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A Big Wet Kiss?, A Barrel of Laughs?:
The 2000 Presidential Election TV Talk Show Interviews with
The Candidates

Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

Communication

by

Barbara Osborn

Committee in charge:

Professor Michael Schudson, Chair
Professor Dan Hallin
Professor Robert Horwitz
Professor Rebecca Klatch
Professor Jon Wiener

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The dissertation of Barbara Osborn is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2006

Epigraph

Now ladies and gentlemen, I should like you to meet the man that many of you came tonight to see and tuned in to hear. Let me tell you a little story about my feelings about this kind of show and asking such distinguished guests. I feel that there's a small service I can perform here because this is an unrigged unloaded kind of show. We have no great point to make, nothing is rigged against anyone. There's no Larry Spivacks or May Craigs, [the first host of Meet The Press, and a Gannett newspaper columnist, respectively] who do their job very well. But I have noticed if you watch political programs, they are asked political questions and the answers are political answers and sometimes I must say I watch shows for half hour and when it's all over no one said anything.

But there is a chance that in this relaxed atmosphere of The Tonight Show you can meet people who aren't on guard, not as tense, and perhaps not as political as you would meet them on other news-type shows. I do not pretend for a moment to know much about politics. It interests me not too much, really. I don't pretend to know a lot about what I am about to ask. I'm going to give you the chance to ask questions too. Senator Kennedy said he'd be most delighted to let you ask him questions.

I think Mr. Kennedy came tonight because he thinks he can reach people who wouldn't ordinarily watch news programs or a portion of them wouldn't. And I say again: All candidates in the two parties are most welcome here and all have been asked. I would ask you to give a real Tonight welcome, to the Senator from Massachusetts, Mr. John Kennedy.

- Jack Paar introducing Senator John Kennedy on *The Tonight Show*, June 16, 1960 in the country's first entertainment TV talk show interview with a presidential candidate.*

* Kennedy was not yet The Democratic Party nominee, though he was the presumed front-runner.

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My husband – For reassuring me that my ideas were interesting and relevant, for being far more ambitious than I am about getting them out into the world, for walking the dogs and emptying the dishwasher, and most especially, for asking over and over in the home stretch, “What can I do to help?”

My committee: Jon Wiener for taking my ideas seriously in the fall of 2000 and putting me on his radio program to share them. (If Jon thought they were interesting, geez, maybe they weren’t completely bogus!); Robert Horwitz, for sitting in on my grad seminar guest lecture (who invited you anyway?), and telling me afterwards that I had a dissertation, all I had to do was write it; Dan Hallin for asking me “What is your object of study?” and sending me into a complete brain-fizzle at my quals (at long last, I resolved the issue) and by studying morning news lo! those many years ago, thus clearing the path before me; Rebecca Klatch for graciously stepping in at the 11th hour *despite* her sabbatical, enabling me to get back to writing; and finally, and above all, to Michael Schudson whose own work inspired me to think that going back to grad school (for the *third* time!) might be a good idea, who despite my glacial pace and disorderly thinking seemed never to doubt that I was capable of doing this and doing it well (the man must be nuts!), and who, early in the process, gave me the two greatest pieces of advice: 1) If you don’t want to write an empty, obvious, tell-me-nothing-new dissertation, start with an interesting question; and, 2) keep on working, you’ll figure it out.

I came to grad school to learn to think different. The path to doing so is much more tortured and frustrating than I could ever have imagined. (Have I ever felt so stupid so often in my life?) Thank you all so much for being models and cheerleaders in that process.

Vita

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A Big Wet Kiss?, A Barrel of Laughs?:
The 2000 Presidential Election TV Talk Show Interviews with
The Candidates

by

Barbara Osborn

Doctor of Philosophy in Communication

University of California, San Diego, 2006

Professor Michael Schudson, Chair

Only recently have a small vanguard of news and cultural studies scholars begun to challenge the idea (prevalent in news, communications and political communication scholarship) that serious news provides a kind of *ne plus ultra* form of democratic communication, while all other nonfiction forms provide a lesser, and many would argue, politically deleterious form of information to the public. To date, few scholars have taken up the study of media texts that fall into unfamiliar new categories that have been dubbed “nonfiction entertainment” or “popular journalism.” Yet Pew Center research surveys released in 2000 and 2004 demonstrate that these nonfiction entertainment forms are a campaign information source for an increasing number of Americans, particularly the young. This dissertation examines the TV talk show interviews with the presidential candidates in the 2000 election to consider them as modes of democratic communication, to identify what kind of content is discussed and how the interviews differ from one

another in intent, method and outcome. I discuss the interviews with Gore and Bush conducted by Oprah, Queen Latifah, Rosie O'Donnell and Regis, as well as the interviews conducted by David Letterman and Jay Leno. While the interviews differ enormously one from another, it is clear that these interviews not only merit attention because they are being used by American voters, but because some of them provide useful forums through which to view the candidates and a challenge to the notion that professional journalism is the preferred way to present political information to the public.



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Illustration 1: Jay Leno is retiring?

Chapter One: The Shoulders I Stand On

I do not know whether you are practicing an old form of parody and satire or a new form of journalism.¹

-Bill Moyers interviewing Daily Show host Jon Stewart

Only recently have a small vanguard of news and cultural studies scholars (Hallin, Curran, Peters, Fiske) begun to challenge the idea (prevalent in news, communications and political communication scholarship) that serious news provides a kind of *ne plus ultra* form of democratic communication, while all other

¹ Interview with Jon Stewart. *Now*. PBS. 11 July 2003.

nonfiction forms provide a lesser, and many would argue, politically deleterious form of information to the public. To date, few scholars have taken up the study of media texts that fall into unfamiliar new categories that have been dubbed “nonfiction entertainment” or “popular journalism.”²

This emerging body of research has been conducted principally among scholars studying the “trashy” siblings of serious news -- the tabloids and talk shows. In trying to evaluate these genres as democratic communication, these scholars (Sparks, Dahlgren, Langer, Grindstaff, Brookes, Macdonald, Glynn, Gripsrud, Zelizer) have made several significant observations. Grindstaff, for instance, has demonstrated the ways in which production and narrative techniques of news and talk shows resemble each other. Fiske and Hallin have evaluated the substantive differences in content between news and entertainment. Fiske contends that “textually, there is not a lot of difference between television news and television series or serial drama.”³ Hallin, a cooler head less given to overly sweeping generalizations, found in a study of CBS Morning News (a production of the networks’ entertainment division) that the morning news broadcast sometimes aired “much more substantial coverage than would normally be found on the evening news.”⁴

Where these scholars are united is in their conviction that news and entertainment are more the same than conventional thinking recognizes, that the good/bad value system conventionally assigned to these two categories of political

² Jostein Gripsrud. "Tabloidization, Popular Journalism, and Democracy." *Tabloid Tales: Global debates over Media Standards*. Ed. Colin Sparks and John Tulloch. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000) 285-300.

³ John Fiske. *Television Culture*. (New York: Methuen, 1987) p. 282.

⁴ Dan Hallin. “We Keep American On Top of the World,” 87-112 in Dan Hallin, *We Keep America On Top of the World: Television Journalism and the Public Sphere*, (New York: Routledge, 1994) p. 93.

information is unjustifiable, and that tabloids, talk shows and other nonfiction entertainment represent a potentially democratizing development that legitimates participation by non-experts and expands public discussion of politics beyond the audiences for serious news.

However, these same scholars – be they focused on tabloids or talk shows or other genres -- part company with one another over the issue of individualized storytelling and its impact on political action. I see three elements at issue here: form, content, and the impact of form on content and consequent political action.

I'll discuss them in reverse order. Discussion of the impact of individualized narrative form has a tendency to devolve into effects arguments. It is presumed that individualistic storytelling and abstraction not only foster different types of political understanding, but different types of political action (or lack thereof) in the world. Sparks, Livingstone and Lunt, and others have expressed concern that understanding based on individual narratives does not cultivate political engagement. Sparks, for instance, argues that the kinds of social action facilitated by serious and tabloid journalism are different and that tabloids leave audiences “poorly equipped to participate.”⁵

Myra Macdonald articulates the opposing view, grounding her argument in personal experience, not theory.

If we reflect on the development of our own ‘public knowledge,’ our own political involvements or commitment to social change, they will often have arisen as

⁵ Colin Sparks, “Introduction: The Panic Over Tabloid News,” pp. 1-40 in Colin Sparks and John Tulloch, eds., *Tabloid Tales: Global Debates over Media Standards*. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000) p. 28.

much out of perceived instances of injustice or intolerance, or particular engagements in the passion of an argument, as out of cool reflection and analysis. If this is the case, it might be premature to judge that the media can energize civic knowledge and political participation only through one set of strategies.⁶

While these effects arguments – pro and con -- are endlessly tempting to make, in my estimation, given several generations' worth of scholarly effects research that has not surmounted fundamental methodological obstacles and whose conclusions are so contingent to be nearly useless, effects conclusions cannot be made and I will not attempt to make them in this paper. It seems prudent to assume that it may not be in *any* media's power to mobilize political participation. If individuals experience political power as distant or don't feel a part of the social order, they are not likely to see any point in keeping up with or participating in political power whatever media form the politics comes packaged in.⁷

That said, there remains a fundamental disagreement among scholars about content and its impact on understanding. Does nonfiction entertainment content provide audiences with “the kind of knowledge essential to the exercise of their right as citizens”? Sparks, articulating the concern most often voiced by this camp, suggests that without abstraction, “there are limits to what can be explained or understood.”⁸

⁶ Myra Macdonald. "Rethinking Personalization in Current Affairs Journalism," pp. 251-266 in Colin Sparks and John Tulloch, eds., *Tabloid Tales: Global Debates over Media Standards*. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000) p. 252-253.

⁷ This point is made by both Jostein Gripsrud "The Aesthetics and Politics of Melodrama," pp. 84-95 in *Journalism and Popular Culture*, Peter Dahlgren and Colin Sparks, eds., (Thousand Oaks: SAGE 1992) p. 93 and Liesbet van Zoonen, "A Tyranny of Intimacy? Women, femininity and television, news" pp. 217-235 in *Communication and Citizenship: Journalism and the public sphere*. Peter Dahlgren and Colin Sparks. Eds., (New York: Routledge 1991) p. 233.

⁸ Sparks, *Tabloid Tales*, p. 28.

Others (Macdonald; Gripsrud; Gamson; Neuman, Just and Crigler) see these nonfiction forms – or at least some of them - as an entrée to politics, a “politics for beginners” in which audience understanding is enhanced, not stunted. Macdonald argues that the personalized narrative of these nonfiction forms is essential to their communicative success.

There is a growing body of research evidence that abstraction and analysis, however worthy in themselves, may not be the most successful means of communicating the complexity of the world we live in to audiences and readers. ... the sense that attention to communicative success, whether in media or academic practice, necessarily amounts to diluting or dumbing down rather than to making accessible or enhancing understanding owes much to the tenacity of Enlightenment polarities.⁹

Increasingly, scholars (Peters; Young; Macdonald; Gripsrud; Van Zoonen) argue that democratic life requires not a single “gold standard” of communicative form, but a variety of styles designed for different subpublics.¹⁰ “It takes, if not all sorts, then at least many sorts of journalism to make a democratic media system work as it should,” Gripsrud writes.¹¹ Gripsrud calls his subject “journalism” in this particular essay, but he is referring to a journalism broadly, not narrowly defined. One of the challenges working in this area is establishing nomenclature that is not cumbersome and straddles what people conventionally call news and entertainment. In this paper, I’m inclined to use the term “nonfiction entertainment” in order to

⁹ Macdonald, *Tabloid Tales*, 253.

¹⁰ In fact, scholars have found little evidence that daily news helps the public learn about issues or candidate records. “Only special event coverage like the conventions and debates which allowed uninterrupted access to voters added substantially to their information base.” S. Robert Lichter and Richard E. Noyes, *Good Intentions Make Bad News: Why Americans Hate Campaign Journalism*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995) p. 8.

¹¹ Gripsrud, *Tabloid Tales*, 299.

continually reinforce the idea that this is an informational form not linked to news' professional codes. However, I concede that the label suits daytime talk more intuitively than it does latenight comedy. Moyer's question, with which I open this chapter, exemplifies this conundrum as it relates to latenight.

In this dissertation I've chosen a dataset that lies as "betwixt and between" as any dataset could be -- talk show interviews (conventionally the domain of entertainment) of presidential candidates (conventionally the domain of news). My dataset includes the major party candidate interviews from 2000. In total, I discuss 12 interviews: Oprah and Regis' interviews with the two major party candidates; Queen Latifah and Rosie's interviews with Gore; Jay Leno and David Letterman's general election campaign interviews with Bush and Gore; and Letterman's interviews with Ralph Nader and Bush during the 2000 primaries. (Since *Larry King* is produced under the aegis of news, I do not include him in my dataset.) In general, talk show interviews in election years when an incumbent runs are fewer in number and less groundbreaking (see Chapter 3 for more on this phenomenon), therefore my dataset focuses on the interviews during the 2000, not the 2004 campaign.

My central question is not whether these interviews are a new form of democratic communication. It goes almost without saying that this is the case. The interviews may be shallow, depoliticizing or cynicism-generating, a consummate degradation of political speech that would make The Founders (or, more accurately from a historical perspective, Progressive Era reformers) roll in their graves, but they undeniably present a kind of discourse on politics if only because they present preeminent national political symbols to millions of potential voters. I ask instead: What is the

nature of the information contained in them? What kind of information exchange between presidential candidate and host do talk show interviews facilitate? What are the hosts' intentions, and secondarily, how do they differ from news? What do they ask of candidates, literally and as performances?

All interviews included in my dataset were transcribed. I also consulted the tape of the broadcasts to make observations about the set, the clothing of the host and candidate, their inflection, body language and manner.

I approach my dataset descriptively. It's a methodological approach with obvious pitfalls. Description is subjective. Often, researchers amplify description with quantification of topics discussed. This method looks "more scientific," but topics subjectively assessed, placed in categories, and counted aren't any less subjective for being quantified.

Given this definitional lack of clarity, a single talk show interview could be analyzed for its political content by two different observers and they would come to entirely different conclusions depending on their definition of "politics."¹² In fact, though it's an imperfect example since it compares '92 and '00 data, the findings of Ridout and Baum exemplify this problem. In her 1992 study of talk show interviews, Ridout counts discussion of topics -- domestic policy, leadership, "government gridlock," foreign policy, campaign strategy and personal character issues – and

¹² Wyatt, Katz and Kim note how use of the term "politics" encourages an overly narrow focus on the workings of government and political campaigns, often excluding education and schools, the economy, foreign policy, and other topics. See Robert O. Wyatt, Elihu Katz, and Joohoan Kim. "Bridging The Spheres: Political and Personal Conversation in Public and Private Spaces." *Journal of Communication*, (Winter 2000) 50: 1. p. 72.

concludes that the interviews with candidates were *substantive*.¹³ But in his 2000 study, Baum defines political subject matter in terms of full-sentence references to political issues or political parties and concludes that the talk show interviews were *not substantive*.¹⁴ In my research, I employ a descriptive method despite its limitations and subjectivity and have chosen to embrace a definition of politics that is broader than traditional political institutions and policies. “Let every man be his own methodologist,” Mills exhorted,¹⁵ and I have taken his advice to heart. At least I’ve avoided “the technician’s fallacies” and “false confidence,” and I’ve tried to engage the texts in a disciplined but open way.

My dataset could certainly be presented in a way that makes its content appear utterly and *a priori* ridiculous. Print journalism has engaged in this sort of derisive presentation. Candidates hypnotize chickens, reveal their favorite sandwich and confess whether they prefer women in leather or lace. Rather than set out to ridicule the interviews, my task has been to make sense of the content if sense can be made of it.

I do not presume to understand how audiences actually interpret this material, or as I mentioned earlier, whether this information would make people more or less likely to actually participate in politics, though I do cite others on this question in Chapter Four. Frankly, I regret focusing on the media inasmuch as any study of the

¹³ In the '92 election, Popkin also concluded that "interview shows may be better than the typical news program" at communicating candidate information to less knowledgeable citizens. Samuel Popkin, "Voter Learning in the 1992 Presidential Campaign," pp. 172-180 in *Do The Media Govern? Politicians, Voters, and Reporters in America*, Shanto Iyengar and Richard Reeves, eds., (Thousands Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishing 1997) p. 176.

¹⁴ See Christine F. Ridout, "News Coverage and Talk Shows in the 1992 Presidential Campaign," *PS: Political Science and Politics*, (December 1993) xxvi: 4, and Matthew Baum, "Making Politics Fun: What Happens When Presidential Candidates Hit the Talk Show Circuit?" Paper presented at the 2002 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association. Boston, Massachusetts. August 29-September 3, 2002.

¹⁵ C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959) p. 224.

media, however inadvertently, ends up lending more weight to the popular but erroneous assumption that the media has immense social power that exaggerates its actual impact. As will become clear in later chapters, this exaggerated notion of media power has infected the talk show hosts whose work I discuss.

Additional Analysis that Has Influenced My Thinking

My dissertation research engages several different scholarly literatures: communications literature on journalism, cultural studies examinations of news and talk shows (a bit of which I've discussed already), and political communication studies that grow out of political science's approach to media. These literatures have informed my thinking particularly in my consideration of the content and form of information that may be valuable to various subpublics. A debate exists in political science (in many ways parallel to the debate in communication and cultural studies) between those scholars who see a well-informed citizen as essential to good democratic practice and those who study how imperfectly informed citizens participate in a democracy despite limited information. Historically, political theorists (Locke, Tocqueville, Mill) argued that democracy would only work if people had a high degree of political information and sophistication.¹⁶ While news wasn't explicitly prescribed, providing political information to the electorate became professional journalism's self-described purpose, and the kind of knowledge that journalism values became the kind of knowledge citizens were supposed to

¹⁶ Russell J. Dalton and Martin P. Wattenberg "The Not So Simple Act of Voting" in *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*, pp. 193-218, Ada W. Finifter, ed., American Political Science Association: Washington, DC 1993. p. 194.

demonstrate. Given these beliefs, it's no surprise that scholars were deeply troubled when the first surveys of American voter beliefs, conducted in the 1940s, revealed that the electorate was not well-informed. (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet; Dalton and Wattenberg) Scholars were confronted with a dilemma: Either the American democratic project was hopelessly flawed or voters were finding a way to make "reasonable" decisions without being wildly well-informed, at least as public knowledge was being measured.

This quandary redirected the research of some political communication scholars. In the 1980s, some researchers turned their attention to how the public overcomes "informational shortfalls." "... Our models should look at whether citizens can manage the complexities of politics and make reasonable decisions given their political interest and positions... at modest cost and without perfect information," counseled Dalton and Wattenberg.¹⁷

Popkin argued that voters make "reasonable" decisions through what he calls "gut reasoning" or "low information rationality." He describes it as "a method of combining, in an economical way, learning and information from past experiences, daily life, the media and political campaigns."¹⁸ In making political choices, the electorate was not studying "a textbook" full of all the normative information required for political decision-making, they were cobbling together judgments based on a variety of information sources of diverse quality as they harriedly went about their lives.

¹⁷ Dalton and Wattenberg, p. 196.

¹⁸ Samuel Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) p. 21.

Yankelovich added another interesting dimension to this discussion. Rather than focus on how voters compensate for informational ignorance, he argued that information is not the be-all and end-all of quality opinion and that voters ought not be judged by the thoroughness of their grasp of issues. “It would be perverse to deny that information is not relevant to quality of public opinion,” he writes, “but equating quality opinion with being well informed is a serious mistake.”¹⁹

Political science research has also engaged the debate over whether it is preferable that citizens make electoral choices on the basis of a candidate’s policy positions or personality and character. (This debate has also been taken up within communications and cultural studies.) For decades, political science research -- dominated by the thinking of Converse -- favored public discussion of policy over personality. Issues were considered desirable information for voters, while the candidates themselves -- their personalities and personal lives -- have been viewed as less, if it all, relevant. Stencel, Lichter and Sabato, for instance, argue that the politics of personality “shrinks” the presidency.²⁰

This view remains popular, but is challenged by a body of scholarship (Wattenberg; Patterson; Popkin; Sniderman) that questions the assumption that the norm of good citizenship should emphasize policies over people. Wattenberg, for instance, argues that “because so much power is vested in one person [the president]

¹⁹ Daniel Yankelovich, *Coming to Public Judgment: Making Democracy Work in a Complex World*. (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press 1991) pp. 16 and 44.

²⁰ Mark Stencel, Robert S. Lichter, Larry J. Sabato, *Peep Show: Media and Politics in the Age of Scandal*. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000.)

alone, the personal attributes of the candidates are clearly relevant factors to be discussed in the campaign.”²¹

Moreover, personal characteristics provide voters with three indices that research suggests voters use to assess candidates: their integrity, reliability and competence.

Such criteria are hardly irrational, for if a candidate is too incompetent to carry out policy promises, or too dishonest for those promises to be trusted, it makes perfect sense for a voter to pay more attention to personality than policies.²²

Criticism of the American political process routinely laments the preeminence of personality in voters’ calculus. Whether a voter “likes” a candidate is regarded as perhaps the least appropriate criteria of all candidate-centered criteria. Yet, Sniderman has found that “likeability” is a meaningful heuristic for voters. “As simplistic as it seems to suggest that viewers can make a credible political decision on whether they *like* a candidate or not,” he writes, “in fact, they can. Their feeling of like and their ideological allegiances are in consonance.”²³

I find solace and sanity in the historical analysis of this question by Gil Troy. His research suggests that this debate was as contentious 200 years ago as it is today.²⁴ Clearly, this conflict is deeply rooted in the culture of American electoral politics, perhaps a symptom of larger, even more fundamental struggles.

²¹ Martin P. Wattenberg. *The Rise of Candidate-Centered Politics* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991) pp. 80-81.

²² Dalton and Wattenberg, P. 209.

²³ Paul M. Sniderman, Richard A. Brody, Philip E. Tetlock *Reasoning and Choice: Explorations in Political Psychology*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) pp. 93-94 and 115.

²⁴ Gil Troy, *See How They Ran: The Changing Role of the Presidential Candidate*, (New York: Free Press, 1991) p. 67.

Recent public opinion survey research has made this perennial “people vs. policies” debate a focus of renewed and contentious discussion. Since 1996, The Pew Center for The People and The Press has conducted a quadrennial survey concerning where Americans get their campaign information. In its 2004 report, “Cable and Internet Loom Large in Fragmented Political News Universe,” a survey of 1,506 adults, Pew found that a significant percentage of young people say they learn about the presidential campaigns from entertainment venues. Overall, one out of every two young people said they at least sometimes learn about the campaign from comedy shows. The number of people under age 30 that say they regularly learn about the campaign and the candidates from comedy shows like *Saturday Night Live*, *Politically Incorrect* and *The Daily Show* doubled since 2000.

Pew researchers found that not only were more young people learning about campaigns from entertainment shows, they were “abandoning” news.

...young people, by far the hardest to reach segment of the political news audience, are abandoning mainstream sources of election news and increasingly citing alternative outlets, including comedy shows such as *The Daily Show* and *Saturday Night Live*, as their source for election news.

For Americans under 30, *Saturday Night Live* and *The Daily Show* “are now mentioned almost as frequently as newspapers and evening network news programs as regular sources for election news.” Eighteen to twenty-nine-year olds were almost as likely to get information from comedy TV programs (21%) or the Internet (20%) as network evening news (23%). The percentage of young people using traditional news media also dropped by double-digits over the four-year period from 2000 to 2004.

Within the overall population, use of entertainment venues for political information is less prevalent. Among 30-49 year olds, 7 percent said they get campaign information from latenight TV comedy; 6 percent said they get campaign information from comedy. Among 50+ adults, 8 percent said they get campaign information from latenight TV and 3 percent from comedy shows. To compare this to other sources of political information among 30-49 year olds, the same percentage said they get information from latenight TV comedy as C-Span. Among 50+ adults, the same percentage of people said they get campaign information from latenight TV as news websites.

A comparison of the January 2004, February 2000 and April 1996 data shows consistent increases in usage of nonfiction entertainment in the form of talk radio, latenight TV and comedy programs.

Respondents who "regularly learn something about the campaign or the candidates from":

Table 1: Pew Center Campaign Information Source Polls 1996-2004

	<u>April 1996</u>	<u>Feb 2000</u>	<u>Jan 2004²⁵</u>
Talk radio	12%	15%	17%
Latenight TV	6%	9%	9%
MTV	3%	5%	n.a.
Comedy TV	n.a.	6%	8%

Previous Pew studies provide additional evidence of the decline in news use. In a 1996 survey, Pew found that viewership of nightly network TV and local TV news was decreasing. Network news viewing was dropping particularly precipitously.

²⁵ None of the Pew surveys on voter information have measured whether Americans are getting political news from daytime talk shows like *Oprah*, *Regis*, *Dr. Phil*, etc. presumably because the shows do not regularly schedule political guests.

Only 42 percent of respondents said that they regularly watch one of the three nightly network broadcasts, a decline of 18 percent over three years.²⁶ Weekday newspaper readership has also dropped precipitously -- more than 20 percent in 30 years. Readership stood at 77.6 percent in 1970. In 1999, that figure was 56.9 percent and still falling.²⁷ Finally, in terms of overall news use, between 1994 and 1996, the percentage of respondents not using radio, TV or newspapers for news nearly doubled to 15 percent.²⁸

Concluding Remarks

A stark and ever-growing conflict exists between conventional norms and contemporary reality. Neuman, Just and Crigler note a "disjuncture" between what media critics emphasize and "what the media audience tells us is important and relevant in their lives."²⁹ Additional pressures contribute to the erosion of the audience for news. Technology has driven a dramatic fragmentation of audiences. News outlets are under unprecedented pressure to maintain double-digit profits, resulting in reduced investment in news production. "The political press feels like we don't matter," laments Nicholas Lemann, Dean of the Journalism School at Columbia University. "Nobody is listening to us anymore."³⁰ This is the larger social context in which my study takes place.

²⁶ "TV News Viewership Declines," Pew Center for the People and The Press, 1996.

²⁷ "U.S. Daily Newspaper and Sunday/Weekend Reading Audience", Newspaper Association of America, 2000.

²⁸ "TV News Viewership Declines," Pew Center for the People and The Press, 1996.

²⁹ W. Russell Neuman, Marion R. Just, and Ann N. Crigler. *Common Knowledge: News and the Construction of Political Meaning*. (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.) p. 110.

³⁰ Judd B. Kessler, "Journalists Debate the Role of Media in Elections," *The Harvard Crimson*, 3 October 2000. Available: www.thecrimson.com/article.aspx?ref=101645. Downloaded: 1 April 2006.

Although I discuss these developments in an American context, this is not simply an American phenomenon. Neveu's recent discussion of talk show politics in Europe testifies to similar developments and concerns in the UK and France.³¹

The next chapter will look at some of the elements that distinguish talk show form and intent from news. Chapter Three outlines the trajectory of presidential campaign interviews on American TV talk shows, a chronology that has not been compiled before. Even this fairly cursory timeline provides a sense of the growth of these interviews over time and the significant interviews within this 40-year timeframe. Chapter Four analyzes Oprah's interviews in depth. Chapter Five looks at other daytime talk interviews. Chapter Six looks at latenight comedy TV talk show interviews. Chapter Seven tries to draw out some of the potential implications of this research for the future.

Finally, I want to close with a few words on words. I call this dissertation "A Big Wet Kiss? A Barrel of Laughs?" because media critics have tended to characterize these interviews as if the hosts were creating a highly flattering venue for candidates (a big wet kiss) or as if the venues were tests of a candidate's ability to make jokes (a barrel of laughs.)

In day-to-day conversation, entertainment is often posited as the opposite of news. But "it's not news" isn't a satisfying definition of entertainment. Virtually no one who uses the word defines it and those who have tried fail.³² Apparently, like

³¹ Erik Neveu. "Politicians without Politics, a Polity without Citizens: The Politics of the Chat Show in Contemporary France," *Modern & Contemporary France*, 13: 3 August 2005, pp. 323-335.

³² For an example of a failed attempt, see Joseph Turow, "A Mass Communication Perspective on Entertainment Industries," pp. 160-177 in *Mass Media and Society*, James Curran and Michael Gurevitch, eds., (New York: Edward Arnold, 1991.)

pornography, we're supposed to know it when we see it. Van Zoonen astutely observes that many scholars have chosen to identify entertainment in terms of effects rather than genres.³³ In any case, it remains poorly understood and poorly defined. Though I do my best to avoid it, I occasionally use the word to denote a conventionally understood body of cultural texts. I don't define it. And if that's unjustifiable, at least I've got a lot of company.

I also often refer to the programs in my dataset by their host's name, e.g., "on Letterman." I do this to reflect the powerful influence of the individual host on the approach and content of the show. I use first names, e.g., "Oprah," "Regis," "Rosie" in acknowledgement of the informal relationship daytime talk show hosts foster with their audience.

And finally, I use the terms "professional journalism" or "political journalism" to denote that subset of journalism that is taught in journalism schools, promoted by the profession and practiced most uniformly by political journalists.

³³ Liesbet van Zoonen, *Entertaining The Citizen: When Politics and Popular Culture Converge*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005) p. 9.

Chapter Two: Different Strokes for Different Folks?

In this chapter, I'll discuss characteristics of talk show form and talk show interviews. Most of the statements I make in this chapter apply equally to daytime and latenight talk shows, though in Chapter Six I address some of the unique elements brought to talk show form by comedy.

I also contrast talk shows with televised political journalism interviews in order to throw talk shows' formal components into relief as well as to begin to question whether interviews conducted by political journalists are a clearly preferable vehicle for democratic communication as convention and much scholarly research assumes.

Talk Show Form

Daytime talk shows' "female attributes" have received extensive discussion in the talk show literature. (Arlen, Carpignano, Dixon, Gamson, Grindstaff, Livingstone and Lunt, Munson) The typical talk show set replaces the TV news desk with a "living room" couch or upholstered chairs. The set and social interaction carry the hallmarks of a private, not a public space. Rituals of hospitality are observed. "The host" is the host of the get-together. "The guests" arrive. Hugs and kisses are exchanged. (Never mind that everyone has already greeted each other back stage.) Daytime talk show hosts eschew the standard business attire suit-and-tie of TV news. Larry King wears no jacket, exposing an undergarment – his suspenders. Dr. Phil

sports a jacket, no tie. Regis' dress code – a monochrome suit and tie -- is anomalous in its formality, but Regis' female co-hosts are never in business attire, and Regis' sartorial monochrome distinguishes him from the classic male business attire: dark jacket, white shirt, contrasting tie. Indeed, Regis' tie – that signifier of male formal dress -- all but disappears into his shirt and jacket.

It is also a scholarly commonplace to observe that women are more likely than men to talk about the world in personal and emotional terms. Talk show interactions, conducted in front of a predominantly female audience, are guided by the rules of “girl talk.”³⁴ Self-disclosure is favored. Displays of emotion – happiness, delight, sadness, concern -- are appropriate. In news interviews with Oprah as subject, the “Queen of Talk” has stressed that emotions and feelings are what her show is all about.³⁵ Oprah reacts, laughs, screams, cries. She physically touches her guests and the members of her audience.

Indeed, some writers argue that American political discourse is undergoing a feminization of which talk shows could be viewed as one manifestation. Jamieson calls this new form of political address “The Effeminate Style.” It is self-disclosive, conversational and intimate, unscripted and direct, and grounded in personal experience. It favors narrative storytelling over argument. Jamieson argues that “the

³⁴ It appears that about three-quarters of talk show viewers are female. In her book, Grindstaff cites a 1995 Annenberg School for Communication study that indicates that 75 percent of talk TV viewers are women. See, Laura Grindstaff, “Producing Trash, Class, and the Money Shot: A Behind-the-Scenes Account of Daytime TV Talk Shows,” pp. 164-202 in *Media Scandals: Morality and Desire in the Popular Culture Marketplace*, eds. James Lull and Stephen Hinerman. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) p. 199. Gerstenzang reports that 76 percent of *Oprah's* viewers are women. (James Gerstenzang, “Gore Plays It Warm Fuzzy on ‘Oprah,’” *Los Angeles Times*, 12 September 2000.) For a discussion of women’s speech styles see Deborah Tannen, *The Argument Culture: Moving From Debate to Dialogue*. (New York: Random House, 1998)

³⁵ Laurie Haag. “Oprah Winfrey: The Construction of Intimacy in the talk show setting.” *Journal of Popular Culture*, 26:4 (Spring 1993) pp. 115-119.

broadcast age has rendered the combative, data-driven, impersonal 'male' style obsolete."³⁶ Jamieson's observations are empirically supported by Rod Hart's computer analysis of presidential speeches from Truman to Carter in which he found an increase in familiarity and self-references.³⁷ A second group of scholars (Ryfe, Carpignano, Gamson), detecting the same trend, attribute this development not to the medium of television, but to the civil rights movement and the rise of feminism.

My own view is that Jamieson's analysis captures only half the picture. Despite Hart's empirical support, one only has to think of Montel Williams or Morton Downey to be reminded that the combative male style still plays a significant role in televised talk shows. These shows embrace combat while rejecting an impersonal rhetorical style. Combative talk show hosts jettison the "living room set", preferring to stand and duke it out with their audience or their guests or both. Within a journalistic arena, Clayman and Heritage found that presidents "face a much more confining and inhospitable interrogative environment" in their analysis of reporters' questions in the "Television Age." (They analyze press conferences from the Eisenhower to the Reagan administrations.³⁸) I believe we are seeing an expanded range of political discourse, simultaneously more *and* less combative. (Within the talk show universe, the shows in my dataset belong to what I call the "living room"

³⁶ Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Eloquence In An Electronic Age: The Transformation of Political Speechmaking*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) p. 65 and 84-89. During the 2000 campaign several reporters also made note of this feminization of politics. See Maureen Dowd, "Women rule: Cuddle us, or else!" *The Denver Post*, 28 September 2000: B-07 and Abraham McLaughlin, "White House Race Takes a Feminine Feel," *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 September 2000.

³⁷ Roderick P. Hart, *Campaign Talk: Why Elections Are Good for Us*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000.) p. 61.

³⁸ Steven E. Clayman and John Heritage, "Questioning Presidents: Journalistic Deference and Adversarialness in the Press Conferences of U.S. Presidents Eisenhower and Reagan," Paper presented at the 2002 International Communication Association, p. 772.

subset of talk shows with the norm being non-combative exchange, grounding arguments in personal experience.)

Talk show form is also characterized by the host's engaged, non-objective approach to social and political topics presented on the show. Oprah and Donahue both came from journalism. (Donahue was a TV news reporter in Ohio. Until the late 1960s, Oprah was a TV news reporter in Tennessee.)³⁹ But as talk show hosts, Donahue and Oprah turned away from journalistic disengagement. In his autobiography, Donahue recounts how he gradually rejected the outside observer status requisite to journalism. Recalling his response to a Quaker anti-war vigil, he writes:

I had begun to question whether it was right for me, a journalist, to make a public statement of protest about a matter on which I would be reporting on the 11-o'clock news. Would Roger Mudd join in if the protest took place in Washington? Would James Reston march on the White House? How much of my guilt was caused by concern over professional objectivity and how much by cowardice? Had Walter Cronkite surrendered his credentials as a citizen when he chose a career as a reporter? One hundred plastic zipper bags [bodybags] a week! Was the issue professional virginity for staying out of controversy? Was I hiding behind my job?⁴⁰

This open engagement in show topics distinguishes talk shows from the dispassionate disengaged codes of professional journalism.⁴¹ Oprah and Donahue's

³⁹ See Bernard M. Timberg, *Television Talk: A History of the TV Talk Show*, (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2002) p. 114. When Timberg compiled a list of talk show hosts 1948-1994, he found that one-third of the hosts came out of news and two-thirds out of entertainment – comedy in particular. David Letterman, known for comedy, hosted a radio news and public affairs talk show early in his career. Mike Wallace, a long-time anchor at *60 Minutes*, came out of entertainment.

⁴⁰ Phil Donahue, *Phil & Company. Donahue: My Own Story*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979) p. 85.

⁴¹ It's interesting to note that "civic journalism" was a short-lived attempt within journalism to remedy some of the dispassionate disengagement of professional journalism.

rejection of objectivity is rooted in moral conviction, a rejection of a TV news form that requires disinterested observation of bodybags and other social horrors. Donahue and Oprah describe their shows as a ministry. To an extent unthinkable within the codes of professional TV journalism, talk show hosts *care*. They wear their values, feelings and opinions on their sleeves. (Evidence of this rule and its erosion in news can be seen in response to CNN reporter Anderson Cooper’s coverage of the 2005 Katrina hurricane. His emotional coverage of the natural disaster prompted man-bites-dog coverage of his coverage.)⁴² The moralism in talk shows can—and in some combative hosts’ hands – does become jingoistic and intolerant, but it does not take on this tone in the “living room” subset of talk shows that I discuss here.

Given talk show hosts’ moral conviction, it is then also no surprise that daytime talk show hosts in 2000 expressed concern about the state of the country and appeared to be acting on their desire to engage viewers in the democratic electoral process. Oprah and Latifah explicitly exhorted their viewers to register and vote. Rosie O’Donnell openly endorsed Gore.

Emotional expressiveness, moral conviction, personal experience, a “living room” set and casual dress -- these are some of the hallmarks of talk shows. Another is the type and variety of topics discussed. Topics off-limits in news get play on talk shows and the topics are juxtaposed in a way that is sometimes deemed jarring. Dick Cavett said his TV series mixed Phyllis Diller with politically “untouchable subjects

⁴² See Elizabeth Jensen, “An Anchor Who Reports Disaster News With a Heart on His Sleeve,” *The New York Times*, 12 September 2005. B1. Jensen notes that “At least twice he [Cooper] choked up on air, once abruptly stopping his commentary about lost homes and waving away the camera as he looked about to burst into tears.”

like gun control.”⁴³ On *Donahue*, strippers, lesbian nuns, and world leaders shared a stage. Over the last 45 years, the talk show has flattened hierarchies and introduced a wide range of potential topics, questions and situations. In 2000, Vice President Al Gore taught Regis how to hypnotize chickens. Texas Governor George W. Bush was interviewed by a contestant from the TV series *Survivor*.

Dixon argues that the talk show is the most dynamic and elastic of all nonfiction on TV, the most likely to push the limits of hegemonic thinking in all directions. Livingstone and Lunt dubbed talk shows “intergenre.”⁴⁴ This intergenre form results in a wide range of potential questions and situations including the potential for unexpected encounters. The relative unpredictability of talk shows puts the lie to the common assertion that talk shows provide a venue in which it is always easy for guests to control their self-presentation.⁴⁵ CNN political reporter Wolf Blitzer, for instance, called the 2000 candidate appearances on talk shows “a big wet kiss.”⁴⁶ Talk shows are described pejoratively as “softball,” while news interviews are described approvingly as “hardball.” Among media critics, there is a clear preference for interviews that pose challenges to candidates’ ability to control their own self-presentation. Talk shows do not operate on a comparable assumption that making an interview difficult for a guest to control is inherently valuable. Candidates’ increasing willingness to appear on talk shows, coupled with their unwillingness to

⁴³ Hearst/Actuality Productions, unedited interview transcripts for *A History of Talk Shows*, A&E. 1998, Used with permission.

⁴⁴ Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt, *Talk on Television: Audience Participation and Public Debate*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) p. 179-180.

⁴⁵ See Paul Brownfield, “Cheap Shots At A Steep Price,” *Los Angeles Times*, 27 August 2000. Caryn James, “Blurring Distinctions While Chasing Laughs,” *New York Times*, 22 September 2000: A19. Maria L. LaGanga, “Pop Culture Politics: Live with George W.” *Los Angeles Times*, 22 September 2000.

⁴⁶ Marshall Sella, “The Smart Guy vs. The Dumb Guy,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 24 September 2000, p. 76.

appear on a show like *Meet The Press* appears to be proof-positive that talk shows hand the reins to candidates, in contrast to political journalism.

Critics argue that talk shows pose no challenges or at least no relevant challenges for candidates. "*The Tonight Show* is a welcome venue for the candidates, because Leno isn't about to ask hardball questions," wrote *L.A. Times* reporter Paul Brownfield. Pulitzer Prize-winning *L.A. Times* TV critic Howard Rosenberg suggested that Clinton's 1992 sax-playing appearance on *Arsenio Hall* sold the candidate

to urban blacks and other young viewers in ways that had nothing to do with his ability to govern... These escapist venues celebrate the qualities of an entertainer, not a national leader... these late-nighters reward glossy camera skills and hair-trigger responses... it's one thing to have the skills to communicate with the nation through TV, quite another to have the skills of a showman.⁴⁷

But these critiques are misguided. Rosenberg makes a facile, albeit familiar distinction between entertaining and leading, communicating and showmanship. He distrusts the superficiality of "the show" an attitude that places him in pedigreed company. In a discussion of Habermas, John Durham Peters points out Habermas' "distrust of aesthetic representation." "Habermas," Peters writes, "prizes conversation, reading and plain speech... and is frankly hostile to theater, courtly

⁴⁷ Howard Rosenberg, "If You Can't Be Funny," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 March 2000. In his recollection of the *Arsenio* episode, Rosenberg -- like many journalists -- recalls history through synecdoche. Rosenberg remembers Clinton's appearance for its sax performance. Utterly forgotten in this recollection is Arsenio's extended conversation with Clinton about violence and poverty in south central Los Angeles in the immediate aftermath of the 1992 riots.

forms, ceremony, the visual and to rhetoric more generally. Show and manipulation always go together ..." ⁴⁸

In my view, a more useful way to think about the performance issues that arise in relation to candidate appearances comes from Goffman:

The very obligation and profitability of appearing always in a steady moral light, of being a socialized character, forces one to be the sort of person who is practiced in the ways of the stage. ⁴⁹

In other words, nearly everyone is nearly always performing. Talk show interviews require a different type of performance from candidates than news does. "Casual conversation is as performative as an entirely scripted affair," Tuchman writes, and "being oneself is itself a constructed activity." ⁵⁰ Talk show guests, like TV news interview guests, play a heightened version of themselves. When candidates go on talk shows, they enter a world in which self-disclosure, personal anecdote, emotion are the norm. If guests -- politicians or others -- don't conform to the norms of the talk show world, they are less effective, just as the formal, measured, impersonal presentation serves candidates at debates, press conferences and other news venues.

