

Remarks During a Walking Tour of the Bush Ranch and an Exchange With Reporters in Crawford, Texas
January 2, 2003

The President. Good morning, everybody.

Q. Good morning, sir.

The President. Let's go. I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll walk about 3 or 4 miles, and then we'll end up having coffee. Mrs. Bush wants to say hello to everybody.

Q. All right.

The President. Come on. Come on, Barney. We'll walk out—it's a little muddy. I need somebody walking up here with me. I can't be—Reed, get out of the pictures. [Laughter] Come on, Stretch [David Gregory, NBC News], get in here.

Q. How are you? Happy New Year.

The President. Same to you all. We're trimming a lot of underbrush, still. Come on, Barn. Are you going to make it, Heidi [Holly Rosenkrantz, Bloomberg News]?

Q. I'll be fine.

The President. We've got a truck for you back there.

Q. Don't worry about me.

Q. Who's going to carry Barney?

The President. He's coming.

Q. He can walk 4 miles?

The President. Oh, yes, he'll walk 4. Where is he? Come on over, Barney.

Q. I don't remember—you've had the guesthouse all along, right?

The President. That's the Secret Service.

Q. That I know, but I mean, last time I actually saw this was 2000—

The President. Oh, really?

Q. —when it was still a shell. Remember, you walked us through that in July?

The President. Turn right here, guys. That's a little—right over there is another little house we refurbished, got a gym in there, and one bedroom. And then that's a little guesthouse over there, a garage.

Q. That was part of the original—

The President. Yes.

Q. Look at Barney trying to make it through the woods there.

The President. Come on, boy.

Q. Lot of legs.

Q. He's trying to get to you. [Laughter]

The President. This is pretty good—[inaudible]—in there.

Q. Is this manmade, sir?

The President. Manmade.

Q. How many acres?

The President. About 11 acres lake, 17 foot deep, the deepest spot. I put 600 black bass in there a few years ago, and about 30,000 bait fish. And they're about 2½ to 3 pounds now. A bad time to fish, because the fish are lethargic during the cold. We've got bluegill and shad and perch.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Oh, it's fantastic. We got up yesterday—Laura and I have got a tradition of—we go for a sunrise walk on the first day of the year. So yesterday we popped about of bed about 7:20 a.m., and we started moving, walked 4 miles.

Q. Great.

Q. Wasn't as chilly yesterday.

The President. No, it wasn't.

Q. You'll get up and run in this cold, won't you?

The President. Oh, absolutely. Start over there at the house. We've got different running—come on, Barn.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Yes, maybe. This is an old dirt road, so we put—[inaudible]—on it, to withstand the—we're going to walk—[inaudible]—then we're going to go down

into the canyons, so it won't be quite as cold.

Q. Will we see the waterfall?

The President. Absolutely.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. I went in there yesterday to make sure there was water in—[*inaudible*].

Q. So have you had friends out?

The President. Oh yes, every night. We've got—tonight we've got my long-time ally and friend Elton Bomer, who was the insurance commissioner and the secretary of state when I was the Governor, and a former state senator for this district, David Sibley, and his wife are coming. Condi's coming.

So, for example, this is one of the trails, this is a mile-and-a-half spot for one of the trails. You'll see those markers.

Q. From the house?

The President. From the house. The different colors on there. Is Barney back there? Is he back there? He's getting in the truck. [*Laughter*] Barney got nervous with the crowd here.

Q. If he gets too far behind, we can help him in.

The President. Now, these are all live oaks in here, and when live oaks like this they're called "motts."

Q. Motts? M-o-t?

The President. M-o-t-t. A mott is where a group of trees grow quite tight together.

Q. They never lose their leaves?

The President. The live oaks do not lose their leaves. And these are—this is great deer country in there. Here are some of the beautiful live oaks.

Q. Now, has the range changed a lot more—you made the lake a little bigger and—

The President. Yes, the lake is a little fuller, but only because of the wild grasses. And what Laura is doing is, around the house, is trying to restore the country to the native prairie grasses. And these are all different native grasses from Texas. So you'll see—when we get back to the house,

all inside the barbed wire fence here will eventually be made—

Q. Has this all changed a lot since you came?

The President. Oh, yes. This is all different. And so in the spring, particularly in a year like this year, there will be fantastic wildflowers.

Q. How nice.

Q. How many miles of trails have you all put in?

The President. A lot.

Q. Just all over?

The President. Yes. You can run probably 6 miles without doubling.

Q. Without doubling over.

The President. The other thing that's really interesting—I hope we see them—is there are a lot of cardinals here this time of year.

Q. What's your favorite time to come?

Q. We might scare them away with this group.

The President. No, I don't think so. Any time.

Q. Really? You don't have a favorite season?

The President. No. I like it warm. [*Laughter*]

Q. Really hot, huh?

The President. We're going to have a muddy spot up here, so bear with us. We're going to go right and head west out for about a mile. And then we're going to go down, and there will be a rest spot in there.

You're doing great.

Q. Oh, thanks. Don't worry about me.

The President. The medical unit will be here—[*laughter*]. We'll warm up going this way.

