [*Laughter*]

The President. Not really. No, I never did. I—he—you know, he ran a good, hard race, and I felt like we ran a good race, too, and never got mad at him. One of the things in politics you learn is, you can't get mad at people. And it's—never really did.

Yes, sir.

First Family

Student. Does your family go with you sometimes in Washington and——

The President. On trips? Sometimes. We have—Laura goes with me a lot, of course. We spend a lot of time together, and that's good for me. I don't know if it's so good for her, but it's good for me. [*Laughter*]

We've got twin daughters who are 19 years old, and sometimes they travel with us, and sometimes they don't. We recently went to Europe, overseas, and Barbara went and traveled with us that time, and she got to meet the Pope and saw some really interesting parts of the world. But they're pretty independent little girls right now, and they're both in college, and that's good.

Yes, ma'am.

The White House

Student. Where's the White House?

The President. The White House is in Washington, DC; it's up East. It's a beautiful house, and guess what color it is?

Audience members. White.

The President. That's right. That's a good answer.

And the other thing is, is that—but it's not—it's the people's house, see. The people of America own that house. And any time you go to Washington, or most of the times you can go to Washington, there's a tour, and you can go look at the White House and see what's in it. It's a beautiful

place. We're very lucky to live there, and we find it a great honor.

Yes, sir.

Student. Is it like really, really big or——

The President. It's big. Yes, it's really, really big.

Student. Is it bigger than the tower?

The President. Bigger than what?

Student. The tower.

The President. Bigger than the tower here? I don't know; that's pretty big.

It's got a lot of rooms. It's got some fantastic, big rooms. One of the things the President does is have what they have a state dinner. We occasionally welcome a foreign leader to come to Washington, DC, and we have a dinner, a very formal, fancy dinner. Laura and I are entertaining President Vicente Fox from Mexico, and that will be the first week we're back, the week right after Labor Day. It's going to be a majestic event, and the rooms are just really beautiful, formal rooms that I think you would find amazing.

Red shirt, right there.

The Presidency

Student. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Favorite what?

Student. [*Inaudible*]

The President. I can't hear either question.

Two red shirts. Yes, ma'am, go ahead.

Student. Are you looking forward to getting out of your office?

The President. Am I looking forward to getting out of the office? No. [*Laughter*] I enjoy it. It's been a great experience. This is a job where you can actually make a huge difference in people's lives, and I like that; I like that part of it—part of the job.

Yes, sir, back to you.

Student. What's your most favorite thing——

The President. Most favorite thing—helping people, to make a difference in people's lives, setting a good example, so that youngsters like yourself realize that democracy is—can be a very good system, that politics is a noble calling. I hope that I can inspire people to get involved in the political process. I hope I can inspire people to get involved with helping neighbors in need in Crawford, Texas. I hope I can help raise the bar, make sure every child is educated. And I hope to make the world more peaceful.

And that's a pretty big agenda, and the President has got a chance to do those things. And I'm honored to be able to do it.

Yes, sir.

President's Car

Student. [*Inaudible*]

The President. My limo? I don't have one here. I've got an SUV here.

Yes, ma'am.

President's Education

Student. Where did you go to college?

The President. Yale University.

Next. Yes.

President's Autograph

Student. Can I have your autograph?

The President. No. [*Laughter*] I mean, yes, of course. I'll sign one, and we'll—let you copy it.

President's Age

Student. How old are you?

The President. How old am I? I'm the speed limit. [*Laughter*] Fifty-five.

Student. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Well, the old speed limit.

Yes, Donna.

Little League

Student. What is your favorite childhood memory?

The President. My favorite childhood memory was playing Little League baseball in Midland, Texas. I was—I loved baseball, still love baseball. As a matter of fact, I'm going to the Little League World Series on Sunday. So we're going to fly out of Waco, and I'm going to go to a picnic in

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and then go to the Little League World Series, and then I'm going to come home. I'll be back home here Sunday night. So it's a pretty fast life I'm living these days.

President's Inauguration

Student. How did it—you just became President. How has it——

The President. Well, when I got sworn in as President, it was a pretty cold day in Washington, DC. And it was—the Inaugural ceremony was at the end of a pretty pressure-packed time. One, the election—I campaigned hard in the election. Secondly, we weren't sure what the outcome was. You might remember that period of time. It took a period—it took about 30-something days to figure out who the President was going to be. I spent a lot of my time here in Crawford, as a matter of fact.

And then when I was declared the winner, we had to get moving, because I had to put an administration together, had to put a team together. And we got up to Washington—I went from Crawford to Midland, Texas, where I was raised, and then flew up to Washington and got settled in in what they call the Blair House.