Within the "living room" subset of talk shows, the type of performance that is called for does not generally involve conflict. In a study of informal conversation,

⁴⁸ John Durham Peters, "Distrust of representation: Habermas on the public sphere," *Media Culture and Society* 15: 4 (October 1993) p. 562.

⁴⁹ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, (New York: Doubleday Books, 1959) p. 251. Goffman defines performance as "all activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers." See Goffman, p. 22.

⁵⁰ Gaye Tuchman, "Assembling A Network Talk Show" in *The TV Establishment: Programming for Power and Profit*, ed. Gaye Tuchman, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974) p. 125, 178.

Wyatt, Katz, and Kim argue that conversation that is not purposefully argumentative plays a more vital role in the democratic process than is usually recognized.⁵¹

Even in the 1960s, Jack Paar chose to avoid conflict and apologized – as we’ll see in the next chapter – for his hard questions. (By drawing repeatedly on examples from talk shows years ago I do not mean to imply that the talk show form has gone unchanged, but to make clear that there are certain elements that have remained consistent for several decades.) Paar, reflecting on his interviews years later, wrote:

Mike Wallace or Dan Rather, and many others, would have clobbered Nixon in five minutes, which might have been easy to do: but they probably would have lost in the long run, since many people don’t like seeing anyone embarrassed for five hours. I feel that getting a portrait of a man is more illuminating and helpful than interrogation in the manner of those who act like Torquemada in the Spanish Inquisition.⁵²

In addition to avoiding confrontation with guests, talk shows -- to varying degrees -- eschew specialized knowledge. Larry King, for example, prepares as little as possible for each interview. If he knows too much King feels “inhibited.”⁵³ Going into an interview, King wants to know less, not more. Knowing less changes the elicited content of an interview. It means asking questions that don’t require special knowledge. Knowing less means asking questions about lived experience: family, relationships, schools, meals, clothing, daily life. It means asking “dumb”

⁵¹ Robert O. Wyatt, Elihu Katz, and Joohoan Kim. “Bridging The Spheres: Political and Personal Conversation in Public and Private Spaces.” *Journal of Communication*, (Winter 2000) 50: 1. 71-92. p. 72.

⁵² Jack Paar, *P.S.*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday. 1983) p. 25.

⁵³ William Powers, “Winning At Softball,” *The Washington Post*, 25 March 1996, B1.

questions.⁵⁴ Although it will be clear in Chapter Four that Oprah prepared for her interview with the candidates and considered how to get the candidates to perform in the moment (as opposed to by rote), her strategy was not to employ wonkish policy knowledge to do so.

Historically, talk shows have also been much more open to “ordinary people” – individuals without the expertise that comes from specialized knowledge – as interrogators. In the first talk show interviews with candidates in 1960, Paar incorporated audience questions. Ordinary people are not only engaged as audience members and interlocutors, they are valued sources. Oprah makes reference on air to “the people she ran into on the way to Borders,” just as Tim Russert might casually make reference to running into so&so legislator “on the Hill.” Professional journalism views people with specialized political knowledge as uniquely entitled to interview political officials. Only in recent years have the presidential debates incorporated citizen questions. Veteran TV anchors like Jennings, Rather and Brokaw are immersed in the day-to-day picayune details of policy and politicking. Leonardo Di Caprio does not have that knowledge, and as a consequence in March 2000, when ABC announced that its Earth Day Special, *Planet Earth 2000*, would feature Di Caprio interviewing President Clinton, network journalists erupted.⁵⁵ Why was a movie star interviewing the president? Tim Russert is entitled to interview the

⁵⁴ When it comes to “dumb” questions, journalism’s theory and practice is out of sync. While J School students learn the adage “there is no such thing as a dumb question,” dumb questions are not the ticket to upward mobility in the world of professional political journalism.

⁵⁵ The incident was dubbed “Leogate” by *USA Today*. See also Gail Collins, “The Best of the Bad,” *The Denver Post*, 26 April 2000, p. B-09 (Collins was a syndicated columnist for *The New York Times* and her opinions were picked up in many papers across the country); Peter Johnson, “ABC reprimands 2 producers involved in Earth Day special,” *USA Today*, 27 April 27, 2000, p. 4D; Tom Shales, “Leo’s Interview: ABC’s Earth Day Air Pollution,” *The Washington Post*, 24 April 2000, p. C01.

candidates. Oprah – the Queen of Talk -- is not. And media critics lampooned her efforts.⁵⁶

Parenthetically, it's interesting to note that there was a time when even journalists were not entitled to interview elected officials. Michael Schudson has chronicled how the interview *became* a tool of journalists in the mid-19th century.⁵⁷ Now, interviews are viewed as indispensable – often the be-all and end-all of reporting. Schudson's analysis suggests that we may be seeing another evolution in the history of interviews as well as a challenge to the premium journalism places on specialized knowledge. Who is entitled to interview candidates? Is it only Rather and Russert, or can Oprah, Jay Leno, Dr. Phil and Larry King do so too?

In an effort to distinguish between the questioner with and without specialized knowledge, the term “interviewer” is often used. Larry King, for instance, calls himself “an interviewer,” not “a journalist.” But the terms reflect a social pecking order as well. Deriding her rival, “journalist” Connie Chung once referred to Barbara Walters as “an interviewer.”⁵⁸

I want to make a final point about talk show form. In his book on popular and high culture, Gans suggests (following Riesman's model) that cultural texts are

⁵⁶ Howard Rosenberg, "Candidates on Talk-Show Circuit: If You Don't Schmooze, You Lose." *Los Angeles Times*, 15 September 2000. The issue of expertise has been engaged in a very interesting way by Jay Rosen. For instance, in a published web “conversation” with former newspaper journalist turned blogger and Internet guru Dan Gillmor, Rosen contends that “the authority of the journalist – the way it has evolved in the United States – is very much tied up with the journalist knowing things that others don't. Having access that others don't. Witnessing things that others can't – a press conference, etc. And it's almost like in the deep grammar of American journalism, the assumption is that knowledge moves from the news organization to a public that lacks it.” See “A Conversation Between Dan Gillmor and Jay Rosen. p. 49. Available: www.oreillynet.com/lpt/a/5168. Downloaded: 14 September 2004.

⁵⁷ Michael Schudson, “Three Hundred Years of the American Newspaper,” pp. 37-52, ed. Michael Schudson, *The Power of News*, (Harvard, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995) 49.

⁵⁸ Gini Graham Scott, *Can We Talk?: The Power and Influence of Talk Shows*. (New York: Plenum Publishing, 1996.) p. 245.

either creator- or user-oriented.⁵⁹ Using this framework, the talk shows in my dataset are user-oriented texts. The audience is of paramount importance in the work's production and evaluation. Talk shows must attract and sustain audiences. While news is also produced for commercial purposes, social forces provide a countervailing force against the commercial pressures that is not found with talk shows. As a consequence, news is relatively freer of concerns about audience and more concerned with adherence to its professional codes. I am certainly not arguing that news is entirely insulated from commercial pressures, particularly in recent decades, only that it is less subject to commercial pressures than talk shows. In talk shows, the audience is the ultimate arbiter of success. Do they watch or not? As I'll make clear later, the presence of the audience in the talk show studio also affects the dynamic between host, guest and audience.

To summarize my discussion of talk show form, talk shows take place on a set that signifies a private, rather than a public space. Informality and intimacy, emotion and conviction are expected in the exchange between host and guest. A wide variety of topics and guests can be juxtaposed within the form. The talk show avoids confrontation and specialized knowledge, and is more audience-oriented than media texts ostensibly produced "in the public interest" (a paradox I'll identify without stopping to explore.) Talk shows' "challenge" to candidates lies more in the form's lack of prescriptives that give hosts considerable latitude in how they conduct an interview. There's no question talk show hosts operate within certain constraints:

⁵⁹ Herbert J. Gans, *Popular Culture and High Culture: An analysis and evaluation of taste*. (New York: Basic Books, 1999.) p. 36.

They must persuade audiences to watch and it is unlikely that “living room” hosts would pursue a wonkish combative line of questioning. However, talk show interviews are considerably less pre-determined than political journalism interviews.

When talk shows engage political subject matter, they present an implicit challenge to the codes of professional journalism, because talk show style differs so markedly from news norms. If a guest is supposed to let their hair down and put their feet up in talk shows, that same guest is expected to stand and put up their dukes in political interviews. I want to use the final pages of this chapter to use a *Meet The Press* interview with Al Gore in 2000 to illustrate how starkly talk show and news forms contrast.

By using *Meet The Press*, I don’t intend to make the Sunday morning TV series serve as a proxy for all TV journalism interviews. However, *Meet The Press* is iconic of a style of TV interview much-admired by professional journalism. In the excerpt that follows, Tim Russert “grills” Vice President Al Gore in a manner typical of Russert’s approach.

My analysis of *Meet The Press* is not intended to be comprehensive, nor does the one excerpt I discuss fairly represent all exchanges between Russert and his guests. It is simply a prototypical slice of professional journalism that reflects the profession’s aims and practices. The contrast between journalistic and talk show practices becomes the more striking when one realizes that there is no comparable talk show prototype. Talk shows have no comparable rules, professional codes or social expectations.

Diff'rent Strokes for Diff'rent Folks

When host Tim Russert first became the *Meet The Press* anchor, the show's previous host told him that Russert's new job was to learn as much as he could about his guests' positions on issues and then take the other side.⁶⁰ That remains, fundamentally, Russert's method: Extensive specialized knowledge in the service of opposition. Russert's interviews are driven by the belief that from opposition comes truth.

The following exchange from *Meet The Press* opens with Russert summarizing in considerable detail the available documentation about White House fundraising at an event at the Hsi Lai Temple in Los Angeles.

RUSSERT: Mr. Vice President, when we talk to voters all across the country, they say they are looking for trustworthiness and a strong leader. A lot of comments have been made about your role in 1996 fundraising. And I'll give you a chance to talk about them.

April 29th, 1996, fundraiser at the temple, Hsi Lai—we can see it there on our screen--and following right behind you is one of your principal fundraisers, Maria Hsia, who was convicted of five felony counts. The essence of the debate or discussion seems to be that director of the FBI, Louis Freeh, and three other ranking Justice Department officials believe there should be an independent counsel, special counsel, to look into this matter, because they think you may have broken the law or lied under oath. And they point specifically to your denial that you knew that event was a fundraiser.

And let me just go through the documentation they have developed. The first was a Secret Service description which said, "According to the Secret Service, the event was a fundraiser." There was an e-mail from your staff member, Kimberly Tilley to you which talked about it as a fundraiser;

⁶⁰ Mark Lorando, "Tim Russert's Full-Court 'Press,'" *The Times-Picayune*, 24 May 1998. p. T9.

and an Al Gore e-mail back to her which says, "If we've already booked the fundraisers, then we have to decline" another event.

The National Security Council looked at this matter and made a judgment it was okay for you, as it says, in their e-mail, "to visit the Hsi Lai Temple where there will be a fundraising lunch for 150 people." Harold Ickes, the deputy chief of staff, put together a memo where he projected income of \$ 250,000 for the VPOTUS, Vice President of the United States, fundraiser in Los Angeles.

With all that, the Secret Service, your own staff, your own e-mail, the National Security Council, the deputy chief of staff all calling it a fundraiser before the fact, how can you insist you didn't know it was a fundraiser?

Gore: Well, look, Tim, this has all been aired publicly and otherwise, and those are pretty selective facts. What happened was another event was set up and then canceled. And the lunch that was canceled was what a lot of that was referring to.

Russert: But the National Security Council specifically said Hsi Lai.

Gore: I understand. But I didn't know about that.

Russert: And John Huang was there. Maria Hsia was there.

Gore: Look, all I can tell you...

Russert: She introduced you and translated for you, your fundraiser.

Gore: Well, no--but also a member of that organization. And, you know, there was a Republican elected official there, the highest ranking Republican other than the mayor in Los Angeles County. There were numerous Republicans and never--no money changed hands. I did not know it. And you can accept that or not. That was--and it's all been reviewed. This has been...

Russert: Do you believe now it is a fundraiser?

GORE: This is beating a dead horse here.

RUSSERT: No, no, it's an open investigation.

GORE: Well...

RUSSERT: When the director of the FBI and three Justice officials say it should be looked into, that's why I'm asking.

GORE: Okay. That's fine.

RUSSERT: You deserve a chance to talk about it. Do you believe to this day it was a fundraiser?

GORE: I believe it was not. I believe it was not.

RUSSERT: To this day?

GORE: Yes. There was no request for funds. No money changed hands.

RUSSERT: But they did raise money and people went to jail for it.

GORE: After the fact, people went back and solicited those who were present. I did--there was no money that changed hands there.

RUSSERT: The other issue was your raising money at the White House. The attorney general said it was soft money; therefore, it was okay. Others insist, "No, it was hard money, real money for the campaign." Leon Panetta gave testimony that you were very focused on the documents, you looked at the documents, that you then told The New York Times that, in fact, sometimes you drank a lot of iced tea and had to excuse yourself for the rest room. Harold Ickes testified whenever you left the room, he stopped the meeting. How can you contradict Leon Panetta, who said you were focused on that meeting when the distinction between hard money...

GORE: Well, first of all, I didn't say that to The New York Times. I was asked, "Was I always present in the room and did I leave the room?" And I did. And "Did I hear what

was going on when I left the room?" I said no, and that's the truth.

RUSSERT: Coffees--as you know, there were 103 coffees at the White House which raised about \$7.7 million. In April, you were asked by Robert Conrad, who is investigating the situation, whether or not you attended any of those coffees and you said, "I don't think so. Maybe one." Two days later, your lawyer amended your comments by saying you misunderstood the question and you, in fact, had attended about 25 of the White House coffees.

GORE: Well, again, that's pretty selective. The question was about White House coffees, and I did misinterpret that because I responded accurately and truthfully to the question of White House coffees. It turned out to be three or four instead of one. But there were other meetings in a different building, and I immediately said, "Okay, look, if you're asking about this, here's the full number."

RUSSERT: And I said that. Now, it appears there were about 37 coffees that you attended at the White House or the executive office building next to the White House. When you were asked that question--I want to give you a chance to clarify this--on the screen, this is what Mr. Conrad, the prosecutor, said: "Did you have discussions with anyone concerning the role that coffees would play in raising that type of money?"

GORE: "Let me define the term 'raising,' if I could, because if you mean by it 'Would they be events at which money was raised?' the answer is no."

RUSSERT: People reading that conjure up "It depends what 'is' is." If people are being brought into the White House 103 times and you attend 37 of those--high rollers, money who--people who gave \$ 8 million within a matter of weeks--it never occurred to you that you were raising money at the White House?

GORE: They were not fundraisers. That's the simple point. And again, this has all been investigated many times, and I put out the entire transcript of that voluntarily, completely and fully, so that people can make up their own minds about it.

RUSSERT: Lanny Davis, special counsel to President Clinton, no more loyal defender and spin doctor for Al Gore and Bill Clinton, wrote a book entitled "Truth to Tell." And this is what he said: "Months after the coffee story was over and everyone knew that our denial that the coffees were about fundraising had been absurd, it would have been better to have described these events from the start as fundraisers and not to have attempted to deny the obvious."

GORE: Well, they were not fundraisers, so he can...

RUSSERT: He's wrong?

GORE: Yeah, as far as I'm concerned he is.

What emerges from this exchange? Although Russert promises Gore a chance to discuss the comments made about Gore's fundraising, Russert weighs in at 828 words while Gore speaks less than half of that – 373 words. The exchange opens with Russert summarizing in considerable detail the available documentation about Hsi Lai and White House fundraising, employing a technique Clayman and Heritage dub "elaboration" in their study of adversarialness in presidential interviews.⁶¹ It is a style typical of *Meet The Press*. Russert densely packs his first question which runs 334 words – virtually equal to all the words Gore speaks in the entire exchange. Russert then asks Gore to counter the evidence in virtually certain knowledge that for reasons of campaign expedience Gore cannot do so directly.

Russert also liberally employs a technique Clayman and Heritage call "assertiveness." The technique reflects the degree to which a journalist pushes for a particular response, implicitly expressing the journalist's opinion.⁶² "Do you believe

⁶¹ Clayman and Heritage, p. 755.

⁶² Clayman and Heritage, p. 762.

now it is a fundraiser?” Russert asks, making his opinion plain. “It never occurred to you that you were raising dollars at the White House?”

Russert’s typical range of interest is fairly narrow, from strategic campaign concerns to specific policy issues. He operates in the belief that if he cordons off a tiny area on any topic of interest and constrains the candidate’s potential response, something valuable or at least newsworthy may be extracted from the candidate.

Russert applies this adversarial method even in the absence of salutary results. If there is a victor in this war of words, it is Russert. His knowledge of subject matter is detailed and substantial and he puts it in service of nimbly and repeatedly countering Gore. But the outcome is a series of postures. The point of the exchange appears to be not the content of Gore’s responses, but watching Gore artfully, or not, deflect Russert’s blows. The result is a kind of ritualized powerplay that highlights the rhetorical bob and weave that has become typical of presidential campaigns. If, as Neuman, Just and Crigler argue, information-gathering is a search for meaning,⁶³ the meaning of this exchange – whether one interprets it to be the cat and mouse of journalist-politician relations, or the influence of money in politics, or some other reading – is remote from the character or policy issues that interest the public.

Russert’s method has come to be applied so reflexively by journalists that one Democratic TV consultant opined that journalistic panel shows like *Meet The Press*, *This Week*, *Face The Nation* or *Crossfire* have devolved into a political version of

⁶³ Neuman, Just and Crigler. p. 22.

American Gladiator in which “guest contestants run an obstacle course while the show's muscle-toned cast members engage in a predictable pummel-fest.”⁶⁴

I am not suggesting that every journalist reporting on presidential politics consciously and assiduously follows this method in every task, to the ultimate degree, in every story. I am, however, suggesting that these general rules of approach are woven deeply into professional journalists’ work. It is a credo and is applied with particular consistency in coverage of national politics. This method is not only central to professional journalism, it is central to the assumptions and criticisms directed by media critics at talk shows. (As will be clear in subsequent chapters, talk show interviews are only glancingly concerned with policy, let alone the details of policy, and almost always avoid confrontation.)

While journalism places great faith in this adversarial method, it has been criticized in recent years on a number of fronts.⁶⁵ Tannen and Young are among these new critics. Tannen suggests that American communication is over-reliant on opposition. Writing recently on journalism, she noted the absence within American journalism of an approach that was neither antagonistic nor passive. “We tend to think that if you’re not an attack dog, you’re a lap dog, taking everything politicians

⁶⁴ Tom Rosenstiel, *Strange Bedfellows: How Television and the Presidential Candidates Changed American Politics, 1992*. (New York: Hyperion, 1993) pp. 184-186. If not *American Gladiator*, maybe the mock-blows of the Worldwide Wrestling Federation. Several years ago, I was involved in an Australian Broadcast Company series about Rupert Murdoch’s worldwide media holdings. The ABC reporter traveled across the country talking to reporters and producers – including producers at PBS’ *News Hour*. When he sent me the finished series, I learned that the “debates” on *The News Hour* are rehearsed in advance. Pow! Ker-plunk! The blows are as predictable and damaging as the false punches absorbed on the old TV action series, *Batman*.

⁶⁵ Thomas Patterson. *Out of Order*, (New York: Knopf, 1993) and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Everything You Think You Know About Politics... And Why You're Wrong*. (New York: Basic Books, 2000), for instance, argue that this type of presidential coverage fosters negative attitudes within the electorate.

say at face value.”⁶⁶ As I hope to make clear in subsequent chapters, “good interviews” (by which I mean interviews that elicit valuable information that is not entirely canned and packaged) can be produced through approaches that are not dependent on conflict and opposition.

Young suggests that when public discussion is restricted to “contest-style” deliberation people’s positions become fixed rather than enabling them to change their minds as they interact with new ideas.⁶⁷ Instead, “contestants” fortify their defenses. In addition, contests in which some win and others lose, favor male speaking styles over female, potentially alienating female audiences.

Fifteen years ago, Hallin suggested that “fragmentation of the news audience might not necessarily be a bad thing.” Though he was not optimistic that a “different strokes for different folks,” multiple-models of democratic communication would come to pass, he foresaw a system in which “distinctive forms of journalism emerged for middle-class and working-class audiences (and subgroups of these), reflecting the different tastes and concerns of the audiences but providing each with serious discussion of the world of politics in the widest sense.”⁶⁸

The talk shows in my dataset represent an incipient development in that direction. Whether all of the talk shows in my dataset constitute “serious discussion of the world of politics” will be part of my discussion in the chapters to come. Still it hardly seems farfetched to suggest that Russert, rather than being the proxy for all

⁶⁶ Deborah Tannen, “The Feminine Technique,” *Los Angeles Times*, 15 March 2005. See also Tannen, *The Argument Culture*, pp. 3-8.

⁶⁷ Iris Marion Young, *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997) pp. 63-65.

⁶⁸ Hallin, p. 179.

voting Americans, stands in for a particular subset. (NBC boasts that 100 percent of *Meet The Press* viewers vote.) The talk show hosts, be it Larry King or Oprah, Jay Leno or Queen Latifah are acting as proxy for other kinds of prospective voters. It is certainly the publicly expressed hope of the daytime talk show hosts that conducting interviews with the candidates and generating interest in the election will engage those audiences in the electoral process. Nielsen research reveals only the broadest demographic outline of these audiences. Compared to *Meet The Press*' viewers, talk show audiences are more female, with less formal education and lower incomes.

In subsequent chapters, I'll look at how the daytime talk show hosts tried to engage these prospective voters.

Chapter Three: 1960-2004 -- A Timeline

In this chapter, I'll map out the historical trajectory from 1960 when the American TV talk show host Jack Paar first interviewed candidates Kennedy and Nixon to 2004 when Kerry and Bush sat down with the clownish variety show emcee Don Francisco of *Sabado Gigante*.

In thinking about these historical developments and their impact on journalism, I've found it helpful to bear in mind that journalism itself is a historical artifact, emerging at a particular moment in history and changing over time. (My brief summary in the previous chapter of how interviews have evolved historically is an illustration of this.) Thinking about journalism historically gives us permission to imagine that maybe news isn't or won't always be what it's been, or might not serve the same functions it's served. Schudson, Hall and Pauly among others have studied how particular journalistic forms and norms have changed.⁶⁹ Journalism is not a historically consistent form, nor has its social and political role been consistent over the last 200+ years. Pauly has pointed out that news did not hold a central cultural position until the mid-19th century. His observation suggests that news' position as a "superior" form of knowledge may also be transient. We now live in an era in which news competes with many more informational forms that carry political content. The growing presence of presidential candidates on entertainment television has been

⁶⁹ John Pauly, *Reflections on Writing a History of News as a Form of Mass Culture*, Working Paper #6, Center for 20th Century Studies. (Fall 1985); Michael Schudson, "Question Authority: A History of the News Interview" in *The Power Of News*, ed., Michael Schudson, (Harvard, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995. pp. 72-93; and David D. Hall, "The "Higher Journalism" and the politics of culture in mid-19th century America," David Center Seminar, Boston U. March 4, 1988, unpublished paper.

much discussed, but not well-documented. My timeline sheds some light on a few of the forces driving these appearances, beyond the sheer proliferation of outlets desperately trying to produce commercially viable programming. These other forces include campaign strategy, changes in FCC regulation, the women's movement, and ultimately, the growing social acceptance of candidates in these nonfiction entertainment venues. This chapter also makes clear how the cursory synecdochic journalistic narrative that traces the evolution of these appearances has overlooked significant developments and aspects of the appearances themselves.

Clayman's historical outline of broadcast news interviews suggests that broadcast news interviews evolved independently of their talk show cousins. The first TV news interview took place in 1947 on *Meet The Press*.⁷⁰ The televised interview represented a fundamental change in interviews. They became both information gathering and presentational device.⁷¹ It wasn't for another 13 years, in 1960, that latenight host Jack Paar brought the presidential candidates into a talk show context.

I open this dissertation with an epigraph from Jack Paar's interview with Kennedy, the first entertainment TV interview with a candidate in American history. Paar's desire to create a context that is beyond "political answers" still rings true today. Interestingly, the 1960 TV debates espoused similar goals, promising to

⁷⁰ Erik Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty: The Evolution of American Television*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) p. 102.

⁷¹ Steven Clayman, "Generating News: The Interactional Organization of News Interviews," diss. University of California Santa Barbara, 1987. p. 14.

bypass ghostwriters and admen, rehearsal and calculation.⁷² In other words, both the debates and the talk show interviews were efforts to get beyond what was perceived as unsatisfying political discourse.

The Paar Interviews

In June 1960, John F. Kennedy was a senator from Massachusetts and had not yet been named the Democratic nominee. Jack Paar's *The Tonight Show* reached about 7 million viewers a night (half a million fewer than *Oprah* would reach 46 years later.) Kennedy's appearance marked the first time a presidential candidate had appeared on a non-news TV interview show. Paar made a point at the beginning and end of the interview of saying that all the candidates running in the primaries had been invited to appear on the program.

Repeating the point at the close of the program, Paar said:

PAAR: Well, I hope that you in the theater tonight, that's all I have is you to talk to and hear back, that digressing from our format of nothingness to somethingness was worthwhile. You're not going to get the big laughs, but the world's pretty serious and more serious tonight than it's been in some time. I think you appreciate that we tried to do something a little different.

I must say this: It was very brave and courageous of Senator Kennedy to come on this show where anything can happen, as you know. And we repeat again that Vice President Nixon has been asked to come on. Mr Truman. Adlai Stevenson. Mr. Symington. I'm not quite certain whether we got to him. But we do now! Stu, come on! And Mr. Lyndon Johnson of Texas would be most welcome here.

⁷² Troy, p. 195.

Paar made his intention for the interview abundantly clear from the outset. “I feel that there’s a small service I can perform here,” he said.

I have noticed if you watch political programs, they are asked political questions and the answers are political answers and sometimes I must say I watch shows for half an hour and when it’s all over no one said anything. But there is a chance that in this relaxed atmosphere of *The Tonight Show* you can meet people who aren’t on guard, not as tense, and perhaps not as political as you would meet them on other news-type shows.

The interview itself addresses virtually nothing but political topics (more or less conventionally defined) including Kennedy’s progress in securing the nomination; his view of foreign policy, particularly with regard to Cuba, Russia and China; his age and Catholicism as issues in the campaign; and Jimmy Hoffa and The Teamsters.

Paar appeared to be concerned about partisanship. Early in the interview, he chided guest/actress Peggy Cass for appearing partisan in her questions. (Paar claimed to have been a registered Republican, but conceded confusion about his politics and didn’t vote to prove his nonpartisanship.⁷³)

Like his interview three months later with Nixon, Paar asked only one question that he characterized as “tough” and prefaced it with an explanation *cum* apology. He posed it, he said, because he didn’t want to “look too naïve.”

Shortly before concluding the interview, Paar asked Kennedy why he agreed to appear.

SENATOR KENNEDY: First, because my brother has had a pleasant experience each time he’s been with you. Secondly,

⁷³ Jack Paar, *P.S.*, p. 211.

in campaigning in Wisconsin and West Virginia, I ran into a lot of people who sat up nights watching you. And I think any time it's possible for those of us in public life to have a chance to communicate, I think we ought to take it. Therefore I regard it as a privilege to appear on this program.

Like his interview with Kennedy, Paar's interview with Nixon lasted 40 minutes.⁷⁴ NBC eliminated some, but not all commercials from the broadcast.⁷⁵ During his interview with Kennedy, Paar had been clearly uncomfortable throwing to lipstick and lemon juice commercials.

Nixon's appearance was made possible because of the relaxation of the Equal Time rules in 1960. The amended rule went into effect August 25, the day before Paar's interview with Nixon.⁷⁶

Overall Paar's manner was deferential referring to the interview as "an honor," "a thrill" and "a great pleasure." At the outset, Paar complimented Nixon on his acceptance speech, and said he had originally planned not to ask his first question because it was "rough," but asked it anyway, asking the Vice President to comment on President Eisenhower's remark the previous day inferring that Nixon had not made any decisions under the Eisenhower Administration. Nixon finessed the question saying that he was present at high-level discussions, but that it was the President's job to make decisions.

⁷⁴ Joseph A. Loftus, *The New York Times*, 26 August 1960. p. 1

⁷⁵ Paar recalls that he offered to preempt commercials with Nixon, but Nixon refused. Jack Paar with John Reddy, *My Saber Is Bent*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1961) pp. 47-49.

⁷⁶ Loftus, *The New York Times*, p. 1. In response to a 1959 FCC Equal Time (Section 315) ruling, Congress created four exemptions -- stations that gave time to candidates on 1) regularly scheduled newscasts, 2) news interviews shows, 3) documentaries, or 4) on-the-spot-news events would not have to offer equal time to other candidates for that office. Available: www.museum.tv/archives/v/E/htmlE/equatimeru/equaltimeru.htm. Downloaded November 2005. This is the same provision that would permit Phil Donahue to interview Geraldine Ferraro 24 years later.

With varying degrees of seriousness and humor, Paar asked Vice President Nixon about religion in the campaign, to define the differences between Kennedy and himself, to discuss the polls, the upcoming first-ever TV debate, food on the campaign trail, his relationship with Kennedy, the wear and tear of the campaign on his family, national defense, and taxes. Paar also allowed four questions for the Vice President from his audience.⁷⁷ In this respect, Paar's interview with Nixon very much resembled those that would begin again 30+ years later. It was a mix of personal anecdote and policy positions with the audience enlisted as interlocutors.

Public reception in 1960 was mixed. Paar himself was pleased with the shows and felt "their appearances served a useful purpose." Although columnist Dorothy Kilgallen "took a dim view of the candidates appearing amid flying jokes and singing commercials," Paar believed the appearances "under such informal circumstances revealed their human side, and in my opinion, aided voters in making an over-all evaluation of which would make the better President."⁷⁸

In response to Nixon's appearance in late August, *The New York Times* ran the sitting Vice President's appearance on the front page, above the fold, under the headline, "Nixon Mixes Jokes and Politics on TV: Denies Policy Role." Two photos -- one of Nixon on the Paar set, the other of Kennedy (now the Democratic nominee) at a speaking engagement -- ran above the story. *The Times* also ran extended excerpts of the Nixon interview that took up nearly all of the paper's page six.

⁷⁷ This was not the appearance in which Nixon famously played the piano. That was in 1968. At the time, Paar had a Friday night show. Paar recalls in one of his memoirs that Nixon, "against his own judgment and that of his many advisors," played the piano. See Paar, *P.S.*, p. 135.

⁷⁸ Paar with Reddy, pp. 47-49.



Used with permission of *The New York Times*.

Illustration 2: New York Times front page, August 26, 1960

Not only *The New York Times* considered the interview important. Joseph Kennedy called Paar the morning following the interview to thank him and sent him a note on December 12, 1960 thanking him a second time for helping to get his son elected.⁷⁹ McLuhan believed the interview was decisive as well. Writing *Understanding Media* in the late 1960s, McLuhan argued that Nixon would have won the election had he played the piano on *The Tonight Show* in 1960 as he did in his subsequent 1968 appearance. In hindsight the claim seems dubious. But while it may well be an example of McLuhan's tendency to be provocative rather than prescient, it does suggest the significance that was projected onto the appearance.

⁷⁹ Jack Paar, *P.S.*, p. 140

Paar also recalled how differently each of the candidates seemed from the public image they projected. “Mr. Kennedy, who had seemed boyish and lighthearted on TV and in newspaper pictures, in person was businesslike and serious,” Paar remarked. “Mr. Nixon, on the other hand, who had seemed from his TV appearances to be somewhat aloof, even stern, was much more warm and pleasant than I had expected.”

In many ways, Paar’s interviews were a harbinger of interviews to come and reflect the faultlines still debated today. As will be clear in subsequent chapters, Paar’s critical observation regarding the emptiness of “political” interviews, his protestation that he didn’t know much about politics, his assertion that he had no “great point to make,” his focus on both policy and personal matters, and Kennedy’s desire to communicate with voters however he could do so -- all remain salient features in any contemporary study of talk show interviews with the presidential candidates.

What’s also noteworthy is the increase in snarky disapproval found in press coverage 40 years later. *The New York Times* covered Paar’s interview with Nixon as a significant news event with a great deal of content worthy of public perusal.⁸⁰ The 2000 talk show interviews, on the other hand, were dismissed by most news outlets. While *The New York Times* placed Bush’s 2000 appearance on *Oprah* on the front

⁸⁰ *The New York Times* ran extended excerpts from the interview, cutting only three things – a joke about whether the candidates could drive (odd only because other jokes made it into the transcript); Nixon’s comments on the upcoming television debate – including his remark that “the most important thing about the business of government and politics is not to bore the people;” and Mrs. Nixon’s arrival on set to talk about wardrobe mishaps during the campaign.

page, the story itself was a tongue-in-cheek account of the candidate's visit with "the queen of confessional television."⁸¹

In the early 1960s, Paar was a lightning rod for a media debate still very much alive today between the putatively "substantive" and "the vulgar," enlightenment and ignorance, rationality and emotion. The battle lines can be seen clearly in a sharp-tongued goodbye published by *Newsweek* on the occasion of Paar's retirement two years after the interviews.

Paar has become the most exalted entertainer of his day, in other words, by tossing into the garbage can all the banquet-circuit notions of television as an instrument of enlightenment, or even of television as a purveyor of inoffensive, "wholesome" entertainment, and by giving the public what it really wants. A program of towering and indomitable vulgarity.

His ignorance, which extends to almost every field of human knowledge and which he himself admits to, condemns him to act on tiny shreds of information or misinformation. The self-adoration then takes over and tells him that ignorance doesn't really matter, since the only important knowledge is whatever he happens to possess. Finally, any outside mention of this ignorance is taken by Paar as proof that he is unloved, and neurotic fulminations ensue.

There is a certain injustice, of course, in holding Paar up to any sort of rational yardstick, since by his own testimony he is a man of emotion and impulse who acts, or reacts, from a few basic notions of loyalty, honesty, admiration and square-shooting.⁸²

But while Paar had his critics, he also had champions. They praised Paar's willingness to engage "in a moment of deepest emotion" contrasting it with the

⁸¹ Alison Mitchell, "Full of Banter, Bush Takes On 'Oprah' Circuit, *The New York Times*, 20 September 2000, A1.

⁸² "Jack Paar Was The Best We Had," *Newsweek*, 2 April 1962. pp. 82-83

“cool, pristine, analytic tones of the rest of the communicators and their almost cynical exploitation of crisis”⁸³ and heralding Paar as a “new kind of celebrity” -- a “human.”⁸⁴

After Paar’s interviews of 1960, the talk show venue went unexploited by presidential candidates for nearly 25 years. One of the unanswered questions in this historical timeline is why this link between the latenight talk show and the candidates did not continue. Future research may verify or dismiss my own speculation that Paar’s interviews were possible because TV in 1960 was relatively unformulated and uncodified, and the more codified the TV industry became the less open it was to experimentation. In addition, Paar was replaced by Johnny Carson who took the show away from political topics. *The Tonight Show* was eventually moved to Los Angeles where the goings-on in Washington were distant, and where the production was surrounded by a more “show biz” culture.

Another intriguing question for future research is whether it is anything more than coincidence that the presidential debates and the first entertainment TV talk show interviews with candidates both occurred in 1960 and then went through a long hiatus. The next TV debate did not take place until 1976. Meanwhile, *Meet The Press*, the show that debuted the presidential TV news interview, found candidates no longer willing to appear on the show after 1972.⁸⁵ The next presidential campaign interview on an entertainment talk show did not occur until 1984. Is there significance to the interplay between these three venues?

⁸³ William Dufty and Rudo S. Globus, "TV and Radio," *Saturday Review*, 19 March 1960. p. 35.

⁸⁴ Hugh Downs, "What I Think Jack Paar is Really Like," *Look Magazine*, 16 August 1960. p. 31

⁸⁵ King with Stencel, 135.

A 25-Year Hiatus In TV Talk

While TV debates and TV talk show interviews disappeared for several election cycles, presidential politics surfaced in drama and comedy. Although it is not directly relevant to my dataset, I include this brief discussion of other TV genres because in popular chronicles of presidential campaigns on TV, some of these programs are dropped facilely into the narrative regardless of the nature of the appearance or venue. In any considered appraisal of presidential candidates on entertainment TV, these differences matter.

Some of the appearances involve “outsider” candidates like comedian Pat Paulsen’s campaign launched in 1968 on *The Smothers Brothers*. Others involve major party candidates in four-second cameos, e.g., Nixon’s famous “Sock it to me” appearance on *Rowan & Martin’s Laugh-In* or only involve re-appropriated news footage as routinely found in political satire like *That Was The Week That Was*. Some don’t involve candidate appearances at all (*All In The Family*, *The West Wing*) or involve fictitious candidates rubbing elbows with the real thing (*Tanner 88*.) Comparing a four-second slogan uttered by President Nixon with a 40- or even a 10-minute sit-down interview with a major party candidate is comparing the near-incomparable. In each of the above examples, the appearance of presidential candidates or their fictitious likeness was subject to significantly different intentions,

expectations and pressures.⁸⁶ Clearly, more research and a more nuanced reading of these developments would be helpful.

I want to return now to my chronicle of TV talk shows which picks up again several years into Phil Donahue's career as a TV talk show host. Donahue went on the air as a talk show host in 1967. Five years later, he invited Julie Eisenhower, the president's daughter on the program. After Spiro Agnew left office, Donahue had the former Vice President on the show. In the late 1970s, Donahue had Reagan on the air between the end of his second term as governor and his first term in the White House. Donahue also hosted former President Ford three years after Ford's defeat by Jimmy Carter.⁸⁷ But it was not until the 1980s that presidential candidates on the campaign trail warmed again to a talk show environment, and not until the 1990s that they began to be seen on latenight programs.

The Candidates Return to TV Talk

Vice Presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro appeared on *Donahue* in late October 1984. Ferraro's appearance was made possible because Donahue's

⁸⁶ These sloppy histories also erroneously read into appearances intentions that never existed. References to Nixon's cameo (see Josh Getlin, "In Politics of Celebrity, Be Charming, Win Big," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 September 2000, p. A22; Brownfield, "Iowa, New Hampshire..."; Paul Lieberman, "At Last, Gore Gets to the Oval Office, but It's on 'SNL'" *Los Angeles Times*, 15 December 2002, p. A40.) suggest that the "Sock it to me" line was a strategic maneuver on the part of the Nixon campaign. But in fact, as the next 35 years of history demonstrates, the doors of entertainment programs are often open long before candidates are willing to walk through. *Rowan & Martin* producer George Schlatter says the appearance was an opportunistic brainstorm cooked up by *Rowan & Martin* staff. One of the show's producers had a personal relationship with Nixon and was able to arrange the taping. Schlatter recalls they rushed through multiple takes for fear that they would be stopped before they could make off with the footage. When they realized Nixon emerged from the cameo favorably, producers tried to convince Hubert Humphrey to tape a cameo saying "I'll sock it to you, Dick," but Humphrey refused and later said he thought it may have cost him the election. This anecdote comes from Elizabeth Kolbert, "Stooping to Conquer," *The New Yorker*, April 19 and 26, 2004, pp. 116-122.

⁸⁷ Reagan appeared on March 15, 1977. Carter appeared on May 18, 1979. Donahue, pp. 60-67, 124-125. Timberg argues that syndication was less risk-averse than the networks which allowed for some of the innovation in Donahue's syndicated talk show. Timberg, p. 68.

producers had requested that the program be considered by the FCC as a “news interview show” and therefore exempted from the Equal Time rule. That

Table 2: Table 2: Presidential Campaign Appearances on Daytime/Latenight Talk 1984-2004

Show	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000	2004
DONAHUE	Ferraro		Clinton Perot			
LARRY KING		Dukakis	Clinton Gore GHWBush Mrs. Bush Quayle Perot Mrs. Perot	Dole* Kemp Mrs. Dole Gore Mrs. Clinton	Gore & Mrs. Gore Bush & Mrs. Bush Nader Lieberman & Mrs. Lieberman Cheney & Mrs. Cheney	Bush & Mrs. Bush Kerry & Mrs. Kerry Edwards & Mrs. Edwards** Kerry’s daughters
ARSENIO			Clinton			
MTV			Clinton GHWBush	Clinton Dole Perot		
TNN			Clinton GHWBush Gore			
LATENIGHT			Clinton (by phone)		Gore Bush Nader	Kerry
TONIGHT SHOW				Mrs. Dole	Gore Bush	Kerry Edwards (2x)
OPRAH					Gore Bush	
REGIS					Gore Bush	Kerry Mrs. Bush
ROSIE					Gore	
QUEEN LATIFAH					Gore	
DR. PHIL						Bush & Mrs. Bush Kerry & Mrs. Kerry
DAILY SHOW						Kerry Edwards
SABADO GIGANTE						Kerry Bush

*Dole’s appearance was in the primaries not in the general election.

** In 2004, The Edwards made two solo and two joint appearances.

year, both Larry King and Phil Donahue asked Democratic candidate Walter Mondale (running against incumbent Ronald Reagan) to be on their shows, but Mondale turned them down. According to Donahue, Mondale's handlers didn't want to send a presidential candidate to a stage where "male strippers" had appeared.⁸⁸ Apparently, Ferraro's dignity in 1984 had not been at stake.

In 1988 Dukakis and Bush were invited to appear on *Larry King* but both refused. Only in the final days of the campaign when Dukakis was trailing badly did he reverse himself. Had Dukakis been a stronger candidate, the appearance probably would not have happened. The tendency for underdogs rather than front runners and incumbents to accept talk show invitations recalls Troy's observation about presidential stumping in the 19th century. Only "probable losers" did it, Troy writes.⁸⁹ Only an underdog risks social disapproval in search of votes.