One of the things about this place you'll see is, for example, that little clump of trees is the head of a long canyon that goes down—I'll show you the canyon. There's seven different canyons on here that create really unique—

Q. They're not connected to one another?

The President. No, they're separate and unique.

Q. So when you tell us you're clearing brush, does that mean you're setting these trails up?

The President. No, no. What it means is—you see that little brush over there? The pile of brush?

Q. Yes.

The President. Underneath these—see those cedars right there, growing underneath the live oaks?

Q. Yes.

The President. We're cutting those down.

Q. Why?

The President. Because the cedars take water.

Q. Oh, okay.

The President. They talk water from the big trees, and they're kind of like a nuisance.

Q. Do you know how they got here?

The President. As a matter of fact, they got here when pioneers planted them for—go left here; this is the worst mud—pioneers planted them for fenceposts.

Q. And then they started to—

The President. You see the dark? I mean, we've got enough cedars for—

Q. You'll be clearing up—

The President. We won't clear this.

Q. It grows back real quick, right?

The President. It does grow back.

Q. Do you burn it?

The President. We burn it, yes. We were burning yesterday, but the grass wasn't dry—[inaudible]—have to call in fire—[inaudible].

Q. In Australia we call it "bigelow."

The President. Oops, be careful. That's the worst.

Q. The wetlands, right?

The President. Preserves. Claire, get in—oh, you made it? Oh, good. Whose shoes are you wearing, Claire?

Deputy Press Secretary Claire Buchan. Harriet's. [Laughter]

The President. The big tree up there on the left is called a cedar elm. Loses its

leaves. It's got kind of a skirt to it, at the rear base of the—they tend to have a skirt to it.

Q. What are these trees here, these ones with the bare—

The President. It's some kind of a oak. The live oak doesn't lose its leaves. That one right there is a hackberry. They're a terrible tree. They're trash trees. They're not native.

That's a cedar elm there. Those are cedar elms, Stretch.

Q. How many cows?

The President. I've got 200 mother cows and 6 bulls. That's a cow camp operation, kind of like a little nursery, is the best way to put it.

Q. Now, these aren't yours. These are—

The President. No.

Q. Leases, or whatever?

The President. Yes. Kenneth Engelbrecht. I bought the place from his dad, and he and his wife live on here.

Isn't this a beautiful day?

Q. It really is. It's gorgeous.

Q. Have you had your run?

The President. I'm not going to run today. I went over—I had my CIA briefing and had a visit with the Vice President this morning.

Q. Via telecom?

The President. Yes. Real-time, secure—

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Absolutely. [Inaudible]—technology.

Q. When did they really—when did they really bring that online?

The President. Last year. Pretty soon they're going to have it on Air Force One.

Q. What?

The President. Real-time, secure videoconferencing. It really changes—will change the nature of how people live in many ways.

Q. [Inaudible]

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. But imagine, you know, your business—or your business, for example. You’ll be able to have——

Q. Oh, we’re all ready—yes.

The President. You’ve got real-time—[*inaudible*]—sitting around with your editors and——

Q. Oh, yes. There is so much that we’re starting to do now on computers, where you can edit stuff on laptops and—[*inaudible*].

The President. Maybe they can enhance your face. [*Laughter*]

Q. That’s what I’m working on.

The President. Super enhancement. [*Laughter*]

Q. Oh, look at this, my wife just got me this little Palm Pilot here, and my organizer. It’s got a camera in there.

The President. Oh, fantastic. I notice telephones have got that now, where you——

Q. Yes, oh, I know. I think that’s a little too much business going on in—[*inaudible*]. [*Laughter*]

The President. So what you’ll see is three different parts of Texas. You’ll see this, kind of the central plains, flat. This is more rolling, where it’s the—rock is closer to the surface. Oh, here comes Laura.

Q. Yes, I noticed she was out with friends, huh?

The President. Yes—[*inaudible*].

Q. And Spot?

The President. Spot, the dog.

Q. Barney was out—one day out on where we do our live shot.

The President. Right. [*Laughter*]

Q. I said, I don’t think—[*inaudible*]—out here fraternizing.

The President. That’s not true. He knows that’s not true. [*Laughter*]

Q. We saw some fox, and looked like turkeys or——

The President. Turkey buzzards, yes. A lot of hawks here. Red tail, we saw a red tail hawk yesterday. There’s those puppy dogs—loyal dog, great athlete.

[*At this point, the President whistled.*]

Q. He came——

The President. Yes. Hey, Spotty. Hi, Laura.

The First Lady. Hey.

The President. How is it? Take Barney with you, okay? He’s in the truck. We’ll see you back at the house.

Q. I mean, you do this often; I wasn’t here, but when we were here in 2000, we went the other way, right? I seem to remember taking a drive the other way past the house. Am I wrong?

The President. No, you’re right.

Q. It’s hard to believe it was going on 3 years ago. [*Laughter*]

The President. It’s unbelievable, isn’t it? Heck of an ordeal, wasn’t it? For all of us involved.

Q. Yeah. [*Laughter*]

The President. It’s amazing what the democracy puts the—[*inaudible*]—what kind of people are involved in the campaign, because we were—it’s a grueling experience. I remember meeting your dad, sitting behind the——

Q. Yes. [*Laughter*]

The President. How is he?