And the Inaugural Day came, and I got sworn in. And I guess I had a lot of mixed emotions. One, I was exhilarated. I—gave a very—what I thought was a pretty good speech. The people seemed to listen to it. I turned around, and there was my dad and mother, and they had tears in their eyes, so it was emotional. And it was just a lot of activity. It's hard to describe, but it was a real proud moment. And then frankly, that night, I was a little tired.

But I get to work early. I'm excited about my job. I'm one of these early-bird type people, like I'll be in the Oval Office at about 7 o'clock every morning, because I'm anxious to get to work. I like what I'm doing. And it's been a great honor.

Yes, sir.

President's Travel

Student. Have you been to China?

The President. I have not—yes, I've been to China, but I haven't been to China since I've been President. But guess where I'm going in October? China. [*Laughter*]

Lets, see, who hasn't had a question? Yes, sir.

President's Round of Golf

Student. What did you score at the end of the golf game?

The President. It was too high to count. [*Laughter*] A lot. [*Laughter*]

Yes.

President's Travel

Student. Have you been to——

The President. Been to where?

Student. Speegleville.

The President. No, I haven't been there yet. Do you recommend it?

Student. That's where I'm from.

The President. Oh, you live there.

Student. I live there, too.

The President. You live in Speegleville? That's great.

Yes, ma'am, in the glasses. Yes, ma'am.

Presidential Decisionmaking

Student. Is it hard to make the decisions as President?

The President. Is it hard to make decisions as President? Not really. If you know what you believe, decisions come pretty easy. If you're one of these types of people that are always trying to figure out which way the wind is blowing, decisionmaking can be difficult. But I find that—I know who I am. I know what I believe in, and I know where I want to lead the country. And most of the decisions come pretty easily for me, to be frank with you.

I realize sometimes people don't like the decisions. But that's okay. I've never been one who's trying to please everybody all the time. I just do what I think is right. The good thing about democracy, if people like the decisions you make, they'll let you

stay. If they don't, they'll send me back to Crawford. Isn't all that bad a deal, by the way.

Yes.

Texas

Student. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Why do I live in this State? I love Texas. I was raised in Texas. Texas has got a way of life that I really like. I like the can-do attitude of the Texas people. Texans are really caring people. It's a great place to live. You know, I've changed my address, but I haven't changed my home.

Okay, a couple more, and then I've got to go. Yes, ma'am. No, you're first, and then you're second—unless you have the same question.

President's Travel

Student. How many important places do you go in a week?

The President. How many places do I go in a week? Well, it just depends on the week. When I went to Europe, it seemed like I was going to a country every day. And I travel around some, but I spend a lot of time in Washington, at my office, particularly when the United States Congress is in town, because I get to deal with the Congressmen and the Senators. A lot of them come down to the White House to say hello, and we have nice discussions about different issues.

But I travel—sometimes travel a lot and sometimes not so much.

Yes, ma'am.

President's Hobbies

Student. What are your hobbies?

The President. Hobbies? I like to fish. I like to exercise. And by the way, I hope everybody takes some time to exercise. It's really—it's really important. That's a good way to stay healthy, even if you only walk 20 minutes a day. But I love to exercise. I like to play golf. I'm not very good at it, but I like to play. I like to read a lot. I hope you read. I've read a couple of books since I've been down here. It's very important to read a lot.

Anybody got anything over there?

Nomination for Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Q. Mr. President, you plan to make an announcement tomorrow, we're led to believe, on a new Chairman for the Joint Chiefs——

The President. There will be a press conference tomorrow, and——

Q. Could you tell us, if you don't want to tell us who it is, what is the message you intend to send to the world?

The President. Tomorrow; I'm going to talk about that tomorrow. Thanks.

Yes.

ABM Treaty

Q. Mr. President, when will you put President Putin on notice that the 6-month clock is running on U.S. withdrawal from the ABM?

The President. We'll have, on the—she's talking about what they call the ABM Treaty, which is a treaty signed in 1972. And I have made it clear that I think the treaty is a treaty that hampers our ability to keep the peace, to develop defensive weapons necessary to defend America against the true threats of the 21st century.

We will withdraw from the ABM Treaty on our timetable, at a time convenient to America. Now, one of the things I've said in the course of questions about the ABM Treaty, I've said that we would consult closely with our allies in Europe as well as continue to consult closely with Mr. Putin.

I have no specific timetable in mind. I do know that the ABM Treaty hampers us from doing what we need to do. And secondly, I do know that Mr. Putin is aware of our desires to move beyond the ABM Treaty. And we will.

Yes, Sonya [Sonya Ross, Associated Press].

Nomination for Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Q. Sir, as you've looked for a new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, what have you been looking for? What have you been considering?

The President. I have been looking for—and it's not just me, of course. It's the Secretary of Defense; we've been in collaboration. We've been looking for someone who will bring the highest standards of excellence to the office, someone who is willing to think differently about the missions of our military how to conform—the fundamental question is, how do we conform our defenses to the true threats that face America not, only now but in the out years?