As is generally noted, 1992 was a watershed year in the history of American presidential candidates in nonfiction entertainment TV venues. *Larry King* appeared to have become "socially acceptable" to the campaigns and critics. Entertainment cable channels like MTV and latenight television comedy/variety shows began to take an interest in having candidates appear on the programs and candidates began to reciprocate the interest. Significantly, Hallin argues that 1992 also marked the end of

⁸⁸ Phil Donahue, *Larry King Live*, CNN. 2 November 1992.

⁸⁹ Troy, pp. 114-124.

the preeminence of the evening news, the year when evening news was "displaced as the main point of contact between candidates and the voters."⁹⁰

Mandy Grunwald, one of Clinton's campaign consultants, is routinely given credit for having initiated this popular culture approach to campaigns.⁹¹ Her espoused goal was to rehabilitate Clinton's reputation after the Gennifer Flowers affair was broken by *The National Enquirer* and then widely reported by the mainstream media. Grunwald also wanted to disrupt the press pack's obsession with Perot's popularity and unorthodox style. What occurred in 1992 broke new ground, but a foundation for the appearances -- rarely acknowledged in journalistic histories -- had been laid in previous campaigns with Dukakis' appearance on *Larry King* and Ferraro's appearance on *Donahue*.

1992 was the year all three major candidates -- Clinton, Bush and Perot -- appeared on Larry King's program. In addition, their wives (with the exception of Hillary Clinton), the vice presidential candidates, and third party candidates Jerry Brown and Pat Buchanan appeared on *Larry King*. Perot used the show to float his candidacy, and in total, made six appearances on *Larry King*, using *King* as a way to circumvent the news media's lack of interest in third party candidacies.

Clinton made four appearances on *Larry King* in 1992, and Clinton and Gore also made a joint appearance. Gore did two appearances as a vice presidential candidate. Early in the campaign, President George H.W. Bush was quoted saying:

⁹⁰ Hallin, p. 15.

⁹¹ Rosenstiel, p. 174.

“I don’t plan to spend a lot of time on ‘*Phil Donahue* shows.’ I’m President.”⁹² But by the time October rolled around, the President’s petulance had subsided. He appeared on *Larry King* three times -- on October 2, 7, and 30th.

Larry King was a logical place for this new development to gain ground. Reagan and Bush had both been guests on Larry King’s latenight radio talk show suggesting that the White House had some comfort level with him. King serves as a bellweather of changing sensibilities as presidential campaigning moved into nonfiction entertainment. King’s format is a hybrid, borrowing from the codes of traditional news (white guy in a tie; he and his guests sit at a desk, not a couch; he works for a “news” network) and the codes of talk shows (he invites listener calls, asks about private matters and eschews adversarial questions or the specialized knowledge required to develop such questions or challenge a candidate’s answers.) Furthermore, in King’s willingness to host the same candidate repeatedly in a single campaign, he has demonstrated a lack of concern for appearances of partisan bias.

King’s role is often underplayed in the discussion of presidential candidates on TV talk shows. Donahue’s even more so. Arguably the most radical candidate forum of the 1992 election is one that is omitted from most journalistic synopses. Phil Donahue, having done individual interviews with primary candidates Clinton and Brown, invited them to do a host-less debate on the eve of the Missouri primary. Critical accounts at the time deemed the show a remarkable success, though it attracted only a fraction of Donahue’s regular audience. Eric Mink, writing for the

⁹² Dan Balz, “Candidates Skirt News Media, Favor Direct Delivery of Message,” *The Washington Post*, 19 May 1992, A1.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch argued that “you could make a pretty convincing argument that no television program and certainly no TV ad has done a better job of giving us a look at competing candidates than the recent *Donahue* show.”⁹³ Donahue introduced the two candidates on a sound stage. There was no studio audience and the two candidates spoke to each other for an hour without intervention.

“The Donahue-less *Donahue* show provided an invaluable service to voters,”

Mink concluded.

It proved that the world would not end if candidates dealt directly with each other on television without the participation or intervention of reporters. That’s a leap of faith that journalists are loathe to make... Clinton and Brown were stunningly civil to each other... The bickering children of the campaign trail and past debates and the cycle of nasty charge and counter-charge was replaced with the sight and sound of what appeared to be two smart, thoughtful, concerned men discussing real issues as if they mattered.⁹⁴

The other signal development in 1992 was cable entertainment channels like MTV taking an interest in making presidential politics part of its programming. MTV sent their principal correspondent, Tabitha Soren, on the candidates’ campaign buses. In the shorthanded history offered by journalism and repeated so often it becomes the conventional account, Soren’s interviews with Clinton and Bush have been condensed to a “boxers or briefs?” synecdoche. (In her interview with Clinton, she asked whether he preferred wearing boxers or briefs.) But Soren’s interviews might just as well be remembered for her striking departure from journalistic off-screen deal-making when she revealed during her interview with President Bush that

⁹³ Eric Mink, “A Donahue Show with No Donahue,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 10 April 1992, p. F13.

⁹⁴ Mink, F13.

the Bush campaign had made the interview contingent on Soren not asking about the Iran-Contra affair.⁹⁵

During the 1992 campaign, both candidates also appeared on The Nashville Network. Clinton appeared with Gore and demonstrated his pig-calling skills, a sound referred to by a contemporary press account as “an Arkansas rallying cry.” Two months later, President Bush appeared on the network and imitated a then-current Jimmy Dean sausage commercial. “This is fine, just fine! Now you all try it. Now eat it. It’s very good,” Bush drawled, pretending to hold a sausage on a stick wrapped in a pancake.⁹⁶ (*USA Today* appears to have provided the only major media print coverage of these appearances which probably explains why the appearance was not ritually recalled in subsequent journalistic tales of the ’92 campaign and beyond.⁹⁷)

1992 also marked the beginning of latenight television’s renewed interest in presidential candidates. From the Democratic National Convention, David Letterman conducted a phone-interview with nominee Bill Clinton. Later in the general election, Arsenio Hall invited Bill and Hillary Clinton to appear on his program. Clinton donned Ray-Bans and famously played his sax with Arsenio’s band, belting out two numbers including *Heartbreak Hotel*. All but forgotten in journalistic retelling is that Clinton then sat down with Arsenio and talked at length about urban violence and the Los Angeles riots of spring 1992. (Arsenio’s show was taped in

⁹⁵ Leslie Phillips, “Hep Cats,” *USA Today*, 2 November 1992.

⁹⁶ Judy Keen, “Bush dons demeanor of a landslide winner,” *USA Today*, 1 October 1992, p. 12A

⁹⁷ *USA Today*’s coverage (Judy Keen, “Bush dons demeanor...”) is typical of news reporting of these appearances inasmuch as it focused on what was almost certainly the zaniest man-bites-dog moment. The paper’s coverage provides little indication of what else transpired.

L.A.) In his appearance on *Arsenio*, Clinton spent far more time talking about the L.A. riots than blowing his horn.

Boxers or briefs? Clinton blows the sax on *Arsenio*. Perot declares his candidacy on Larry King's talk show instead of at a news conference.⁹⁸ These are the iconic moments impressed upon the public by journalism, as journalists wrote "the first draft of history" in 1992. These moments were then mindlessly recalled in 1996, 2000 and 2004 as each new set of political reporters reached into their news database for background.

In contrast to 1992, 1996 seems quiescent. Typically, throughout the period I've reviewed, when an incumbent is running for re-election, he is less likely to make himself available to "unorthodox" venues. Nonfiction entertainment TV venues are used by candidates – at least initially – only under competitive duress. Even Clinton, rightly regarded as a groundbreaker in this arena, made far fewer appearances in 1996 than 1992. Similarly, President George Walker Bush made fewer appearances of this kind in 2004 than in 2000.

Yet 1996 had a few points of interest: Despite his success landing candidates in 1992, Larry King could not persuade candidates to appear in 1996. President Clinton did not sit down with him. Clinton's challenger, Bob Dole, appeared on King's show during the primaries but not during the general election campaign. Instead, it was a year of surrogates. The vice presidential candidates appeared, as did the presidential candidates' wives. Mrs. Clinton appeared on the show in late September for a

⁹⁸ In fact, Perot did not announce his candidacy, but encouraged his fans to begin a grassroots third party campaign on his behalf. *Larry King*, CNN. 22 February 1992.

friendly sit-down with King. Elizabeth Dole did an 11th hour appearance on the program just days before the election. Symbolically, the message from the presidential campaigns was clear. King was important enough to send someone, but not important enough to send the candidate. King, perhaps in retaliation for the lateness in the campaign or Dole's refusal to make a personal appearance, uncharacteristically challenged Elizabeth Dole on the campaign's failure to develop more of a popular following, particularly among women.

Perhaps most interesting and least remembered from the 1996 campaign is Elizabeth Dole's appearance on *The Tonight Show*. In it, Mrs. Dole, dressed in a leather jacket and jeans, was driven onto the set on the back of Leno's motorcycle. How completely forgotten this appearance is is suggested by the fact that despite the wide commentary provoked by John Kerry's 2003 appearance on *The Tonight Show* astride a chopper, only a single major U.S. paper noted Mrs. Dole's prior appearance in such a sketch when covering the 2004 Kerry campaign.⁹⁹

If 1992 was the year *Larry King* became socially acceptable and 1996 was the year of surrogates, 2000 was the year the daytime talk shows broke into the ranks of TV venues perceived as useful to campaigns. Oprah did interviews with Gore and Bush. So did Regis. Rosie O'Donnell did a one-on-one with Gore. Queen Latifah hosted separate interviews with Gore and Nader. In the primaries, there appears to have been little if any ambivalence about appearing on daytime or latenight shows apart from sheer campaign calculus, e.g., George W. Bush may well have avoided

⁹⁹ "John Kerry's Bad Week," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 16 November 2003, E7.

Latifah assuming a young black rapper-host was unlikely to have potential supporters in her audience.

There were two new developments on *Larry King* in 2000: King began interviewing the candidates with their wives. Gore, Bush, Lieberman and Cheney all appeared with their respective spouses. (Unmarried Ralph Nader appeared solo.) The addition of candidates' spouses did not significantly change the content of the interviews. (Perhaps not too surprisingly, Tipper Gore, a seasoned public personality, played a more vocally supportive role than Laura Bush who said nothing at all unless specifically asked, limiting her comments to a discussion of her daughters and her experience teaching school.) The significance of King's "couple interviews" is largely symbolic, speaking to the social importance of women and women voters in the election. Almost certainly the campaigns' intention was also to project a positive contrast with the Clinton's marriage.

In 2000, latenight TV also expanded its candidate interviews. Letterman had Gore, Bush and Nader on his program. In fact, Bush appeared twice, once in the primaries and once in the general election. That year, after several primary candidates appeared on his show, Letterman began boasting "the road to the White House runs through me." Both Gore and Bush appeared on *The Tonight Show*. Peculiar, but not yet a clear harbinger of things to come, Vice Presidential candidate Joe Lieberman appeared on *Conan O'Brien* and sang a song.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ "With six weeks to go, here are the events, polls shaping presidential race," *The Seattle Times*, 24 September 2000. A3. Lieberman was not the first 2000 candidate to break into song. Primary candidate Alan Keyes warbled on *The Tonight Show* during the primaries.

In 2000, Republican primary candidates John McCain and George W. Bush used the latenight shows, particularly as the contest became more competitive. McCain appeared on *The Late Show with David Letterman* on January 20, 2000, and in the six months prior to the South Carolina primary appeared three times on *The Tonight Show*, his final appearance occurring on March 1, 2000, just before the final showdown with Bush.¹⁰¹ As the primaries tightened, George W. Bush appeared on *The Late Show with David Letterman* on March 1, 2000 and then appeared a week later, on March 6, 2000 on *The Tonight Show*.

A final development is worth noting although it never made it to air. In May of 1999, Larry King booked Vice President Al Gore to “guest-host” his show, but CNN scotched the deal for fear the Vice President’s appearance would be inappropriate. Gore announced his candidacy the following month.¹⁰²

In the period between 1992 and 2000, there are other relevant developments, not specific to my dataset but tangentially related and I want to catalog them briefly for the sake of other researchers trying to get a handle on this seminal period. In 1992, comedian Paula Poundstone provided convention commentary for *The Tonight Show*. In the first Clinton administration, Vice President Al Gore appeared on *Donahue* and *The Late Show* to promote the White House's plan to downsize government. Comedian Chris Rock covered the 1996 conventions for Comedy Central. During the 2000 primaries, Vice President Al Gore did an audio cameo for an animated character (representing himself) for the Fox series *Futurama*. Also that

¹⁰¹ Brownfield, “Iowa, New Hampshire...”

¹⁰² Larry King and Pat Piper, *Anything Goes: What I've Learned from Pundits*, (New York: Warner Books, 2000) p. 271.

year former presidential candidate Bob Dole and former Labor Secretary Robert Reich were hired as campaign commentators on Comedy Central's *The Daily Show*. In the summer of 2000, Comedy Central and MTV devoted more airtime to the Republican and Democratic party conventions than the TV networks.¹⁰³ 2000 was also the year that news began incorporating political comedy into their programming. CNN, MSNBC, and *The Today Show* used *Saturday Night Live* sketches in their newscasts. CNN International, the network's international news service, began carrying Comedy Central's *The Daily Show*. And *The New York Times* began to publish a campaign joke list. After campaign 2000, it was clear that few of the old rules remained unbroken. News did jokes. Comedy shows made news.

Between 2000 and 2004, appearances by current or former high-ranking White House officials in entertainment venues continued. Colin Powell went on *The Late Show with David Letterman*, making news about plans to transfer power to the Iraqis and Vice President Cheney appeared on *The Tonight Show*. *The New York Times* covered both interviews in the news pages, not the TV pages -- another milestone in the cultural normalizing of these appearances.

In 2004, with an incumbent up for re-election, the talk show appearances were less frequent. Nevertheless, several new developments emerged. *Larry King's* franchise expanded to include more family members. King interviewed the presidential and vice presidential couples: Kerry and his wife, Bush and his wife, and John Edwards and his wife. Dick and Lynn Cheney were the only candidates not to

¹⁰³ Mortman, Howard. "Convention Comedy: Make Me Laugh!," 17 July 2000. Available: www.NationalJournal.com. Downloaded: August 2000.

make themselves available. John Edwards appeared on Larry King's show three times after being nominated -- on July 21 with his wife, and again on September 22 and October 25. Edwards' wife Elizabeth also made a solo appearance on November 1. Kerry's daughters did an interview with King as well.

Most unusual of the 2004 appearances were the interviews conducted with both major party candidates by Dr. Phil (an *Oprah* spin-off) and Don Francisco of *Sabado Gigante*.¹⁰⁴ Dr. Phil and his wife Robin asked the candidates about marriage and divorce, family and parenting. Don Francisco hosted half-hour taped interviews with Kerry and Bush covering more conventional political topics.

The use of latenight shows during the primaries was more pronounced in 2004 than four years earlier. *The Tonight Show*, *The Late Show with David Letterman*, and *The Daily Show* were being widely used by the Democratic candidates in the primaries. Richard Gephardt appeared on *The Tonight Show*, *The Late Show with David Letterman* and *The Daily Show*; Howard Dean appeared on *The Tonight Show* and *The Late Show*; Dennis Kucinich appeared on *The Late Show*; Carol Moseley-Braun appeared on *The Daily Show* as did Wesley Clarke. John Edwards announced his candidacy on *The Daily Show* and Edwards appeared twice on *The Tonight Show*, once during the primaries and once during the general election.

Given these trends, it seems safe to assume that in 2008 with a wide open election -- the first time in decades the incumbent Vice President will presumably

¹⁰⁴*Sabado Gigante* is a hugely popular three-hour Spanish-language Saturday evening variety show. It is the longest-running show in television history, beginning as an entertainment-variety program in 1962 in Chile. In 2004, the show was viewed by more than 100 million viewers in 42 countries. The closest American English-language analogy may be *The Ed Sullivan Show*, but Don Francisco is much more of a good-natured buffoon than Sullivan ever was, donning funny costumes, dancing lasciviously with scantily clad girls, and otherwise whooping it up.

not run -- the latenight shows are likely to become an ever more favored stomping ground by candidates of all parties, particularly during the primaries. In 2005 and early 2006, three likely 2008 presidential contenders - John McCain, John Edwards and Russell Feingold -- appeared on *The Daily Show*.

The history I've presented is little more than a timeline. Hopefully, this chapter establishes some markers that will provide a headstart to other researchers chronicling the integration of American presidential campaigns into entertainment television and encourage an "unpacking" of this history. As I hope subsequent chapters will make clear, different entertainment venues create vastly different opportunities for political discourse, even those within a single genre.

Chapter Four: Oprah – The Personal Is Political

In this chapter, my focus is on analyzing *Oprah's* interviews. I devote an entire chapter to them, since in my view, Oprah uses the talk show form with most skill and clear intent. In the next chapter, I'll make related observations about the other 2000 daytime talk interviews.

Oprah interviewed Al Gore on September 11, 2000 and George W. Bush on September 18, 2000. Each interview ran nearly 38 minutes. The interviews' length poses a sharp contrast to the face time candidates were given on national newscasts. The average candidate soundbite on the nightly news in 2000 was less than eight seconds.¹⁰⁵ *Oprah's* average daily viewership was 6.5 million viewers. (By contrast, NBC's Nightly News average viewership was 6.9 million; ABC's was 6.7 million and CBS' was 6 million.)

In approaching Oprah's interviews, I was interested in seeing how she employed talk show form. Oprah made her central intention clear even before bringing the candidates on set. In her opening remarks just prior to her interview with Al Gore – the first of the two interviews she conducted -- Oprah acknowledged to the audience that she had not interviewed presidential candidates in the past because she

¹⁰⁵ Stephen Hess, "Hess Report on Campaign Coverage in Nightly Network News," Brookings Institution, (November 2000) Available: www.brookings.edu. Downloaded: December 2000. Hess' numbers put the average soundbite length at seven seconds. The Center for Media and Public Affairs put the number at "less than 8 seconds." "Campaign 2000 Final," Center for Media & Public Affairs, (Oct/Nov 2000) Available: <http://www.cmpa.com/mediaMonitor/MediaMonitorArchive.htm>. Downloaded: January 2001.

wasn't sure she could "penetrate the wall"-- the "wall of soundbites and practiced answers."¹⁰⁶

Until today I stayed away from politicians. I never felt like I could have a real—real -- honest conversation with them. There's this wall that exists between the people and the authentic part of the candidate. This presidential race is so interesting and the closest in 20 years. I thought 'Okay after 15 years, I need to pen-e-trate that wall.' (As she says “penetrate,” she adopts a comic, deep voice and makes a muscle-pumping gesture.) The hope is that at the end of these two shows you'll be able to answer for yourself, like, who do you trust? Who feels right for you to be President of the United States? It boils down to who do you like?

Echoing these ideas in the introduction to her interview with Bush, Oprah told her audience that she was going to "ask questions that will reveal the real man."¹⁰⁷ The fact that she waited 15 years to attempt to “penetrate the wall” may suggest her own past doubts about whether it would be possible to meet her objective. By promising to “penetrate the wall” and expose “the real man,” Oprah seemed to be suggesting a belief in some essential “Ur-self” that is masked by the exigencies of the political process. In fact, I think her quest was far less deep or ambitious than her “real man” language might suggest. Her intention was to get the candidates off script, to “penetrate the wall” of packaging and pre-rehearsed answers. In a sense, she was picking up where Paar left off 40 years earlier.

Before getting involved in the substance of Oprah’s interviews I want to make several general observations about them. Throughout this chapter, I’ll lean heavily on Goffman and his observations about performance. Goffman argues that if

¹⁰⁶ *Oprah*, 11 September 2000.

¹⁰⁷ *Oprah*, 18 September 2000.

a performance is to come off, the audience must be able to believe that the performers are sincere.¹⁰⁸ In this sense, most presidential candidate performances today are abject failures. Their sincerity is not credible and this failure contributes to the distrust and low regard with which politicians are viewed. Candidates' robotic iteration and re-iteration of talking points impedes, rather than aids, public confidence in their sincerity. Oprah believed that to present the candidates off-script and unpackaged would be valuable for her audience.

Embedded in Oprah's belief that if she "penetrates the wall" she will find "The Real Man" is the idea that candidates perform "behind the wall" but might not in other contexts. Oprah's challenge is to get the candidates to step from behind the wall and reveal someone performing in the moment, not off their all-too-familiar script.

Oprah also exhorts her audience to identify who they "like." By framing candidate evaluation in terms of likes and dislikes, Oprah risks association with recent public opinion survey questions that ask respondents questions like, "Which candidate would you rather have a beer with?" My view, however, is that Oprah is not asking her audience to place the candidates on a "desirable date" index. She is not asking, "Who do you find most handsome and pleasant?" but "Who do you think projects honest thoughtful leadership that reflects your own ideas and values?"

On the talk shows, candidates had a chance to prove that they were not the prototypical candidate as described by David Foster Wallace in his exceptional profile of John McCain in 2000. In it, Wallace expressed a generalized public

¹⁰⁸ Erving Goffman. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. (New York: Doubleday Books, 1959), 71.

yearning for a candidate who seems *human* -- not the “sort of kids in high school or college who were into running for student office: dweeby, overgroomed, obsequious to authority, ambitious in a sad way.”¹⁰⁹ The McCain campaign, Wallace contends, produced a “very modern American sort of confusion – an interior war between your deep need to believe [that there is a candidate who is “human” and means what he says] and your deep belief that there’s nothing but marketing and hype.” In her own way, Oprah engaged that same struggle -- though with candidates who were far more consummately steeped in “marketing and hype” than McCain.

Oprah’s interviews required the candidates to perform two potentially contradictory roles – “The Candidate” must say what “marketing and hype” require him to say, but the “The Real Man” must also at least occasionally step from behind the wall. Whether the candidates knew it or not, that was their challenge on the 2000 talk shows.

This brings me to a final general observation on Oprah’s approach to the interviews. Oprah believes the media has more impact on the public than it does. She thinks that if she encourages people to register and vote on her TV show, they may do so. (We’ll see in the next chapter that this belief is shared by her daytime host colleagues.) At the end of her interviews, she encouraged viewers to register to vote and posted registration information online. However, the literature on motivating

¹⁰⁹ David Foster Wallace, *Up Simba! 7 Days On The Trail of an AntiCandidate*, (Ipublish.com, September 2000), unnumbered pages.

low-propensity voters suggests that repeated interpersonal contacts has far more to do with motivating people to vote than the media.¹¹⁰

Oprah’s ideal interview would have had both candidates expressing themselves with credible sincerity and revealing the passions and values that drive their lives. Motivated by what they’d heard, her audience would come away with their opinions clarified and a commitment to go to the polls.

For the rest of this chapter, I’ll discuss specific incidents from the interviews to illustrate Oprah’s approach. In the interviews, her focus is primarily on personal beliefs, personal reflection and personal experience. This is her hallmark as a talk show host but it is also her strategy for “penetrating the wall.” Given her intention, it’s not surprising that her questions do not dwell on policy. I note that she engaged some conventional political subject matter -- the price of medicine for the elderly and the death penalty, social security and education – simply because reference to these conventional political topics was omitted in contemporary news accounts of the *Oprah* interviews.¹¹¹

Personal Questions & Self-Reflection

A clear undercurrent driving Oprah’s interviews with Gore and Bush was her conviction that the way one behaves in private life is a guide to how one behaves in

¹¹⁰ Elizabeth Addonizio, Donald Green and James Glaser, “Putting the Party Back into Politics: Results of a Pilot Experiment Designed to Increase Voter Turnout through Music, Food and Entertainment.” Available: www.yale.edu/isps/publications/voter.html (May 31, 2005) Downloaded: March 2006, and Donald P. Green, Alan S. Gerber, David W. Nickerson, “Getting out the Vote in Local Elections: Results From Six Door-to-Door Canvassing Experiments,” *The Journal of Politics*, 65: 4 (November 2003) pp. 1083-1096.

¹¹¹ None of the substantive discussions I note in the pages that follow were noted in any of the dozens of news reports covering the interviews.

public life. In this, her assumption mirrored what voters do. Voters extend private morality to public morality.¹¹² Therefore, personal experience is as relevant in a discussion with a public official as policy might be. Her questions also suggest that she believes reflection on one's life tells us something meaningful about a person. Oprah asks about parenting, marriage and negotiating work and family.¹¹³ She asked Gore how he reacted when his wife began to suffer from depression. How did the critical injury of his son change him? How can specific policies be implemented that "honor" families? Should parenting be incorporated into school curricula?

Bush was asked about restoring his family name, about his role as the "black sheep" of the Bush clan, and about raising his daughters. Each interview ended with a short video entitled, *Remembering Your Spirit* composed of an interview with the candidate and his wife, flanked by home movies, other B-roll, and lap dissolved photographs, set to a tinkly score. The film told the story of the couples' courtship, married life, kids, and home.

In analyzing Oprah's questions about the candidates' personal lives, a contradiction emerges. Polls indicate that relatively few voters express interest in candidates' personal stories.¹¹⁴ Yet *Oprah's* audiences indicated that they found her interviews of great interest. Harvard's Vanishing Voter Project found that nearly half of those who saw Gore on *Oprah* described his appearance as "very or extremely interesting." Nearly one-third said George W. Bush's appearance was "very or

¹¹² Popkin, *Reasoning Voter*, pp. 70-71.

¹¹³ These questions were all framed in a "women's context" i.e. education was talked about in terms of raising children, not – as it might be -- in terms of creating a competitive job force.

¹¹⁴ Ken Dautrich, "Improving Campaign Coverage," *Media Studies Journal*, (Winter 2000) p. 127.

extremely interesting."¹¹⁵ How reconcile this apparent contradiction? Some discrepancy may lie between voter poll respondents and *Oprah's* audience, but I suspect that the difference may be better explained by how respondents understand the phrase "personal life." Many of *Oprah's* personal questions ask candidates the meaning they make of their life experiences. They are "personal" questions, but they are not what I think respondents think they are being asked when pollsters ask whether they want to know about the candidates' "personal lives."

Oprah, for instance, asked about a defining moment in both candidates' lives. She asked the Vice President when he began to take responsibility for himself as a man and asked Bush when he needed forgiveness. Bush, widely considered a person with little capacity or interest in self-reflection, was rendered momentarily speechless by another of *Oprah's* personal questions.

OPRAH: Every, everybody has self doubts and feels overwhelmed at times. Tell me about one of those specific, specific times. A story in your life.

BUSH: About what? now?

OPRAH: About feeling overwhelmed. Of self doubt and what you did. Everybody has them.

Bush: I'm sure. But you're asking me right here. It's kind of a pressure packed moment. You, I think you should give me a little advanced warning to come up with a moment of self doubt. Let's see here, um, I'm sure there was self doubt when I got shipped off to school.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ "Recent News Stories Work To Gore's Advantage: Both Candidates Gain From *Oprah* Appearances," Vanishing Voter Project, Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, 28 September 2000. Available: www.vanishingvoter.org. Downloaded: October 2000.

¹¹⁶ Three years later, at a White House press conference, April 13, 2004, *Oprah's* exchange with Bush seemed eerily prescient. In the press conference, a reporter asked President Bush, "After 9/11, what would your biggest mistake be, would you say? And what lessons have you learned from it?"

PRESIDENT BUSH: Hmm. I wish you would have given me this written question ahead of time so I could plan for it. [long pause] John, I'm sure historians will look back and say, 'Gosh, he

Oprah's attempt to elicit thoughtful, reflective responses was not always successful. Bush wasn't always able to meet the demands Oprah created within talk show form. For instance, Bush said he knew "for sure" that there is a God, and when pressed, added that he knew "he's sitting here talking to you" and that he loved his wife.

Gore, on the other hand, responded to a question about his greatest fear with a moment of surprising depth. "Somebody told me one time, speaking of faith, that we're not human beings who occasionally have a spiritual experience. We're spiritual beings having a human experience."

While most of Oprah's questions engaged the personal, one of the most striking things about her interviews are the questions that touched upon social theory (What could a president really contribute to the nation?, How can a president address the "meanness" of American culture?), epistemology (What does Bush know for sure?), and metaphysics (Does government have a soul?) These questions articulated practical concerns about the limits of presidential power and leadership, as well as tried to identify the spiritual guideposts and values that Oprah assumes inform the candidates' decisionmaking.¹¹⁷

could have done it better this way or that way.' You know, I just -- I'm sure something will pop into my head here in the midst of this press conference, all the pressure of trying to come up with an answer. But it hasn't yet.

¹¹⁷ Given these singular questions, there's a particular irony in the trivializing critical attention Oprah received. While the press corps in fall 2000 fawned over NBC's critically-acclaimed *West Wing* series and its fictitious president -- a thoughtful, moral, searching, erudite human being who sprinkles his conversations with pithy quotes (in Latin, no less!), critics disdained Oprah's efforts to probe whether either candidate was a potential *West Wing* president.

The Personal As Ideology

Although Oprah steered relatively clear of policy, some of the candidates' personal stories carried ideological content. For instance, Oprah asked Bush how he gave up drinking. The candidate recounted that on his 40th birthday, he celebrated with friends, had a little too much to drink, and the following morning, went for a run. "I made up my mind right there on the jog that I was going to quit drinking for the rest of my life and I did."

Hungover on his 40th birthday. Bush decides to stop drinking. And he does. Period. End of story. No AA. No tormented struggle. No lapses. No treatment. The man knows what bootstraps are for. The story is an anecdotal distillation of his campaign's "personal responsibility" theme.

A moment later, Bush drew out the story's broader social implications. "What I understand now and what our society's got to understand, it requires the person involved to make up his or her mind that this is what needs to happen. No one can make up the mind for you."

Immediately following this story of personal resolve, he embarked on a similar anecdote about his wife and her determination to give birth to their children despite health problems.

BUSH: Laura got, became ill. She got toxic. Toxemia. And so we had to move from out in west Texas and she moved to the hospital in Dallas and she got on the airplane and she said, 'These babies are going to be born healthy.' She had that west Texas determination. I'm kinda tearing up about it a little bit because it was such a powerful statement by a mother who said these children will come to be. It was such a resolute, powerful statement of motherhood and when the

babies came and she was healthy and they were healthy, it was a fabulous moment.

These are personal stories that position Bush squarely and accurately as a conservative who emphasizes personal responsibility, not community responsibility or government assistance.

Linguist George Lakoff uses the metaphor of the family to explain the latent coherence of conservative and liberal ideological systems. Liberal and conservative ideology, he says, can be viewed as two competing notions of family. The conservative worldview is represented by what he calls the “strict father” family model in which the world is a dangerous and competitive place. Children need to learn obedience and discipline and it is the responsibility of a strong, strict father to protect the family and instill discipline in the child so he or she will thrive in this dangerous competitive world. The liberal model, by contrast, can be understood as a family system guided by a “nurturant parent.” In it, empathy and responsibility replace discipline as a core precept. A parent’s obligation is to help the child seek fulfillment in the world.¹¹⁸ It seems quite possible that Oprah’s viewers are, consciously or not, tuning into this underlying ideology in the personal stories shared by the candidates.

Gore’s invocation of the ideology of community and social responsibility is more explicit than Bush’s oblique evocation of personal responsibility.

¹¹⁸ George Lakoff, *Don’t Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame The Debate*, (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2004) pp. 7-13.

GORE: You know, we got off the track in- - in our country in properly honoring the- - the individual. I mean that's- - the freedom of the individual is our bedrock. But we kinda lost track for a while the- - of the truth that we are all part of something larger than ourselves.

OPRAH: Uh-hmm.

GORE: We're part of our families, our communities, just as you've helped revitalize this neighborhood where we're located.

OPRAH: Uh-hmm.

GORE: That gives meaning to the work that you do here.

When critics call Oprah “puffball”¹¹⁹ or “apolitical”¹²⁰, they overlook the political within the personal, imagining the personal and the political are discrete spheres that don’t ever overlap. But the personal and political overlapped on the stage of the Democratic National Convention when Gore and his wife embraced as the candidate took the stage.

Tipper Gore introduced her husband at the DNC. (The fact that wives are now asked to introduce their husbands in highly visible political contexts is further evidence of the influence of the women’s movement on contemporary American politics and political speech.) As a wife, Mrs. Gore may share personal details of the Gore family (including stories and photographs) with the thousands at the convention, not to mention the millions in the TV audience, while fulfilling a public role – introducing her husband to the Convention. But as Al Gore met his wife on the stage, the political press corps expected him to bring the rules of public performance

¹¹⁹ Caryn James. “Blurring Distinctions While Chasing Laughs.” *New York Times*, 22 September 2000. p. A19.

¹²⁰ Baum, p. 2.

on stage with him. A dry perfunctory public peck was in order. Instead, The Gores provided an apparently genuine private sphere embrace.

The event was interpreted in the press as a political stunt. Five morning news shows wanted to know whether the kiss was a calculated maneuver or an outburst of spontaneous affection.¹²¹ *The New York Times* headlined its story: "When a Kiss Isn't Just A Kiss".¹²² Columnist Robert Novak called it "disgusting."¹²³

But several weeks later, with Gore on the show, Oprah recalled the moment with virtually no skepticism or cynicism. (Polls showed that Gore got a 12 to 17 point bounce after his speech.¹²⁴) Coming back from a commercial break, she brought up the subject of the smooch by replaying the convention footage – not once, but twice.

[Clip of Al Gore embracing Tipper Gore on stage at the Democratic National Convention.]

OPRAH: It's our 15th season premiere. We're live in Chicago with Vice President Al Gore. That [referring to the footage] was definitely a little peek behind the wall. That kiss was so analyzed.

GOPE: I was really surprised by that.

OPRAH: I have a theory about it. Those of you who are in relationships and have been fortunate enough to be kissed lately... (audience laughter) For all the people who say that's fake, everybody knows you can't even get your jaw to move that way [laughter, scattered applause] if you are not accustomed to doing it. You know, those of you in the pecking stage -- where you just peck, peck [Oprah air-kisses

¹²¹ Martin Kasindorf, "Gore, under questioning, insists the kiss was just a kiss," *USA Today*, 22 August 2000, p. 1A

¹²² Caryn James, "When a Kiss Isn't Just a Kiss", *The New York Times*, 20 August 2000, p. 4: 4.

¹²³ Barbara Nachman, "Overdone PDAs: When will that buss stop? Gore's convention smooch has other tongues wagging," *The Seattle Times*, 7 September 2000, p. E2.

¹²⁴ Joe Klein, *Politics Lost: How American Democracy Was Trivialized by People Who Think You're Stupid*. (New York: Doubleday, 2006) p. 154.

to the right, to the left] -- it would take a lot to get your lips to do that.

I want to see it again because I think more than the kiss, it's the hug.

AUDIENCE LAUGHTER

[Replay clip]

OPRAH [over the footage]: Notice the hug. The full body hug. [audience whoops, applause] Whoa baby. What did you say to her? I tried to read your lips.

GORE: I just said that... I can't exactly remember what I said. I remember what I felt an overwhelming surge of emotion that this was a great moment in our lives. It's not as if I got there by myself. This has been a partnership. She is my soulmate. It's not that complicated. I was standing offstage with my buddy Tommy Lee Jones and the two of us couldn't see her directly but we could see her on the screen above and she had just finished showing all these pictures of our kids and our grandson and our life together. I was welling with emotion.

OPRAH: You were full as the people say.

GORE: I was full. And when I walked out, the crowd was expressing emotion. It was the most natural thing to me.

OPRAH: Was it calculated?

GORE: One of the reporters said to me afterwards, [Gore adopts a conspiratorial tone] 'Were you trying to send a message?' [Gore returns to normal inflection.] I was trying to send a message to Tipper.

Oprah and her audience (like women voters, according to polls) didn't view The Kiss as calculated. They believed in its authenticity.¹²⁵ Oprah doesn't challenge it, she celebrates it. The Kiss turns out to be a Rorschach test that reflects one's

¹²⁵ Clifford Pugh, "Read My Lips: Three-second smooch melts Gore's old image," *The Houston Chronicle*, 24 August 2000, 1.

willingness to see The Private and The Public as at least occasionally overlapping realms.

The Personal as Interrogative Strategy

Oprah's focus on the personal not only reflects her own sense of what matters, it has strategic value to her as well. It allowed her to ask many questions that the candidates were unlikely ever to have fielded, and allowed her to coax "The Man Behind The Wall" with his well-practiced answers into new unrehearsed terrain. Fielding these questions, the candidates didn't fall back on pre-rehearsed answers. Indeed, there were none to fall back on. Predictably, Gore – whose greatest presentational flaw is arguably his plodding discipline -- was better at returning to script than Bush. In Oprah's interviews with Bush, she caught him off-guard several times and, in one instance, probably had handlers tearing out their hair backstage. A viewer asked: "Governor Bush, what is the public's largest misconception of you?"

BUSH: Um, probably I'm running on my daddy's name. That uh, you know if my name were George Jones, I'd be a country and western singer.

OPRAH: Okay.

BUSH: I've lived with this all my life, of course. Listen, I love my dad a lot. He's a fabulous man and, I'm proud to be his son...

OPRAH: Yes.

BUSH: And, uh, he gave me the great gift of unconditional love. Which is a fabulous gift. It's allowed me to feel like, you know, I can dare to fail and dare to succeed. But, but a lot of folks, like particular like when I ran for governor

against Governor Richards and that was a tough race. A lot of people didn't think I could win - including my mother.

Bush, caught off-script, reinforces negative preconceptions circulating around his candidacy: He's running on his daddy's name. Even his mother didn't think he could win.

Oprah's "Favorite Things" segment (in which she asks guests for top-of-mind responses to questions about their favorite things – a book, gift, memory, etc.) is also an effort to jolly "The Man Behind The Wall" out of rote responses. It asks candidates to present themselves with no forethought. Though Oprah tells Gore it's not a contest, it *is* a contest. By insisting on lightning reactions, can she get real as opposed to strategic reactions? As Goffman puts it, audiences to a performance "often give special attention to features of the performance that cannot be readily manipulated, thus enabling ourselves to judge the reliability of the more misrepresentable cues in the performance."¹²⁶

OPRAH: Here's a side of the Vice President I know you haven't seen. I've asked these questions of plenty of famous faces over the years but never a presidential candidate. It's call- - what we call Favorite Things.

GORE: Umm.

OPRAH: It's not a contest. You're not gonna win anything. [laughter] It has nothing to do with policies. It's just- -

GORE: It's just not that *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*?

OPRAH: No, it's not. [laughter] It's just, uh- - just for us to get an insight and to see how much- -

GORE: Yeah.

¹²⁶ Goffman, 58.

OPRAH: - - like us you are.

OPRAH: - - like us you are. Okay. Your favorite movie of all times?

GORE: Hmm, *Local Hero*.

OPRAH: Favorite cereal?

GORE: Oprah.

OPRAH: Favorite cereal?

GORE: Oh, I thought you meant serialized TV show.

OPRAH: No, no.

LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE

Well, that's good. Favorite cereal?

GORE: Um, Wheaties.

LAUGHTER

OPRAH: For real?

GORE: Yeah.

When Gore says his favorite cereal is Wheaties, Oprah challenges him. It seems too strategic a response. Has the candidate gone back “behind the wall?”

OPRAH: Wheaties? [laughter] Okay. [skeptical] When's the last time you had some?

GORE: Uh, it's been a while. I don't- - I- - I typically don't eat, uh, cereal in the morning now but- - but sometimes I do. When I do, I like Wheaties.

OPRAH: Okay. You do like Wheaties. [almost convinced] Okay.

GORE: Yeah.

OPRAH: [still dubious] I'm challenging you on the Wheaties question.

LAUGHTER

A similar moment occurred in her interview with Bush. He is eager to prove that his answers are authentic.

OPRAH: Okay, favorite song of all times.

BUSH: Uh, *Wake Up Little Susie*, Buddy Holly.

OPRAH: Okay. Favorite time of day.

BUSH: Did Buddy Holly sing *Wake Up Little Susie*?

OPRAH: I don't know.

BUSH: Everly Brothers. Everly Brothers.

OFF-STAGE STAFF: Everly Brothers.

OPRAH: Everly Brothers, okay.
[to offstage staffer]: Thank you, Tobert.

BUSH: I got it before he said it.

Bush emphasized that he had corrected himself before the off-stage prompt. He does not want the audience to think that he doesn't know who sung his "favorite song," since it would cast doubt on the credibility of his other answers.

Not only does Oprah's Favorite Things segment offer a way to try and short-circuit pre-calculated and rehearsed responses, it provides a kind of iconic portrait of each candidate. I don't want to make too much of this, but the exercise is not nearly as superficial as critics make out. (If you doubt me, try it on yourself!) The result of these accumulated, "personality" tidbits is a capsule-portrait of each candidate. Gore:

The Vietnam Era Baby Boomer Literate Sports-buff. His favorites: Film - *Local Hero*, cereal – Wheaties; Book - *The Red & The Black*; Quote – “Those who are not busy being born are busy dying,” (Dylan); Music – The Beatles; Memory – Baseball with dad. Bush: The West Texan Rancher & Runner with Regular Guy Tastes with a hint of Tex-Mex. Sandwich – Peanut butter and jelly; Gift to give – A kiss; Gift to receive – A tie; Favorite Time – Now; Favorite food – Taco; Thing he can’t live without – Running; Song – *Wake Up Little Susie*; Historical figure - Churchill or Willie Mays; Prize possession – Ranch; Memory – Little League.

Each response communicates a universe of associations. As Popkin notes, symbolic politics matters.

When a George Wallace crowns a beauty queen who is black, or a Rockefeller eats a knish, each man is communicating important changes in his relations with and attitudes about ethnic or religious minorities.¹²⁷

None of the candidates’ Favorite Things responses carry such pointed symbolic meaning as Popkin’s own examples, but they carry symbolic meaning nonetheless.

Parallel Performances

Although there’s no evidence that either Oprah or the candidates realize it, they share an agenda. Oprah and the candidates are both trying to demonstrate that the candidates can be real, honest, trusted. The candidates do this most convincingly by exposing moments of personal fallibility or when they draw attention to the exigencies of the campaign. They expose an imperfection in the perfectly packaged

¹²⁷ Popkin, *Reasoning Voter*, p. 6.

candidate. In these moments, the audience catches what appears to be a glimpse of “The Man Behind The Wall.” I don’t believe either candidate was deliberately employing a strategy of personal disclosure. Given how unfamiliar these venues are to campaigns, I don’t believe candidates went into these interviews with more intention than simply to be friendly, relaxed and stay out of trouble.