Q. He’s doing great. Yes, he’s doing great.

The President. Big old guy.

Q. Yeah, he is. We’re real excited because I got—I was around Christmas and stuff——

The President. With the kid?

Q. I got the picture of you holding Max, and they loved that. [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, I’m sure their life is changed with Max.

Q. Yes. They’re having a great time. They’re going up that way—I can’t remember—in a week.

The President. That’s fantastic.

Q. He’s probably traveled more than I have. [*Laughter*]

The President. That’s hard to do, David.

Q. Yes. [*Laughter*]

The President. It's warming up, Patsy [Patricia Wilson, Reuters].

Q. [Inaudible]—about 30 degrees warmer.

The President. Yesterday was fantastic.

Q. Yes, it was gorgeous.

Q. Do you believe how fast it does go, though? I mean, it's—

The President. A few months. Some of them are already talking about '04.

Q. Did you see Edwards—[inaudible]—this morning?

The President. No.

Q. He announced on the "Today" show that he's going to be—[inaudible].

The President. Oh, really?

Q. I haven't caught my breath from—

The President. Well, if you think about it—if you think about it, remember the '98 campaign, that was the—the beginning of the '98 campaign there was a lot of speculation about whether or not I was going to run. And got through the session and '99, it was right after that we all got on the plane.

Q. I remember—

The President. [Inaudible]

Q. Yes, I remember—[inaudible]. I remember Jamie Gangel [NBC News] did that piece about you, and you—were you out fishing somewhere?

The President. That was in Austin. But that was before—I mean, that was in—[inaudible]—Texas. That was when we had the place in east Texas.

Q. But that was early on, right? I mean, you weren't—

The President. No, I wasn't—[inaudible]. That was a nice piece.

This is it for mud. [Laughter] Down here—[inaudible]. We go out to the tree line, way out there.

Q. You know, this summer was the first time I've been to Kennebunkport. That was just fabulous.

The President. It's nice, isn't it? It's not as nice as Crawford, but it's nice. [Laughter] Yes, Kennebunkport is a beautiful place to—[inaudible].

Q. [Inaudible] But it is a lot more boxed-in than this, you know? You can't come some place and just—

The President. Hang out. There's—[inaudible]—he's looking at his cows.

Q. They seem like they do a good job of not shutting the place down at all.

The President. Kennebunkport?

Q. Yes.

The President. Yes, I guess. How do I know?

Q. It's a lot flatter here.

The President. Yes. It's not going to be flat here in a minute.

Q. [Inaudible]—didn't go anywhere yet.

The President. Well, that's a different—that's your pink route. We've got a lot of turkey live on this ranch. It's really fun to see them.

Q. They're pretty.

The President. Oh, they're fantastic. There's a tank right there. Right on the other side there's—[inaudible].

Q. When you bought it, did you have a pretty good idea what you were getting? Or have you discovered—

The President. No, I discovered a lot. I really did. It was a—I knew we were getting some dramatic country that was very rare for Texas, but I wasn't sure about all the little nooks and crannies.

Q. Right. A lot of them still covered up?

The President. Yes, there are some. You'll see. You'll see some of the—

Q. There seems to be a fair amount of water on the property.

The President. A lot of water right there. But you'll see some of the places that we have cleaned out, and you'll see some of these cliffs that have got unique little structures to them. I discovered an interesting rock formation the other day when we were up here scouting around on this cliff.

There's a cottonwood tree. See that isolated tree right there? The cottonwood is a fantastic tree. It grows along the riverbed, and somehow this thing ended up here alone. It must have a source of water.

We've got two cottonwood trees on the whole ranch, and that's one of them.

Patsy, are you hitting the tennis ball at all?

Q. No, not—it's too cold. My hands get too cold to hold the racket. I'm not ready to challenge John Bridgeland yet. [Laughter]

The President. Bridgeland is a good player.

Q. I know. He played for Harvard, didn't he?

The President. I think he did. I'll tell you who's a good racket man, is Al Gonzales.

Q. Really?

The President. Racketball.

Q. Oh, racketball.

The President. Stretch claims he's a good tennis player.

Q. Well—

Q. Patsy and I—[inaudible]—on today. [Inaudible]

The President. You're a serve-and-volley guy. I can see it a mile away.

Q. I'm working on my walk. [Inaudible] He's probably going to wear out pretty quick.

The President. You've got the big serve and volley.

Q. I can cover a lot—[inaudible].

The President. I bet you can. Like my brother, Marvin, he's a big serve-and-volley man.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Yes. He's a good player.

Q. He is. He was able to get great partners, like Chris Evert's brother and people like that.

Q. You know, there's a lot of pros who have moved into McLean, like Jana Novotna—[inaudible].

The President. Really?

The territory is beginning to change. See how these rocks were right up here on the surface? But what ends up happening is that over time, millions of years, rocky roads created these canyons we're going

into. They're pretty sparse country where you've got your rocks—[inaudible].

Q. So this is one of the canyons we're going into?

The President. This is the river bottom. We have 3½ miles of river, stream. And the canyons feed into the bottoms here. But the waterfall—see the point right there? That's the headwaters of the waterfall, and we're going to go down—[inaudible].