I'm looking for somebody, obviously, with experience, somebody who understands what the job is, what the job entails. And we found that person.

Q. Is it General Myers?

The President. I'm not going to tell you who it is until the appropriate time.

You just saw a good reporter, how a good reporter asks questions. See, she's trying to get me to say something I don't want to say. [*Laughter*] But that's her job. That's her job, is to try to jump the news.

But tomorrow we will have a full discussion on defense matters, and that subject may be included.

Yes.

Federal Budget

Q. The Mid-Session Review came out yesterday, and outside of the Social Security surplus, there isn't much of a surplus left. Are you concerned, when Congress gets back, there won't be room for your education or defense priorities?

The President. No, I think if—the Mid-Session Review showed that the budgets we submitted not only are in balance but meet the priorities that I think are important, including defense and education.

I'll tell you what these numbers are showing. They're showing that we've inherited an economic slowdown. And the country is in an economic slowdown. And so what a President should ask and what the Congress should ask is, what can we do to stimulate economic growth? And we responded with tax relief.

Now, evidently, there are some people in Washington, DC, who are having second thoughts about tax relief. And so my question to them is, do they want to raise taxes? Do they suggest that helping the economy grow—a good way to do so is to raise taxes? If that's the case, that's a brand new economic theory.

The way to stimulate growth is to cut taxes, and we have done so. Now it is going to be incumbent upon the Congress to make sure they don't overspend. And the surest way to make sure the economy does not recover is to bust the budget. And one of my jobs as the President is to make sure that we don't bust the budget. I will use the veto to make sure that Congress stays within the budget.

There is—we have the second largest surplus in the Nation's history. We're paying down over $100 billion of debt, in spite of the fact the economy is slow. But this tax relief package is going to help our economy recover, and that is going to be important.

Immigration Policy

Q. Sir, what is your timetable for amnesty for illegals, or——

The President. There will be no blanket amnesty for illegals. I have said that point blank. I will say it as many times as I need to say it. I'm more than willing to talk to the Mexican officials about how to help willing employers find willing employees, how to treat people with respect once they're here in the country. I think we ought to have a good, honest dialog about how we make sure our neighbors to the south do a better job of enforcing their own border. We've got great collaborative efforts going now on a wide variety of fronts. Relations with Mexico have never been better.

But there is going to be no amnesty. Amnesty is not the right answer to the immigration issue.

Now, there are ways for us to discuss, as I said, a worker program of some type that will legalize the hard work that is taking place now in America. So long as there is somebody who wants to hire somebody and somebody willing to work, it seems like to me it's in our Nation's interest to make sure the two go together.

Representative Gary Condit

Q. Mr. President, I don't know if you think this is being a good reporter or not, but seriously, you——

The President. Probably not. [*Laughter*] But if it's not, I won't embarrass you in front of—anyway——

Q. You've talked a lot about family values and personal responsibility. For better or worse, so much of the country seems to be focused on this controversy involving Congressman Condit.

The President. Yes, I'm not going to discuss Congressman Condit. Evidently, he's making a statement to the Nation tonight, and let's just see what he says.

Q. Will you watch it?

The President. No, probably not. I'll read about it, maybe in AP or Reuters; I'm not sure which one.

Senator Jesse Helms

Q. Sir, what is your reaction to Senator Helms' decision to retire, and are you concerned that that seat might be in jeopardy for the Republicans?

The President. It depends on who runs, obviously. Senator Helms has served our Nation with distinction. I called him yesterday, had a good visit with him. I told him I appreciated his service to America. He explained to me he and Dot wanted to take some time to be together after the sessions—after his term is up, and I said, "I appreciate that, Senator. You served well."

I'll tell you one thing about Senator Helms, he was a gentleman. You may not have agreed with his politics all the time, but he was a gentleman about it. He brought a lot of class, I thought, to the Senate, and he will be missed. And it depends on who we field, obviously.

Q. Would you support Elizabeth Dole as a candidate?

The President. Well, I'm not—as you know, one of the things the President doesn't do is get involved in all the speculation on these run-ups for these different candidacies. I will tell you, Elizabeth Dole would make a fine candidate. I've competed against her once before, and she was formidable and a fine lady, there's no question about that.

But I'm not going to get involved in the primaries. I'll, of course, look forward—if she is the nominee of the Republican Party in North Carolina, I, of course, will campaign hard for her.

Okay. Listen, I want to thank you all for giving me a chance to come by. Good luck to you all. What you just watched is a mini press conference.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:08 a.m. in the cafeteria. In his remarks, he referred to Linda Stout, principal, Crawford Elementary School; President Fernando de la Rua of Argentina; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; and Dorothy "Dot" Helms, wife of Senator Helms. A reporter referred to Gen. Richard B. Myers, USAF, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.