Here’s Gore, responding to Oprah’s questions about whether his wife was solely responsible for raising their children.

GORE: We have four children, and we've always spent lots and lots of time with them. But [sigh] I had become a little bit, uh, of a workaholic in the sense that my career had drawn me, uh, more and more into devoting all my energy and time to it.

OPRAH: So Tipper was raising the children basically by herself?

GORE: Uh, well, uh, I wouldn't go that far. But- - but, uh, she would certainly- -

OPRAH: But would she?

LAUGHTER

GORE: Yeah, yeah, she would. [laughter] Yeah.

Asked about his favorite book, Gore made a nod to the Bible, saying: “In addition to the Bible? Everybody has to say that...” Asked about his “favorite thing to sleep in,” Gore responded: “A bed,” as the audience laughed approval at his deft deflection of a potentially prurient question.

Similar moments occur in Oprah’s interview with Bush. Coming back from the first commercial break, Oprah played a clip from Bush’s Republican National

Convention speech. Bush intones from the stage: “I believe in grace because I’ve seen it and peace because I felt it and forgiveness because I’ve needed it.”

OPRAH: Tell us about a time when you needed forgiveness.

BUSH: Uh, right now.

AUDIENCE AND OPRAH LAUGHS

OPRAH: Okay. But for real. Tell me a story.

BUSH: Well I'm a, a when my heart turns dark. When I, um, am jealous or when I am spiteful.

OPRAH: I'm looking for specifics.

BUSH: I know you are, but I'm running for president.

AUDIENCE LAUGHTER

The audience roared its approval as Bush withheld candor for openly acknowledged reasons of political expedience.

I am using audience laughter and applause here simply as an indicator of effective performance in the context. That said, the presence of the studio audience is immensely important throughout my dataset. The studio audience provides instant approval and disapproval. The audience can reward a candidate for boldness and express its irritation with tripe. (Imagine if *Meet The Press*, the *CBS Evening News* or the presidential debates were subject to raucous studio audience members ready to respond with laughter, cheers, applause, boos, etc. In Chapter Six, we’ll see that the audience can play an even more significant role in latenight because the audiences are permitted and expected to be rowdier.)

Bush prompted more sympathetic laughter when he acknowledged that had he known he would one day run for president, he would “have behaved a little better.”

OPRAH: Were you like sitting in Midland, were you walking through the woods and all of a sudden you said [I feel a calling to be president]...

BUSH: I never, I never, I never dreamt about, uh, running for president when I was a kid. I didn't think about it when I was in college or maybe I'd behaved a little better had I thought about it. You know what I mean?

These moments of fallibility are designed to demonstrate that the candidate is, after all, “like us.” But in truth, candidates are asked to give a performance riddled with paradox. Oprah put her finger on it.

BUSH: ...there's a lot of folks in my state whose judgment and instincts and common sense I respect a lot. They may not even have ever gone to college and so smart comes in all different kinds of different ways.

OPRAH: Because I think, you know, my sense is that the American people want a president who's like us. Who's -- has felt some of the same things that we've felt and what it's like to, to live in the world.

BUSH: I think so.

OPRAH: And also who is smarter than us.

BUSH: Yeah.

OPRAH: Do you fit that bill?

BUSH: Yes. [laughs]

LAUGHTER

OPRAH: Do you think...

BUSH: Especially the way you asked it.

OPRAH: Do you, okay, do you think you're like us and smarter than most folks?

BUSH: Well, I don't know. You know, listen, I've got a lot of experience. I know how to lead. I mean I'm well educated but I'm certainly not the kind of person that talks down to people because of my education. I don't think that's what a leader does. I think a leader needs to inspire and unite and you can't inspire and unite by thinking you're smarter than everybody else. At least that's what I've learned as Governor of Texas.

This requirement to play “like us” and “smarter than us” is not simply a contemporary phenomenon. Troy, in his history of American campaigns, notes that Americans have always wanted a president “of the people” and “above the people.”¹²⁸

It’s tempting to view the candidates’ “of the people,” “Real Man” moments as forays into “back stage” behavior. According to Goffman, “front region” behavior accentuates some facts and conceals others in order to foster an idealized impression. “Back stage” is where those suppressed facts make an appearance, “where the impression fostered by the [front stage] performance is knowingly contradicted.”¹²⁹ However, I don’t think the candidates’ disclosures concerning the exigencies of the campaign process or their acknowledgement that they are less-than-perfect constitutes “back stage” behavior. The candidates are simply making reference to front stage calculus and creating a bond with the audience by sharing it with them. These moments of candor are not the equivalent of Bush, thinking the microphone is off at a rally, calling a *New York Times* political reporter a “major league asshole.”

¹²⁸ Troy, unpaginated photo caption.

¹²⁹ Goffman, pp. 65, 111-113.

That's backstage. And yet the candidates *are* letting front stage calculus leak out, sharing what Goffman calls “strategic secrets.”¹³⁰ The constraints of candidates’ self-presentations today are so familiar to audiences that the display of “strategic secrets” is now safe. Indeed, it is strategically useful to incorporate them into some candidate performances.

In his analysis of celebrity-watchers, Josh Gamson found that many people experience celebrities with a kind of double-vision: Fans simultaneously enjoy the celebrity self-presentation as well as the manipulation that delivers the celebrity.¹³¹ (With politicians, I believe, there is a stronger longing that the apparently real be truly real.) But *Oprah's* audience seems to be taking a related pleasure, watching the candidates play triple roles: The candidates play candidates. They play the fallible, “of the people,” “guy next door;” and they occasionally acknowledge their “inner campaign manager,” the candidate’s SuperEgo who disciplines the candidate’s front stage self-presentation.

Control & Conflict Avoidance in Oprah’s Interviews

Because control and conflict are so central to the standards against which talk show interviews are judged, I want to specifically address how Oprah handles this. Oprah’s approach to getting “The Man Behind The Wall” to come forward is completely different than the way political journalism approaches a candidate. Whereas political journalism puts much stake in control and conflict, the informality

¹³⁰ Goffman, p. 141.

¹³¹ Joshua Gamson, *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America*, (Berkeley, CA: UC Press, 1994) pp. 142-185.

and fluidity of the talk show give candidates a lot of control over what gets discussed and how it gets discussed.

Gore seized opportunities to appear solicitous and repeatedly turned the conversation back to Oprah, asking about their shared past as Nashville reporters, her success in *Beloved*, her status as a “one-person media conglomerate.” He congratulated her on the Emmys she won the previous evening.

Oprah did not seem to be closely monitoring whether she got answers to the questions she asked. When she asked Bush about school standards and the “soft bigotry of low expectations,” Bush began by talking about reading programs in Texas, then abruptly redirected the conversation. If Oprah noticed, she did not act to keep Bush on topic.

OPRAH: You said in the speech in, in the acceptance speech for the nomination, that too many American children - and I love this - are segregated into schools without standards. Now, for those of you who have your children in private schools or charter schools maybe you're not aware, but it's a mess out there in a lot of the schools. And you say, shuffled from grade to grade because of their age regardless of their knowledge, and this is discrimination pure and simple. The soft bigotry of low expectations and our nation should treat it like other forms of discrimination. We should end it. Now, having done 15 years of shows and done many, many, many, many, many related to education and the parents out there and their children, we know that this is a huge issue. How is it really going to end?

BUSH: Well, in my state of Texas for example we have pre-K and we say that if you want to have a pre-K we'll fund it. And we have kindergarten and it says that, uh, but, but that's what a leader does. A leader sets the goals. Somebody who is a good leader says this is what's most important in life. What's the most important in life is teaching young children to read. You asked how we closed the achievement gap and

there's a huge achievement gap in America. It starts with early education.

As often happens in conversation, threads are begun, then lost. Oprah also made abrupt conversational shifts. When Gore began to talk about “generational patterns” in parenting, Oprah shifted the conversation to Gore’s age and the need for glasses.

GORE: The curriculum in a school is always locally determined. But I am very much in favor of parenting education. For one thing, we all see- - you know, the older I get, the more I, uh, see the continuing impact of generational patterns.

OPRAH: Do you need the glasses yet? I don't see you pulling out the glasses.

Although she didn’t seem deeply invested in getting answers to specific questions, Oprah occasionally drew a line on campaign blather. When Gore began a drumbeat of talking points, “I really believe in what I'm doing...we've got to make some changes in this country. We have to recognize that some things are going well. We need to keep creating jobs...people are working harder. Parents need more help...They need more time. Partners and spouses need more time with one another...” Oprah cut him off. “I’m going to ask you about that,” she said. “Let me ask you this right now. What do you think is the most important contribution, really, a president can make in our lives? Really, what can you do?”

Similarly in her interview with Bush, a studio audience member posed a question, Bush began to spew campaign rhetoric, and Oprah interrupted.

MILLICENT: As a 25-year-old African-American woman with no children and no money, I qualify for broke but I'm not poor.

BUSH: Good way to put it.

MILLICENT: How do I fit into your platform and other millions of Americans just like me?

BUSH: Well, you fit into my platform by having a country that says the American dream is available to you. First and foremost, that doesn't matter how you're raised, what your background is. If you work hard, you can realize the greatness of the country. The -- I don't know what your education background is like but the young Millicents need to be educated. My vision says every child is gonna be educated in America. I want the public school system to hold out the promise for every single, every single citizen. So that when they get to be 25 years old you can realize your dreams. See, see, I see America a land of dreams and hopes and opportunities. Again I don't know your personal circumstances but I don't want anything to hold you back.

OPRAH: Okay, speaking of holding back, I want to interrupt you...

Bush is able to begin to deliver platitudes about education as the groundwork for American hopes and dreams but Oprah won't let him blow hot air endlessly.

Nevertheless, Oprah avoids direct conflict or confrontation. She is far more likely to tell the candidates she likes something they've said or done, than that she dislikes something. She sustains a convivial, friendly, teasing, "living room" tone. When Gore comes out on set and embraces her, she turns to him and asks: "No kiss?" -- a reference to Gore's big smooch at the Democratic National Convention.

Later in the interview, Oprah asked about the neck-and-neck horserace.

OPRAH: You're feeling the pressure of the heat?

GORE: I don't feel the pressure. I mean I like the competition. I think it's good for the country.

OPRAH: Wouldn't you rather be 15 points, 20 points out ahead really?

AUDIENCE LAUGHTER

GORE: Well, you know, I've run both ways.

OPRAH: Well, come on.

AUDIENCE LAUGHTER

GORE: And I prefer unopposed.

Oprah's interview with Bush also contained plenty of friendly playfulness. She turned Bush's name into a chant of "Dub-ya, Dub-ya, Dub-ya." Coming back from a commercial break, Oprah threw to a light-hearted video segment and asked Bush to tell a joke.

VIDEO CLIP: [Bush on campaign plane. He speaks over the plane intercom]

BUSH: This is your candidate, George W. Bush. Welcome aboard the inaugural flight of Great Expectations. Please store your expectations securely in your overhead bins as they may shift during the trip and could fall and hurt someone, especially me. [Audience laughs] Thanks for coming along today. We know you have a choice of candidates when you fly and we appreciate you choosing Great Expectations.

CUT TO STUDIO LIVE

OPRAH: We're live with Governor Bush. And that was behind the scenes footage on his campaign plane. I read that you're known for being able, being able to have fun even while running for president. I want to know what your best joke, that you can tell on television, no bad language or nothing.

Bush obliged.

Despite the overall mood of conviviality, every once in awhile Oprah pushed back, though never in a way that seemed confrontational. In this excerpt with Bush,

she made a straightforward, common sense observation in response to Bush's answer to the question why people should vote for him.

BUSH: The question is why should they vote for me? Absolutely they ought to vote for me. One, I'm a proven leader. I've been given the awesome responsibilities of being the governor of a big state. I've brought people together to get positive things done. I would hope people would look at our record in public education in the state of Texas. Our, our test scores for minority students are some of the best in the nation because we've set high standards. We're got strong local control of schools. We believe in accountability. We believe in giving parents choices. I've got an agenda that says we're going to elevate the individual in America, not empower government. I trust individuals with making decisions in their own lives. I've got a program for reducing taxes. I've got a program for strengthening the military to keep the peace. I've got a plan that says we're gonna provide prescription drugs for seniors. My philosophy is no one should go without. People who cannot help themselves need to be helped by our government and if there's somebody having to make the choice between food or medicine, some elderly soul, we're gonna help that person not have to make that choice.

OPRAH: Well, Al Gore says the same thing.

In several instances, Oprah threw down a challenge only to toss it away. The only time she infers a contradiction between what Gore has said and reality is when Gore asserted that he'd made time with his family a priority.

GORE: ... family is first. And nothing goes onto the schedule until after all the- - the- - the family time and personal time. You gotta make time with your- -

OPRAH: I don't see how you're gettin' it with 27 hours straight of campaigning, but we'll talk about that when we come back.

GORE: Yeah.

OPRAH: We'll talk to the Vice President about personal challenges he's faced as a father and as a husband. Back in a moment.

MUSIC/APPLAUSE

Oprah threw to a commercial. For all intents and purposes, the contradiction was lost. She did not return to the topic.

Similarly, in an exchange with Bush in which Oprah asked Millicent, a woman in her studio audience, whether her question was answered, Oprah saved Bush from having to face Millicent's dissatisfaction directly. (I've bolded the section in which Oprah heads off the confrontation.)

OPRAH: Do you feel your question was answered, Millicent? Do you feel satisfied or are you going to go away going what, what, what did he say?

MILLICENT: Well, I, I, understand --

BUSH: We'll follow up.

MILLICENT: I, I, I understand what he said about education. But in the next four years, you know, your policies on tax cuts and prescription drug costs and Social Security really, really won't affect me. Um, how does your platform --

BUSH: I think, I think it will on Social Security.

OPRAH: **Social Security's going to affect you no matter what. When you're 25 you don't think so Millicent. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] But it will affect you eventually.**

BUSH: Millicent, my policies are this. Again I don't know your particular status but if you're working and are paying taxes, because of the surplus, I think you ought to be able to put more money in your pocket. That's what I believe.

AUDIENCE APPLAUSE

BUSH: [responding to the audience] Maybe I hit a nerve.

And for my vision, my vision of tax relief is that everybody who pays taxes ought to get relief and the reason I think that's important is I'd rather have you make decisions with your own money than the federal government making decisions for all your money. [applause] And that's what I believe.

OPRAH: Coming up more with George W. Bush. We'll find out if he really told the Queen of England he was the black sheep of the family. More when we come back.

By interrupting with her assertion about Social Security, Oprah shut down Millicent's challenge. Later in the interview when a heckler in the audience interrupted Oprah to ask Bush about "the government's policy of bombings and sanctions that kill 5,000 children a month," Oprah reasserted control, cut the audience member off, threw to a commercial, and when she came back, said to Bush:

OPRAH: Okay, we're live with presidential candidate George Bush. I told him 15 years of shows, never had a heckler. You come on, I get a heckler. It's okay. You deal with that all the time.

BUSH: Glad to break the record somehow, you know.

AUDIENCE LAUGHS

The social niceties of the "living room" had been restored.

Conclusions

Given the task she sets herself, does Oprah succeed? Did she pull the candidates out of their routine stump speeches? Did we get a new view of them? I think the answer is yes.

If we ask, instead, did audiences get a look at "The Real Man?" Then Oprah has set herself an impossible task, one that she would inevitably fail. But in my view, it's

unfair to hold her to this standard since I think she employed the phrase “The Real Man” as a rhetorical device, not a philosophical concept.

On the voter mobilization front, she’s unlikely to have had much impact in turning people out to the polls. However, Baum concludes that the talk shows – his evaluation was of daytime and latenight talk, not just *Oprah* – succeeded in making people care about the election and exercised a “great deal of influence” on their vote choice, despite the interviews’ presumably marginal impact on turnout.¹³²

The interviews succeed symbolically and substantively in ways that Oprah never made an explicit part of her agenda. “The media’s capacity to publicly include is perhaps their most important feature,” writes Schudson, “... the impression it promotes of equality and commonality, illusion though it is, sustains a hope of democratic life.”¹³³ In the fall of 2000, Gwen Ifill an African-American correspondent for PBS, tried in vain to mount a partial defense of *Oprah*’s interviews to her *Meet The Press* colleagues. “It’s who [the Gore campaign was] talking to [African-American and women voters] and that he was talking to,” not his “silly answers,” that mattered, she said.¹³⁴

Symbolically, Oprah succeeded in including herself and her viewers on the televised American electoral stage which is dominated by wealthy white male candidates being interviewed by wealthy white male TV journalists who are ostensibly acting as proxies for the American electorate.

¹³² Baum, p. 28.

¹³³ Michael Schudson, “Introduction: News as Public Knowledge,” pp. 1-36 in *The Power of News*, ed. Michael Schudson, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995) p. 25.

¹³⁴ *Meet The Press*, NBC. 29 October 2000.

Finally, as I hope I've made clear in this chapter, neither the questions nor the answers in Oprah's interviews were, in fact, "silly." They were part of a coherent strategy that defined a new style of political interview designed to address the concerns of Oprah's viewers. Her interviews challenged the dominant journalistic paradigm and suggest that there is more than one good way to conduct interviews with presidential candidates.

How singular is Oprah's success? The next chapter examines four more daytime interviews.

Chapter Five: Kickin', Stumpin' & Stunting – Latifah, Rosie & Regis

In this chapter, I want to discuss the other 2000 daytime talk shows – Queen Latifah, Rosie O'Donnell and Regis. Regis interviewed George W. Bush on September 21, and Al Gore almost a month later on October 19. Gore appeared on Rosie O'Donnell's talk show October 20th, and Queen Latifah interviewed Al Gore on October 26, 2000.

I'll begin with a few generalizations that can be made about all four interviews and then discuss each host and their approach in turn. Not surprisingly, the interviews exhibit many attributes typical of talk show form. Guests are welcomed with warmth and informality. (Latifah urges Gore to “get comfortable.”) Family intimacies are reinforced. (Regis asks Bush whether his father ever told him that Regis and George H.W. Bush had played tennis.) Gore and Rosie chat about each other's family members. (How's your little grandson?, Rosie asks.) Instant friendships are forged. (At the end of Regis' interview with Bush, Regis' co-host tells the candidate if he comes to Wisconsin she'll take him hunting.) The candidates show off their relaxed, fun-loving selves. (Gore tells Latifah he's “good at making duck sounds” with his grandkids, and on *Live With Regis* demonstrates his Tennessee country boy technique for hypnotizing chickens. Bush, too, goes to the trouble of showing he's not beyond a good joke, walking on to Regis' set dressed in the host's

trademark monochromatic suit, shirt and tie.) If, as Goffman has argued, social distance helps generate and sustain awe, these appearances are awe-eroding.¹³⁵

Like *Oprah* and talk show form in general, *Regis*, *Rosie* and *Queen Latifah* emphasize personal experience and span a wide range of topics. The interviews I discuss in this chapter are generally divided in two, separated by a commercial break. The first half engages personal questions. The second half is devoted to policy-focused questions which the candidates answer with campaign boilerplate.

Echoing observations I made in the previous chapter (and that we'll see again with latenight talk shows), when candidates use strong, "honest" language they are rewarded with audience approval. Rosie received more audience applause affirming Gore's positions with strong direct language than Gore got articulating them with his campaign's boilerplate. Republican pollster Fank Luntz told *The Los Angeles Times* prior to the 2000 election that his research showed that voters weren't talking about particular issues. "None of the issues comes up," he said. "What people want is a straight shooter."¹³⁶ No surprise then that Bush received strong applause for moments of straight talk or self-deprecation. He was a "mediocre" baseball player and didn't believe "the best man" had won the 1992 election. The *Regis* audience erupted with applause.

While there are broad similarities between the interviews, each of them is driven by a different intention: Queen Latifah wants to generate interest among her young

¹³⁵ Goffman, p. 67.

¹³⁶ Elizabeth Mehren, "He Smirks; He's Too Stiff ... Which is the Winning Personality?," *Los Angeles Times*, 9 July 2000. p. A18.

viewers in the election. Rosie wants to lend support to Gore's campaign. Regis wants the ratings bump that the candidates will bring.

Queen Latifah

Queen Latifah hoped to engage young voters in the election. She's explicit about it, making her pitch for civic engagement at the beginning of her interview with Gore. She wanted to give young people a chance to hear the candidate address their issues and to urge them to vote.

This is a unique opportunity for all of us to ask the man who may be our next president questions on issues important to us, right? Alright. This is also a chance for the Vice President to address an audience of young Americans, and that's you. And that's you -- the single group of people least likely to vote. It's time to turn that around, do you not agree?

At the end of the interview, Latifah returned to the theme, telling her audience: "Bottom line, go out and vote. It's at least your choice there. So please, go make that choice."

First, Latifah asks personal questions. Then she moves to policy, with a "pop culture game" serving as a kind of coda to the interview. Her questions tried – in a way that seems almost desperate -- to link her audience to the candidate. As Oprah sought to reveal The *Real* Man, Latifah sought to reveal The *Wild* Man.

"I got this feeling," she said, "every once in awhile the Vice President here likes to get a little loose. So I'm gonna ask you a few quick questions that might give us a peek at your wild side. Have you ever worn leather pants?" In pursuit of Gore's "wild side," Latifah also asks the Vice President whether he has ever been stopped

speeding, done anything crazy over a girl, or played a drinking game at a college party. Gore tried to oblige.

Latifah gave Gore an explicit opportunity to bridge the gap between young people and the election. “Now, this is an audience of people, many under the age of 25, and a lot of them don’t feel like they can relate to either candidate. What can we tell them, or what can you tell them, to help get inspired to go out and vote?” Her self-correction – “What can we tell them, or what can you tell them” – suggests the extent to which she sees herself as a collaborator in an effort to generate interest in the election among young people. Gore responds:

GORE: Well, you can make a difference, and you ought to know that. This is the closest election in 40 years. Since the time when John Kennedy won by a margin of one vote per precinct.

The environment is at stake in this election. If you care about the issues like global warming, if you care about clean air and clean water, uh, helping kids with asthma. And if you want to keep the economy strong, so that when you guys get out of college there are still a lot of jobs being created. If you want to invest in education. Balance the budget. That’s what I stand for. Also, one point I want to make: College tuition tax deductible, \$10,000 a year for all middle class families.

APPLAUSE

According to Queen Latifah’s producer, she and Latifah thought it was important to present the candidates and ask them to address young people’s issues. Gore, Nader and Bush were asked to appear. Only Gore and Nader agreed. The Bush

campaign never outright refused. They simply had it “under consideration” until after the election.¹³⁷

Gore did the interview at the urging of his campaign manager Donna Brazile. Gore’s campaign may well have been willing to do the show as a vehicle for reaching young people, but it seems worth noting that the first time a candidate made an appearance on not just one, but two African-American women’s TV programs, the candidate’s campaign manager happened to be African-American. The campaign imposed no ground rules and campaign staff knew only that Gore would be asked questions of concern to young people.

Press accounts sometimes suggest that candidates are forewarned about what will take place in the talk show interviews. In my interviews with *Latifah’s* and *Regis’* producers I found no explicit evidence of this. However, since the campaigns were sometimes asked to provide photos of the candidate and his family, it would be reasonable to assume that they would be asked about them. In Chapter Six, I make clear that some of the sketches on latenight comedy required advance preparation, but in neither daytime or latenight did I see any evidence that candidates were given advance notice of what questions would be asked.

These interviews are “firsts” for the candidates as well as firsts for the hosts. Latifah seemed uncertain as to how to make best use of the opportunity. She opens the interview seeming a little cowed. It is being conducted on location. An ad hoc set has been thrown together on a college campus.

LATIFAH: Thank you for being here. Woo!

¹³⁷ Beth Haddad (Queen Latifah’s producer), interview with the author, 27 March 2001.

GORE: Thank you for having me. Alright.

LATIFAH: Oh please, have a seat. Get comfortable.

LAUGHTER

GORE: Thank you for having me on your show.

LATIFAH: Oh, thank you so much for being here. What should I call you? Should I call you uh--?

GORE: Well, you know that Paul Simon song, *You Can Call Me Al?*

LATIFAH: You can call me Al. Alright, Al. I feel privileged.

GORE: [laughter]

LATIFAH: I will call you Al. Well, thank you for letting us jump on the campaign trail with you.

Latifah runs through Gore family photographs – a technique to get at the personal through the visual used by several of the talk show hosts, and she presents Gore with an unexpected gift – a leather jacket. She copies two elements directly from Oprah, first replaying The Gore’s Democratic National Convention kiss.

LATIFAH: Speaking of finding each other all over again, I know everyone remembers that kiss seen around the world. That’s passion. Take a look at this.

CLIP PLAYS

Oh, yeah.

GORE: [laughter]

LATIFAH: Oh, look at the love in that hug. That’s how you do it.

GORE: [laughter]

LATIFAH: What a doting husband. That's the way you're supposed to look at a woman. Oh, I'm getting all giddy just looking at that.

GORE: Somebody, one of the uh, one of the political analysts said, "Were you trying to send a message?" And I said, "Well, I was trying to send a message to Tipper." And she said, "I got it."

LAUGHTER

LATIFAH: And that's the important part. She has definitely picked it up for 30 years. You guys really are a good example though, I think.

Latifah also does a variation on Oprah's "Favorite Things" telling the Vice President that she is going to ask him to play a "pop culture game."

LATIFAH: We are back in Betendorf, Iowa with Democratic Presidential candidate Al Gore. Al Gore, in the house. That's right.

GORE: [laughter]

LATIFAH: On *Queen Latifah*.

APPLAUSE/LAUGHTER

GORE: Alright.

LATIFAH: Alright, now we're almost out of time. Let's play a little pop culture game.

GORE: Mm.

LATIFAH: Movies -- Action or drama?

GORE: Mmm. Action.

LATIFAH: Alright. Cable -- HBO or Discovery?

GORE: Mmm. I like them both. I like *The Sopranos*, and but I like the nature shows on Discovery too.

LATIFAH: Me too. Oh, this is a man after my own heart.

APPLAUSE

GORE: Yeah.

LATIFAH: On a woman -- Leather or lace? [laughter] I mean, on your woman, leather or lace?

GORE: Lace, lace.

LATIFAH: Lace, lace. Okay, music. Folk or funk?

GORE: Uh, folk.

LATIFAH: Folk, alright. And sports: Mets or Yankees?

GORE: Oh, no, no, no, no.

LATIFAH: Mets or Yankees?

GORE: No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. You tried to slip up on me with that one.

LATIFAH: That was -- He's quick, he's quick. I was hoping to get-

GORE: Who are you for?

LATIFAH: Mets or Yankees?

GORE: Ah [laughter]. Alright. Yup.

LATIFAH: You know, who do you go for? I, you know, I love both the home teams, it's so difficult, uh. They're all so cute. I -- There's cute guys on both teams. That's who I'm going for. Yeah.

LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE

GORE: [laughter]

LATIFAH: Okay. Favorite transportation trend -- SUV or sports car. How about that?

GORE: Mm. I like uh, sports cars. Sure.

LATIFAH: That's right, see.

It's worth noting that *Latifah's* "Favorite Things" sequence is less successful in establishing a capsule-portrait of Gore than *Oprah's* was. The explanation, I think, is two-fold. Latifah asked fewer questions, but more importantly, she pre-defined Gore's options and those options were too generic to carry much useful symbolic or connotative content.

In the second half of the interview, Latifah turns to policy, asking about gun control and rap music. Public opinion survey research indicates that education and jobs are key concerns of most young people.¹³⁸ Gore, very early in the interview, manages to make points about how his policies will help young people with both. But Latifah asks questions that seem to have personal interest for her, not for young people generally.

She asks about gun control: She's worried that people who want to own guns will have to give them up. She asks about rap music and violence in entertainment because her career began as a rap singer. Here Latifah's inexperience or lack of planning shows since her choices don't appear to support her goal of engaging young people.

Although it's tangential to my dataset, it's worth noting that Latifah also interviewed Ralph Nader in 2000. Latifah was the only daytime host to invite Nader

¹³⁸ Anna Greenberg and Bob Carpenter "Motivating Younger People to Vote, A briefing on young voters in 2004." The Graduate School of Political Management at George Washington University, Vol, 1 (May 2004)

on the program. Nader appeared along with supporters Susan Sarandon and Phil Donahue. Latifah's questions for Nader were more conventional than those she asked Gore, including asking Nader about The Green Party and to explain the World Trade Organization (WTO).

For the Nader interview, Latifah had a voting booth placed on set and demonstrated how to use it. This decision seems better conceived than the policy questions she asked Gore. Survey research indicates that communications designed to get young people to vote need to demonstrate that voting is easy and presumably the voting booth would allay some fears. But survey research of young people also makes clear that multiple obstacles prevent them from voting and simply calling on them to vote isn't enough to get them to the polls.¹³⁹

Although Latifah clearly hoped to jack up the youth vote, my own view is that these interviews' success should not be assessed by whether they got people to the polls. If that's the threshold for success, these interviews will always fail. Applying this criteria, news interviews fail as well. Only empirical research with her audience could reveal how well Latifah succeeded in linking the Vice President to young people through her efforts to find his "wild side," her questions about gun control and rap music, and her pop culture game. It seems churlish to condemn her efforts, however her success in this first foray is -- I would guess -- very limited. This is an instance in which good intentions, abetted by a more thorough public discussion of talk show interviews and their potential, might have a salutary impact on subsequent efforts to engage young voters in the campaign.

¹³⁹ Greenberg and Carpenter.

Rosie O'Donnell

Rosie O'Donnell intended to support the Gore campaign. From the outset of her 21-minute interview, she showed her cards.

ROSIE: With the election less than three weeks away, I'm delighted that our first guest decided to pay us a visit. He's received the support of the American Federation of Teachers, the National Association of Police Organizations, the AFL-CIO, Jim and Sarah Brady, the Sierra Club, and me. It's an honor to welcome him to the show. Please welcome the Democratic nominee for the President of the United States, Vice President Al Gore.

Rosie's on-air endorsement appears to be a first among talk show hosts.

Throughout the interview, she explicitly affirmed Gore's record and positions. "A lot has been said about what's been done in the last eight years. A lotta good, if you ask me..." She concurred with his opinions repeatedly. "I couldn't agree more," she said, affirming his position on school vouchers and underpaid daycare workers. She called his prescription drug plan "simple and easy" and added that she happened to agree with him on abortion too.

Rosie's staff also produced a "nonpartisan" public service announcement urging viewers to vote, noting that the race is "gonna be very close." The PSA was played during a commercial break.

The interview began with a personal familiarity unseen in the other interviews. They asked after each others' kids and grandkids, calling them by name. Gore wants to know whether "Mia [O'Donnell's recently adopted foster child] is sleeping through the night yet?" Although the familiarity between them is greater than in

other talk show interviews, Rosie devotes only a few minutes at the beginning of the interview to this personal exchange.

Rosie's interview is focussed primarily on issues, more so than the others I discuss in this chapter. She focuses special attention on family health and education. She asked about violence in entertainment and its impact on kids, healthcare for women and children, drugs for seniors, abortion and The Supreme Court, daycare costs, adoption, after-school programs, school quality and vouchers, child safety trigger locks, and the environment. I've excerpted a small section of Rosie's interview to illustrate the character of these exchanges.

ROSIE: Well, we're back with the Vice President and we have now questions from the audience, when they wrote to us on our website and also sent us questions by fax. Here's question number one. As a parent, I'm concerned about violence my kids are exposed to on TV and movies and videogames and the internet. What do you propose to be done to protect kids from these dangerous influences?

GORE: I think parents oughtta be given more tools to protect their children from material that parents themselves deem inappropriate. That's not censorship, it's parenting. I think that, well, first of all, the V chip ratings- - you can't have the government determining content. That is censorship. I'm opposed to anything like that. But I think that the industry needs to exercise more self restraint and you know, recently there was an F.T.- - a Federal Trade Commission report showing that some of the companies that label the material inappropriate for children were turning around behind the parents' backs and advertising adult material directly on kiddie shows and at children. I think that is hypocritical and outrageous. Joe Lieberman and I, both of us have worked on this. Course, Tipper's been workin' on this for 15 years. We gave them six months. We said, look, let's call for an immediate cease fire. It's insane for kids to see 20,000 murders on television by the time they graduate from high school. Just- - I mean that cannot be good for us. Uh, and we

gave them six months. If, at the end of that time, they haven't cleaned up their act, we're gonna call for tougher legislation with the F.T.C. having the right to go after false and deceptive advertising. If they've said this is not good for kids, then they shouldn't advertise it to kids.

The excerpt above is both campaign boilerplate (and there is much of it in all three interviews I discuss in this chapter), and well-spun but straightforward content, outlining Gore's position on specific issues. Although it doesn't "make news" by revealing "something new" to close political observers, it is an informative presentation of Gore's platform on media violence.

It seems as if Rosie's intent was to present Gore in a flattering light. Certainly she allowed him to talk unchallenged. On the other hand, it's hard to imagine Gore's presentation changing a Bush supporter's mind. Apart from the PSA, Rosie did not encourage people to go to the polls. Of all the interviews, hers is the most straightforward and least innovative -- save for her endorsement.

Rosie's endorsement went largely un-noted in the press, but is a potentially dramatic step in American televised politics. Her endorsement of Gore raises an interesting Equal Time consideration. Assuming Rosie's producers did not invite Bush to appear on the program (I have no knowledge one way or the other), the Bush campaign had a week to demand equal time.¹⁴⁰ But why would they? Bush would enter openly hostile territory. Rosie's endorsement serves as a kind of pre-emptive strike, deterring the opposition from requesting equal time. It's possible to imagine in 2008 or beyond, other broadcast talk shows selectively endorsing and promoting

¹⁴⁰ I confirmed this interpretation of FCC regulatory policy with the FCC. FCC staff, personal interview, 21 February 2006.

their own favored candidate, confident that the opposing candidate won't make use of the FCC's Equal Time provision. Should the FCC revisit its regulations? I'll address this question in my conclusion.

Regis

Regis is an anomalous figure within my daytime dataset. He is not one with his audience: He's a man. He wears a suit. His set is as much "executive office suite" as living room. He and his co-host sit on barstools. No comfy couch for him! There appears to be scant public service responsibility motivating his interviews. Unlike Oprah, he wasn't trying to "penetrate the wall." Unlike Latifah, he wasn't trying to get the candidates to speak to the concerns of 20-somethings. Unlike Rosie, he wasn't trying to support one of the candidate's campaigns. Regis was using the candidates as a ratings-draw. His producer told me in an interview that the show had been "stunting" as Regis searched for a new co-host. The election provided a chance to "stunt." *Regis! Hosting the country's biggest political celebrities!*

The show's producer made clear that he and Regis were well aware that their interview would not be the only interview their viewers would see. They didn't aspire to produce "the definitive interview" of the candidates. Instead, the show was trying to present "a different side" of the candidates, something different from the standard news interview. By way of example, he pointed to the fact that Bush was on the show "with the truck driver from *Survivor*." It made the interview, he said, "more like two real Americans, not media types, sitting around talking to the president in

front of millions and millions of people.”¹⁴¹ The point then was not so much what Regis did with the candidates on the show, but simply to get them on the show. Even better to get the candidates on the show in an unexpected pairing.

Each of Regis’ interviews – 13 minutes a piece – included personal questions prior to the first commercial break and policy questions after the ads. Regis was joined for the Gore interview by entertainer Rhonda Jamgotchian and for the Bush interview by *Survivor* series contestant Susan Hawk.

The Regis interviews enact a kind of generalized sociability. Prior to the commercial break, Regis poses personal questions. But they are quite different than Oprah or Latifah’s personal questions. They are not designed to link the candidate to a subset of viewers as Latifah’s were. They are not designed to reveal something genuine or self-reflective as Oprah’s were. The questions have no intent beyond getting literal answers to Regis and his co-host’s inquiries.

Regis asked how the candidates relax, about Gore’s climb up Mt. Rainer and whether the Secret Service tagged along. He asked Bush what the W in his name stood for and whether he pitched for the Yale baseball team. I will quote at some length the opening conversation between Regis, Bush, and Regis’ co-host Susan Hawk to illustrate the character of the exchange.

REGIS: What’s the last movie you’ve seen?

BUSH: *Saving Private Ryan*.

SUSAN HAWK: Oh, great movie.

¹⁴¹ Michael Gelman, interview with the author, January 2001.

BUSH: A great movie.

REGIS: Yeah, yeah. In a movie house or on TV?

BUSH: Uh, uh, it was a rental.

REGIS: Oh, you rented it?

SUSAN HAWK: Yeah, he had a- - yeah.

BUSH: I haven't been to a movie house in a long time.

REGIS: Yeah, sure. I'll bet. And do you have enough- -

BUSH: There's not enough tickets to pay for the entourage that [laughter] I'm- -

REGIS: Yeah, right.

SUSAN HAWK: Not enough seats in the theater?

BUSH: Not enough seats.

REGIS: Yeah, you travel with quite a crowd, I'll tell you that.

BUSH: Yeah, well.

REGIS: You ever watch the big *Millionaire* show?

BUSH: All the time.

APPLAUSE

REGIS: How, uh- - what else is he going to say? Wh- - when you play along at home, how high do you go?

BUSH: Uh, [laughter] let's see, uh...

REGIS: \$32, \$64, \$125...

BUSH: All the way. [playfully boasting]

REGIS: All the way.

BUSH: Yeah, I know. I have watched your show. It's a lot of fun. And, uh-

REGIS: Good. Now, you know, I keep hearing this W, George W. Bush. And now here in New York, when they- - they just call you W. You know, you- -

SUSAN HAWK: How's that work with just W?

BUSH: At least they're calling me.

SUSAN HAWK: I like that. W.

BUSH: Yeah.

SUSAN HAWK: That's a great name.

REGIS: What is the W for?

BUSH: Uh, Walker- -

REGIS: Walker?

BUSH: My middle name.

SUSAN HAWK: Oh, Walker, Walker Bush.

BUSH: George Walker Bush.

REGIS: Yeah, yeah. Now- -

BUSH: There's another George Bush that's been-

SUSAN HAWK: There's a Texas Ranger named Walker.

BUSH: Yeah, he's a good friend of [laughter] mine by the way.

SUSAN HAWK: Yeah. Is he really?

BUSH: Yeah. Chuck Norris.

REGIS: Yes. He's down there all the time. And he's in pretty good shape- -

BUSH: But there's another George Bush that used to roam around, actually still roaming.

REGIS: [laughter] Yeah, yeah.

BUSH: And, uh, so the George W. distinguishes me from George H. W.

REGIS: Yeah.

SUSAN HAWK: Okay.

BUSH: I certainly don't want people to be confused here as we're coming down the- - in the- - in the political process.

SUSAN HAWK: No. because you look like-

REGIS: Did your father ever tell you that I played him in tennis?

BUSH: Yeah, I think he said, uh, he won. [a jocular boast]

APPLAUSE

SUSAN HAWK: Did he? [laughter]

REGIS: See, there he goes again. Well, actually he's an awfully good tennis player. And you're in pretty good shape yourself.

BUSH: I'm in pretty good shape. I run a lot.

REGIS: Now do- - you jog every morning?

BUSH: I do.

REGIS: Did you have a chance to jog this morning?

BUSH: No, I'm going to jog in Cleveland, Ohio.

REGIS: Oh, you're going to Cleveland today?

SUSAN HAWK: Oh, you're going there and go It's a great town.

REGIS: Where were you last night?

BUSH: I was at the Waldorf Astoria.

REGIS: Now what'd you do?

BUSH: Well, our daughter came, uh- - came down from New Haven and we had dinner with her. We hadn't seen her in a couple of weeks.

And so on. This exchange is followed by a review of Bush family photographs. Then Regis goes to a break. In the second section of the interview, Regis asks Bush about school vouchers (which Regis appears to favor); the price of oil, Iraq and the environment; taxes; and social security.

The Gore interview charts similar terrain. Gore is asked to explain his opposition to school vouchers and Bush's tax and social security privatization plans. Gore responded, predictably, by promising to put social security in a "lock box." Overall, the *Regis* interviews, whether the questions posed are personal or political, are less ambitious than in other daytime interviews.

Partisan bias seems to creep into Regis' interview, though the effect is nowhere near as overt as Rosie's endorsement of Gore. However, Regis' relationship to President Bush, Sr., his leading question about school vouchers in the Bush interview, his choice to let Bush's platform frame the questions Regis asked Gore, all suggest that the host is a Bush supporter, but how audiences respond to these partisan cues is a question only audience researchers could address.

Ultimately, what's most singular about the interviews is the presence of Wisconsin truck driver Susan Hawk in *Regis'* interview with Bush. Hawk, an attractive white woman in early middle-age, has a powerful voice with an equally powerful midwest working-class accent. She behaved in a way that conformed far less to conventional norms about how one addresses a candidate than other talk show hosts or their studio audience members. In the first half of the interview, she freely interjected her own opinions on whatever was being discussed, free-associating the "W" in Bush's name with the TV series *Walker, Texas Ranger*, getting starry-eyed when Bush said he was friends with Chuck Norris, and beginning to speak with real emotion about a pony she lost as a girl.

After the commercial break when the interview veered into policy, Hawk receded. But at the end of the interview, she resurfaced as a cheerleader for Bush's tax and social security plans.

BUSH: I want to share some of the surplus with the people who work hard. I want you to get some tax relief, Susan, so you can save, and dream and build.

HAWK: Tax refund.

BUSH: Tax relief. [emphasis Bush's]

HAWK: Relief?

BUSH: Yeah.

HAWK: Relief?

BUSH: And I- - I- - I want to strengthen the- -

HAWK: You cut it before, right?

BUSH: - - military to keep the [laughter] peace.

HAWK: Like I don't have to pay it and then get it back?

BUSH: No. I cut it before you pay.

HAWK: Oh, that is a re- - yeah.

BUSH: I want you to know if you're a family of four in Wisconsin making \$50,000 dollars a year, under my vision, you get a 50% reduction in the federal- -

HAWK: Okay.

BUSH: - - income tax as you pay. And the reason I believe that's important is I worry about the working people being overtaxed. Uh, I worry- -

HAWK: And they're going to pay for their kid's college and all that.