Q. Is this the same river that feeds—[inaudible]?

The President. Yes. No, let's see. You know, I don't know. The middle fork of the Bosque—I think—I don't think so. I'm not sure. You know, it might. It might. You may be right. [Inaudible]—falls must be running pretty good right now.

Q. Yes.

The President. Does it look pretty?

Q. Yes, it's beautiful.

The President. We're going to a different part of the world now.

Q. I'm just grateful you didn't make us clear any brush. [Laughter]

The President. Well, you'd like it. It's good exercise. I'll show you something interesting here. See how that water is coming out of those rocks? See it?

Q. Yes.

The President. All the aquifers are charged now because of the rain.

Q. [Inaudible]—Hill?

The President. No, no. [Inaudible]—Hill is back over there. We're not going to be able to get to it because the water across the crossing.

Q. Oh, really?

The President. Yes. [Inaudible]—you'd just get soaked.

Q. Can you get just as good a workout walking like this, as running?

The President. I think you can.

Q. I think you can, too. [Laughter]

Q. You're working out with two. [Laughter]

The President. But you've got to move. I kind of use it as a warmer-upper. It's good for you.

We're going to go right up here. Wait until you see this place I'm going to take you. It's cool.

Q. [Inaudible] [Laughter]

The President. That was Barney. It's a different world down here.

Q. It's beautiful.

The President. We're headed right up in there. These are called chinaberries. See the little berry at the end there? We've got up here in this canyon you'll have ash, walnut, different kind of oaks. I've become a guy who really likes trees. [Laughter]

Q. Crash course, right?

The President. Well, you can really get to appreciate them. Now this in here you couldn't—before we got in here you couldn't see the contours of this little canyon. And it was really hard to walk in here. We got in here and cleaned out a lot of the undergrowth, a lot of the dead trees that—see all those trees in there? They were all like that in here, way up in here. What I want to do is open this up so you can see the contours of this little canyon in here.

Q. Do you have people working here when you're not here, too?

The President. No, we do it ourselves, and we built all this that we're heading into.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Yes.

Q. There's just not that much brush to clear at the White House. [Laughter]

The President. Well, they got people clearing it there. You could not move in here. I mean, we couldn't—a few years ago, you had to crawl through all these rocks to get up in here.

[*The tour continued.*]

The President. [Inaudible]—enough rain, it may have created to charge those aquifers enough to withstand the heat.

Q. What kind of stone is this?

The President. Limestone. Real soft limestone.

Q. —did you know right away when you bought the ranch, or did you discover it on—

The President. No. We had to clear this out. I mean, you could not come up here.

Q. But you brought people down here, right? Like a—

The President. [Inaudible]—in here. I didn't see this part of the ranch when—

Q. So it was a surprise?

The President. Yes, it was a surprise.

Q. It's a nice surprise.

The President. This is where Putin came. Jiang Zemin did not come down here, but Vladimir Putin did.

Q. That's cool.

The President. See the cedar? That grows right on the ledge.

Q. It's on the rocks.

Q. Has some of it already started to grow back—

The President. We didn't put it up there.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. We don't clear up top. We clear down here when they go against these big—we clear the young.

Q. Right.

Q. So how wide a—[inaudible]—that you cleared right—

The President. Yes, this is all—you could not walk in here, literally. It was overgrown. There were seven of them like this, with different cuts to them.

Q. All of them different.

Q. Did you do it yourself, or did—

The President. Oh, I do it myself.

Q. Really?

The President. Yes. It's part of the fun to be outside working. I really enjoy it. There's the great outdoors, and you're supposed to be in it. [Laughter]

Q. Right.

The President. All right. Retreat.

Q. Watch those rocks, they're slick.

[*The tour continued.*]

The President. I've seen fox in here.

Q. [*Inaudible*]*—*Barney?

The President. No, he had some problems. I was afraid Barney would come out with—*[inaudible]*.

Q. Red fox or gray fox?

The President. Gray fox. Red fox are what?

Q. We have red fox around Washington.

The President. Yes.

Q. You just can't imagine that these kind of little nooks exist out here.

The President. No, isn't it amazing? We had—we brought some friends out here. And one of the guys driving said, "I can't imagine why President Bush bought this place. This is some of the worst country in Texas." But what he didn't realize is that the fingers of the Hill Country, which is where you all have been, south of Austin, extend up here. If you look on a map, you'll see the topography on the map shows this is some unique country.

Q. How much did you check out the land before you bought it?

The President. I went all over it. But I didn't, you know—

Q. You didn't find everything.

The President. Yes. I didn't crawl up in there. And we saw enough to know that there was some pretty unique relief.

Q. Do you really spend the largest percentage of your time, outside of working, out here?

The President. Absolutely. I'm either—my typical day is I will work from about 7 a.m. until 10 a.m., and then will come out and we'll cut cedar or fool around, you know, repair something.

Q. Right.

The President. And then we'll eat lunch about 12:30 p.m. And generally make phone calls then or answer mail or do whatever, and then get back out about 4 p.m. and fish. I love to fish.

Q. Now, when you're stocking your own pond, do you still get credit for catching?
[Laughter]

The President. Oh, yes, absolutely. The only time you don't get credit is when the

Secret Service—right here, take a right—the Secret Service frogman puts it on for you. You see the snorkel.

Q. If you can't see him, then it's totally—

The President. Right. *[Laughter]*

The last time we had the crew here, it was up to the top of that canyon, remember? We were clearing. There's another canyon that goes up in there. And here's the—here's where they end.

Q. This is the one we walked up.

The President. Right.

Q. With all the brambles and thorns.

The President. Right. That's right.

Q. Do you fish from the shore or do you—

The President. I've got a little boat in there.

Q. Bait fish or with lures?

The President. No, fish with lures. The jig is particularly good during the winter. These fish are very lethargic, real slow.

This is about a two-thirds mile pasture here. We're paralleling now the middle fork of the Bosque River. You'll see it when we get up here.

Q. What are these trees?

The President. Those are cedar elms. They're really pretty in the spring.

Q. Do they flower?

The President. No, they—they're in leaves. But they're beautiful skirts.

Q. Do you ever sleep in?

The President. No.

Q. Never? *[Inaudible]*

The President. *[Inaudible]*

Q. *[Inaudible]*

The President. No. I was probably asleep at 10 p.m. *[Laughter]*

Q. Couldn't even see the ball drop on the East Coast.

The President. In Bermuda.

Q. *[Inaudible]* *[Laughter]*

The President. I was looking for that ball dropping in London. *[Laughter]*

Q. *[Inaudible]*—good enough for you.

The President. That's right.

Put him in a Gator. The pickup is better.

Let me show you something that's really pretty here. When the sun sets—west is that way; east is this way—and when the sun sets, the cliffs over here, which you'll see in a minute, just completely glow.

A big cedar elm here.

Q. There's something running up here. Is this a white-tail or—

The President. Yes. Did you see it?

Q. Yes, I saw it.

The President. Yes, a white-tail deer.

Q. I grew up in Atlanta. I don't know my—[laughter].

The President. This is very interesting. There is a relatively tame white-tail that has been hanging around here. I saw it the last time I walked in here. And it just kind of paralleled—see the cliffs over there. That's not on our property. It's right on the other side of the river.

At the end of this pasture, there's a turkey roost up in this area.

Q. Do you envision a time where you'd live here all the time, or will it always be a kind of retreat?

The President. I think this will be more—that's an interesting conversation Laura and I have had. In my view, this will be the primary residence, and we'd have a townhouse somewhere else. I think her view might be slightly different—[laughter]—in which case, her view will prevail.

Q. Right. [Inaudible]—as much pressure as you do.

The President. But we do love it out here. One of the reasons we picked it—that cedar is a red cedar. Isn't that beautiful? It's unique, different from these other trees.

But this is halfway between Dallas and Austin. Most of our friends are in Dallas and Austin, so it's very convenient for our buddies to come and visit and—

Q. Well, you guys aren't often here by yourselves?

The President. What?

Q. You're not often here alone, are you?

The President. No, we're really not. We had—our friends from Lubbock came the day after we got here. And our friends from Austin came last night. It's a good chance for us to catch up with our buddies, and we really like our friends. Yes, it's wonderful.

See, up in there? For example, I haven't explored up in there yet. See the makings of an interesting rock formation? I may clear that out some so you can see it better. Haven't made up my mind. In the spring, this is just emerald green.

Q. Greener than usual this August.

The President. Pardon me?

Q. It was greener than usual this August.

The President. Yes, because of the rain.

Q. Mr. President, would you mind terribly if we would just let the truck pass so they can get some walking shots?

The President. Not at all.

Heidi, what are you doing?

Q. I want to catch up to you. [Laughter]

Q. Quite a little motorcade back there.

Q. Do you ever—[inaudible]?

Q. A lovely walk in the woods—[inaudible]—with motorized vehicles.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Yes, you do. Exactly. [Inaudible]

Q. If I stub my toe, what will I do? [Laughter] [Inaudible]

The President. It's easy to get a sense of the kind of the relief. It's about 90 foot in here, from the highest to the lowest point. Pretty good relief.

Q. This part I remember, because you drove us down to here.

The President. But you wouldn't ever envision this, driving into the ranch.

Q. Right.

The President. That's what I like about it.

Q. Were these roads here, or did you build these?

The President. I built this one. The definition—I'll show you the definition of a road. The definition of a road is tire ruts on a ranch. And one of the things I assured

Ron [Ron Fournier, Associated Press] is that we would build a road so it would become easily accessible. This is—I did not build this road. This is a road that the Engelbrechts built. But you have to maintain these things, obviously. The water will erode them out.

The deer lay down in here. They feel protected. And then the turkey were right up here.

[*The tour continued.*]

The President. Make news, will you.

This is the river right here, the middle fork of the Bosque. And right across the way is our neighbor. These are bur oaks. See these huge trees there? Aren't they spectacular?

Q. These guys must create some nice fall foliage.

The President. You get pretty good color here.

See the tree with the leaves still on it?

Q. Yes.

The President. That's called a bois d'arc, and it's a real hard wood that they claim the Indians used for their—[*inaudible*]. They produce a big, green apple. That's a big—[*inaudible*].