BUSH: Exactly right. And so I would rather you have decisions over your money, as opposed to the federal government making a decision over your money.

APPLAUSE

HAWK: And I- - yeah. I think either he does- - You have a good stand on the social security. I like that, let me invest my own money.

BUSH: I want to- -

HAWK: That's going to be a tough transition.

BUSH: That's okay. But- - but nevertheless- -

HAWK: I'm willing to try it.

BUSH: We've got the money to transition from a- - the old way in social security, which is the government program. The government'll decide the benefits to- - to a new way to allow younger workers to manage some of your own money-

HAWK: Yeah.

BUSH: - - in safe and secure investments in the private sector so we get a better rate of return on people's monies than the- - than less than two percent rate of return.

REGIS: Uh-hmm.

HAWK: And give us a more responsibility is- - because Americans can handle it, trust me.

BUSH: You're singing my tune.

HAWK: Yeah.

BUSH: [laughter] We- -

HAWK: You're saying Americans are not dumb-- not- -

REGIS: Governor, I- - I think you better take her with you.

BUSH: I do too.

LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE

HAWK: I'd like to.

Of all the daytime talk show interviews, this section is the one that makes me – an overeducated upper middle-class white ex-journalist trying to surmount my prejudices – cringe. Susan Hawk is a politically unsophisticated person. She seems guileless in the face of slogans that describe policies that promise her more money in her pocket. She becomes an instant supporter. Her lack of sophistication makes media critics uneasy and disdainful. Her first offense: shedding dignity and privacy for a shot at winning *Survivor*. Her second offense: Her working class manners. The last straw: Being a guileless unsophisticated participant in Regis' interview with the nation's next president.

This moment best substantiates critical anxiety about talk show interviews – who they speak to and their capacity to “manipulate” or mislead unsophisticated voters. The talk show format allows the candidate to put a rosy unchallenged gloss on a policy proposal of immense public import. Susan Hawk reflects a portion of the American electorate that is neither knowledgeable nor sophisticated. She is a democratic conundrum. Converse’s nightmare. She is a “poorly-informed” citizen, a “low-information” voter. She doesn’t know the issues, doesn’t ask “the right questions,” doesn’t get “the right news.” Indeed, the nation’s elite political journalism long ago gave up trying to speak to her.¹⁴²

And yet, I and other scholars like Gamson; Neuman, Just & Crigler; and Popkin defend “Susan Hawk” as a legitimate participant in American democracy. Five years after she appeared ready to lead the charge for the privatization of social security, the policy was repudiated, regarded by the public as so deeply flawed that no amount of presidential stumping could build support for it. I’d like to believe that somewhere somehow, the “Susan Hawks” of America got wind of the debate, paused for a moment and wondered whether a policy that seemed so appealing at first glance was really such a great idea. Maybe. Maybe not.

The democracy imagined in professional journalistic codes and practices is logical, neat, efficient, and well-reasoned -- the democracy Lippman imagined if the

¹⁴² See Thomas Leonard, *News For All: America's Coming of Age with the Press*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) for a book length exposition on how American newspapers jettisoned “unattractive” working class readers.

experts were in charge.¹⁴³ But “democracy” writes John Durham Peters, “wrecks every romantic ship.”

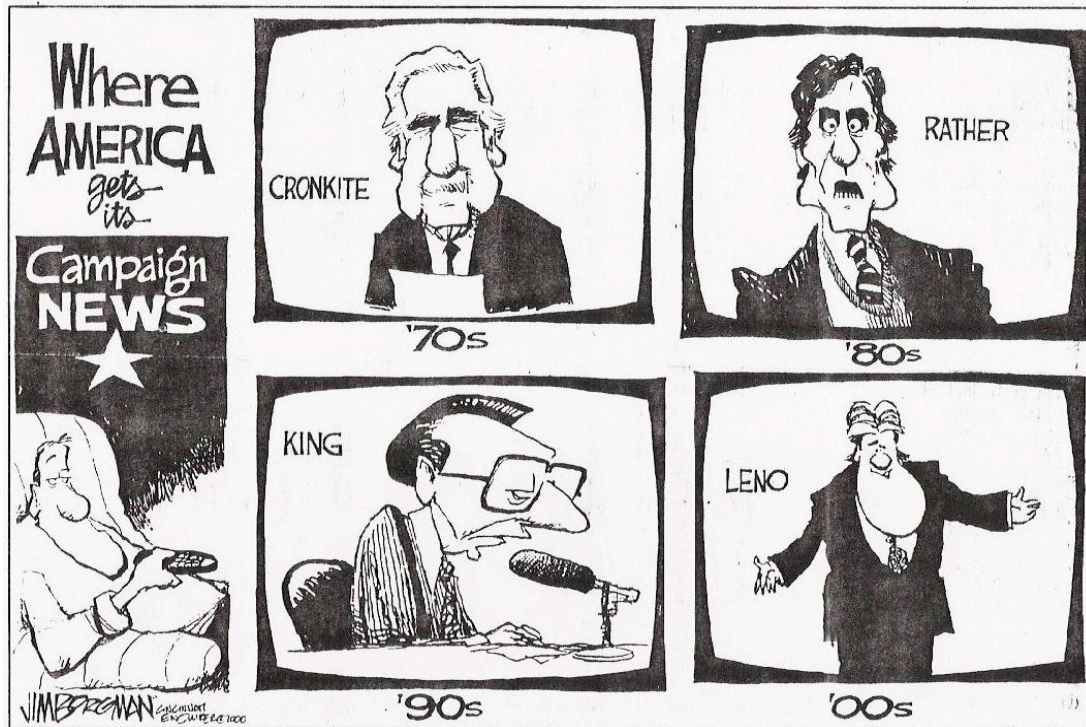
Its history is a catalog of error and grace, stupidity and fumbling genius. At its best, democracy reminds us not of the great wisdom of the people but of our great folly... Democracy needs not our faith but our tenderness, being a form of political life that insists on its own, and our own, incompleteness at every turn. It is the principle of imperfection in politics, something to embrace, not to be embarrassed by.”¹⁴⁴

In a daytime talk show like *Live With Regis*, “the stupidity” is easy to identify. But “the fumbling genius?” The genius is in the juxtaposition of Susan Hawk and “the most powerful man in the world.” “Susan Hawk” is a part of American democracy that professional journalism keeps safely out of sight except to occasionally ridicule or lament. Political reporters, both print and broadcast, would seek out more conventional, articulate sources to quote, or use Hawk as a fleeting moment of “color.” No “Susan Hawk” is selected to be a “Citizen Questioner” on the debates. Journalism, unwittingly but systematically, “cleans up” American democracy, minimizing Susan Hawk, if not purging her altogether from its portrait of American democracy. Journalism ignores “the Susan Hawks of America” in the hope they will disappear. In this sense, *Regis* exposes American democracy. You can like Susan Hawk or loathe her, but the interview makes Hawk and America’s imperfect democracy irrefutably, uncomfortably, brilliantly visible.

¹⁴³ Walter Lippman, *Public Opinion*, New York: Free Press, 1922.

¹⁴⁴ John Durham Peters, “Public Journalism and Democratic Theory: Four Challenges” in *The Idea of Public Journalism* ed. Theodore L. Glasser (New York: The Guilford Press, 1999) pp. 105-115.

Chapter Six: The Anti-Spin Doctors



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Illustration 3: Where America Gets Its Campaign News

America doesn't want the President of the United States to be the funniest guy in the country. They don't want Robin Williams to be the president. They just want to know you're human and have a good sense of humor and just relax.

-Al Franken¹⁴⁵

In this chapter I examine comedy interviews with Gore and Bush during the 2000 campaign which appeared on *Late Night with David Letterman* and *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno. David Letterman interviewed Al Gore on September 14, 2000 and George W. Bush on October 19, 2000. Jay Leno interviewed George

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Al Franken, *Fresh Air*, National Public Radio, 31 October 2000.

W. Bush on October 30, 2000 and interviewed Al Gore the following evening. Although not a part of my formal dataset, I will also analyze Ralph Nader's appearance on *The Tonight Show* on September 28, 2000 and Bush's appearance on *Late Night* during the primaries.¹⁴⁶ I discuss six interviews in this chapter.

In popular discourse about the latenight appearances, the shows, the monologues and interviews are often lumped together. In this chapter, I try and disaggregate them, distinguishing between Leno and Letterman's styles and between the opening monologues and the interviews. I will focus on the late night interviews with the candidates, not the opening monologues, though the monologues have been the implicit or explicit subject of most of the critical examination concerning the candidates' appearances on latenight. Although the jokes' sheer volume begs for attention, I will not spend a great deal of time on them for several reasons. First, my dissertation is an examination of talk show interviews, not of jokes. I am also suspicious that the monologue jokes have become a focus of public attention not because they provide a rich semiotic treasure trove, but because they are easily captured and quantified. In addition, I suspect that discussions of them in the popular media have been so widespread because they give journalists an opportunity to lace their reports with snappy copy. (So much for the hard and fast line between news and entertainment!)

That said, I want to quickly summarize what's known and what's said about the latenight monologue jokes. The Center for Media & Public Affairs' ElectionWatch

¹⁴⁶ For the record, John McCain and Alan Keyes also appeared on Leno and Letterman during the primary season, but since they did not run in the general election I do not include them.

research notes that from September 1 to November 6, 2000, George W. Bush was the subject of 254 monologue jokes and Al Gore 165 jokes. In the year 2000, year-end totals indicate that George W. Bush and Dick Cheney were the subject of 1,065 jokes and Bill Clinton and Al Gore 1,336. Assuming 220 shows a year (based on 5 original shows a week x 44 weeks), the president/vice president and their challengers were the focus of roughly six jokes per show.

Center for Media and Public Affairs research also confirms the popular perception that candidates tend to be identified in monologue jokes by a single characteristic or two: Gore is stiff and hogs more than his fair share of credit for things. Bush is a rich boy, former party animal who is stupid or burned his brain out on drugs. "Humor about each office holder tends to focus on one overriding weakness," writes Davis.¹⁴⁷ Or as Clinton aide Mandy Grunwald observed during the 2000 campaign: "Once they [late night talk show writers] have a take on you, once they decide what to mock you for, it essentially becomes permanent and there's almost no way of undoing it."¹⁴⁸ As a near daily viewer of *The Tonight Show* in 2000, I did not hear Leno ever make a joke about Clinton that wasn't tied to the President's voracious appetites, usually his sexual appetite.

To wit, on a single evening, January 27, 2000, Leno joked that Clinton was giving \$1 billion for education so that teachers can have the best sex money can buy; that when Clinton did Roger Eberts' show, he did a popcorn-in-the-lap-trick with an intern; that The Jefferson Foundation acknowledged that Jefferson fathered six

¹⁴⁷Murray S. Davis, *What's So Funny? The Comic Conception of Culture and Society*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993.), p. 232.

¹⁴⁸ As qtd. by Bernard Weinraub, "Election's Barometer: Barbs of Late-Night TV," *The New York Times*, 19 January 2000. p. A16.

illegitimate kids, proving that Jefferson really was the founder of the Democratic Party and explaining why our president's name is William Jefferson Clinton; and finally in reference to Helen Gurley Brown's assertion that 100,000 women would do what Monica Lewinsky did, Leno joked that Clinton responded: "I need names. I need numbers."

Much of the popular discussion of the latenight shows focuses on Grunwald's concern. But how significant from the standpoint of public information and democracy is this single-minded focus of the monologue jokes? Are voters, as Ted Koppel asserted after the 2000 campaign, getting their idea that Bush is dumb from latenight TV?¹⁴⁹

Latenight talk show joke writers contend that they are only echoing observations made by the news media. After the 2000 campaign, David Letterman suggested that latenight hosts were jumping on a moving train, not driving it. "I'm not sure we coin those cliches or anything or crystallize them. I think by the time they get to us, they're fully reinforced. We just pile on... We're just gang tackling."¹⁵⁰

Comedy writers writing jokes about politics take their cues from the news. As I'll make clear in my discussion of how comedy works, comedy subverts expectations. Murray Davis in his theory of comedy writes, "If nothing is expected, nothing can be unexpected. Consequently, nothing will be funny."¹⁵¹ This suggests that most audience members are not learning for the first time that Clinton had a thing for the ladies or Bush had a thing for drugs and alcohol. "The audience has to

¹⁴⁹ *Nightline*, 24 April 2001.

¹⁵⁰ Ivan Delventhal, Private correspondence. Based on notes taken from his Columbia University class with Al Gore. 4 April 2001.

¹⁵¹ Murray Davis, p. 189.

know what you're talking about or else you'll be sunk," Leno told *The New York Times*' Bernard Weinraub. "You can't know more than anybody watching. And we've found that once you get past Secretary of State – and even that's a stretch – no one knows what you're talking about."¹⁵² This intrinsic element in comedy makes it a sensitive gauge of public knowledge. Comedy doesn't offer new information, it takes what is generally known and re-interprets it.

Furthermore, to argue that these jokes are having a corrosive effect on democracy you'd have to believe that these jokes are the only piece of information that voting members of the audience have access to or that it overrides all other information as voters form judgments on the candidates and the political process. (I've included a broader discussion of comedy and its putative impact on voter cynicism later in this chapter.) It seems to me highly unlikely that this is so.

I want to turn my attention now to the real subject of this chapter, the latenight interviews. I'm interested in exploring how the latenight talk show genre and comedy shape the interviews I analyze. The initial questions guiding my analysis of the latenight talk show interviews break down into three areas:

1. Comparative. Do both hosts essentially follow the same "latenight comedy" format? What was each host's intention?
2. Comic Influence. How does comedy influence the interviews? Is a prerequisite for success that the candidate be funny? What kind of presentational challenges do the interviews present? What made for a

¹⁵² Bernard Weinraub, "Election's Barometer: Barbs of Late-Night TV," *The New York Times*, 19 January 2000. p. A16.

successful appearance? Why, for instance, was Bush' appearance on Letterman during the primaries regarded as unsuccessful, while Ralph Nader, hardly a guy known for side-slapping public appearances, made a successful one on the same show?

3. Content. What was discussed and how was it discussed? What kind of utility, if any, might these interviews have for potential voters? This last question is particularly interesting given that Bush and Gore got more time on *Late Night With David Letterman* than they did on the three network news shows during the entire month of their respective Letterman appearances.¹⁵³

Before I discuss each interview in turn, I want to make a few general remarks about the look of latenight programs and how they differ from daytime or news. The latenight sets are a cross between daytime's informal "living room" and the formality of a news interview show. Guests sit on a couch or in an upholstered chair, but the host sits behind a desk. The hosts are male and wear suits, but guests of either sex may be less formal appearing in jeans or suits. And rather than a background that suggests a warm domestic environment like daytime or a backdrop with a world map, a shot of the Capitol or some similar political symbol typical of news, the latenight shows have cityscape "night life" backgrounds. The sets don't signify coziness, seriousness or the affairs of state. They do, however, hold out the promise of something urban and exciting.

The answer to my first set of questions comparing Leno and Letterman was simple and clear. They take entirely different approaches to the candidate interviews.

¹⁵³ Center for Media & Public Affairs, "Campaign 2000 Final".

Leno is using the candidates to do comedy with the country's biggest political stars. Leno's interviews are highly planned and structured. Letterman, on the other hand, appears not to have a clear agenda. What transpires in his interview is serendipitous and largely unplanned. I'll discuss Leno first.

The Tonight Show

Contrary to the assumption of media critics,¹⁵⁴ guests on latenight comedy do not have to be funny to make a successful appearance. Furthermore, candidates are able to be funny without telling jokes. The Leno interviews make this observation abundantly clear. The appearances were carefully structured so that the burden of maintaining a lively comic interview rested on Leno and his writer/producers. Whether a guest quipped easily like Gore, or didn't like Bush, made no difference to the comic success of the segment. Leno, aided by his staff's planning, sustained the comedy throughout the interview.

The first section of Leno's interview came immediately after a "headlines" segment that is a regular feature of the show. Leno presents headlines, typos, and ads from papers around the country that are ripe targets for laughs. Each "headline" is mounted on a black board. When Bush appeared on set, he presented Leno with his own headline mounted on a black board, a device clearly requiring pre-planning and production. In press accounts, Leno acknowledged that his staff has helped

¹⁵⁴ Paul Brownfield, "Iowa, New Hampshire... 'Tonight Show'." *Los Angeles Times*, 11 February 2000: F2. Howard Rosenberg, "If You Can't Be Funny." *Los Angeles Times*, 6 March 2000.

candidates and their staff prepare for the program.¹⁵⁵ After a few preliminary questions about his family, Leno inquired about “what happened in South Carolina.” Bush understood that he was being prompted to tell a particular funny story. The South Carolina story is followed by another pre-planned comic moment in which Leno, followed by Bush, pull political masks from behind Leno’s desk. (Leno’s interview with Bush took place the day before Halloween. The interview with Gore took place on Halloween.)

What follows is the transcript of the first section of the interview prior to the first commercial break.

LENO: My first guest, you know running as the Republican candidate for President of the United States, from the great state of Texas, please welcome Governor George W. Bush.

MUSIC

LENO: Good to have you --

APPLAUSE

BUSH: Well, I got a little headline of my own here. It's, uh- - it's kind of an advance preview - yeah.

LENO: On November 8th-- Wednesday, November 8th, *The Los Angeles Times*. This the headline?

Well there you go. [Leno turns the board to camera revealing an *L.A. Times* headline fully mocked up: Bush Wins!!]

APPLAUSE

BUSH: There you go is right.

LENO: Now how's mom and dad doin'? Okay?

¹⁵⁵ Marshall Sella, "The Stiff Guy vs. The Dumb Guy," *The New York Times Magazine*, 24 September 2000.

BUSH: They're nervous. Yeah.

LENO: Do you think mom's more nervous for you than she was for your dad?

BUSH: Uh, I don't know. It might be a tie, but I know she's darn nervous and, um, she's still tellin' me what to do though after all these years.

LAUGHTER

LENO: Who's more competitive, mom or dad? I prob'ly know the answer to this, but--

BUSH: I'd have to say, mom.

LENO: Yeah. You know, she was on this show once and she shook my hand and I thought it was Arnold Schwarzenegger. [Leno shakes his hand as if in pain. Then, recalling Mrs. Bush's words:] See, What-- You're not doin' any-

LAUGHTER

BUSH: She's shaken mine too like that too.

LENO: I get this: "You're not doin' any jokes about my husband tonight, are you?" I said, "No." She's strong. She's really strong. And you--

BUSH: She's a strong-willed woman.

LENO: Yes, strong-willed woman. And your wife Laura's here. She's a big part of the campaign. Where--

BUSH: She-- she's right over there--
[CAMERA CUTS TO LAURA BUSH]

APPLAUSE

LENO: Has she ever given you campaign advice? Does she-

BUSH: Yeah, quite frequently, of course. Like she gave me a little advice tonight. She said, "Whatever you do, don't try to be charming, witty, or debonair. Just be yourself."

LENO: Just be yourself. That's good advice. It's nice when the woman knows you.

LAUGHTER

I know the campaign trail, it just must be a nightmare because everywhere you go-- in fact, I-- I'm sure you've had this happen with you. I was talking- uh, when Al Gore was here one time, and we were talking, just out in the parking lot, and he went, and looked over, and there was a guy with one of those, uh-- with like a shotgun mike, aiming it. He was like a quarter mile away, just picking up every-- every little thing that you say.

BUSH: Yes, I-- I know what you're talking about. [said with a laugh indicating that he knows Leno is referring to the widely-reported incident in which Bush, believing a stage microphone was off, turned to Cheney and called *New York Times* reporter Adam Clymer a “major league asshole.” To which Cheney replied, “Big time.”]

LENO: Big time, yeah, big time. Oh. You know what I'm talkin' about big time?

BUSH: Big time.

LENO: Now what happened in South Carolina? What happened there. There were-- there was somethin'.

BUSH: Well, we had a-- [laughter] yeah, it's interesting you would know that. Um--

LENO: That's my job. [said with an ironic chuckle, suggesting that Bush told Leno or his staff about the incident backstage as opposed to Leno digging it up – reporter style – himself.]

BUSH: The day-- well, the day of the primary, we were having, we were having breakfast at The Ham House and a fellow dressed like a pig pulled up in a dump truck full of pig manure dropped it-- all the manure, so we couldn't leave. The bus was stuck, the motorcade was stuck, and there we were in The Ham House, hemmed in with the pig manure pile. The policeman was upset so he reaches in and grabs the

driver of the pickup truck and he pulls off the pig head, so I see the policeman with the pig head with the pig manure and I'm going, 'Only in America.'

LENO: So what happened? Did it-- is that-- now, is this a Secret Service job? the--

APPLAUSE

BUSH: Yeah, they were - I guess they were shovellin' for months. We managed to get a cab or somethin' like that to get outta there but we went out the other way. But it was an interesting experience. It-- people--

LENO: Now, I have a Halloween mask I think you might get a kick out of. See what you think here. Put this on. Does this look a little bit subliminal? [Leno reaches behind his desk and puts on Bush mask.]

BUSH: That's scary.

LENO: Subliminal?

BUSH: [Bush pulls a Gore mask from behind Leno's desk and puts it on.] This was more scary.

AUDIENCE LAUGHTER

LENO: I'll be right back right after this. More with George Bush right after this. Don't go away.

Bush gets through the first segment of the interview having to do little more than follow the cues laid out by Leno, comment on his parents and acknowledge his wife in the audience as well as a veiled reference to the campaign incident involving *New York Times* reporter Adam Clymer.

Leno sustains the comedy by purposefully inquiring about things he thinks will yield comic fodder – by raising the contrast between Bush's parents' competitiveness knowing what the answer is likely to be, by jesting about Barbara Bush's iron

handshake, putting a coda on Bush's own self-deprecating remark about "being himself," by bringing up Bush's indiscreet comment about Adam Clymer, by prompting Bush to tell the manure story, by planting the masks and teasing about Bush's pronunciation of "subliminal."

Leno has no public service agenda. He's just doing a comedy program and he marvels that the candidates make themselves available. The following night, introducing Gore, he said: "It's amazing to me that I get to talk to these people. We do jokes about them and-- and God bless them, I thank you for coming here, regardless of the party. It's always amaze- - These are the people that change history."

Independent of Leno's assistance, Bush manages to make the audience laugh several times. But given how the producers have stacked it with comic moments, he doesn't need to be funny for the segment to be a comic success.

What's noteworthy about the fact that Bush makes the audience laugh is that he does so in each case by acknowledging a personal shortcoming or misstep, an imperfection in the perfectly packaged candidate. He admits his mother still tells him what to do; his wife told him not to try to be charming or debonair; and that he's been caught making a backstage comment public. It's very much the same attitude that wins audience approval in *Oprah's* interviews. Bush also gets audience approval (in the form of laughs and /or applause) when he provides a strongly-worded opinion that might, in a news context, appear indiscreet or unguarded.

These moments are inherently funny because they break the rules that govern candidate behavior. Fundamentally, comedy disrupts The Expected, The Orderly,

The Conventional. As Mary Douglas writes, jokes dis-organize. They challenge dominant values. They denigrate and devalue them.¹⁵⁶ The joke's "form consists of a victorious tilting of uncontrol against control, it is an image of the leveling of hierarchy, the triumph of intimacy over formality, of unofficial values over official ones."¹⁵⁷

Douglas also recognizes that jokes are commentaries on the dominant social structure. "All jokes are expressive of the social situations in which they occur. The one social condition necessary for a joke to be enjoyed is that .. a dominant pattern of relations is challenged by another."¹⁵⁸ Comedy is reactive, dependent on the audience's familiarity with dominant social norms. Without that familiarity, comedy's challenge to convention is meaningless.

That's why Leno is funny when he says Barbara Bush's handshake was crushing. Because First Ladies *aren't supposed to be* bone-crushers. When he says, "It's good when the woman knows [who] you [are]," he is funny because candidates are *supposed to be* charming and debonair. When he suggests the pig manure clean-up was a job for Secret Service, the audience laughs because the Secret Service *is supposed to have* important work to do. Comedian John Vorhaus writes that comedy

¹⁵⁶ Davis in his sociology of comedy argues that there are three theoretical strands for understanding humor: incongruity theories (developed by Kant and Schopenhauer), release from restraint (developed by Herbert Spencer and Freud) and superiority theories (developed by Aristotle and Hobbes). Davis argues that these three theories supplement each other rather than being mutually exclusive and that all comic experience begins with incongruity. See Murray S. Davis, *What's So Funny? The Comic Conception of Culture and Society*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993.) p. 7.

¹⁵⁷ Mary Douglas, "Jokes" pp. 291-310 in *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*, eds., Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson. (Berkeley: UC Press, 1991), p. 295-297.

¹⁵⁸ Douglas, p. 298.

is about “truth and pain.”¹⁵⁹ The Secret Service is an important government agency. But the truth is its duties (in this case at least) are not always grand; even The Powerful and Important have the painful experience of dealing with crap.

“In its most familiar and vulgar form, comedy debunks arrogations of nobility, of spiritual or moral perfection,” writes Wilson Carey McWilliams.¹⁶⁰ “Comedy turns on the exposure of human incompleteness... unmasking the human pretension to be a whole, to claim to have final answers to the great mysteries.” Comedy is the perfect antidote to the robotic, packaged presentation of contemporary candidates. While Oprah had to make an effort to get the candidates to reveal their “real” selves, comedy inherently subverts convention, thereby encouraging candidates to present their imperfect, non-packaged, “human” side. As Davis puts it, comedy traditionally ends “with the public revelation of its characters’ secret selves – specifically, their true physical attributes, psychological motives or sociological subcategories.”¹⁶¹

Throughout the latenight interviews, Bush fulfills the comedic form when he steps away from the conventional, perfectly packaged candidate self-presentation. In his appearance on *The Tonight Show*, he gets laughs by demonstrating directness uncharacteristic of a candidate.

LENO: Now, younger brother, Jeb, of course, Governor of Florida. Now he has promised you- he has promised you Florida. He's your brother here, how's he doin'? How - I hear that one's kinda on the line.

¹⁵⁹ John Vorhaus, *The Comic Toolbox: How to be Funny Even If You're Not*, (Los Angeles, CA: Silman-James Press, 1994) p. 2.

¹⁶⁰ Wilson Carey McWilliams, "Poetry, Politics and the Comic Spirit," *P.S. Political Science and Politics*, XXVIII: 2 (June 1995) p. 198.

¹⁶¹ Murray Davis, p. 270.

BUSH: That's not what he says, but, uh -- [Bush laughs]
Yeah, I think we're gonna do fine down there but little
brother's-- he recognizes that Thanksgiving might be a little
chilly if things don't go well.

LAUGHTER

[direct to camera] No pressure, brother.

LENO: Now, it looks like Clinton is going to be out, uh,
campaigning for Gore. What do you think? Does that help?
Does that hurt? 'Cause according-

BUSH: Well you know, the-- the Vice President was
fighting to get out from behind his shadow, and now The
Shadow returns. [AUDIENCE LAUGHTER] I- I don't think
it can help him.

LENO: No, don't think it will?

BUSH: I don't think so, be -

LENO: You think it'll hurt?

BUSH: I think it's gonna-- people are gonna say, 'Well I
wonder why he needs the President to come out and try to
help him out. What's-- what's goin' wrong?' But, you know,
let-- the people are gonna make up their mind on that.

LENO: Now this campaign this last week, it seems to be
gettin' nastier. And on-- sort of on both sides. I mean, I see
things and 'No, that - it's not our ad.' 'No, we don't know
this.' The Gore campaign hinting, oh, you might not be up for
the job. I-- I think Lieberman was saying that.

BUSH: I don't think it was-- I don't think that was a hint.

LAUGHTER

LENO: All right, there you go. Boom.

BUSH: Uh, well my attitude is that, first of all, there's some
folks that believe if you spend all-- you have to spend all
your life in Washington in order to be qualified to be the
president. I obviously don't agree with that. Matter of fact, I

think prob'ly the less time you spent in Washington, the more qualified you are.

APPLAUSE

But secondly, you know, in all seriousness though, one-- that's what they said about Ronald Reagan, if you remember when...

Stepping away from the packaged candidate self-presentation also allows Bush to be more direct in attacking Gore. “People are gonna say, ‘Well, I wonder why he needs the President to come out and try to help him out. What's-- what's goin' wrong?’” and “I don't think that [Lieberman’s remark] was a hint.”

In the interview with Bush, Leno asks no policy questions. To the extent that he broaches conventional political subject matter, it is focused on strategic considerations: Why is Clinton stumping for Gore? Why isn’t Lieberman giving up his Senate seat? *The Tonight Show* interview is not rich in heuristics—clues as to Bush’s politics -- though his remark that the “less time spent in Washington, the more qualified,” as well as a later assertion that his favorite president is Ronald Reagan certainly carries implied ideological content.

Leno’s interview with Gore had a similar structure. Leno led with a funny sketch, then moved to campaign strategy questions, followed by audience questions submitted in advance and posed by Leno. In both interviews, Leno made sure that the first and the final audience questions were for laughs.

In Leno’s interview with Gore, the Vice President jested and quipped easily. Part of what’s striking is that although Gore demonstrates a much quicker wit than Bush, it doesn’t give him any particular advantage as a guest on latenight comedy.

The opening segment of the Gore interview -- in which Leno showed photographs of Gore and his wife in various Halloween costumes -- had been pre-arranged. Pointing to a photo of himself as a bandaged hospital patient Gore said, "That's why we need a Patients' Bill of Rights;" teasing when Leno insinuated that Gore's cover photo on *Rolling Stone* was too sexy, Gore countered, "Jay, I think people buy that magazine for the articles"; in response to Leno's question about Clinton's desire to see Republicans apologize for impeachment, Gore quipped: "I'm still waiting for the Republican Congress to apologize for electing Newt Gingrich speaker."

While Gore was witty, he was less at ease with the actual (as opposed to the perceived) self-presentation requirements comedy rewards. Gore had trouble stepping away from the packaged candidate he's presented countless times over the course of his political career. Although both Gore and Bush received enthusiastic applause at the outset of the interviews suggesting vocal supporters in both studio audiences, Bush appeared to get heartier audience response for his "imperfectness" than Gore got for his mastery.

In his book on authenticity in presidential campaigns, political reporter Joe Klein also observes this paradoxical strength in weakness.

As the public has become more aware of banana peel oratory and market tested language, plain speaking has taken on a totemic quality in presidential politics. In fact in the absence of real candor, speaking badly plays better than speaking well: George W. Bush's fractured syntax and malapropisms – even as he read speeches that were focus-grouped extravagantly

gave him a whiff of “authenticity” that neither of his Democratic opponents could muster.¹⁶²

When Leno asked Gore, “Now how about Ralph Nader? Is this just a pain in the neck, this guy?” Gore answered flatly: “I really respect the people who get motivated by the issues like the environment. I’ll put my record on the environment up against that of anybody.” Gore got applause at this point, but if he had a deeper understanding of the form, he might easily have gotten a strong laugh and heartier applause by saying, “Yup.” Or “Some days I think so,” and then launch into his packaged response.

These glimpses of the unpackaged candidate function both as comedy and as moments of apparent candor delivered to an audience yearning for something genuine in the candidates. In Oprah’s parlance, they are moments that “penetrate the wall.” They give audiences a brief reprieve from feeling as if they are being presented with a seamlessly packaged candidate, a self-presentation without humanity.

Late Night With David Letterman

Letterman’s approach to comedy and his interviews with the candidates are quite different than Leno’s. Early in his interview with Gore, Letterman says: “Let me ask about a couple of things that have been going on and we’ll talk about your eight years as Vice President and we’ll talk about whatever else you want to talk

¹⁶² Joe Klein, *Politics Lost: How American Democracy Was Trivialized by People who Think You’re Stupid*, (New York: Doubleday, 2006): p. 163. Klein also argues that Reagan’s “mistakes” and Clinton’s “inadvertent authenticity” helped those candidates win voters. See p. 64 and 110.

about.” Letterman’s *modus operandi* is to respond in the moment, serendipitously catching what chance may bring. His approach is more socially transgressive than Leno’s. Borrowing from Freud, Barry Sanders argues that comedy disrupts “the powerful and persistent grip of civilized behavior.” Comedy can be unruly, transgress norms, defy decorum. Every comic, Sanders writes with a hint of romance, is a “social scofflaw.”¹⁶³ Comedy -- as Gerald Nachman has written of Mort Sahl and Lenny Bruce -- feeds our “starving ids.”¹⁶⁴

In truth, not every comic is a scofflaw. Leno is not Lenny Bruce and Leno’s comedy is conservative, affirming social norms by making fun of deviance. Leno’s comedy falls short of the subversive potential Nachman and Sanders describe. Letterman’s comes closer.

This can be seen in Letterman’s first interview with Bush on March 1, 2000. In it, Letterman introduced the segment in characteristic form – he is cranky, brash and belligerently full of himself. Why isn’t Bush in studio with him? [The interview is being conducted via satellite.] Does Bush realize “the road to the White House” runs through him?

Next, and prior to cutting to Bush on the satellite feed, Letterman has to decide how to approach the awkward situation of having a guest on the show about whom he’s made unflattering jokes. Rather than sweep past remarks under the rug, Letterman places the dilemma front and center. He conducts an on-camera discussion with his producer Rob Burnett about how to handle the situation.

¹⁶³ Barry Sanders, *Sudden Glory: Laughter as Subversive History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995) pp. 252-253.

¹⁶⁴ Gerald Nachman, *Seriously Funny*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003) p. 11.

LETTERMAN: Alright. Does he [Bush] know that I said he was a boob?

[CUT TO BURNETT OFF SET]

BURNETT: I think they're aware of that, yes.

LETTERMAN: Should I just play dumb on the boob thing?

BURNETT: I wouldn't start there.

LETTERMAN: I'll tell you what. I'll ask him if he heard about the surgery. Kind of soften him up.

Letterman then welcomes the Governor of Texas to the program.

LETTERMAN: Welcome to *The Late Show*. Let me remind you of one thing, Governor. By God, you look like you've been on vacation. You look like a million damn dollars.

BUSH: I appreciate that.

LETTERMAN: How do you do that? I know campaigning is difficult work. How do you look so youthful and rested?

BUSH: Fake it.

LAUGHTER

LETTERMAN: And that's pretty much how you're going to run the country?

BUSH: Naaaa—

LAUGHTER, BUSH JOINS IN

BUSH: Exactly. Exactly.

APPLAUSE/LAUGHTER

In this opening exchange, Bush and Letterman both work well within the comic form. Letterman operates in the moment, with a game plan that shifts with every word, every event. He sees Bush on the monitor and responds to what he sees. Bush

looks tan and rested, not like a man in the middle of a grueling campaign. Letterman reacts. “How do you look so youthful and rested?”

By answering, “fake it,” Bush subverts the expected and invokes the artifice of the campaign. It’s a strong comic rejoinder. Letterman’s response – “and that’s pretty much how you’re going to run the country” – raises the ante and sets up a competition of ripostes. But Bush has no rejoinder. He moves briefly to reclaim his non-comic candidate role and begins to say, “Naaaaaa!” Then wisely decides to let himself be the butt of the joke instead. This is a latenight comedy interview, not news. Bush’s dignity is not what’s important. What’s important is his ability to drop the candidate packaging, not his ability to keep it in place.

As I’ll discuss in a moment, comic interviews have potential pitfalls for guests. In the example above, Bush avoided one, but his reprieve was short-lived. Letterman then asked Bush about his claim to be “a uniter, not a divider,” and the audience laughed in response to Letterman asking Bush for an explanation of empty campaign rhetoric. Operating under the misimpression that he needed to be funny, Bush responded clumsily with a play on words, making what sounded like a mean-spirited reference to Letterman’s recent bypass surgery. The audience booed.

LETTERMAN: The road to Washington runs through me.
You’re aware of that, aren’t you?

BUSH: It’s about time you had the heart to invite me.

AUDIENCE BOO

LETTERMAN: You’re winning delegates left and right here tonight. I know you’re on a tight schedule and I have some questions I want to run by you. In watching the campaign, you keep saying, “I’m a uniter not a divider. I’m

a uniter not a divider.” You say that, isn’t that correct?
What exactly does that mean?

LAUGHTER

BUSH: That means when it comes time to sew up your chest cavity we use stitches instead of opening it up. That’s what that means.

AUDIENCE BOO

[THE CAMERA RETURNS TO LETTERMAN. WHAT HIS FACE EXPRESSES ISN’T CLEAR. CONFUSION? WRY DISCOMFORT? IT’S DEFINITELY NOT POSITIVE.

THE CAMERA CUTS TO BURNETT OFF STAGE WHO MOUTHS “I DON’T KNOW” AND SHRUGS. THE CAMERA RETURNS TO LETTERMAN WHO IS STILL MUGGING.

OFF CAMERA, BUSH BEGINS TO SPEAK AND THE CAMERA RETURNS TO HIM]

BUSH: A uniter is somebody who brings somebody together.

Bush recovered by abandoning his flat-footed effort at comedy and pushing the segment forward by simply answering the question. What’s most significant about this exchange is not so much the specifics of Letterman’s response, but that Letterman responded in a way that was spontaneous and did not protect his guest. This is anomalous in the normally friendly atmosphere of TV talk. Letterman did not move to push things along, nor did he chide his audience for boo’ing the candidate. When Bush appeared on *Oprah*, Oprah protected him from an audience heckler. On *The Daily Show*, host Jon Stewart will often hush the studio audience

if they jeer or boo a right-wing guest. But on *The Late Show*, Bush was on his own.

Brill's Content editor Eric Efron noted at the time that Bush's "attempted joke about Letterman's recent heart surgery" was "incomprehensible." But the problem wasn't simply that the comment didn't make sense. (At this point in the primaries the candidate's verbal fumble couldn't be contextualized as one more example of Bush's now-famous tendency to mangle the English language. The press had yet to make much of this. Leno's "subliminal" joke was imaginable in October 2000, but not six months earlier.) The gaffe was, in comic terms, worse than incomprehensible. It was in bad taste, boorish and ill-mannered.

Even comedy's play with the unconventional operates within a sphere of convention. The norms latenight comedy lampoons are sharply constrained. Hosts mock the artifice of the campaign and the ignorance of voters, but not voting and policy issues. Straight talk from the candidates elicits applause. Bush can say American enemies abroad are subject to retaliation, they're "not gonna like what happened to 'em." But were he to say "we'll bomb 'em back to the Stone Age," he would likely be moving close to the bounds that constrain latenight comedy.

Mary Douglas notes: "Social requirements may judge a joke to be in bad taste, risky, too near the bone, improper or irrelevant. Such controls are exerted either on behalf of hierarchy as such, or on behalf of values which are judged too precious and too precarious to be exposed to challenge."¹⁶⁵ Bush's remark pitted the audience's loyalty and affection for Letterman recovering from bypass surgery against the

¹⁶⁵ Douglas, p. 297.

audience's thin loyalty to Bush -- a contest that Bush had no chance of winning. If the talk show set is modeled on a metaphoric "living room," Bush had just pissed in the fireplace.

In all talk shows, the audience has a role to play. They ask questions, applaud, laugh, indicating to the home audience how it should respond. But a risk -- especially in comedy formats where the audience is there to enjoy "disorderly" conduct -- is that the audience will play a disapproving rather than an approving role. If convention demands that an audience politely ignore Bush's gaffe, comedy requires that the audience make it the center of boisterous attention.

Bush's gaffe caught Letterman off-guard and off-balance, speechless, confused, baffled and irritated, and he reacted in the moment. He failed to display the dispassionate mask worn by TV journalists in the interest of appearing balanced, authoritative and in control. Contrasting Letterman's handling of the incident with how other TV talk hosts might have handled the situation, Efron drew this distinction:

If such an exchange were to happen in most straight news settings, the interviewers perhaps would follow-up and ask the speaker to clarify what he meant, or just move on to the next question. Larry King might say "good point" and go to the phones. But David Letterman is no Larry King, nor is he Tim Russert, and when Bush gave his chest-cavity comment, Letterman and his producer pointedly exchanged puzzled glances, neatly captured by the camera, that unambiguously indicated that they had no idea what the hell Bush was talking about.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Eric Efron, "Politics After Dark," *Brill's Content*, (May 2000) pp. 51-52.

Effron concluded that the incident "demonstrated that the conventions of entertainment, as opposed to those of journalism, may be more effective in flushing out some truths."¹⁶⁷ His conclusion is just slightly off the mark. Yes, Letterman's response is not constrained by journalistic protocol. As a comedian, he need not be civil, balanced, or genteel in fulfilling his civic duty. Letterman has no liberal public service obligations and unlike some of his daytime counterparts, he has not volunteered to take them on. He can react in the moment, and does. But *entertainment* does not mandate or "flush out" such moments. *Comedy* provides the conventions that allow for such a moment.

Letterman's in-the-moment response creates a stark contrast with how journalism plays moments that surprise the host. I want to use *Meet The Press* as a foil one last time. In Tim Russert's interview with President Bush in January 2004, Russert asked The President about progress in Iraq.

RUSSERT: It's now nearly a year and we are in a very difficult situation. Did we miscalculate how we would be treated and received in Iraq?

LONG PAUSE

BUSH: Well, I think we are welcomed in Iraq. I'm not exactly sure, because the tone of your question is, we're not. We are welcomed in Iraq.

Given daily attacks on American soldiers in Iraq, Bush's response -- delivered after an excruciatingly long pause of "TV time" -- teetered on the psychotic. But whatever reaction Russert had -- incredulous, bewildered, outraged - he suppressed.

¹⁶⁷ Effron, pp. 51-52.

Russert tried a follow-up, maintaining a poker-faced equilibrium and dispassionate tone of voice.

RUSSERT: Are you surprised by the level and intensity of resistance?

“No,” the President responded and Russert moved to another topic.¹⁶⁸

The following week, *The Daily Show* replayed this segment from *Meet The Press*, and host Jon Stewart responded much like Letterman had when faced with George W. Bush’s “we use stitches” remark. After playing the exchange between Russert and Bush, the camera cut back to Stewart wide-eyed and astonished. The studio audience broke up.