Q. So this is the line right here?

The President. No, this is just—[*inaudible*].

It's the middle fork of the Bosque. We have a mile and a half—you'll see a creek down here.

Q. Do you fish the river?

The President. No, no. This river is real gravelly. And most of the time, you won't see water running on the surface. It runs underneath the gravel. You know, I hike up and down this river a lot, and you might run into—in August, you might run into a pool of water, but that's about it.

Q. So we're 2.5 miles from what, the house?

The President. Yes. We have walked about 2 miles.

Q. A little exercise in the morning.

The President. Absolutely.

Q. Is everybody happy?

The President. See the—that's real gravelly and shallow.

Q. Do you periodically have rocks spread—

The President. Yes, caliche, right. I did. We'll hike up out of here by a caliche pit. It's kind of a salty limestone that's used for road—[*inaudible*].

Q. You've got it right here on the ranch?

The President. Yes. See out here, this is where most of the—[*inaudible*]. And the creek that we're fixing to come up here, it's really hard to cross. So I built a low-water crossing. So you'll see a low-water crossing.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Well, "low-water" means it's not a dam. In other words—

Q. Like a ford?

The President. Yes. The water runs continuously.

Q. [*Inaudible*]—are never done, right?

The President. These hardwoods are taking away a source of water. On a nice, relatively calm day, we'll come down and burn.

Q. These cliffs are all—

The President. Yes, they do. We're paralleling them. We'll see some more dramatic—it's about 3½ miles all throughout here in the bottoms. Engelbrecht said he has seen water coming out of the creek and the river all across here, which is why you would never build down here.

Those cedars, small cedars, were crowded up against the hardwoods and competing with the hardwoods for the water.

Some of these are pecans out here, great big pecan trees. The pecan is a fruit-bearing tree. We didn't have a very good pecan crop this year.

See the white tree over there, the white bark? That's a sycamore, and they grow in the river.

Q. You're quite the tree man.

The President. I am a tree man.

Q. The Audubon Society—

The President. Good for you. Opens up your—when I say every day is Earth Day if you own your land, you're beginning to understand what I mean.

Q. [Inaudible]

Q. Skinny bits and saplings?

The President. Those are little oaks and ashes. The sturdy will emerge. Here's where we worked yesterday. See how we opened up—that's our country over there on the right, on the other side of the creek. You couldn't see that. We opened it up, and now you have a sense of—that it's a part of our property.

Q. When you find all these little—

The President. You all right? You okay?

Q. Yes.

The President. Medical Gator. [Laughter]

The numbers are the designated points. So, for example, so-and-so is at 50, they look on the map and find out where 50 is.

Q. It's not for recreation?

The President. No, the recreation part is the mileage.

Q. What are the white patches over there?

The President. That's where we burned.

Q. Burned.

The President. We will have seen about half the ranch. You can't cross—you'll see down here—I want you to see this river that it's just too wet to go across.

Q. Is this, with the marker, is this where you run?

The President. This is one of the trails. Some of these—we've got—this is not a trail marker; this is not a running-trail marker here. It's an intersection.

This is now the Rainy Creek. Where the Rainy Creek hits the middle fork of the Bosque is on our property, right up about a quarter mile that way. And now the Rainy Creek defines our northern border. And you'll see it up here. And there's five crossing points, and here is one of them.

Q. Have we been on the eastern half of the ranch?

The President. You have been on the eastern half of the ranch. You've seen—yes, left. I don't think we want to try to cross here, but we can stop here for a minute. I want you to see this.

[*The tour continued.*]

The President. And this will run about a mile and a half this way and then go a mile and a half—

Q. This is not a fork where you fish?

The President. Actually, I put some fish in here farther up, where there's a big, deep pool. And it's fun to come down here and fly fish. There's not a lot of fish—[inaudible].

All right, we'll hike it up this hill here.

Load up. Load up. Man, you better load up. We're going up the hill.

Q. Oh, I'm good, sir.

The President. You can handle it? Holly, get in here. Now, can you handle it?

Q. I can, apparently. I've got to figure out how. Something to keep me occupied. [Laughter]

The President. Exactly. You can read the instruction manual for a week. [Laughter]

Q. That's what I did. That was one night. [Inaudible]

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. I finally recovered. These are all lacy oaks in here that you couldn't see. The cedars were crowding them out. These are going to be a beautiful stand of lacy oaks.

Q. We'll have to give you a nickname—[inaudible].

The President. Yes, exactly. See the cliffs over there?

Q. Yes.

The President. Pretty dramatic stuff.

Q. Looks like good hiking in there.

The President. That's great hiking. There's a little hidden valley that you can go over there and—[inaudible]. Super Stretch, caliche.

Q. You bulldoze it right out of there?

The President. Yes. This is a good one to run, in August.

Q. Ninety-eight degrees.

The President. Hundred-degree for the run.

Q. Reminds me too much of home. I couldn't do that.

The President. That's right. But 90 degrees.

Q. Wow, look at the hawk.

The President. Those are big buzzards.

Q. Turkey buzzards?

The President. Yes, turkey buzzards. They're hoping one of us drops. [Laughter]

Q. [Inaudible]—reporters.

The President. It's good for you.