Letterman and Stewart are jokers, “privileged” people performing a role that allows them to express rather than suppress a spontaneous response. Jokers can

... say certain things in a certain way which confers immunity. ... Safe within the permitted range of attack, he [the joker] lightens for everyone the oppressiveness of social reality, demonstrates its arbitrariness by making light of formality in general, and expresses the creative possibilities of the situation.¹⁶⁹

After asking Bush about “being a uniter not a divider,” Letterman turned to a series of “you or McCain questions.” (Bush’s March 1st appearance took place within the context of the McCain-Bush showdown in the primaries.) Who’s the real reformer, you or McCain? Letterman asked. Who’s more like Reagan, you or McCain? Who’s running the dirtier campaign, you or McCain? Who likes interns

¹⁶⁸ *Meet The Press*, 8 February 2004. A criticism voiced by Rosenstiel of “entertainment” interviews of political figures is that they allow no follow up and candidates can lie, but it appears that even on the “toughest” news shows candidates are quite capable of lying. See Rosenstiel, p. 184.

¹⁶⁹ Douglas, p. 305.

better, you or McCain? As Letterman neared the end of his list of questions, Bush interrupted him.

“I want to do something, do you mind?” Bush asked. Gauging from Letterman’s response, Bush’s proposal was not expected.

LETTERMAN: Wadda you got in mind?

BUSH: Well, I understand that I’ve morphed from a boob to a dweeb.

LAUGHTER

LETTERMAN: Governor, I have no idea what you’re talking about.

LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE

BUSH: Let me say I’ve done extensive research and you’ve started a grassroots movement. When I come on your show, I want to present this to you personally...

[Holds up “Dweebs for Bush” T-shirt.]

LETTERMAN: Yah! Dweebs for Bush. I’ll go along with that. Nice going!

BUSH: ...As the president of the Dweebs for Bush Club. Yessir. We touched a nerve.

Self-deprecation – dropping the candidate’s usual self-presentation—won Bush a laugh and ultimately, the interview ended without Bush doing further harm to himself.

The lesson for the Bush campaign might well have been the advice Laura Bush gave her husband prior to his *Tonight Show* appearance months later. *Don’t try and be charming, witty or debonair. Just be yourself.* The Bush campaign’s assumptions

about how to prepare for the appearance had been based on erroneous assumptions. Candidates don't have to be funny on latenight comedy, and unless they're particularly witty, it's risky to try.

A second lesson for the Bush campaign might have been not to appear on *The Late Show* again. For a campaign, lack of predictability erodes the rewards of talk show appearances. Throughout the 2000 election, Bill Maher complained loudly that candidates would not appear on *Politically Incorrect*.¹⁷⁰ Maher, who began his show in 1993, the year after presidential candidates began making latenight visits, described his program as "*The McLaughlin Group* on acid."¹⁷¹ Asked about why candidates refused to appear on *Politically Incorrect*, Clinton press secretary Joe Lockhart said that he would advise most politicians "to stay away from Bill. The risk-to-reward ratio isn't very good."¹⁷² Serious policy questions, rapier wit, no commitment to impartiality or decorous exchange (including embarrassing spontaneous reactions), and unpredictable alliances among panelists made *Politically Incorrect* too risky for major party candidates. *The Late Show* was on the edge – valuable but potentially out of control -- at least for the Bush campaign.

But the fall 2000 race was close, so Bush appeared on Letterman again. As I noted in Chapter 3, candidates' willingness to make political appearances on entertainment TV tend to occur in highly competitive races in which candidates are

¹⁷⁰ *Meet The Press*, NBC. 29 October 2000. This assertion was corroborated in private correspondence with Maher's executive producer, Jerry Nachman.

¹⁷¹ Timberg, p. 185.

¹⁷² Larry Platt, "Do We Need Another Pain In The Ass?" *George*, (December/January 2001) p. 98. In his commentary for *Brill's Content*, Nader also noted that Gore and Bush would not do talk radio shows because they were insufficiently scripted. "The handlers of their scripted campaigns do not find the unmanaged radio talk show congenial to the force fields erected around their candidates." Ralph Nader, "My Untold Story", *Brill's Content* (February 2001).

willing to take chances to reach prospective voters. In other words, campaign desperation drives them. Almost certainly, the March 1st interview during the primaries would not have taken place had Bush been a shoo-in for the Republican nomination.

In the October 2000 interview with Letterman, Bush was a far savvier latenight performer than he'd been six months before. Bush handled the comic format well by modestly loosening campaign constraints, flaunting a little 'tude and making a few self-deprecatory remarks. No, he didn't feel the need to apologize to *Times* reporter Adam Clymer (laughs/applause); No, he didn't believe Al Gore was the man to lead us to solutions to save the planet (laughs/applause); Yes, leaders in Yemen would "pay a serious price" for attacks on Americans, and "... that means they're not gonna like what happened to 'em" (applause); And yes, "A lotta folks don't think I can - you know, string a sentence together and so when I was able to do so, it, uh -- expectations were so low, all I had to do was say, 'Hi, I'm George W. Bush'" (laughs/applause).

Several times Bush was conspicuous in his political expedience or calling attention to the artifice of the campaign. "Who do you like now for The [World] Series? Letterman asked about the Yankee/Mets face-off. "I like that New York club, I do," Bush responded. Or when he revealed that behind his altruistic talk about democracy and voting, he's doing whatever he could to "encourage people to vote – *particularly* for me."

Unlike Leno, after a few questions focusing on the campaign, Letterman broached policy. He asked about capital punishment, a recent attack on Americans in

Yemen, the conflict in the Middle East, genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda, drilling in Alaska and air pollution.¹⁷³ Letterman's discussion of policy provides his audience with some ideological heuristics on key policy positions: Bush is pro-death penalty, pro-expanding oil production by drilling in Alaska, pro-forceful military retaliation.

Broaching the death penalty, Letterman asked about the number of executions in Texas.

LETTERMAN: Are the numbers of executions in Texas so far greater than any other state using, uh, the death penalty now?

BUSH: Uh, I think that's probably true.

LETTERMAN: Yeah. And-- and is there a reason for that? I mean--

BUSH: Yes. Because our-- our, um-- well first, we're a death penalty state. Some states aren't death penalty states.

LETTERMAN: And how many are there in the--

BUSH: I can't-- I can't answer--

LETTERMAN: Is it like 20-- in the twenties, something, 27 or so?

BUSH: You know, I don't know. Sounds about right. Uh, secondly, um, our j-- our prosecutors seek the death penalty, and, uh, I mean, they-- they seek the death penalty and that's why they have it.

LETTERMAN: **Now-- now do, you know more about this than I do**, and-- and, uh, because peo-- people are certainly, uh, opposed to this, and-- and are - The notion of this whole topic just makes me very uncomfortable, very squeamish, and

¹⁷³ Niven, Lichter and Amundson conclude that late night comedy is generally devoid of issue content. Their research exemplifies the over-eagerness with which some critics have dismissed latenight candidate appearances. See David S. Niven, S. Robert Lichter, and Daniel Amundson, "The Political Content of Late Night Comedy," *Press/Poliitics* 8:3, pp. 118-133.

I think people who oppose the death penalty would absolutely agree with that.

BUSH: I think so. I-- I'm sure people who are for the death penalty, uh, look in their conscience. I do. Uh, but, you know, that's-- this is a very serious subject matter, and people who are against the death penalty-- you're against the death penalty?

LETTERMAN: **You know, uh, I-- see, in certain circumstances, I think, yeah, it seems like it might suit here. In other circumstances, I-- I think, geez, I don't know if I would be comfortable with that. I just-- I just don't-**

BUSH: Well that's-- that's fair, and that's-- that's normal and, uh, our society's a society that is a society of law. Our state passed this law, and my job's to uphold the law, and I do.

LETTERMAN: Did they ever determine whether or not it deterred, uh, crime? Is it a deterrent--

BUSH: Well I think it d-- I think-- I think that's probably-- that's a hard statistic to prove but if you were to c-- if, you know, **I could be convinced it didn't deter crime, uh-- uh-- uh, you know, I may change my opinion about the death penalty.** One thing we shouldn't do is have the death penalty to seek revenge. We shouldn't be seeking revenge.

I want to make three points concerning this section of the interview (and have placed in bold specific bits of text I'll refer to.) First, Letterman self-identifies repeatedly as a non-expert. "You know more about this than I do," he says about the death penalty. Later, Letterman declares he's "not smart enough" to counter Bush on global warming. When Letterman broaches the Middle East, he says: "Here's another topic that-- that makes me dizzy because I guess it's just par-- partially, uh, ignorance and-- and just-- well, mostly all of it's ignorance." He admits not having seen all of all three debates. Letterman doesn't pretend to be a "well-informed

citizen” or a well-prepared interviewer. His claims to ignorance may be a tactic to assure the candidate he’s no “Tim Russert” or a way to connect with his audience, but whether strategic bluff or an expression of genuine self-deprecation, Letterman offers his audience a distinctly different paradigm for how to host a candidate interview.

Second and related to the first, imperfect information doesn’t prevent Letterman from having opinions about issues. Indeed, it may be this informational failure that allows him to hold a conflicted, uncertain opinion -- an anomaly in televised politics where reporters (even most “interviewers” and talk show hosts) -- make a point of hiding their opinions, and those who hold opinions hold them unequivocally.

Letterman also appears to care about the issues. Later in the interview, he will raise the verbal temperature. “Instead of sending these guys up looking for natural gas in Alaska or wherever the hell you’re going to do it,” Letterman asks, why not take some of that money and develop alternative energy? Letterman expresses exasperation with his guest that has precedent neither in daytime talk or on *The Tonight Show*. His partial knowledge, uncertainty, and selective focus on the issues he knows and cares about, make him an atypical journalistic proxy for the American electorate, but arguably a more representative one than journalists like Tim Russert. Letterman is one with his audience. He doesn’t know much and he’s not sure what he thinks, but he cares.

In these interviews, Letterman is often more interesting than the candidates. Unlike Oprah, he’s not trying to reveal the candidates and thereby make them

interesting to an audience. As a joker, he is free to make observations about the artifice of the campaign and speak truths that would be taboo within journalism.

In the excerpt below, Letterman characterizes Bush's slur of a *New York Times* reporter "the only honest moment of the campaign" and wonders whether Bush's handlers descended on him afterwards. Letterman also celebrates the honest emotion behind McCain's eruption during a news conference.

LETTERMAN: This thing you mentioned tapping the microphone and so forth. That was exciting.

[Bush laughs.]

When that happened I was very excited.

[Bush laughs more]

BUSH: I'm glad somebody was.

LETTERMAN: I do that kind of crap every night.

[Bush laughs]

Uh, I-- I mean, I'm always apologizing to somebody for something but when that happened, I said to myself, this is the-- this is the only honest moment of the campaign, when you called that guy an ass-- Uh, oh that—and why not? Now did you-- did you ever feel the-- the need to apologize to him for saying that?

BUSH: Not really, no.

APPLAUSE/LAUGHTER

LETTERMAN: Really? I'm always writing letters of apology. Honest to God, that's what I do half my day.

BUSH: Ah, it was inappropriate that people heard me say that, but, um I was turning--

LETTERMAN: As a--did everybody descend on you and say, 'Oh my God, guess what you've done? You've just called this guy a horrible name. Or was it just like, so what, let's keep moving?'

BUSH: Well, some people were a little concerned about it. It's like that lady when I was working the rope line said, "Young man, I'm gonna wash your mouth out with soap." I said, "Just don't use Lava."

LETTERMAN: But, you know, just-- just find me the person who hasn't said that word and Ill give 'em a thousand bucks. You know, that's how I feel about it.

LAUGHTER

BUSH: I was looking. [looks out at audience] Yeah, [laughter].

LETTERMAN: Uh, but, you know, the s-- the same like with, uh-- John McCain, when, after he-- I guess his-- his concession speech and there was a reporter there and he says, "I-- we told you to just get the hell out." And I said, "Well that's great. How about a little of that? Why can't we have a little honest emotion?"

BUSH: We did. [laughter]

LETTERMAN: [LAUGHTER] Now, did the polls move at all on that? Was that any kinda pivotal moment in the campaign?

BUSH: I don't-- I hope not. I don't think so.

LETTERMAN: But that'd be great if they shot sky high, wouldn't it?

If Oprah was trying to reveal the candidates' Real Man, Letterman is giving voice to the Real Electorate frustrated with the mealy-mouthing b.s. of the campaign.

The third and final point I want to make about this section is to point out that the policy content on the death penalty in the debate, by and large, resembled the content

in the interview with Letterman. This is not to suggest that all policy content in the latenight interviews and the debates are comparable, only to suggest that the content in the latenight interviews may sometimes be more substantive than assumed. The death penalty was addressed directly in the third debate, October 17, 2000, moderated by Jim Lehrer.

CITIZEN QUESTIONER: ...Are you really, really proud of the fact that Texas is number one in executions?

BUSH: No, I'm not proud of that. The death penalty is very serious business, Leo. It's an issue that good people obviously disagree on.

I take my job seriously. And if you think I was proud of it, I think you misread me; I do. I was sworn to uphold the laws of my state. During the course of the campaign in 1994, I was asked, "Do you support the death penalty?" I said I did, if administered fairly and justly, because I believe it saves lives, Leo, I do. I think if it's administered swiftly, justly and fairly, it saves lives.

One of the things that happens when you're a governor -- at least -- oftentimes you have to make tough decisions, and you can't let public persuasion sway you because the job is to enforce the law, and that's what I did, sir. There have been some tough cases come across my desk. Some of the hardest moments since I've been the governor of the state of Texas is to deal with those cases. But my job is to ask two questions, sir: Is the person guilty of the crime, and did the person have full access to the courts of law? And I can tell you, looking at you right now, in all cases those answers were affirmative.

I'm not proud of any record. I'm proud of the fact that violent crime is down in the state of Texas. I'm proud of the fact that -- that we hold people accountable. But I'm not proud of any record, sir. I'm not.

LEHRER: Vice President Gore?

GORE: I support the death penalty...[I've abridged Gore's remarks] I support the death penalty in the most heinous

cases.

LEHRER: Do both of you believe that the death penalty actually deters crime?

BUSH: I do. That's the only reason to be for it. I don't -- let me finish --

LEHRER: Sure.

BUSH: I don't think you should support the death penalty to seek revenge. I don't think that's right. I think the reason to support the death penalty is because it saves other people's lives.

LEHRER: Vice President Gore?

GORE: I think it is a deterrence. I know that's a controversial view, but I do believe it's a deterrence.

LEHRER: All right. Next question is for you, Vice President Gore.

In both the Letterman interview and the passage from the debate above, Bush stressed that the death penalty is the law of Texas and that he is sworn to uphold the law, that it saves lives and ought not to be applied in vengeance. Neither debate nor latenight talk show format obliged the candidates to delve into areas in which the death penalty *is* vulnerable – the research that challenges the death penalty as a deterrent, inequitable application of executions, and the wrongful execution of individuals who are later exonerated.

While Letterman uniquely expresses ambivalence in his opinions, he is not always uncertain about his opinions. Later in the interview, he moves to the subject of oil drilling in Alaska. Here, he places his point of view front and center.

LETTERMAN: I heard something a couple of weeks ago coming outta your campaign and I just thought, 'Well, this is

not true. He's not really gonna do that.' Talking about wilderness lands up in Alaska or the Arctic Circle. You're gonna take trucks up there and drill for oil, and I said, 'Oh, that's a joke. He's not gonna do that.'

BUSH: Yeah, well, then you're not going to have any natural gas if we don't do it and, uh--

LETTERMAN: So, y-- you think we need--

BUSH: Absolutely. And guess what? The irony about all this is, to tell you how politics is outta Washington, the administration's opened up what's called the National Petroleum Reserve, which is in that part of the world. They're already exploring up there. And it's necessary and I believe we can do so in an environmentally friendly way. I do. And we need to. Either that, or we're going to be dependent on foreign sources of crude oil.

LETTERMAN: When-- when Al Gore was here, and I started whining to him about the polar ice cap melting, and turning to slush and you can go up there and water-ski year round now and-- and he said, you don't have to worry about a thing. He says, 'I will step forward. I will be the one that will lead us to solutions to save the planet.' Now-- now, do you believe him when he says that?

BUSH: Not really.

[LAUGHTER]

LETTERMAN: Do you -- do you believe the planet needs saving?

BUSH: I believe-- I-- I do. I think we can do a much better job with the environment and we're making great progress with the environment. On the other hand, I don't want the people who work for a living, everyday people, have their energy bills out of sight, when I know we can move natural gas-- which by the way, burns cleanly from Alaska, uh, through pipelines that can be constructed with the environment in mind. It-- we got gas up there--

LETTERMAN: Well, what are you burning down in Texas? It-- don't you have bad air pollution down in Texas?

BUSH: Actually, it's getting better.

LETTERMAN: Getting better but it-- I mean, getting better by how much?

BUSH: Well, we got a lot of cars. We're a big city. We got a lot of autom-- we got a lotta automobiles.

LETTERMAN: Yeah, but you know what I'm saying. If in fact this is true, is it the worst country- eh, the worst state in the country for air pollution? Is that true or the--

BUSH: Well, we're the best in reducing toxic pollutions. We've reduced our industrial pollution--

LETTERMAN: But if you're the worst and you reduce it by this much-

BUSH: Well, I'm not so sure we're the worst-- you know maybe--

LETTERMAN: But it's a problem. Isn't it a problem?

BUSH: Well, it's a big city. Houston's a big city.

LETTERMAN: Well, I guess it would-- it's not as big as New York. It's not as big as Los Angeles.

BUSH: Well, Los Angeles may be. I wouldn't necessarily be comparing Los Angeles to Houston, but nevertheless we're making progress.

LETTERMAN: But listen to me, Governor. Here's my point.

BUSH: I am listening to you. I don't have any choice but to listen to you. [Bush laughs]

LETTERMAN: In-- instead of sending these guys up looking for, uh, natural gas, in Alaska or wherever the hell you're going to do it, wh-- why can't-- why can't we take some of the-- that-- that fund, the-- some of that money and-- and look for alternative means of energy?

BUSH: You mean you want to plug in your-- plug in your electricity?

LETTERMAN: Well, we got to start somewhere.

BUSH: I-- I think we ought to be looking about it. But I'm a practical guy. I-- I think we can develop alternative uses of energy. As a matter of fact, in Texas, under the Electric Dereg Bill I signed, we're gonna have more alternative uses of-- of energy than any other state. But, hey, it's going to be hard to get your electric car to drive you from where you live to New York. They don't have the technology necessary. I'm a person that deals with the problem at hand. The problem at hand is, the Arabs have got us over the barrel, so to speak. They-- we-- we're importing 57 percent of our crude oil. We don't have enough refining capacity. People are going to start paying high bills and I'm worried about it. I'm worried about what it'll do for the economy.

LETTERMAN: I'm not smart enough to counter any of these things, but-- but sooner or-- sooner or later, we're gonna have to make a change-- gonna have to make a significant change.

BUSH: I think we can do that--

LETTERMAN: Not-- not just lip service, not just an item on a campaign--

BUSH: There's no question we can do that. But the technology is not available now--

LETTERMAN: Polar ice cap is melting. That's all I know. Eleven degrees warmer than it was 50 years ago. All right, we'll be right back, ladies and gentlemen with the, uh, Governor here.

This section of the conversation with Bush has an agonistic quality, and for this, the interview won rare praise from *The New York Times*.¹⁷⁴ Letterman dogged Bush: How much better can the air be getting in Texas if it's the worst in the country? If

¹⁷⁴ Alison Mitchell, "All Joking Aside, Bush Faces Letterman," *The New York Times*, 20 October 2000. p. A27.

oil-related pollution is endangering the planet shouldn't we begin to "make a change?"

Letterman's dogged persistence bears some resemblance to Tim Russert's *m.o.* and like many exchanges on *Meet The Press*, the disagreement goes unresolved. (Is so! Is not! Is so! Is not!) Yet Letterman's discussion is far more dependent on common sense than facts and figures. Letterman doesn't parry fact for fact. And ultimately Letterman focuses on broad policy directions, not the details of policy.

Many of the same characteristics turn up in Letterman's interview with Gore. Letterman selects topics out of the news. They're not policy issues, *per se*. He asks about the mysterious Bush campaign debate preparation tape that arrived at Gore headquarters and The Justice Department's handling of Wen Ho Lee [the Los Alamos scientist prosecuted and ultimately cleared of spying.]

Again, Letterman is tentative. "Do I have the guy's name right?" he asks. Letterman knows the general outlines of the Lee case: He was "stealing secrets," "downloading," "in jail for nine months," "Janet Reno won't apologize." Letterman leads these portions of the interviews with broad strokes and tentativeness about particulars.

The single issue Letterman really engages with both Bush and Gore is the environment. Prefacing his questions about global warming, Letterman apologizes to Gore for "being dopey." He wants to talk about the environment because "that's the only thing I have just a -- just a -- fleeting knowledge [of]." By denigrating his own knowledge but not abjuring political topics, Letterman is changing the ground rules for political debate. Involvement encouraged: Expertise not required.

On the environment, Letterman asks:

LETTERMAN: ... I was reading a couple of weeks ago in *The New York Times* and they said that the polar ice cap has melted for the first time in 50 million years. Well that, that's not exactly true, but it's now like a free flowing river. It's worse now than it's ever been before and the ambient temperature of the polar cap area has increased 11 degrees over the last 30 years. Now how are we going to lower that? How are we gonna get that temperature back down?

GORE: You are such a wonk.

AUDIENCE LAUGHS

By calling him a wonk, Gore's intent is to make light of a criticism made about himself. Gore's appetite for detail was reported to be vast and boring. Here he can make fun of criticism directed at him by redirecting it at Letterman. The joke works because Letterman is obviously and admittedly not a wonk.

Some critics have suggested that candidates' efforts to parody their "character flaws" is a way to avoid responding to criticism. The example above is oblique. Many such efforts are more direct, for instance, Bush engaging in sketches in which he mangles words. For the opening of Bush's late October appearance on *The Tonight Show*, Leno's producers pre-taped the following sketch.

LENO: Hi, Governor Bush, Happy Halloween!

[Bush approaches a table at which Leno is lighting jack o' lanterns]

BUSH: How are you? I got some advice for you. You can't be lighting that stuff in here. The closet is full of stuff that's highly flammammable.

LENO: I think the word you're looking for is flammable.

BUSH: No, it's flammammable.

LENO: I hate to correct you but it's flammable.

BUSH: No, Jay, look at that sign.

CAMERA CUTS TO SIGN: Warning Highly Flammammable.

After his loss in the 2004 primary, Howard Dean self-mockingly invoked “The Dean Scream.” By repeating the criticism as self-parody, Elizabeth Kolbert argues, the criticisms are emptied of their critical power, giving the candidates an opportunity to communicate that *they* don't take these criticisms seriously and voters shouldn't either.¹⁷⁵ Self-mockery is a basic comic technique, writes Davis. Comedians depreciate themselves but “they are depreciating only their inessential surface self not their essential core self.”¹⁷⁶

Additional examples of self-mockery can be found in the 2000 Letterman interviews. Bush uses self-parody several times in his appearance with Letterman. News reports suggested that Bush was neither intellectual nor eloquent, so Bush's Top 10 List calls for books at the White House with “big print and pictures” and a security guard to protect the nation's “nucular” secrets. Number Ten in Gore's Top 10 list is “Vote for me or I'll come to your home and explain my 191-page economic plan to you in excruciating detail.” Number Nine: “Remember America, I gave you the internet and I can take it away. Think about it.”

These moments of self-parody may well be intended to have the effect Kolbert ascribes to them, though I'm inclined to think that they also serve to humanize the

¹⁷⁵ Kolbert, pp. 116-122.

¹⁷⁶ Murray Davis, p. 274.

candidate and communicate resilience, that the candidate “can take a hit” and come up smiling. While they are well-received by audiences when focused on candidates’ presentational shortcomings, the technique may not be effective when applied to matters that people regard as truly serious. At the 2004 Gridiron dinner with the press, President Bush did a mock search of the White House for “weapons of mass destruction.” The sketch was not well-received, recalling Douglas’ warning that comedy can cut “too near the bone.”¹⁷⁷

Because comedy operates within unspoken parameters, jokes on the periphery of what’s acceptable can be risky. At the same time, comedy relies on a willingness to take risks. This aspect of the form poses a real challenge for Gore. Letterman’s first news topic is Wen Ho Lee, and in the exchange, Letterman pressed Gore for candor.

LETTERMAN: Now Janet Reno said she's not apologizing. The judge said we owed him [Wen Ho Lee] an apology. Janet Reno says, “Are you kidding me?”

GORE: Uh, I'm gonna let, I'm gonna let the Justice Department speak for itself on that because ...

LETTERMAN: You know you're not under oath, Mr. Vice President.

GORE: I know but I, I'm not gonna get into the details of a court case that I'm not part of.

Gore – to his detriment – is unable to adjust his self-presentation sufficiently to meet the demands of the form. Gore is relentlessly cautious, but comedy thrives on

¹⁷⁷ Greg Mitchell notes that it was not the press corps who found the sketch “too near the bone” – the press apparently laughed warmly in response – but as news of the sketch became public, Democrats and Iraq veterans took offense. See Greg Mitchell, “Colbert Shocks the Media Silent,” www.alternet.org/story/35804 Downloaded: 4 May 2006.

boldness and individualism.¹⁷⁸ A cautious, scripted candidate like Gore does not play especially well on Letterman-style comedy. Although Letterman was far more antagonistic with Bush, Bush arguably met the biases of the form better than Gore did. So did Ralph Nader.

Nader with David Letterman

Letterman was a natural outlet for Nader. There's no small irony in this, given Nader's blanket condemnation of American commercial media culture. Though he may not have realized it -- conventional opinion would never single him out as telegenic -- Nader is well-suited to latenight comedy. He is an outsider, a maverick, well-positioned to be championed by comic formats that lampoon convention and elevate the underdog.

For Nader, the appearance was an unusual chance to speak to a large audience that the mainstream news media systematically denied him throughout the campaign. When he announced his campaign, none of the TV networks reported the story. Nader complained that *The New York Times* ran only a short article and *The Washington Post* carried a squib the day after his announcement. Since his campaign didn't fit into the "horse race" paradigm that dominates national elections, Nader attracted feature, rather than hard news, coverage. While Vice President Gore got a story in *The Washington Post* mid-summer 2000 when he took a vacation, Nader couldn't get *Washington Post* coverage when his campaign filled Madison Square

¹⁷⁸ David Marc, *Comic Visions: Television Comedy and American Culture*, (Malden Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1997) pp. 10-36.

Garden. Nader was also excluded from the debates. After the campaign, Nader wrote that, "perhaps the most insurmountable obstacle" of his independent campaign was "the virtual lock enjoyed by the two major parties on coverage in the national media."¹⁷⁹

But Nader's outsider status gave him a leg up on *The Late Show*. At the outset of the 10-minute segment, Letterman introduced him with far more flattering words than he had for the two major party candidates.

LETTERMAN: He's a best-selling author, a consumer advocate. He's devoted more than 40 years to public service. Now he hopes to become our next president -- Ralph Nader.

BAND PLAYS "BABY YOU CAN DRIVE MY CAR"

LETTERMAN: Welcome to the show, Ralph. Thank you very much --

NADER: Thank you.

LETTERMAN: I know you're a very busy man. I appreciate your time here and we just, uh, talking before you came out and here are just a few of the things that you have been responsible for, uh, becoming, uh, part of the American way of life.

Air bags in automobiles -- fought long and hard for that --

APPLAUSE

Before that, of course, seat belts --

APPLAUSE

NADER: Seat belts, yeah.

¹⁷⁹ Ralph Nader, "My Untold Story," *Brill's Content*, Feb 2001.
www.thepeoplesrevolution.tripod.com/naderstory.htm

LETTERMAN: Yeah, uh, no more smoking on airplanes.
You were also responsible.

APPLAUSE

NADER: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, right.

LETTERMAN: I mean that --

NADER: Uh, uh.

LETTERMAN: That's a pretty impressive list.

NADER: No more overbooking on airlines.

Is it possible Letterman's kind words demonstrate partisan bias? Efforts to detect bias on the latenight shows point in contradictory directions. Claims of partisan bias have focused on joke counts and analysis of latenight hosts' statements and affiliations. Were joke counts determining, the 2000 monologue joke totals would suggest that the latenight shows are pro-Republican. But in 2000, Marshall Sella writing for the *New York Times* magazine amassed "evidence" that concluded that Letterman was a Republican, Leno was a Democrat. His reasoning: Sella quoted a former *Late Show* writer asserting that Letterman was a "nonvoting Republican." Sella also notes that Letterman "blurted out" that the Contract with America was a good idea. His evidence on Leno was equally flimsy. Though Leno claims to have no party affiliation, his wife is a Democrat and Sella bolstered his argument with Leno's statement -- "You have someone [a candidate] come out and tell the truth, and it's really hard to do a joke about the guy, you know? How many Ralph Nader jokes do

you hear? You don't. Here's a guy, he comes out and tells it like it is. My job's over!"¹⁸⁰

Like many scholars and critics writing about politics and comedy, Sella fundamentally misunderstands comedy. He argues that comic archetypes [Gore is stiff, Bush is dumb] are the result of a show's writers' "political disposition."¹⁸¹ But as I've pointed out throughout this chapter, the point of comedy is contrarianism, saying what others won't, subverting convention. That type of subversion can be directed at Democrats or Republicans.

In Letterman's interview with Nader, the consumer advocate is slightly stooped, rumped, unpolished and vaguely wonkish, but the interview works all the same.

Letterman asks Nader first about The Green Party.

LETTERMAN: Tell me about the Green Party. What is it we ought to know about the Green Party that most of us probably don't know about it?

NADER: Well, obviously, it's for dramatic improvement in environmental health globally. You know, you don't cut down all the forests and ruin the water and you know, let the cars go, pave everything over. And nuclear power, no, and solar energy, yes, and all that.

But it's also to clean up the politics. A lot of what McCain and Bradley voters voted for, you know. To get dirty money out of politics and have public elections funded by public money. It's the best investment anyone can make. Also universal accessible health insurance and the other thing that's really unique is to get rid of that terrible law that's 53 years old -- that Taft-Hartley Act that keeps tens of millions of workers in low paid jobs like Wal-Mart, McDonalds from forming trade unions and lifting their standard of living.

¹⁸⁰ Sella, p. 75.

¹⁸¹ Sella, p. 78

LETTERMAN: Do you have any policies regarding road rage, Ralph? Is there anything could be done there? Let's --

LAUGHTER

NADER: Yeah, it's called the modern public transit--

Like his interviews with Gore and Bush, Letterman focuses almost exclusively on the environment, touching on a range of environmental topics – oil, air pollution, alternative energy sources. At the end of the first answer, Letterman felt the need to punctuate Nader's exposition of the Green Party with a joke. But Letterman does little joking during the interview. Nader works within the latenight genre without additional comic support. Nader is not a packaged candidate. He is unguarded, making bold statements, even *ad hominem* attacks.

LETTERMAN: Now, Ralph, you know, uh, you know George W. Bush.

NADER: Yeah.

LETTERMAN: You know, uh, Al W. [sic] Gore --

NADER: Yeah.

LAUGHTER

LETTERMAN: And I'm told here that you referred to, uh, George W. as being "beyond satire." Does that ring a bell?

LAUGHTER

NADER: Yeah.

LETTERMAN: Yeah. Can you expand on that?

NADER: Because George W. Bush is really a big corporation running for president disguised as a human being. I mean, how can you satire that?

LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE

LETTERMAN: And Al Gore --

NADER: Al Gore --

LETTERMAN: You describe him as a “gee-wiz-techno-twit.”

LAUGHTER

NADER: Yeah, I mean, you show him any Silicon Valley technology, he just goes gaga and he don't say, ‘Well, what is it for? How is it going to really improve our lives? How's it gon -- not going to invade our privacy?’ Al Gore's dilemma every day on the campaign trail is to figure out whether he's a great imposter or a great pretender.

LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE

Nader wins audience brownie points by subverting the self-presentation of the packaged candidate. Nader's *ad hominem* remarks might seem to arm critics like Baumgartner and Morris, and media critic Paul Brownfield who contend that latenight comedy fosters cynicism.

The late-night gang these days do, through their unending stream of easy cynicism about the political system and the leaders running it, communicate a point of view. Disaffected and blasé, they are the embodiment of today's apathetic voter.¹⁸²

Brownfield insinuates that comedy operates to foster what William Gamson has called “cynical chic” - a defensive strategy in which people emphasize their own alienation, powerlessness and ignorance in the face of circumstances they don't understand or control. In the face of their powerlessness, they pretend not to care.

¹⁸² Jody Baumgartner and Jonathan S. Morris, “The Daily Show Effect: Candidate Evaluations, Efficacy, and American Youth.” *American Political Research*. 34: 3 (May 2006) pp. 341-367. And Paul Brownfield, “Cheap Shots At A Steep Price,” *Los Angeles Times*, 27 August 2000. pp. 3, 70.

But Letterman, Stewart, Maher – none of them appear not to care. Indeed, they appear to care a lot. It is their passion – their frustration, anger, impatience -- that threatens the candidates and the artifice of a political system that appears to be all smoke and mirrors. They represent a populist challenge to authority. How different from news that "urges us to look but not care, see but not act, know but not change."¹⁸³

A number of scholars, among them Norris and Chaloupka, argue that cynicism is a healthy expression within a democratic system. In his book on cynicism, Chaloupka writes:

The lively contentious but ultimately resilient process of democratic practice requires a persistence and a verve not unrelated to cynicism. In short, cynicism is not uniformly an affliction or injury. ... In a society deeply suspicious of the discrepancies between public pronouncement and the hidden workings of power, there is something genuinely attractive about the way a cynic expresses a truth. Every social movement, from the left or the right, has its jesters, wordsmiths, and lead singers -- its engaging cynics. It is not at all obvious that we would be better off without them. ...¹⁸⁴

Leno calls comedians like himself “anti-spin doctors.” They shed light on the hypocritical posturing that often passes for serious politics. In an interview with *20/20*, Leno said: “... when you see people [a presidential spokesperson] come on and say, ‘The president did not lie; he miss-spoke.’ Wh--what does that mean? But when you do a joke about it, people get it right away. They understand exactly what is happening.”¹⁸⁵ Comedy can clarify what news leaves obscure.

¹⁸³ Macdonald, "Rethinking Personalization in Current Affairs Journalism," p. 255.

¹⁸⁴ William Chaloupka. *Everybody Knows: Cynicism in America*. (University of Minnesota Press, 1999) p. xv, 22.

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Jay Leno, *20/20*, ABC. 8 December 2000.

Contrary to popular assumption, latenight interviews often seem more sincere and less cynical than news. Leno introduces the candidates with a sense of awe. Letterman is far from disaffected and blasé: Ralph Nader is welcomed despite his quixotic campaign. Nor does Letterman disguise his concerns about the environment.

Comedy isn't cynical. It's hopeful, argues Davis.

By suddenly dismantling our social systems – seemingly so pervasive, massive, and immutable – comedy, like sociology, reminds us that they are not given but created by ourselves. After organizing elements into the larger systems of our social world, we forget we have done so. Jokes jolt us into remembering (at least momentarily) that we are responsible for their organizations – and consequently, can change them.¹⁸⁶

Conclusion

In concluding, I want to recap my key ideas since this chapter has been long and meandering. Criticism of candidate interviews on latenight rests on assumptions that fundamentally misunderstand comedy. Comedy disrupts The Expected and there are many ways to be funny without telling jokes. In general, candidates who are most free to break loose of the perfectly packaged candidate self-presentation will have most success on latenight comedy.

Leno's interviews are highly structured and entail little risk for candidates. But not all latenight comedy is risk-free from the candidates' perspective. Comedy is not constrained by some of the rules of decorum observed by political journalism. Candidates may be subject to passionate and unexpected questions from the host.

¹⁸⁶ Murray Davis, p. 311.

Latenight comedian/hosts do not have a grand design or agenda. They aren't trying to inform or educate. They have no conviction concerning the seriousness of their activity. Still, their work may contain great insights. "The humorist possesses the ability to sustain multiple, even contradictory interpretations of phenomena – unlike the ideologist who accepts one and rejects the others, or the nihilist who rejects them all."¹⁸⁷ Latenight talk show comedy therefore may provide a rich and valuable alternative perspective on the candidates.

Despite what I view as positive elements that comedy can bring to political discourse, comedy guarantees very little. The jokers' "insights are given by accident," notes Douglas. They "do not combine to form a whole new vision of life, but remain disorganized as a result of the technique which produces them."¹⁸⁸ This makes comedy a potentially rich, but unreliable source of information about the candidates.

¹⁸⁷ Murray Davis, p. 313.

¹⁸⁸ Douglas, p. 306.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions

The most important thing about the business of government and politics is not to bore the people.¹⁸⁹

-1960 Republican nominee Richard Nixon

In this chapter, I'd like to draw out what I see as my most salient conclusions, provide a few observations to help direct future research, and reflect on the relationship of these new modes of democratic communication to journalism.

I began with a conviction that multiple interview styles and modes of democratic communication are appropriate for contemporary democracy. This study has suggested ways in which nonfiction entertainment programming may be valuable as part of a pluralistic array of democratic communications that augment, rather than supplant journalism. These interviews may be a tool for political engagement and are certainly richer than generally imagined. They expand where Americans may encounter politics, what constitutes political concerns, how politics can be talked about and who merits the attention of candidates.

At the beginning of my research, I didn't realize how wide the range of interview style even within my relatively narrow talk show dataset would prove to be. Future research should be more cautious than I was about lumping daytime and latenight talk shows together simply because they are both called "talk shows." The

¹⁸⁹ *The Tonight Show*, 25 August 1960. It is interesting to note that this appearance was transcribed almost in full by *The New York Times*, but as I note in Chapter 3, Nixon's reference to "boring the people" was part of the small section *The Times* chose to excise.

two formats are far more different than generally recognized and individual talk show hosts have vastly different styles which affect the outcome of their interviews. One of the most fundamental distinctions I found is that most daytime talk in the 2000 campaign was motivated by public service norms. The interviews' *raison d'être* was to bring the candidates within range of the talk show audiences and to have the candidates answer questions of presumed relevance to those audiences. *Regis* is the only arguable exception and his producer ascribed pro-social motivation to the interviews.¹⁹⁰ Daytime talk interviews carry a normative message, implicitly saying to their audiences: "Pay attention! Go vote!" (In many ways, daytime talk shows are journalism's public service relatives once removed.) Latenight comedy eschews socially responsible norms. Comedy operates under a different set of formal rules. Its tendency is to lampoon norms rather than uphold them. When interviewed about their influence, latenight talk show hosts disavow responsibility for educating the public.

Talk shows' lack of formal rules regarding intent and method makes them more open to less "serious" approaches and a broader range of topics. These have far more social value than conventionally recognized. Certainly not the least of talk shows' value is its openness to candidates outside the two party system. Although many talk show hosts are rooted in the same Progressive Era/Well-Informed Citizen tradition that news is anchored in, talk shows are broader in their interpretation of what's worth knowing and more forgiving about the knowledge that's required to participate. They place less primacy on policy and depth of policy knowledge. Oprah

¹⁹⁰ Gelman, Interview with the author.

and Latifah placed more importance on personal experience. Letterman seriously engaged candidates and issues, despite his failure to appear to be the well-informed citizen, serving as a proxy for the public that more closely resembles the public itself. By encouraging political engagement and modeling an investment in electoral politics that doesn't depend on a detailed knowledge of policy, Oprah, Letterman, Queen Latifah and other talk show hosts may help de-professionalize political talk, returning it to a discourse in which "ordinary" people feel capable of participating. Of course, empirical audience research would make me feel more confident making this claim.

The 2004 Pew survey of voter information sources found that those who regularly learned about politics from latenight television, morning TV shows, local TV and comedy TV shows were 'the least informed' and "the least engaged." This is conventionally interpreted as a kind of civic tragedy, that the least informed are getting the least substantive information.¹⁹¹ Beyond the fact that such voter assessments are a dubious way to assess electorate sophistication, invariably falling into what Neuman et. al. call "The Facts and Figures Fallacy,"¹⁹² there is another way to interpret this situation that would suggest that those who are least informed and least engaged are finding a way to become informed and engaged through these talk show venues. Engaging people matters. "Not boring the people" may not, as Nixon suggested in his 1960 interview, be "the *most* important thing," but it helps.

¹⁹¹ According to October 2002 Nielsen data, *Oprah's* audience has only slightly less college education than the general public. In general, less than half of the talk show audience did not attend college. More than half (54%) of *Regis & Kelly's* audience, 42% of *The Tonight Show's* audience, 43% of *Late Night's* audience, 47% of *Oprah's* audience has no college education.

¹⁹² Neuman Just & Crigler, p. 2

Judging by audience laughter and applause, the 2000 talk show audiences appreciated a representation of contemporary politics that acknowledged candidates' dual reality as Real Man and Salesman/Candidate. This representation of politics is more open and accepting of the constraints placed on candidates than journalism in which candidates are expected to play Salesman/Candidate but disavow the mechanics of their role, leaving journalists the job of deconstructing the salesmanship. On talk shows, candidates can be both Candidate and "Real Person putting on a show." Arguably, there is greater honesty in that representation of candidates than one in which the candidate must constantly deny the demands placed on them by the contemporary electoral system.

Exposure to talk show interviews will not transform audiences into well-informed citizens, but it may help them find a way to initially engage politics that feels meaningful to those audiences. Although these interviews are unlikely to affect people's willingness to go to the polls -- people's alienation from politics stems from far more than simply not being spoken to -- it may make them feel newly included in the democratic process. Nonfiction entertainment forms have been described as a gateway to politics.¹⁹³ The implicit, if not explicit, assumption is that nonfiction entertainment will whet public appetite for more substantive political discussion. But talk shows may not simply be gateways, they *are* – at least in some cases – meaningful democratic discourse in and of themselves.

A skeptic might argue: What if *Regis* was a voter's only source of information? But this kind of isolationist hypothesis in an era of unprecedented

¹⁹³ Jostein Gripsrud, "Tabloidization, Popular Journalism, and Democracy." p. 298.

information production and dissemination seems to me unlikely. Even those who don't seek out information are bombarded by it. Regis' producer, who presumably knows his audience better than anyone but the show's market researchers, defined his charge as giving their audiences a vantage on the candidates that they had not seen or heard before. The success of Letterman and Leno's monologues is dependent on audiences picking up news if not intentionally then "by osmosis."

My greatest concern about talk shows as a new mode of democratic communication is consistency. Talk show form retains an element of surprise that may help resist future efforts by campaigns to "capture" it. Yet this same looseness of form means that the content of talk show interviews isn't consistent. Thus, serendipitous accidents at the margins of official political discourse may deliver some of our most interesting forums for contemporary campaign speech.

Furthermore, there is a social cost involved in the kneejerk dismissal of these venues. Because these nonfiction entertainment interviews are dismissed by critics as "not important," there is no serious public discussion of them, no attempt to codify what they do and how they do it. Such analysis might help maximize the interviews' social utility in the future. Some of the daytime hosts hoped to exercise an influence on voters, but in the absence of thoughtful discussion of the interviews, talk show hosts and the shows' producers are unlikely to refine their ideas about how to help voters engage with politicians in a talk show format. In the wake of Oprah's candidate interviews in 2000, will other talk show hosts try to imitate what she did, or will they simply fly blind without much of a framework for considering what they

might do? Or in the absence of social approval or a ratings bump, talk show hosts may simply decide to conduct fewer candidate interviews.

Nonfiction entertainment producers have no incentive to take the social impact of their work more seriously -- to codify it or to yoke it to the kinds of social expectations journalism is tethered to. The social expectations they are expected to meet are limited to their commercial audiences' expectations. They don't need to be answerable to anyone else or any other criteria. Who can blame them for wanting to keep it that way? In fact, their success, in some measure stems from their very freedom from formal and social constraints. Lord knows, I'm not arguing for a professionalization of talk shows (it's certainly been a mixed blessing for journalism), but a less derisive public conversation might be helpful in shaping producers' and hosts' thinking about their actions and influence.

I'd like to talk about another consideration that pops up here and there throughout this text that I haven't yet addressed head-on. Whether in news or talk shows, access remains the candidates' trump card. And yet within news, the decision to "not appear" is a non-event that typically isn't reported. Thus, candidates' refusal to appear in news interviews is rarely, if ever, news; whereas in talk show venues -- particularly comedy, it is sometimes noted, and at times, it is made centerstage.

The explanation for this is perhaps not too complicated. Candidates agree to be interviewed only when it appears advantageous or socially incumbent to them to do so. The journalists who are granted access are inclined to protect that relationship. Journalists need access week in and week out, year after year. They are vulnerable to finding themselves on a *de facto* "black list" and receiving no cooperation from

campaigns or public officials. Thus, although no general election candidate has appeared on his program in nearly 30 years, Russert protects the access he is granted during the primaries and does not make loud public complaints when he is denied access to the candidates in the general election. Similarly denied access to the candidates, Bill Maher belly-ached noisily on *Politically Incorrect* in 2000. In 2004, *The Daily Show* purchased an ad on the op-ed page of *The New York Times* inviting – one might say, *daring* -- Bush to appear on the show.

THE DAILYSHOW
WITH **JON STEWART** cordially invites

George Walker Bush

43rd President of the United States
to be a guest on our basic cable television program

11p.m. Monday-Thursday
The Daily Show Studios (see map below)

Attire: Presidential casual
A light meal of fun-sized candy bars
will be served in the green room

-----R.S.V.P.-----

I will attend alone I will attend with my Vice President.
 I am unaware of your existence

Please send in your response along with a list of pre-approved questions no later than November 2, 2004.

Convention Coverage Continues
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New York Times, September 1, 2004

Illustration 4: The Daily Show cordially invites...

When it comes to candidate appearances, nonfiction entertainment hosts can “take it or leave it.” They do not have the same need to protect stable on-going

access to political candidates that news does. And the hosts' outrage when denied access provides an additional bonus -- it makes for engaging television.

In the past, candidates have made themselves accessible to nonfiction entertainment interviews as a supplement to news. True, they now systematically avoid the Sunday morning news shows, but they continue to make themselves available to most of the political press corps. But with Arnold Schwarzenegger's 2003 race for California governor the tacit rules of access changed. Whether that change is permanent or temporary, whether it could be employed by non-celebrity candidates, remains to be seen. But it is cause for concern and talk show appearances are at the heart of it.

Schwarzenegger launched his gubernatorial campaign on *The Tonight Show*. He gave subsequent interviews to Oprah, Howard Stern and Larry King. During the entire campaign, he conducted only one press conference and refused to do news interviews with political journalists. Schwarzenegger chose to do "entertainment" interviews *instead* of news interviews. He accessed the national entertainment media and bypassed state and local political journalists, adopting a campaign strategy more typical of presidential candidates than candidates for state office. The political press corps periodically complained, but had no effect on the campaign's strategy.

After his election, Schwarzenegger continued to bypass the news media. In March and August 2004, and again in January 2005, he appeared on *The Tonight Show* to promote his policies. For the governor's first anniversary, he refused to do a sit-down interview with any journalism organization and went to *Larry King* instead. His press secretary explained that *Larry King* was "a medium that's better suited to

this governor, and if he makes news, the California press corps is going to cover it anyway.”¹⁹⁴ The power dynamic between candidates and journalists has always been built on shared social assumptions, not immutable laws of nature. But those shared social assumptions can change and have changed. Journalists can no longer assume they will be given “first dibs” at a public official, but until Schwarzenegger, no candidate or public official had dared move so far beyond conventional social norms.

Because of his immense celebrity, Schwarzenegger is a unique and I suspect an anomalous case rather than a portent of future developments. Few people have the celebrity clout to pull off such an unorthodox strategy. It’s also significant that two years after his election, after his approval ratings sank and his ballot initiatives floundered, these same national entertainment outlets did not appear to be at his disposal. In fall 2005 when he campaigned for initiatives he’d helped put on the ballot, his campaign did not try or could not access *The Tonight Show* and other entertainment venues to generate public support. I suspect (but I do not know) that producers would have had a harder time justifying Schwarzenegger’s presence, given his clear motivation to promote specific initiatives and policies that were not especially popular. This contention may seem paradoxical since Schwarzenegger’s initial appearances clearly benefited his candidacy, but those appearances were possible at a moment when his celebrity and his candidacy could be conflated, and his celebrity used as “cover” for his appearance. The longer he is in public office and the less popular he becomes, the harder it will be to conflate the two.

¹⁹⁴ This section is based on reporting done by Jeff Kearns, “Beat The Press,” *Sacramento News and Review*, 6 May 2004. Available: www.newsreview.com/issues/sacto/2004-05-06 Downloaded September 2004; Laurence Leamer, *Fantastic: The Life of Arnold Schwarzenegger*. (New York: St. Martin’s Press 2005); and a radio interview with Jeff Kearns and Steve Swatt by the author, KPFK Radio, 8 August 2004.

Governor Schwarzenegger's appearances also raise serious questions about the future of FCC Equal Time regulation. So does Rosie O'Donnell's endorsement of Gore in the absence of any realistic mechanism for a candidate to appeal for equal time. Current regulation provides for an exemption to the Equal Time rule for entertainment shows that provide news or current event coverage as regularly scheduled segments of the program.¹⁹⁵ This language conceivably covers candidate interviews on *The Daily Show*, but *Oprah* or *The Tonight Show*? As candidates increasingly appear on shows classified as "entertainment," should the FCC revisit its rules? My fear is that greater FCC oversight would dissuade entertainment producers from inviting candidates, thus strangling the opportunity for these new modes of political communication to develop further. Historically, when the FCC liberalized its rulings, it enabled talk show appearances of political candidates. Nixon's 1960 appearance was made possible because of the relaxation of the Equal Time rules. Donahue was able to interview Geraldine Ferraro in 1984 because the FCC approved the show's request to be considered a "news interview show." The more the FCC regulates this area, the less likely talk show hosts are to book the interviews.

Ultimately, what would most benefit the electorate is a chance for multiple forms of democratic communication to develop within journalism *and* nonfiction entertainment. In this, I may well be accused of wanting to have my cake and eat it too. The growth and popularity of nonfiction entertainment suggests the current

¹⁹⁵ See www.fcc.gov/mb/policy/political/candrule.htm for current FCC Equal Time rules. Current FCC interpretation of these guidelines was described to me by FCC staff person Rebecca Fisher on 21 February 2006.

weakness of journalism and associated Progressive Era norms such as objectivity, rationality and expertise. Can journalism survive given the competitive economic and cultural pressures arrayed against it?

I began this dissertation with a question posed by Bill Moyers: Was *The Daily Show* an old form of political satire or a new form of journalism? His question begs others: What does Moyers think journalism is that he would even think to call *The Daily Show* journalism? How do we define journalism, and if we stretched the boundaries of journalism in the way Moyers imagines, what would the consequences be?

Moyers seems to expect journalism to be a form of critical commentary on political events. *The Daily Show* provides that type of critical analysis. Its strong critical voice is undoubtedly why *The Daily Show* has twice received one of journalism's most coveted awards, The Peabody; why Bill Maher was similarly honored by the L.A. Press Club; and why political reporters tell Jon Stewart they wish they could say what he says.¹⁹⁶

But *The Daily Show* is not what most people consider "news." Indeed, this is exactly the reason critics have been so perturbed by The Pew Center survey findings that I discuss in Chapter One. A small but significant body of recent scholarship (Langer; Hartley; Sparks; Zelizer; Dahlgren) has suggested that Moyers is right to call political satire journalism. They argue that journalism needs to be redefined and expanded to include other nonfiction entertainment forms. Sparks has called for adoption of a more catholic definition of journalism that would incorporate all of

¹⁹⁶ Interview with Jon Stewart, *NOW*, PBS. 11 July 2003.

nonfiction entertainment's "remainder categories."¹⁹⁷ Dahlgren has suggested a revision in nomenclature, replacing the term "journalist" with "media professional," thereby lumping together all media "content producers" regardless of genre. Doing this would give us a more comprehensive and coherent set of informational categories. Conceptually, this is badly needed and it might encourage more formal experimentation (the kind of "collective artmaking" Dewey had in mind) in journalism.¹⁹⁸

However, housing all nonfiction entertainment forms under the rubric of journalism seems more of a provocative rhetorical gesture than a viable solution. While political satire, talk shows, and other types of nonfiction entertainment may well fit under an expanded definition of "journalism," in practice I see little but disadvantages. The goal is for nonfiction entertainment to be able to lay claim to the social regard with which journalism is held. But is calling it "journalism" the only or the best way to accomplish this? Doing so potentially subjects all kinds of vital, flexible and emerging entertainment forms to the constraints and expectations imposed on journalism. On the other hand, journalism – in a world in which it was associated with less prestigious forms and simply one more form of public information -- would likely see its social prestige plummet. It's not clear to me that the immediate results of such a development would be politically salubrious. Despite its eroded influence, elite political journalism still wields sufficient perceived power

¹⁹⁷ Colin Sparks, "Goodbye, Hildy Johnson: the vanishing "serious press," pp. 58-74 in *Communication and Citizenship*, eds. Peter Dahlgren and Colin Sparks. (New York: Routledge, 1991) p. 67. Peter Dahlgren, "Introduction," pp. 1-23 in *Journalism and Popular Culture* eds. Peter Dahlgren and Colin Sparks (Thousand Oaks, CA, SAGE Publications, 1992) p. 8.

¹⁹⁸ See John Durham Peters, "Public Journalism" for a description of Dewey's vision for journalism. p. 109.

to prompt action from elected officials. If journalism lost that power, what social institution would fill the gap? I'm not confident there is one.

Thus, paradoxically while nonfiction entertainment is or could be "journalism," I don't argue it should be called journalism. The term "media" represents another possibility, but "media" lacks even the slenderest social and political ambition. Preferable would be to create a new name that captures these diverse forms of democratic communication and affords each of them sufficient social esteem that they can be viewed, enjoyed, and studied.

Appendix I: Dataset

2000 Talk Show Interviews with The Candidates

Candidate	Program	Date
Al Gore	<i>Oprah</i>	Sept. 11, 2000
George W. Bush	<i>Oprah</i>	Sept. 18, 2000
Ralph Nader	<i>Queen Latifah</i>	Oct. 2, 2000
Al Gore	<i>Queen Latifah</i>	Oct. 26, 2000
Al Gore	<i>Rosie O'Donnell</i>	Oct. 20, 2000
George W. Bush	<i>Live With Regis</i>	Sept. 21, 2000
Al Gore	<i>Live With Regis</i>	Oct. 19, 2000
George W. Bush	<i>The Tonight Show</i>	Oct. 30, 2000
Al Gore	<i>The Tonight Show</i>	Oct. 31, 2000
Al Gore	<i>The Late Show</i>	Sept. 14, 2000
Ralph Nader	<i>The Late Show</i>	Sept. 28, 2000
George W. Bush	<i>The Late Show</i>	Oct. 19, 2000

Appendix II: Oprah with Bush

September 18, 2000

OPRAH: We're live in Chicago. That was neat. That was, because see the hour passes so quickly the presidential race continues to heat up as you know and the front runners are still neck and neck which makes it so interesting for all of us. So now more than ever we feel it's important for you the voters to get to know the person behind what I've called the political wall. As I said last week when I interviewed Vice President Al Gore, I've stayed away from interviewing politicians for 15 years because I thought it would be really difficult to break through the wall of, you know, those sound bites and practice answers or what appear to be practice answers so my hope again today is to ask questions that will help reveal the real man so you can decide who feels like the right candidate for you. Last week, as many of you know, I sat down with Al Gore and this week it is George W's time, uh, please welcome republican presidential candidate and the governor of Texas, George W. Bush.

[AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

OPRAH: George Bush. Hello.

OPRAH: Thank you. Thanks for the kiss. Let's talk about how --

BUSH: My pleasure.

OPRAH: Let's talk about how tight this race has become. Uh, are you, I asked this of Mr. Gore, are you feeling the heat because there was a while where you had the lead, we all knew you had the lead and now the polls depending on no matter which pole you read says you're behind.

BUSH: Well it's tight enough to give me white hair.

OPRAH: [LAUGHS] Runs in the family I hear.

BUSH: Um, I'm running against a formidable opponent. I am and I know it. It's gonna be a tough race. I think I'm going to win when it's all said and done. But, uh.
[AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

BUSH: But I, but it's gonna be close and it's, it's good for a, the country to have a good close race.

OPRAH: You've added another day on your campaign trailing. I think you've added a 6th day I've read now.

BUSH: Uh, it seems like I've been campaigning all seven, but uh, yeah, it's a lot of work and you know something I love it. I love the people of the country, I love what America stands for, I get to see the best of the country as I travel around. It's been a fabulous experience for me and my and my wife.

OPRAH: In the end it is, is it a test of endurance, it's who can hold up the most?

BUSH: I don't think so. I think it's a test of message and vision and compassion. A test of leadership. Uh, there's not question it taxes one's, uh, stamina, but both the Vice President and I are relatively young and we're in good physical condition --

OPRAH: Relatively, yeah. I believe you really young. The older I get the younger you get to me. When he was here last week I asked the question about why should I vote for him and we had a thousands of e-mails after that visit and one of the vote, one of the, uh, e-mails came from a woman named Millicent. Millicent where are you? Oh, you're right there. Okay. Do you remember your question?

Millicent: Yeah. As a 25 year old African American woman with no children and no money, I qualify for broke but I'm not poor, uh --

BUSH: Good way to put it.

OPRAH: How do I fit into your platform and other millions of Americans just like me?

BUSH: Well you fit into my platform by having a country that, um, that says the American dream is available to you. Uh, first and foremost, that doesn't matter how you're raised, what your background is, if you work hard you can realize the greatness of the country. The, the, I don't know what your education background is like but the young Millicents need to be educated. Uh, my vision says every child is gonna be educated in America. I want the public --

Audience Member: Yeah.

BUSH: school system to hold out the promise for every single, every single citizen. So that when they get to be 25 years old you can realize your dreams. See, see I see America a land of dreams and hopes and opportunities. Again I don't know your personal circumstances but I don't want anything to hold you back.

OPRAH: Okay, speaking of holding back, I want to interrupt you, I want you to go behind that wall now. Uh, you, you said in the speech in, in, in, in the acceptance speech for the nomination that too many American children, and I love this, are segregated into schools without standards. Now, for those of you who have your children in private schools or chartered schools maybe you're not aware but it's a

mess out there in a lot of the schools. And you say, shuffled from grade to grade because of their age regardless of their knowledge and this is discrimination pure and simple. The soft bigotry of low expectations and our nation should treat it like other forms of discrimination, we should end it. Now having done 15 years of shows and done many, many, many, many, many related to education and the parents out there and their children, we know that this is a huge issue. How is it really going to end?

BUSH: Well it's gonna end by teaching every child to read to begin with. I, I have it, put a reading initiative in my state of Texas. It says every child. Every child is going to be taught to read. It means high standards --

OPRAH: What? -- Head Start?

BUSH: That's the beginning.

OPRAH: Yeah.

BUSH: But it means to have a curriculum that works. Phonics needs to be an integral part of our curriculum around the country. It says we're gonna train teachers on how to teach reading. It says if need be we'll have intensive reading laboratories particularly for early grades. But it starts with saying every child can, can learn.

OPRAH: How are we going to do this if the local governments are in charge of the schools as, as they are, and should be.

BUSH: Well they should be.

OPRAH: And should be.

BUSH: Absolutely.

OPRAH: How are we gonna do this if each local government has to decide what it's going to do with its system?

BUSH: Well in my state of Texas for example we have pre-K and we say that if you want to have a pre-K we'll fund it. And we have Kindergarten and it says that, uh, but, but that's what a leader does. A leader sets the goals. Somebody who is a good leader says this is what's most important in life. What's the most important in life is teaching young children to read. You asked how we closed the achievement gap and there's a huge achievement gap in America, it starts with early education.

OPRAH: Yeah it does.

BUSH: It starts with basic education. It starts with focusing on the building blocks for every child to read and that's reading.

OPRAH: There's no question about that. You say in, um, a charge to keep, you're autobiography, you say that no one should let, uh, themselves be defined by other people. I want to know how you, George W, do you like W as a nickname?

BUSH: Sure. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

OPRAH: I heard your mom doesn't like it but anyway it sounds good to say it. You know, W, W, W's in the house. [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

OPRAH: But I want to know how you as George W Bush defines yourself.

BUSH: As a dad, as a husband, as a, um, a patriot, somebody that loves America. I've been an entrepreneur. I've been a governor. But I'd like to be defined by, uh, my, by my heart. I want people to know I care a lot about our fellow citizens. I love my country. I love the people that live in America. I don't want people left behind. I don't want there to be Oprah what's called this gap of hope. Some children are saying America's not meant for me and I hope people, you know, I hope people get to know my heart.

OPRAH: How does that definition of yourself applies directly to your ability to lead?

BUSH: Well a leaders somebody who's, uh, not afraid to take positions. A leaders somebody who's willing to bring people together to get things done. That's, that's what I've done as governor of Texas, I've worked with republicans and democrats to focus on public education for example. A leaders somebody willing to make decisions based up on principle not polls or focus groups. A leaders somebody willing to share credit and to take the heat.

OPRAH: Do you feel that part of a leader is to take responsibility as is somewhat to be a moral cheerleader. We know you were a cheerleader at Andover and back in the day and, uh, --

BUSH: I think, I, I do think the role of a leader is to, uh, as we say in the south, not only talk the talk but walk the walk is to set an example for people I do.

OPRAH: Do you feel your question was answered Millicent? Do you feel satisfied or are you going to go away going what, what, what did he say?

Millicent: Well, I, I, understand --

BUSH: We'll follow up.

Millicent: I, I, I understand what he said about education but in the next four years, you know, your policies on tax cuts and prescription drug costs and social security really, really won't affect me. Um, how does your platform --

BUSH: I think, I think it will on social security.

OPRAH: Social security's going to affect you no matter what. When you're 25 you don't think so Millicent. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]
But it will affect you eventually.

BUSH: Millicent my policies are this. Again I don't know your particular status but if you're working and are paying taxes, because of the surplus I think you ought to be able to put more money in your pocket. That's what I believe.

[AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

Maybe I hit a nerve. And for my vision, my vision of tax relief is that everybody who pays taxes ought to get relief and the reason I think that's important is I'd rather have you make decisions with your own money than the federal government making decisions for all your money. [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE] And that's what I believe.

OPRAH: Coming up more with George W. Bush. We'll find out if he really told the Queen of England he was the black sheep of the family. More when we come back. We'll be back. [GW LAUGHS] Thank you.

[COMMERCIAL]

BUSH: [RECORDED CLIP] I believe in a God that calls us not to judge our neighbors but to love them. I believe in grace because I've seen it and peace because I felt it and forgiveness because I've needed it.

OPRAH: We're live in Chicago with presidential candidate George W. Bush and that was part of his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention. Tell us about a time when you needed forgiveness.

BUSH: Uh, right now. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] [OPRAH LAUGHS]

OPRAH: Okay. But for real. Tell me a story.

BUSH: Well I'm a, a when my heart turns dark. When I, um, am jealous or when I am spiteful.

OPRAH: I'm looking for specifics.

BUSH: I know you are but I'm running for president. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS AND GOES WILD]

OPRAH: Okay, so do you, it's okay. Do you feel, we were talking about, you know, this whole wall, do you feel that there's a part of yourself that you really can't reveal? The state of the media and pol--, politics says it is and rumorizing, do you feel that there's --

BUSH: Well I worry about rumors and gossip. Um, I revealed a lot about myself in the campaign. I said I'm a sinner who sought redemption and found it. I'm a person who recognizes the fallacy of humans. I, um, I think all of us need forgiveness. I think ours is a society, I mean ours is a life that is, should be based upon forgiveness.

OPRAH: I know but when you say, I heard you say that, I started saying to myself, okay now, --

BUSH: What's he need forgiveness for?

OPRAH: Yeah, what do you need forgiveness for?

BUSH: Well everyday I need forgive--, I'm not a perfect person by, by, a stretch of the imagin-

OPRAH: Well none of us are.

BUSH: That's my point --

OPRAH: Yeah.

BUSH: And that's the great thing about religion. Is that it provides a, a solace for forgiveness and for hope and for comfort and I take great comfort in my religion. I did, it doesn't mean I'm a better person than you by any stretch of the imagination.

OPRAH: I take comfort in mine too, so, you don't have anything on me, okay.

BUSH: That's good. Okay.

OPRAH: Uh, uh, uh, speaking of religion one of my favorite bible passages I think is in Corinthians where Paul talks about being pressed to the high calling, and I believe, we talk a lot on this show about people being called, being passionate about their work and I believe there's a calling on everybody's life. When do you feel or have you felt the calling to be president? And is it a calling? Is it that deep and that passionate for you? And it's not just a, a career move.

BUSH: And exercise?

OPRAH: Yeah. Not just an exercise or career move.

BUSH: Listen [STUTTERS] life would be so much simpler to, uh, be in Texas with my, with my wife and not putting our children through the, through the meat grinder of public opinion, so yeah there's a big call and I'm deeply concerned about the future of the country. I'm concerned that some folks are gonna be left behind, I am. I'm concerned about the state of education. I want to make sure that we keep the peace. I want people to fulfill their, their, their dreams in America. This is as fabulous country. It is the greatest country on the earth. The values of this country and the history of the country and the tradition of the country are just magnificent and I feel a deep calling.

OPRAH: Okay, when did that happen? Were you like sitting in Midland, were you walking through the woods and all of a sudden you said --

BUSH: A bolt of lightning-

OPRAH: No you said --

BUSH: Thou shall be president.

OPRAH: Thou shall be president and it shall be you George. No, but is there a moment where you decide. I read in Talk magazine where you said this isn't something that you, you really pursued or thought or was going to happen to you.

BUSH: I never, I never, I never dreamt about, uh, running for president when I was a kid. I didn't think about it when I was in college or maybe I'd behaved a little better had I thought about it you know what I mean. I, um, no, I, um, I start thinking about it seriously over Christmas in 98 and, uh, had legis- I just got re-elected, and had a legislative session to, uh, to deal with in Texas. I thought long and hard about it and, um, uh, got a lot of advice from a lot of good friends, a lot of people that uh, have had an impact on my life and I decided to run, um, because I wanted to make sure this American experienced is, um, is available for everyone. I want to usher in the responsibility or be a part of ushering in a, a new culture, Oprah. It says each individual's going to be held accountable for the decisions he or she makes in life. It stands in [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

OPRAH: That's almost divine law. You're responsible for your choices.

BUSH: That's right.

OPRAH: You're responsible for your choices in the world, everybody is.

BUSH: Well we should be. We should be but that's not necessarily the case today. We've got people say make a bad choice and blame somebody else. These this, there's a culture of irresponsibility that takes hold in, in America at times and I think we can do a better job in America. Now I understand government can't pass a law that says you'll love your neighbor or government can't pass a law that says you will be responsible because --

OPRAH: Yeah because, because government have a soul?

BUSH: No.

OPRAH: Yeah, you say it doesn't.

BUSH: Sure it doesn't. I don't think so.

OPRAH: Yeah and government instill --

BUSH: Do you?

OPRAH: No, well no I'm asking you. Does it [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

BUSH: I wanted, I wanted some sage advice.

OPRAH: Yeah well no, I'm just, I, I heard where you were commenting on whether or not government has the ability to create soul in itself.

BUSH: I don't think it does. I think what government ought to do is tap the soul of America by calling upon faith based groups and community organizations and the Big Brothers and Big Sisters organizations --

OPRAH: Faith based. Not necessarily believing in your faith.

BUSH: Absolutely. I mean listen, there's programs coming out of synagogues or mosques are just as viable as programs coming out of Christian institutions. But Big Brothers and Big Sisters isn't necessarily a faith based program per se but it is a program based up on, you know, I want to love somebody. What can I do to love a child who may wonder whether or not America is meant for them.

OPRAH: There are a lot of people watching right now and some people told me on the street when I was going to Borders yesterday, um, buying some books, uh, that people were saying that they were going to make their decision after 10:00 this morning in Chicago because they really were undecided. And for those people, there's a lot of them out there who say I don't know why I should be voting for you, what is really the difference you are going to make because Al Gore was here last week. He seemed like a perfectly decent and honorable man.

BUSH: I would believe that.

OPRAH: With great intentions for this country just as you have.

BUSH: You bet. So why [STUTTERS]

OPRAH: Yeah.

BUSH: The question is why should they vote for me?

OPRAH: Absolutely they ought to vote for me. One I'm a proven leader. I've been given the awesome responsibilities of being the governor a big state. I've brought people together to get positive things done. I would hope people would look at our record in public education in the state of Texas. Our, our test scores for minority students are some of the best in the nation because we've set high standards. We're got strong local control of schools. We believe in accountability. We believe in giving parents choices. I've got an agenda that says we're going to elevate the individual in America, not empower government. I trust individuals with making decisions in their own lives. I've got a program for reducing taxes. I've got a program for strengthening the military to keep the peace. I've got a plan that says we're gonna provide prescription drugs for seniors. My philosophy is no one should go without. People who cannot help themselves need to be helped by our government and if there's somebody having to make the choice between food or medicine, some elderly soul, we're gonna help that person not have to make that choice.

OPRAH: Well Al Gore says the same thing. So. Okay.

BUSH: That's fine. Except he can't get it done. I mean they've been up there for eight years trying to get something done and [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

OPRAH: Here's another, here's another viewer who e-mailed us with a question for you, here it is.

MAN: Governor Bush, what is the public's largest misconception of you?

BUSH: [LAUGHS]

OPRAH: Yeah.

BUSH: Um, probably I'm running on my daddy's name. That um, that uh, you know if my name were George Jones I'd be a country and western singer.

OPRAH: Okay.

BUSH: That, um, and I, I've lived with this all my life of course, listen, I love my dad a lot. He's a fabulous man and, um, I'm proud to be his son,

OPRAH: Yes.

BUSH: And, uh, [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE] he gave me the great gift of unconditional love. Which is a fabulous gift. It's allowed me to, uh, feel like, you know, I can dare to fail and dare to succeed. But, but a lot of folks, like particular like when I ran for governor against governor Richards and that was a tough race, a lot of people didn't think I could win, including my mother.

OPRAH: She did not.

BUSH: And, uh, and it, you know, you go to the court house steps and you, you're just running on your daddy's name. And, uh, but I knew I was running, I mean I've got a, I've got a mission, I got a vision for our state and I have a vision for our country so I understand people are going to say that, that's okay.

OPRAH: Is there ever a time though, I mean if you search the deepest part of yourself, where some of this is about restoring the family name and legacy and name to the White House?

BUSH: Nah.

OPRAH: Really?

BUSH: I don't, not really.

OPRAH: Don't you want to put a Bush back in there just because you can carry us, not just because, but it carries on the family name, the legacy, it's about restoration. You don't feel that at all?

BUSH: Not really.

OPRAH: Not in the teeniest, tinniest part of yourself. [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

BUSH: Not even in the teeniest, tinniest part because you're asking, I mean, basically the way you're saying is are you running because of revenge. Revenge is such a negative thought. I'm running for positive reasons. I, I, I, first of all I couldn't get elected if I was seeking revenge. [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

OPRAH: 'Cause it comes back to you.

BUSH: Well there are better ways to uphold the honor of my family and that is to be a decent, loving citizen, who is willing to contribute to our community. It doesn't have to be through public service. I mean it could be through church, it could be through charitable gifts, it can be through teaching a child to read. It can be through being just a citizen who is responsible for decisions and responsible for the community in which I live. There's, there's ways to, you know, to honor my mother and dad.

OPRAH: Well sure. You know one of my favorite quotes is, um, Martin Luther King who says not everybody can be famous but everybody can be great because greatness is determined by service.

BUSH: There you go.

OPRAH: Well, coming up, what George W. Bush calls the best decision of his life. We'll be back. Good.

[COMMERCIAL]

BUSH: [RECORDED PIECE] This is your candidate, George W. Bush, welcome aboard the inaugural flight of Great Expectations. Please store your expectations securely in your overhead bins as they may shift during the trip and could fall and hurt someone, especially me. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] Thank for coming along today. We know you have a choice of candidates when you fly and we appreciate you choosing Great Expectations.

OPRAH: We're live with Governor Bush. And that was behind the scenes footage on his campaign plane. I read that you're known for being able, being able to have fun even while running for president. I want to know what your best joke, that you can tell on television, no bad language or nothing.

BUSH: Uh, lets see. I'm kind of a needler. That's, my mother is a teaser and so and I which is a good sign by us, so when I tease it means I care. I think the best joke is a, um, a story I like to tell about the preacher. It may take a while. I'll try to make it quick. Preacher giving a sermon, guy jumps up and says use me Lord, use me. The next Sunday same thing. Preaching away, he jumps up and in the second pew, use me Lord, use me. Goes after and says listen, fine I'll use you. The Lord wants you to sand and scrape and paint all the pews. The next Sunday the man preaching away the guy pops up same pew, says use me Lord, use me, but only in an advisory capacity. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] A good joke has a point.

OPRAH: Yeah, always.

BUSH: There's a lot of advisors in our society.

OPRAH: Too many you think?

BUSH: We need more, uh, scrapers and painters and doers and

OPRAH: And sanders.

BUSH: Yeah.

OPRAH: When was,

MAN IN AUDIENCE: [BURSTING OUT] Do you believe in the governments policy of bombings and sanctions that kill 5,000 children a month [INTERVIEWER INTERRUPTS]

OPRAH: I'm sorry, you can't ask that sir. When was the last time Laura really chewed you out and what did you do to tick her off.

BUSH: The last time my wife chewed me out, let's see, I would say, the last time, [MAN IN AUDIENCE TALKING LOUDLY] I wouldn't, I wouldn't say awhile.

MAN IN AUDIENCE: I'm sorry to interrupt but I need to ask you a question.

OPRAH: I'm sorry you're interrupting and we're going to go to commercial break and remove you from the audience. Thank you.
[AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

[COMMERCIAL]

OPRAH: Okay we're live with presidential candidate George Bush. I told him 15 years of shows, never had a heckler, you come on, I get a heckler. It's okay. You deal with that all the time.

BUSH: Glad to break the record somehow, you know. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

OPRAH: I know, they, they obviously had questions they wanted to ask but we have a policy for asking questions. You have to raise you hand and the camera comes to you and so forth but anyway, my favorite question is one that the late Gene Siskel used to ask, um, at the end of his interviews and the first time he asked, he asked me this question it threw me but I'm going to ask you, what do you know for sure?

BUSH: That there is a God. That's what I know for sure. And that's what I believe with all my heart.

OPRAH: And that's all you know for sure.

BUSH: Well I got no other things for sure. I know I'm sitting here talking to you and, uh, I, uh.

OPRAH: But of the things that you are certain that you have no doubt about.

BUSH: I love my wife. Uh, that my children mean, our children mean more to me than anything in life. Uh, that our, um, that, uh, I know I'm a blessed person.

OPRAH: Do you think you're lucky?

BUSH: Yeah, I do. I think I'm luck, I think I'm lucky,

OPRAH: And how do you define luck?

BUSH: Well I think I'm lucky because I've got unbelievably loving parents. I was raised in a household full of love. Um, I think that, uh.

OPRAH: How do you define love?:

BUSH: Well, in that case, I, I got lucky when it came to the gene pool and, uh, I think there's fate in life, I do. I believe that, I believe that people have been get, dealt, get dealt different hands and I've been dealt a pretty darn good hand in my life.

OPRAH: Do you believe it has anything to do with, my definition of luck is preparation meeting opportunity. So I don't, you know, I believe that you don't just get lucky, I believe that you have to be prepared otherwise the opportunity doesn't mean anything.

BUSH: Well I think, well I think how, were I was born, was, was pretty darn good faith.

OPRAH: Midland?

BUSH: Well, who, I mean how I was raised, with, with a mother and dad that dedicated their lives to their children first and foremost and I, I didn't have much choice in that. I didn't prepare for that. It was, um, it was, uh, it was a God given blessing.

OPRAH: I read about you meeting the Queen of England and you telling her you were the black sheep of the family. Is that true?

BUSH: Oh I was just kinda self deprecating humor. Now that I'm running for president of course I'm not the black sheep of the family. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

OPRAH: Didn't you ask her and something and she told you none of your business? You asked her who was --

BUSH: I, I, actually what happened was my mother sat me at the end of the table, um, my mother's a jester at times and she said we'll have to put George as far away from you as possible and she said why and I quipped, I guess I'm the black sheep of the family and the Queen said are you the black sheep of the family and I said, I don't know. Do you have any in your family? [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

OPRAH: And she said none of your business.

BUSH: Yeah, she, actually like a good mother she kind of gave me a look and we, we, we respect the Queen a lot and, um, [LAUGHS] I don't know what she thinks about me, but.

OPRAH: Put you in your place. So, lets talk about the day you decided to give up alcohol.

BUSH: Uh, huh.

OPRAH: Uh, when, at the end of the last weeks show somebody asked a question about whether or not, um, alcohol still had any influence in your life whatsoever.

BUSH: I don't drink. Um, uh, a group of us went to, uh, Colorado Springs, Colorado for our 40 birthdays and, um, I had a little too much to drink that night and woke up the next morning and went for a jog, my, I like to exercise a lot and I made up my mind right there on the jog that I was going to quit drinking for the rest of my life and I did. And, um, people ask --

OPRAH: And you haven't had a drink since that day?

BUSH: No I haven't. Of any kind. And people ask why and I guess the best explanation is to say, alcohol was beginning to compete for my affections. Compete for my affections for my wife and my family, um, it was beginning to crowd out my energy and I decided to quit and, uh, it's, uh, one of the best decisions I ever made.

OPRAH: Was, were you ever given an ultimatum? I read that you were.

BUSH: Oh there's a lot of speculation about whether or not --

OPRAH: That Laura said --

BUSH: It's either, it's either, yeah --

OPRAH: Yeah, you say it.

BUSH: It's either you or, you know, or Jack Daniel's.

OPRAH: Is that true?

BUSH: No I don't think it's quite that, listen, I think she got disappointed in some evenings. I was always a fairly disciplined person. I, you know, I didn't get, I wasn't drinking all the time, but, uh, there were some times when she said that, you know, you need to think about what you're doing but she understood. What I understand now and what our society's got to understand, it requires the person involved to make up his or her mind that this is what needs to happen. No one can make up the mind for you.

OPRAH: Everybody has the defining moment. What was yours?

BUSH: Uh, I would say the defining moments in my life were one, marrying Laura and secondly the birth of our twins, um, Laura's watching so I got to be careful about how I prioritize those two, but I would tell you the birth of the twins was a unbelievable moment in our lives.

OPRAH: Look at ya.

BUSH: Yep. They, um, first of all Laura got, became ill. I'll tell you an interesting story. Uh, we were thinking about adopt--, we wanted to have children. We were thinking about adopting and we went to the Gladney Home in Fort Worth, Texas and we were in the process of adopting children and if there had happened to be twins that had been fine too, we put on the application and there's a home visit that occurs and in between the home, the final home visit and our, and working with the Gladney Home Laura became pregnant.

OPRAH: Wow.

BUSH: And it was a fantastic moment and she became ill. She got toxic. Toxemia. And so we had to move from out in west Texas and she moved to the hospital in Dallas and she got on the airplane and she said, these babies are going to be born healthy. She had that west Texas determination. I'm kinda tearing up about it a little bit because it was such a powerful statement by a mother who said these children will come to be. It was such a resolute, powerful, uh, statement of motherhood and when the babies came and she was healthy and they were healthy it was a fabulous moment. And I'll never forget it. It was a, it was a defining moment because I realized that I was responsible as was Laura responsible for these little girls coming up in the world. That we were responsible for loving them and teaching them to read and to surround them with compassion and --

OPRAH: Were you an active participant in their life?

BUSH: Absolutely. Absolutely.

OPRAH: And when, and when they would bring boys home that you didn't like.

BUSH: I was an active participant in their life. [LAUGHS] [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] And still am I want you to know.

OPRAH: You still are. And have they brought, has anybody ever brought a, Barbara or Jenna brought a boy home that you didn't approve of and --

BUSH: No, no, no.

OPRAH: Never happened.

BUSH: No yet.

OPRAH: Okay. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] Well, our next viewer question is about the death penalty. Texas leads the nation in executions 143 prisoners have been put to death since you became governor. And here is a viewer question that addresses that.

MAN: How you plan on reforming the death penalty so that innocent people are not put to death yet those who deserve the punishment receive it?

BUSH: Well that's, that's, uh, what the system should be doing now. And I believe does in the state of Texas. Um.

OPRAH: But what about those 143?

BUSH: What about them? I'm convinced that every one of them were guilty of the crime committed and that they've had full access to the courts of law. That's, that's, that's what the governor does. The governor asks two questions. Innocence or guilt and, uh, whether or not the person has had the full access to the judicial system.

OPRAH: So you think the system as it is now works?

BUSH: I do in Texas I do. I do. And, uh, I do believe that as DNA evidence becomes more and more available, of course we ought to use it. The other day I, uh, in, in my state the governor doesn't have the power to grant full clemency, the governor can grant a 30 day reprieve and I granted a 30 day reprieve to allow an inmate to, to determine, to determine whether or not evidence DNA claim would show him innocent. Would prove, the new DNA evidence would prove his innocence or guilty. Turned out to prove him guilty and, uh, uh, confirmed the guilt.

But I think we ought to use new evidence whenever we find it. That, that is germane to the case.

OPRAH: We'll be back. Describe, we'll be back in just a moment. Back in a moment.

[COMMERCIAL]

OPRAH: One of the, one of the things I remember I think you said in a charge to keep, where you said to your girls, you can't make me stop loving you no matter what you do.

BUSH: So stop trying.

OPRAH: So stop trying. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] About how old were they then?

BUSH: They were just hitting those teenage years.

OPRAH: Yeah, and how did that disrupt or not disrupt the household?

BUSH: Teenage years?

OPRAH: Yes.

BUSH: It was disruptive. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

OPRAH: It was?

BUSH: It was, uh, uh, an unusual experience. I was not well prepared for it. And I don't think any parent is. Um, but, um, they've um, they've come through those years and they'll still probably be humiliated that we're talking about them on national TV.

OPRAH: Beause they, they, they don't like that attention at all.

BUSH: They don't. They're, they're sensitive girls and I can understand why. I, I, I've been the son of a president and a presidential candidate and it's not a pleasant experience. It's much easier to be the candidate than it is the son.

OPRAH: Is it, really?

BUSH: Yeah it is because I, uh, I'm used to all the, the, stuff that is said in the course of a campaign. It just, I've got thick skin.

OPRAH: Because of what happened to your dad.

BUSH: No, no it's because I just don't believe half the stuff that's written or said.

OPRAH: And you don't care what other people think about you.

BUSH: Oh I care what 51 percent of the people think about me. [AUDIENCE LAUGHTER]

OPRAH: Every, everybody has self doubts and feels overwhelmed at times. Tell me about one of those specific, specific times. A story in your life.

BUSH: About what now?

OPRAH: About feeling overwhelmed. Of self doubt and what you did. Everybody has them.

BUSH: I'm sure but you're asking me right here, it's kind of a pressure backed moment. You, I think you should give me a little advanced warning to come up with a moment of self-doubt. Let's see here, um, I'm sure there was self doubt when I got shipped off to school. Going from Texas up east. Uh, and I got up to a place called Phillips Academy Andover in Massachusetts where it was, uh, just a whole different world. A completely different environment from where I was raised and, uh, I, uh, I can remember thinking how, you know, how brilliant all the other kids were and how hard I had to work to catch up and --

OPRAH: Were, were there many times you thought you weren't smart enough?

BUSH: Nah, eventually I realized that smarts are not only, uh, uh, not only whether or not you can write well or whether or not you can do calculus but smart also is instinct in judgment and common sense. And that's a lot of folks in my state who's judgment and instincts and common sense I respect a lot. They may not even have ever gone to college and so smart comes in all different kinds of different ways.

OPRAH: Beause I think, you know, my sense is that the American people want a president who's like us. Who's-- has felt some of the same things that we've felt and what it's like to, to live in the world.

BUSH: I think so.

OPRAH: And also who is smarter than us.

BUSH: Yeah.

OPRAH: Do you fit that bill?

BUSH: Yes. [LAUGHS] [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

OPRAH: Do you think-

BUSH: Especially the way you asked it.