Q. We're not cold anymore.

The President. You will be, in a minute.

Q. Oh, because of the wind?

The President. Well, we're getting up top here.

Q. Does the little hill have a name?

The President. No, this one doesn't. But the next one over is Balkan Hill, for Condi Rice, who gave us the history of the Balkans in the middle of a 4-mile walk. I was impressed that she didn't break sentence during the—fill up the hill.

Q. [Inaudible]—Bosnia and Herzegovina going up the hill here.

[*The tour continued.*]

The President. See the area, right in there?

Q. Yes.

The President. That's a little hidden—

Q. Have you been working back there?

The President. We did, last year. You can walk up.

Q. So with all this working, do you ever sit down and—

The President. Relax?

Q. Enjoy it and relax?

The President. Yes, sometimes.

Q. This is limestone, sir?

The President. Yes. See how porous it is. There was a big dead tree right here, which we cut off, opened this up. We'll see—we're heading parallel to this little river, and I'll show you the headwaters of the river. It's spectacular.

Can you envision me sitting here, on the rock, writing some poetry?

Q. Yes.

Q. That's what I see pretty much—writing the State of the Union—[laughter]—longhand.

The President. That's the state of my union.

Q. Speaking of—

The President. Yes, we're working on it.

Q. Anything you want to sneak preview?

The President. I think all you've got to do is call the White House staffers. They'll tell you, evidently. [Laughter] You know what I mean.

Q. My fellow Americans.

Q. That's what makes America great.

[*The tour continued.*]

Q. Is that your property, or is that the other—

The President. That's us. Go straight where those agents are down there. Those are agents down there—that you're not supposed to see.

Q. Yes. [Laughter]

The President. This is a great place to sit down and think. [Inaudible]

[*The tour continued.*]

The President. Be careful up here, seriously.

On a nice evening, you've got a little bit of a western view and—[inaudible]. We've got deer—[inaudible].

Q. Look out, those first steps are moving.

Q. Is it called—[inaudible]—Rainy Creek?

The President. Yes.

Q. Pretty wide for a creek.

The President. Yes, it is, but there's a lot of water right now. But it won't be wide in a while.

Q. How high up are we?

The President. You know, I don't know how much higher—I'd say 90 feet.

All right, I just wanted you to see this. Holly?

Q. Yes?

The President. Quit calling me Jeb.
[*Laughter*]

[*The tour continued.*]

The President. Nice story. The—[*inaudible*—and I went for a run in the campaign, summer of 2000. And we go in the pond, the river pool down there, the creek. And the next day we killed a water moccasin—cottonmouth. That’s the last time we jumped in there. [*Laughter*]

See the cardinals?

Q. Yes.

[*The tour continued.*]

The President. [*Inaudible*—waterfall down there. I don’t know what they are.

Q. Isn’t it pretty down here?

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. I don’t know what they are, strawberries?

Q. Something like that. I don’t know.

The President. [*Inaudible*—wild clover. Anyway, this thing kind of meanders down. And there’s a—well, you can see where it drops off. There’s a waterfall down there. You’ve seen two of the seven canyons. And this is the one that goes up—remember that crossing where we just—this goes all the way down there and drains into the creek right at the crossing. Pretty special.

Q. Is there water—[*inaudible*—down there?

The President. I don’t know what that is. I had never seen it.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

[*The tour continued.*]

The President. Really? You’ve become kind of a matinee idol?

Q. That goes without saying.

The President. Yes, we took a vote. We’ll keep him. They say he’s big; he’s big out there in the hinterland. Holly, do you want in?

Q. I think I’m okay, thank you.

The President. We’ve got about a half mile to go.

Q. A half mile? Maybe I’ll walk.

[*The tour continued.*]

The President. A lot of water coming out that creek.

Q. Good springs anywhere, sir?

The President. Well, there’s—yes, they do. And a lot of the—

Q. Come out of the aquifers?

The President. Just coming out of the rock, like that one I showed you when we first went down into the bottoms there. That’s what a spring is like.

This is the back side of the dam. These are all big cedar elms here—cedar elm grove.

Q. Do you guys like to cook at all?

The President. Yes.

Q. Do you?

The President. Mine?

Q. Yes.

The President. Eating. You said, “Do you guys, right?” Oh, you said, “You guys like to cook.” [*Laughter*] I’m pretty good with burgers, egg salad.

Q. Are you a fancy coffee guy or a regular—

The President. Fancy. I don’t even know what we drink. I just say this, the stronger the better.

Here’s the back side of the house.

Q. In all this planning, how did you pick where you wanted the house?

The President. We had a—the architect, David Heymann, from the University of Texas came out here. And Laura—the decision—[*inaudible*]. And then David came out here—[*inaudible*].

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Winds, the sun, and the big live oak.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. No, no. And one of the things you’ll see if they have a Texas phenomenon, it’s called—[*inaudible*—capture the—[*inaudible*—breezes. And in the summer, you want to be able to get as much of the breeze as you can. So the house is up high. We’ve got the house divided

by screened porches the wind blows through.

Q. I didn't know you had a treehouse. [Laughter]

The President. Yes, look at it. Built that for the grandkids that don't exist. Some of the fellows go up there with some high-powered binocs and high-powered weaponry.

Q. Yes, right.

The President. Here's another way down. There's, let's see, five entries with the Rainy Creek area. You know, I'd say we've been through a third of this, about half.

Q. So how big is the guesthouse? Is it just for one, two people?

The President. No, no, two beds, two baths, and a little sitting room. Then we've got the—you remember the Governor's house?

Q. Yes.

The President. That's three bedrooms, two baths. That's where Condi will stay tonight. So we've got—then Barbara and Jenna's room are at the end of the house. A lot of time they're not here. We've got one, two, three, four—eight guestrooms, if Barbara and Jenna aren't here.

Q. So it's plenty big.

The President. Yes. The Governor's house, is what we call that, is where the guy from whom we bought the property lived. Then we fixed it up.

Q. Yes, I remember. We had a little lunch, remember that, in 2000?

The President. That's right.

Q. That's where you were with Tommy Franks when you talked to us last year.

The President. That's exactly right.

Q. I remember Colin Powell was—[inaudible].

The President. That's exactly right.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. No, that was for the announcement, in the high school.

Q. What was that?

The President. That was for the announcement of him being Secretary of State.

Q. No, no, you know when you came out with Powell was—he was still—it was right after election night when we were into the recount. That's the first time you brought—and the Cheneys were here.

The President. Was he there?

Q. He was.

Q. He was sitting at the table.

The President. Oh, that's right. We talked about the cows the day we announced him as Secretary of State. It was very funny.

Q. This is the back of the house here?

The President. Back of the house. This is the northern view.

Q. It's beautiful.

The President. Thanks. This is native rock. The house is contoured so that when it rains, it drains into a 40,000-gallon cistern. We can recycle, watering all the grasses and trees around here.

Q. Now, are these Mrs. Bush's grasses—

The President. Not yet.

Q. So that's where you go to write the State of the Union. [Inaudible]

The President. Yes.

Q. Oh, I see, and that's the—

The President. That's the famous swimming pool—

Q. Oh, that's right.

The President. Which I dubbed the "whining pool," but—[inaudible]. [Laughter]

Q. Come on.

The President. No, I'm glad we got it. There was a lot of cajoling going on.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. That's exactly right.

That's one of those things that lasts about three sets. Oh, well, we're tired of tennis.

Q. It's too hot.

The President. Too hot.

[*The tour continued.*]

The President. See how that little cedar is growing up from underneath there?

Q. Yes.

The President. That will be gone by—[inaudible]. When we got out here to haul

these trees—[*inaudible*]. They say in Texas that if you were to—if you were to clear land of cedars, you'd increase the water supply by 30 percent. They're real water hogs.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. There is a—they say a species called the—[*inaudible*—uses the old cedar to build nests. So we maintain the old cedar.

Q. Have you ever seen one?

The President. Well, this county doesn't have them, but I'm leaving them anyway. See the big oaks in here? This country is a good part of the ranch.

Here's a little tank that we—[*inaudible*—stock with bass.

Q. So you've got the roads numbered here, right?

The President. Well, these are intersections.

Q. I thought there was. [*Laughter*]

The President. No, no.

Q. Go down to 63 and 34 and get me a—

The President. Exactly. [*Laughter*]

Q. I'm warm now.

The President. Good.

That's a really interesting stand of hardwoods up in there, about 80 acres of them. Great country through here. At the very end of it is the type of canyons we've cleared out. I'd take you back there, but it's really too wet.

Q. Do you hunt here?

The President. I don't, but some of them do. They come up here—I let them come

up here and take deer off and maintain the proper buck-to-doe ratio. You over-populate, you get—[*inaudible*]. I don't let them shoot the turkeys.

Q. You love the turkeys.

The President. But I do let them shoot the dove. I've shot dove here. The dove season starts Labor Day, and generally we're not here.

Q. Sir, will you let us do a little bit of this before we go in the house?

The President. Yes. [*Inaudible*—don't watch TV. There's my man, Barney, standing guard. [*Laughter*] Do you want to do it right here?

Q. We'll get the camera wherever you want.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:51 a.m. at the Bush Ranch. In his remarks, he referred to Assistant Press Secretary Reed Dickens; ranch foreman Kenneth Engelbrecht; Counsel to the President Alberto R. Gonzales; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; President Jiang Zemin of China; and Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida. Deputy Press Secretary Claire Buchan referred to White House Staff Secretary Harriet Miers. Reporters referred to Maxwell Gregory, son of David Gregory, NBC News; Senator John Edwards of North Carolina; John Bridgeland, Executive Director, USA Freedom Corps; John Evert, executive director and director of player development, Evert Tennis Academy; and professional tennis players Chris Evert and Jana Novotna. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Exchange With Reporters in Crawford January 2, 2003

2004 Election/President's Agenda

Q. Sir, there's another Democrat has thrown his hat into the ring today, John Edwards. What do you think of the Democrat strategy to essentially say that you're

not keeping America safe enough? You've heard some of that from some of the speeches.

The President. Oh, you know, I understand politics, and I'm not paying attention