OPRAH: Do you, okay, do you think you're like us and smarter than most folks?

BUSH: Well I don't know, you know, listen, I've got a lot of experience. I know how to lead. I mean I'm well educated but I'm certainly not the kind of person that talks down to people because of my education. I don't think that's what a leader does. I think a leader needs to inspire and unite and you can't inspire and unite by thinking you're smarter than everybody else. At least that's what I've learned as governor of Texas.

OPRAH: But you don't have to think it but it's somewhere you, you know that you are.

BUSH: Well I think people are going to figure it out one way or the other. People, people, yeah, in this business you either trust the people or you don't. I happen to trust people a lot. I don't particularly care for all their decisions like in 92 but I, but I trust the people and I'm going to in this campaign.

OPRAH: Uh, here on the *Oprah* show we like to ask some of our more famous guests, such as yourself, uh, about their favorite things. Okay.

BUSH: Sure.

OPRAH: Okay, we're gonna, you don't have to win a contest.

BUSH: Do I have to answer?

OPRAH: You have to answer. Quickly as possible. First thing comes to your head. Favorite sandwich.

BUSH: Peanut butter and jelly.

OPRAH: On white bread or whole wheat?

BUSH: White.

OPRAH: White. Favorite gift to give?

BUSH: Uh, kiss to my wife. I'll tell ya. Let me tell you the greatest gift I ever gave. Uh, Laura's an SMU graduate, she loves to read. She's all involved in literacy and I gave her the promenade to the SMU library named in her name.

OPRAH: Wow.

BUSH: The Laura Bush promenade leading into the SMU library.

OPRAH: That's a good gift.

BUSH: It is.

OPRAH: Favorite gift you've ever gotten?

BUSH: Uh, tie.

OPRAH: Cuff links. Cuff links. What about the cuff links your dad gave you?

BUSH: Oh the cuff links, thanks.

OPRAH: Okay, go ahead. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] I was thinking that's okay.

BUSH: It was. My, my mother gave me, right before I got sworn in as governor of Texas in 1995 mother gave me a letter from my dad. It had some cuff links that his dad had given him as he went off to war. And, um, it meant a lot.

OPRAH: I thought so. Okay, favorite age or time in your life.

BUSH: Uh, 54 running for president.

OPRAH: Okay. Favorite fast food item.

BUSH: Favorite fast food item, taco.

OPRAH: Favorite, really, favorite thing you can't live without.

BUSH: Favorite thing I cannot live without, gosh, uh, running.

OPRAH: Really? You still run. How, how fast and how long?

BUSH: Running about seven and a half minute miles three miles a day.

OPRAH: Get out.

BUSH: Yeah. Another reason why I should be president. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

OPRAH: Okay, favorite song of all times.

BUSH: Uh, *Wake Up Little Susie*, Buddy Holly.

OPRAH: Okay. Favorite time of day.

BUSH: Did Buddy Holly sing *Wake Up Little Susie*?

OPRAH: I don't know.

BUSH: Everly Brothers. Everly Brothers.

OPRAH: Everly Brothers, okay. Thank you Tobert.

BUSH: I got it before he said it.

OPRAH: Favorite historical figure.

BUSH: Uh, Churchill.

OPRAH: Really. Okay.

BUSH: I love Churchill.

OPRAH: I thought Willie Mays.

BUSH: I love Willie Mays but he's a sports figure.

OPRAH: Okay. Favorite, that's true, favorite dream.

BUSH: Favorite dream? [pretends to put his hand on a Bible, taking the oath of office]

OPRAH: Yeah.

BUSH: [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

OPRAH: So where's the quick wit come from, your mom? Okay. Okay, okay. Favorite prize possession.

BUSH: Ranch.

OPRAH: Really?

BUSH: Um, hum. I love our ranch.

OPRAH: Favorite childhood memory.

BUSH: Uh, Little League Baseball in Midland, Texas. I loved to play in Little League Baseball and, um, we had a little park right behind our house on Sentinel Drive.

OPRAH: Okay.

BUSH: It may not be my favorite picture but

OPRAH: [LAUGHING] *Remembering Your Spirit* is next. Back in a moment.

BUSH: Yeah.

OPRAH: I know.

[COMMERCIAL]

OPRAH: George W. Bush says that his heart and soul are in Texas so no matter where he goes on the campaign trail he's always able to connect with his spirit when he returns to that ranch. Take a look at how George and Laura Bush connect with each other and find some sense of peace in the midst of this high pressure campaign.

[VIDEO]

LAURA BUSH: We actually meet very briefly in the 7th grade and then about 20 years later, we meet at a dinner party that some friends of our had in Midland, Texas.

BUSH: I knew I'd meet a very unusually person, a beautiful person, she captured my fancy as they say in west Texas.

LAURA BUSH: You know were older, we were ready to get married and we were thrilled to find each other. And then we married in three months. I loved his energy. I, I liked that he was funny, uh, that he liked to make people laugh, that he was witty.

BUSH: Well I liked the fact that she would laugh at my lousy jokes.

LAURA BUSH: I thought he was funny.

BUSH: Laura's a very good listener and a person of really good judgment. I didn't realize that when we first got married, I really realize it now here in the middle of a presidential campaign. Her judgment is something I can rely upon. She's got good west Texas values that I treasure a lot. She's a calm in the middle of a pretty significant storm in our life right now.

LAURA BUSH: But we try to take at least one day a week off from the campaign to be with each other and to be at home and do our laundry. [SHE LAUGHS]

BUSH: I like to get up first thing in the morning and bring Laura coffee in the morning. Believe it or not that gives me joy.

LAURA BUSH: That's been our ritual really for our whole marriage, uh, George makes the coffee, brings it back to bed with the newspapers and when the babies were little brought the babies back to bed and I think of those times as the sweetest times in our life when we had these two little babies, one for each of us to hold. I think becoming a parent is a very life changing experience and being responsible for children and loving children, it changes you.

BUSH: I think Laura's helped me understand the need to be a sensitive person and I know raising my children, trying to set a good example for them, has helped me be a better person. I think over the years I've become a more patient person. I think I'm a more giving person.

BUSH: There you go.

LAURA BUSH: Thank you doll.

BUSH: Want to go for a ride? Want to go? Come on.

BUSH: I love Texas. Texas is a place where people can dream big dreams and realize them.

LAURA BUSH: When were here at the ranch we can go for long walks together. That's a very relaxing time for us.

BUSH: It's peaceful. We love just to hang out with each other. When times get tough, um, your family becomes, uh, becomes your haven. In the middle of a campaign when there's all then noise and all the finger pointing, the family is where you find solace and peace. It helps us keep our life in perspective.

LAURA BUSH: Being here where it's so quiet and it's beautiful, being together.

BUSH: This ranch keeps you centered. Keeps you intact with exactly what's important in life.

OPRAH: Thank you for letting us shoot that. Thank you. And that was Millie's daughter.

[COMMERCIAL]

OPRAH: Well for more information on how to register to vote or get voter registration forms from your state, I'm hoping having seen the candidates on this show and many shows you have an opportunity all day long to see the candidates on CNN and all the various channels, uh, that you will exercise your right as an American citizen and vote, vote, vote. Uh, you can go to Oprah.com, uh, to find out how to register if you're not registered in your own area. Remember to vote on November 7th and thank you, Governor George W. Bush.

BUSH: I'm honored.

OPRAH: Say hello to your mom for me. [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

Appendix III: Oprah with Bush
September 11, 2000

OPRAH: Until today I stayed away from politicians. I never felt like I could have a real honest conversation with them. There's this wall that exists between the people and the authentic part of the candidate. This presidential race is so interesting and the closest in 20 years. I thought, 'Okay after 15 years, I need to penetrate that wall.'

Gore is here. And then we'll be live next Tuesday with George W. Bush. And what we hope is, is at the end of these two shows, you'll be able to answer for yourself some of the bigger questions like who do you trust- - who do you trust? You get a sense of a person in an hour. Who feels right for you to be the President of the United States? And it boils down to as a lot of people are saying, who do you like- - who do you like? Please welcome Democratic presidential candidate and Vice President of these United States, Al Gore.

[APPLAUSE/MUSIC]

Thanks. We're live. Thank you. Thanks. Okay, no kiss? I was hoping- -

GORE: Ahhh.

OPRAH: - - for something like, [LAUGHTER] uh- -

GORE: Hey, congratulations. Not, uh- - you know, you brought one Emmy out.

OPRAH: Yeah. I got four. I got four.

GORE: You got four last night. Congratulations.

OPRAH: That belonged to other people. Thank you.

GORE: [APPLAUSE] I think that's great.

OPRAH: And since we're live and I want to cover a lot of things, I was telling the audience about that wall. You're aware of that.

GORE: Yeah, sure.

OPRAH: Yeah. And I'm wondering how with the way the whole campaign is set up, you can avoid being the wall when, you know, for the most part you're summarizing and doing sound bites under such scrutiny.

GORE: Yeah.

OPRAH: And really basically out there grippin' and grinnin' a lot.

GORE: [LAUGHTER] Yeah, yeah, that's it.

OPRAH: Yeah, grippin' and grinnin'.

GORE: Yeah. Well, that's the old way of doing it. And you still have to do a lot of that just because the schedule is, uh- -

OPRAH: You don't think it's outdated though?

GORE: Oh, I do think it's outdated. That's why, for example, later today I'm gonna be, uh, in downstate Illinois doing, uh, a town hall meeting on education. Uh, I do- - I like to do I call them open meetings- -

OPRAH: Uh-hmm.

GORE: - - where I invite, uh, undecided voters who, uh, uh, are not partisan, not, you know, scripted. They don't have some canned pitch to make. But really to ask what's on their hearts. And, uh- - and I generally stay there until the last person, uh, leaves. Some- - one of them lasted, uh, four hours and fifteen minutes. And, uh- -

OPRAH: How are you holding up because- -

GORE: We're not going do that today.

OPRAH: Okay. I know Labor Day you campaigned for 27 hours- -

GORE: Yeah, yeah.

OPRAH: - - straight. I mean how do you do that and still remain sane?

GORE: Well, there's one secret to that. If you believe in what you're doing- -

OPRAH: Yeah.

GORE: - - then you get more energy. You know what? You- - you know this very well, because you- - you went through a big change in- - in your life I know.

OPRAH: Which one you talking about? I had a few. [LAUGHTER]

GORE: So have I- - so have I. But I was thinking about the time when, uh- - maybe it was, uh, when you were doing *Beloved*. I don't know. But you- -

OPRAH: Yes.

GORE: - - when you decided to change the direction of your show.

OPRAH: Yes, yes, yes.

GORE: And, uh, you- - you- - I- - I read somewhere where you wrote that prior to that, you were feeling exhausted. You thought- -

OPRAH: Right.

GORE: - - you were gonna quit the show. And then you- - you told your audience, hey, take a chance with me. Let's try to do this differently. But- - but when you started believing in what you were doing, then now look at you. You're, uh- - you're, uh, a one-person media c- - conglomerate now. And, uh- -

OPRAH: [LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE] Thank you. But I understand what you're saying. I understand what you're saying what it's about.

GORE: But- - but- - but let me make my point. J- - in the same way- -

OPRAH: Without being on purpose, right?

GORE: - - that you've got energy from believing in what you're doing, I really believe in what I'm doing. I think that we've got to make some changes in this country. We've have to recognize that some things are going well. We need to keep creating jobs. But people are working harder. Parents need more help in raising their kids. They need more time. Partners and spouses need more time with one another.

OPRAH: I'm going to ask you about that. Let me ask you this right now. What do you think is the most important contribution, really, a president can make in our lives? Really, what can you do?

GORE: I think a president has to do three things. First and most importantly has to communicate to the country a clear vision of what we're all about and where we're going. Secondly has to communicate clear goals, and put priorities on them, s- - and convince people to buy into them. And third, communicate and maintain a set of values upon which decisions ought to be based in our country, uh, and try to persuade people to- - to buy into that. Like today, uh, Joe Lieberman and I have talked about, uh, trying to give parents, uh, more help in protecting their kids from entertainment that, uh, they think's inappropriate.

OPRAH: I know one of the things that I l- - I- - I- - I particularly liked about your speech, you said, uh- - that I took away from it. Now since this is my show, I'm just taking away what I like. [LAUGHTER] When you all have your show, you can do with it. You said, I want you to know I believe we must challenge a culture with too much meanness and not enough meaning.

GORE: Yeah.

OPRAH: And as president, I'll stand with you for a goal that we share to give more power back to the parents to choose what your own children are exposed to, so you can pass on your family's basic lessons of responsibility and decency. Now I thought- - beautiful quote. I collect quotes. I love the meanness and the meaning and the culture. But I don't know how you're act- - going to execute that.

GORE: Well, it's not about censorship. It's about citizenship and that includes corporate citizenship. You know, w- - what you did in concentrating on meaning- -

OPRAH: Uh-hmm.

GORE: - - is something that a lot of people in the entertainment industry who are parents and grandparents want to do.

OPRAH: But how do you actually formulate that kind of change in society? It's one thing to say it. It's another thing to do it.

GORE: It is. Uh, well, specifically- -

OPRAH: Yeah.

GORE: - - uh, Tipper started twenty years ago, uh, educating [LAUGHTER] me about- - about, uh, why parents need more help. And she was successful in convincing the recording industry to give, uh, warnings to parents- -

OPRAH: Uh-hmm.

GORE: - - when material is inappropriate. Now, uh, Joe Lieberman and I are- - are following up on that to, uh, try to persuade all the companies in that industry to abide by what they said they would do. Eighty-five percent of the young kids who go to get these, uh, uh, albums that are inappropriate for them- -

OPRAH: They're called CDs now.

GORE: CDs. [LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE] You know- -

OPRAH: There're been CDs for a long time. I know we come from the album era but okay.

GORE: I know- - I know. Yeah. Well, you know, w- - since I shifted over to the, uh, MP3, I- - I- - [LAUGHTER] but, uh, seriously, I had that exact same exchange with Tipper just a few days ago. They're called CDs now. [LAUGHTER] Um.

OPRAH: So that's one thing. But there's, uh- - there is- - I think I sensed particularly from doing these shows all this- - these years, there is a meanness that people are disturbed by.

GORE: There is, yeah.

OPRAH: We're not only disturbed by it. We're just sort of fed up with it.

GORE: Yeah, yeah. And it's, uh- -

OPRAH: But I don't know what government can do about that?

GORE: Well, a lot of it has to be done privately. And what we're calling for in this case is, uh, industry self-restrain and self-regulation. And- -

OPRAH: Not censorship?

GORE: No, not censorship at all. It's- - it's about parenting, uh.

OPRAH: I want to know fr- - from where we sit today and everybody's talking about the dead heat. Do you feel the dead heat?

GORE: Yeah.

OPRAH: You're feeling the pressure of the heat?

GORE: I don't feel the pressure. I li- - I mean I like the competition. I think it's good for the country.

OPRAH: Wouldn't you rather be fifteen points, twenty points out ahead really?

GORE: [LAUGHTER] Well, uh, you know, I've run both ways.

OPRAH: Well, come on. [LAUGHTER]

GORE: And I prefer unopposed.

OPRAH: Yeah, yeah.

GORE: I prefer unopposed. But, uh- - [LAUGHTER] but I think, uh- - [APPLAUSE]

OPRAH: So as we sit here today, what difference is it going to make in our lives whether or not I vote for you or Mr. Bush? Why should I vote for you?

GORE: I'm for people not the powerful. I've never been hesitant to stand up to- - to, uh, powerful interests that don't necessarily have the American people's best interest at heart. Um, I- - I know something about the job of president. It's the only position filled by someone who has to fight for all the people, not just the well connected and the few. Uh, I want to keep our prosperity going but make sure that it enriches not just a few but all of our families. And I think that it's time to- - to invest in education, and healthcare, and middleclass tax cuts, uh, uh, a- - and, uh, retirement security.

OPRAH: Ed- - education meaning put the four-year-olds in pre-kindergarten and have that university for everybody?

GORE: My- - my number one proposal is to have high quality universal preschool for every child and every family, in every community [APPLAUSE] all across the county.

OPRAH: I have an idea for you- - I have an idea for you. You know, over the years, we've done hundreds of shows if not thousands about parenting. And people who have children are a great part of our viewing audience. And I think it's the number one thing that comes up over and over- -

GORE: Yeah.

OPRAH: - - again. And people make jokes about it. You know, you've heard people say, well, gee, there's no manual for it. There's no way we're [LAUGHTER] gonna know how to t- - I'm thinking there needs to be a universal, unified teaching system in the schools- -

GORE: Yeah.

OPRAH: - - to teach people how to parent.

GORE: Yeah.

OPRAH: You know, maybe we could remove Home Ec or combine with Home Ec. [LAUGHTER] Nobody's makin' aprons anymore. What do you think of that idea? [LAUGHTER]

GORE: I think it's a great idea. I think that parenting education is an idea whose time has come.

OPRAH: To put in the schools, like in high school. That's a course that you take.

GORE: Sure, sure, sure. The curricula, uh- - the curriculum in a school is always locally determined. But I- - I- - I am very much in favor of parenting education. For one thing, we all see- - you know, the older I get, the more I, uh, see the- - the- - the continuing impact of generational patterns.

OPRAH: Do you need the glasses yet? I don't see you pulling out the glasses.

GORE: Uh, I- - I- - I sometimes wear a contact for distance.

OPRAH: Okay, okay.

GORE: And I- - I actually have two sets of glasses, one for reading and one for distance.

OPRAH: So you do need them now?

GORE: But- - but you're- - you're right in the eight foot comfort zone.
[LAUGHTER]

OPRAH: When we come back, we'll break down more of that wall and go beyond Al Gore the politician and get to Al Gore the man. And, you know, we have to talk about that kiss. We have to talk about [LAUGHTER] the kiss. We'll be right back.
[MUSIC/APPLAUSE]

DNC CLIP PLAYS

OPRAH: [MUSIC/APPLAUSE] Well, it's our fifteenth season premiere. And we're live in Chicago with Vice President Al Gore. That was definitely a little peak behind the wall we were talking about. You know, everybody- - you know, that kiss was so analyzed across- -

GORE: I know. I was s- - I- - I was really surprised by that.

OPRAH: Now I have a theory about it. I- - those of you who, you know, are in relationships and have been fortunate enough to be kissed lately, [LAUGHTER] for all the people who said that that was fake, everybody knows that you cannot even get your jaw to move that way [LAUGHTER] if you are not accustomed to doin' it. You know, those of you who are now in the pecking stage where you just, mmm, peck, mmm. It would take a lot to even get your lips to do that.

GORE: Yeah.

OPRAH: Yeah. I want to see it again, because I think more than the kiss is the hug. [LAUGHTER] Let's have the tape We have the hug. Now notice the hug. Now it's a full body pull me in. [APPLAUSE] Pull me in. Whoaaaa, baby.

GORE: Uh, you know- -

OPRAH: Now what- - what did you say to her? What were you saying? I was trying to read your lips. I- - I could read her saying, I'm glad you liked it. What- - what did you say?

GORE: [LAUGHTER] Uh, I- - I- - I just said that she- - she- - she had- -

OPRAH: Go ahead.

GORE: I can't re- - exactly remember what I said. [LAUGHTER] I- - I can remember what I felt.

OPRAH: What did you feel?

GORE: What I felt was just, uh, an overwhelming surge of emotion. Thi- - this was, uh, a great moment in our lives. I mean it's not as if, uh, I got there by myself.

OPRAH: Uh-hmm.

GORE: This has been, uh, a partnership. And she is my soul mate. And, [APPLAUSE] uh, that's- - it's not that complicated. And I was standing offstage, uh, with my- - my buddy, Tommy Lee Jones, who had done, uh, uh, a little speech earlier. And the two of us were watching- - we couldn't see, uh, her directly. But we could see her on the screen above. And she had just finished showing all these, uh, s- - uh, pictures of our kids- -

OPRAH: Uh-hmm.

GORE: - - and our grandson and our life together. And I was just really welling up with emotion.

OPRAH: You were full, as the people say.

GORE: I was full. And, uh- - [LAUGHTER] and, uh, when I walked out, the crowd was all, uh, expressing emotion. And when I got to the stage, I mean, uh, it was just the most natural thing in- - in the world to me to- - to express my feelings toward her.

OPRAH: Would you say it was calculated? A lot of people said calculated.

GORE: Well, some- - one of the reporters asked me afterwards, were you trying to send a message? [LAUGHTER] And- - and, uh- - and I- - and I thought I was trying to send a message to Tipper and. [LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE]

OPRAH: One of our viewers has a question for you. Roll that.

WOMAN ON TAPE: Al, you know, I noticed you're a little stiff sometimes. I just wanna know what makes you happy. What puts a smile on your face? What gets you going? What do you enjoy?

GORE: Um. [LAUGHTER]

OPRAH: Where's she from? [LAUGHTER] Yeah.

GORE: I didn't understand the part about being stiff sometimes. [LAUGHTER] Uh, what gets me going is my family, Tipper, my kids, my grandson. Uh, we- - we've always been very, uh, family-oriented. And, uh, we didn't become a part of the cocktail party scene in- - in Washington. And whenever we had time off, we were just really together. And that's, uh- - that's one of the- - the- - the ti- - the- - those are the times when I find the most joy in my life.

OPRAH: Let's talk about the stiff thing. I mean do you think- - are- - are you sick of it?

GORE: Uh- -

OPRAH: No, really. Are you sick of it?

GORE: No. I mean, uh, you know, they're gonna say something. So that's, uh, uh- - compared to the alternatives, [LAUGHTER] yeah, yeah, that's- - it's okay.

OPRAH: That's what somebody said the other day. If that's the worst you can say about a person- -

GORE: Yeah, that's okay. But, you know, I think that I- - I'm, uh- - I'm not, uh, a natural politician in the sense of s- - backslapping and whatnot. And I'm a little bit more of a private person than a lot of people in the profession. And I- -I think I absorbed a lot of it from my dad who was- - had a very formal manner in- - in public.

OPRAH: Uh-huh. Because he was so young when he started. He wore coats all the time to make himself look older.

GORE: Well, he came from a hard scrabble, uh, poverty, uh, background. And he was told early in his life that, uh, that somebody in- - who was in the Congress oughtta- - my dad was in the Congress, the House and Senate for thirty-two years. And he- - uh, he- - he was told, you know, you need to look dignified, and presentable, and formal and all that. And, uh, now the older I get, I think the more successful I've become in trying to shed some of that.

OPRAH: Loosen up. Do you think part of it is because- - I saw this on a documentary where I think Kristen- - about standing behind the president, looking so stiff all the time.

GORE: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

OPRAH: And so my- - my producers and I were talking last night. We were saying the next time that happens to you and the president says something you agree with, instead of just standing there being polite, since you've been raised to be so polite, you should just go, yeahhh, man. [LAUGHTER]

GORE: Yesss.

OPRAH: Or just, yesss. Or high five them, you know, like Bill. That's exactly what I'm sayin'. [LAUGHTER]

GORE: Well, you know, it's, uh- - it's, uh- - it's interesting because I didn't ever get that comment very much before I was vice president. And there is something in that role where you just stand. It's an honorable way to serve. You know, you serve your country by strengthening somebody else's hand. But, uh, you know, I've been there and done that. But when- - when, uh, I was doing that, I think that did, uh, convey some of that, uh, imagery.

OPRAH: Yeah, that you were stiff.

GORE: Yeah.

OPRAH: So you think it's a bad rap for you or an unfair rap?

GORE: Well, I- - I mean I know myself well enough to know that there is actually some truth to it [LAUGHTER] so, uh.

OPRAH: Okay, I wanted to ask you, there's a point in everybody's life when you mature and you start to take responsibility for yourself as, uh- -

GORE: Yeah.

OPRAH: - - as a man. There's, uh- - for a lot of guys, I've heard that there's a defining moment. What was that for you?

GORE: Well, when I, uh, referred earlier to a big change that you went through, you said, which one? I- - I can say the same thing- -

OPRAH: Uh-hmm.

GORE: - - here, which one? I'll point to just two. Uh, one was when our first child was born. Uh, I had come back from Vietnam. I was working as a newspaper reporter. And incidentally, um, this one was a star in Nashville in the broadcast media starting when she was eighteen-years-old at WVOL radio. I was the newspaper reporter in Nashville when I came back from Vietnam.

OPRAH: Do you really remember that or did you just --

GORE: Uh, what I remember- - uh, what I remember, [LAUGHTER] is when you- - two years later when you went to WTVF. Because we actually covered some stories together. She was just a kid, of course, uh, I mean literally. You were at Tennessee State then, weren't you?

OPRAH: I was at Tennessee State. I was probably nineteen or twenty.

GORE: I remember us- -

OPRAH: See, I remember you, but I didn't think you would remember me. So I wasn't gonna just [LAUGHTER] say- - you know, like people say, remember me.

GORE: Yeah.

OPRAH: No, I wasn't gonna do that.

GORE: Yeah, yeah, right, yeah. [LAUGHTER] Yeah, yeah. Yeah, that- - like- - like- - like- -

OPRAH: So then we were actually on stories together.

GORE: I mean the fact that people did remember is probably one of the reasons you were the youngest, uh, anchor- -

OPRAH: Yeah, I was.

GORE: - - in Nashville.

OPRAH: Oh Channel Five.

GORE: And the- - the- - the first African American anchor in Nashville. No- - no, people tended to remember you, Oprah. [LAUGHTER] Uh, but I remember specifically one, uh, crime scene that we went to together. And, uh, there were a couple of other reporters out there. I was for the newspaper. You were with, uh, the Channel Five there. And, uh, in any case, about that time, our first child was born. And that was, uh, a time for me to really take stock and, uh, take more responsibility in my life. You know, men mat- - mature more slowly- -

OPRAH: Yes, they do.

GORE: - - than woman up through- - [LAUGHTER] up through the age of fifty-two is all I know, uh, uh, about personally. It may go on for a while. But, uh, that was one big- -

OPRAH: So that when Corinna was born?

GORE: Yeah. And then another big turning point for me was, uh- - was after, uh, I was in the Senate when our youngest child was involved in an accident. And I've talked about this before. But it was, uh, a real wakeup call in every- - in every way. And I changed my priorities totally. Uh, we have four children, and we've always spend lots and lots of time with them. But [SIGH] I had become a little bit, uh, of a workaholic in the sense that my career had drawn me, uh, more and more into devoting all my energy and time to it.

OPRAH: So Tipper was raising the children basically by herself?

GORE: Uh, well, uh, I wouldn't go that far. But- - but, uh, she would certainly- -

OPRAH: But would she?

GORE: [LAUGHTER] Yeah, yeah, she would. [LAUGHTER] Yeah. And, uh.

OPRAH: So how did it change you? I know I've heard- - heard you say that that was a life-changing moment. What changed for you?

GORE: Everything, uh, my priorities. Uh, I remember in the hos- - uh, sitting in, uh, the hospital, looking at my schedule book for the first time. And all these things for the next month that ha- - had felt so weighty when I put ěem on the schedule. [SIGH] When I exhale, they just blew off the schedule light as feathers. They didn't matter anymore. It was a great lesson for me. And, uh, now that's- - family is first. And nothing goes onto the schedule until after all the- - the- - the family time and personal time. You gotta make time with your- -

OPRAH: I don't see how you're gettin' it with 27 hours straight of campaigning, but we'll talk about that when we come back.

GORE: Yeah.

OPRAH: We'll talk to the Vice President about personal challenges he's faced as a father and as a husband. Back in a moment. [MUSIC/APPLAUSE]

[COMMERCIALS]

GORE: [MUSIC/APPLAUSE] This is when I first ran for, uh, president. We had a family meeting. And Kristen wrote the good points and the bad points w- - as we made the decision. Uh, dad's decision, good points. One, wants to do it. [LAUGHTER] Two, good chance. Now here are the bad points. Number one, would not be here a lot, uh, would not like to have social security around all the time. [LAUGHTER]

OPRAH: We're live with Vice President Al Gore. That was part of a documentary by director Spike Jones called *I Made This*. So did the family vote this time? I love that. I don't want social security following us.

GORE: Yeah, we did. Yeah, Secret Service, social security, [LAUGHTER] it all seems the same to, uh- - to a six-year-old. Um- -

OPRAH: Did the family make the decision?

GORE: Yeah, yeah, the family has been- - yes, we did vote. We had long discussions. And they're all very supportive. And, uh, our- - our two oldest daughters, Corinna and Kristen, are- - are out on the campaign trail quite a bit making speeches. And they've- - uh, the- - we've never, you know, urged them to do that. We've given em all the space that they need. But it- - it really touches me that each- - in their own way, each child has been very, very, uh, helpful and supportive. And, uh, it's a family decision. It has to be. You know, you can't do anything important in life without- - without doing it, uh, in the context of family.

OPRAH: If there came a time in your presidency where the presidency- - if you're elected and it was obviously toxic to your family, would you choose between your job and your family?

GORE: I would change the job.

OPRAH: You would the job?

GORE: I would change the nature of the job.

OPRAH: You would?

GORE: Absolutely.

OPRAH: What were you doing when, uh, Tipper, who had been on our show and other shows talking about her depression, when she first let you know that she was depressed, what was your first reaction?

GORE: Uh, to- - to, uh- - to feel the- - the love and search for the healing. And- - and I was fortunate in that she has a graduate degree in psychology. And even as she was going through that experience, she was able to teach me and the kids.

OPRAH: How did that show itself in the house? Because as a vice president, you just can't phone in sick or can you? You can't say won't be in today. My wife is sick. Or can you?

GORE: Uh, sure, sure.

OPRAH: Okay.

GORE: Actually, as, uh- - a- - a- - a- - as vice president, uh, I had more flexibility than a lot of people who are, uh, working other jobs have. And I'm under no illusions about that. But I think that we have to change our society and our culture to honor families and to give moms, and dads, and daughters and sons, uh, uh, the- - the chance, the flexibility, the respect, and the time to- - to live out their lives in the context of their families.

OPRAH: I noticed you said that in your, um- - in your speech.

GORE: Yeah.

OPRAH: Your acceptance speech. You say, we will honor families by expanding childcare, and after school care, and family and medical leave so- -

GORE: Right.

OPRAH: - - working parents have the help they need to care for their children. Because one of the most important jobs of all is raising our children. And we'll support the rights of parents to decide that one of them will stay home- -

GORE: Right.

OPRAH: - - longer with their babies.

GORE: If they wish to.

OPRAH: If that's what they believe is right. Now I heard that and I thought, how is that going to happen? Are you going to give a tax cut to the person who's staying home?

GORE: Yeah, yeah.

OPRAH: That's how you're gonna do it, give a tax cut? [APPLAUSE]

GORE: Absolutely. Right. And- -

OPRAH: And how- - okay. The next questions is, how long before that happens? So for the woman who's looking to vote for you today, is her child gonna be seventeen before that is- - is allowed to happen?

GORE: Well, uh, I- - I would hope to do that right off the bat. I mean this is, uh- - this is the most important thing, to help families live their lives and impart their values the way they- - they choose to. You know, we- - we are- - we- - we got off the track in- - in our country in properly honoring the- - the individual. I mean that's- - the freedom of the individual is our bedrock. But we kinda lost track for a while the- - of the truth that we are all part of something larger than ourselves.

OPRAH: Uh-hmm.

GORE: We're part of our families, our communities, uh, just as you've helped revitalize this neighborhood where we're located.

OPRAH: Uh-hmm.

GORE: That gives meaning to the work that you do here. All of us celebrate our joys and deal with our disappointments in the emotional context of our families. If you're an employee and y- - you're sittin' at your desk or- - or, uh, workin', uh, someplace on the job worried about, uh, one of your children, you're not gonna be able to give the- - the best of yourself to- - to your job.

OPRAH: And you think you can do that in the next four years?

GORE: Yeah, I do.

OPRAH: Uh-hmm.

GORE: Every- - every year for nine years now, Tipper and I have had an annual conference, a two-day national conference on family policy. Uh, and I- - I think that we've got to- - to put families at the center, family and faith.

OPRAH: You have a whole book about it. You --

GORE: Yeah. Joe Lieberman and I just put out this, uh, economic plan called Prosperity for America's Families. And the easiest way to get it, incidentally, is at - - at al Gore.com on the- -

OPRAH: Oh, you have a dot com too. Okay.

GORE: - - on the Internet. Yeah, that's right. I don't have, uh, a magazine or a publishing house or- - [LAUGHTER] but, uh.

OPRAH: Touche. Okay. More with- -

GORE: I don't- - I don't need- - I don't have red boots, uh, [LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE] uh. Aren't they nice?

OPRAH: Yeah. [MUSIC/APPLAUSE] All right. More with Vice President Gore when we come back.

[COMMERCIALS]

OPRAH: [MUSIC] So we're live with, uh, Vice President Al Gore. Uh, here's a good online question from one of our viewers.

VIEWER: I am Brianne from Salt Lake City, Utah. What do you believe is the greatest problem America faces today?

GORE: I think the- - the greatest problem is, uh, the fact that we- - we need more meaning in our national life. Uh, we need more people to believe in this country and to believe in our ability as a people to make it what it's supposed to be. Uh, this country i- - is what we make it. And we have the power because of our- - our freedom. But there are a lot of people who- - who, uh, kinda stay arms length from the political process because, you know, it's politics.

OPRAH: Uh-hmm.

GORE: And- - and it is politics, but we can change politics if we have enough people who are willing to push past the fear of disillusionment, uh, and disappointment, and do what our- - our founders did and what each generation has done, and really seizing the opportunity to make this country what it's supposed to be.

OPRAH: And we live in a country- - something that you said, uh, and have said earlier- - where elderly people shouldn't have to choose between food and medicine.

GORE: Absolutely. We need a prescription [APPLAUSE] drug benefit under Medicare.

OPRAH: Yeah, you- - you talked about- - you talk about drug benefit, yep.

GORE: For all seniors.

OPRAH: Yes.

GORE: Not just- - not just for the poorest of the poor. We're talking about middleclass seniors who are now- - I've talked- - I- - I talked with someone in a nursing home last week, uh, whose nurse told me that he uses a walker. And he doesn't really need to. Uh, but- - but he can't afford the heart medicine and the blood predder- - blood pressure medicine and then still afford the Vieox for the arthritis pain. So he uses a walker because he can't afford to control the pain. Now I- - I've talked with people who had literally choosed between medicine and food.

OPRAH: You- - you talked about Jacqueline Johnson, macaroni and cheese, macaroni and cheese.

GORE: Right, yeah. I met her in St. Louis. And she had come from the wholesale foods store, and they had a sale on macaroni and cheese. And she was eating it at every meal. This is a woman who was a nurse and cared for people all through her career, a beautiful woman. She's now in her seventies and- - and needs care herself- - uh, she needs to care for herself. And she can't afford her medicine and still, uh, have dignity and a high quality of life. Listen, this is the generation that won World War II and brought us through the depression. There are mothers, and fathers, and- - and grandparents and they should not have to choose between medicine and food. [APPLAUSE] And if the drug companies don't like it, that's tough. Let's do it.

OPRAH: An audience question, where's, uh, Karen Magninson? Where are you Karen? Karen Magninson's question is, what's your greatest fear?

VIEWER: Yeah. What is your greatest fear in regards to personal or work?

GORE: Hmm? That's, uh- - that's a really thoughtful question. I don't have a lotta- - a lot of fears. But I guess if I had to single one out, it would be the- - the fear of, uh, forgetting, uh, the most important things in life. When you get, uh, rushed and hurried, to focus on the- - the busy day, uh, you can forget wh- - wh- - what is really the most im- - important thing. And, uh, to me, my- - my faith and family are most important. Uh, somebody told me one time, um, speaking of faith, that we're- - we're not, uh, uh, human beings, uh, who occasionally have a spiritual experience. We're spiritual beings having, uh, a human experience. [APPLAUSE] And I think we shouldn't forget that. I believe that.

OPRAH: Aneese- - Aneese Rosenthal, where are you? Aneese Rosenthal?

VIEWER: Hi.

OPRAH: She- - she says she can't imagine living under such scrutiny, uh, herself, her family. How do you handle it? Do you- - are you at a point now where it doesn't matter what people think?

GORE: Uh, well- - well I- - you know, uh- -

GORE: I'm asking people to vote for me in November. [LAUGHTER] So I would say, uh, uh, no. But- - but, you know- -

OPRAH: I mean from the point of taking things personally.

GORE: The criticism?

OPRAH: Yeah, the criticism.

GORE: Yeah, yeah. I mean, you know, you- - your skin does get thick after a while. And, uh, I've taken advice from Tipper. [MUSIC] Uh, and if there's, uh, you know, uh, negative, uh, stories, just don't read it.

OPRAH: She says she doesn't. She doesn't.

GORE: Yeah, she doesn't.

OPRAH: But your people read and tell you about it, right?

GORE: If you really need to know. You seldom need to know.

OPRAH: Coming up, a side of Al Gore, uh, I know you've never seen. We'll be right back. I know you've never seen this. [MUSIC] Back.

OPRAH: [MUSIC] Here's a side of the pric- - Vice President I know you haven't seen. I've asked these questions of plenty of famous faces over the years but never a presidential candidate. It's call- - what we call favorite things.

GORE: Umm.

OPRAH: It's not a contest. You're not gonna win anything. [LAUGHTER] It has nothing to do with policies. It's just- -

GORE: It's just not that *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*

OPRAH: No, it's not. [LAUGHTER] It's just, uh- - just for us to get an insight and to see how much- -

GORE: Yeah.

OPRAH: - - like us you are. Okay. Your favorite movie of all times?

GORE: Hmm, *Local Hero*.

OPRAH: Favorite cereal?

GORE: Oprah.

OPRAH: Favorite cereal?

GORE: Oh, I thought you meant serialized TV show.

[OVERLAP]

OPRAH: No, no. Well, that's [LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE] good. Favorite cereal?

GORE: Um, Wheaties. [LAUGHTER]

OPRAH: For real.

GORE: Yeah.

OPRAH: Wheaties? [LAUGHTER] Okay. When's the last time you had some?

GORE: Uh, it's been a while. I don't- - I- - I typically don't eat, uh, cereal in the morning now but- - but sometimes I do. When I do, I like Wheaties.

OPRAH: Okay. You do like Wheaties. Okay.

GORE: Yeah.

OPRAH: I'm challenging you on the Wheaties question. [LAUGHTER] Uh, favorite- - favorite book- -

GORE: What- - what- - what? You think I'm gonna- -

OPRAH: Favorite book of all times- - favorite book of all time?

GORE: Hmm? Uh, in addition to the Bible, everybody has to say that.

OPRAH: Okay.

GORE: Would- - w- - uh, maybe, um, uh, *The Red and the Black*.

OPRAH: *The Red and the Black*.

GORE: Yeah.

OPRAH: Okay, favorite subject in school?

GORE: Hmm? Science.

OPRAH: Favorite teacher?

GORE: [LAUGHTER] Uh, Dean Stambaugh who was my art teacher.

OPRAH: Okay.

GORE: I paint.

OPRAH: Okay, okay. Favorite quote?

GORE: Hmm, uh, Bob Dylan, those who are not busy being born are busy dying.
[APPLAUSE]

OPRAH: Favorite time of year?

GORE: Uh, springtime.

OPRAH: Favorite thing to sleep in?

GORE: A bed. [LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE]

OPRAH: Okay.

GORE: You get the picture?

OPRAH: I got it. I got the picture. Okay. Uh, all time favorite musical group or album?

GORE: Beatles.

OPRAH: Beatles, okay. [APPLAUSE] Uh, favorite indulgence?

GORE: Hmm? Oh, going to the lake near our home in Tennessee on a houseboat and just, uh, water skiing with the kids and, uh, floating and swimming. That's the - - that's, uh, probably my favorite thing.

OPRAH: Favorite meal?

GORE: Hmm? Chinese.

OPRAH: Okay. And favorite childhood memory?

GORE: Hmm? Uh, playing baseball with my dad.

OPRAH: Nice. We'll be back. Coming up, between running for president and raising a family, how the Gores stay connected to the spirit of their marriage, [MUSIC] next. Very good. [APPLAUSE]

[PAUSE]

OPRAH: [MUSIC] You know, everyday on this show- -

GORE: If I get started, I might forget I'm a spirit- - uh, uh- -

OPRAH: Right. Moment.

GORE: A human experience.

OPRAH: No.

GORE: Go ahead.

OPRAH: We're talking about don't get him started on the opponent. He'll be here next week. Okay? Now you know everyday on this show we do Spirit.

GORE: Yeah.

OPRAH: We do Remembering Your Spirit, because we believe that that's what people should do.

GORE: Yeah.

OPRAH: While the Gores continue along the campaign trail, they're sure to spend many days and nights apart. And today's Remembering Your Spirit they shared with us. We found them on the road, how it is the spirit of the marriage that keeps them connected to each other and their family even through all of this. Take a look.

TIPPER GORE: [MUSIC] We- - we're introduced by a mutual friend. And I remember being very struck by him. I just thought that he was very handsome, and very [LAUGHTER] witty, and very, um, charismatic.

GORE: I was smitten thoroughly.

TIPPER GORE: Yeah.

GORE: And got her number.

TIPPER GORE: Yeah.

GORE: And called her up and asked her for a date that following weekend.

TIPPER GORE: Right. And I accepted. I was very excited that he called. And I think it's fair to say that we've been together ever since that time. When the children were young, we decided we're gonna take, uh, one night a week and go out to dinner, just the two of us.

GORE: Uh-hmm.

TIPPER GORE: We figure out ways to kind of reignite, uh, reconnect.

GORE: Uh-hmm.

TIPPER GORE: Um, and I think that's really important. [APPLAUSE]

GORE: Yeah, you have to make the time. And when you have such, uh, incredible demands on your time in a presidential campaign, fifty states, all different kinds of priorities, you just have to lay down the law with the people that you empower to, uh, make up the schedule to make sure that, um, we have time for one another, time as a family, time with the children.

TIPPER GORE: For the days that we're apart, right now during the, um- - the campaign, he will call me everyday at a certain- - usually at a certain time.

GORE: We actually schedule.

TIPPER GORE: Now we have to schedule that. We didn't used to have to schedule it.

GORE: But it really works extremely well. That's respectful of one another, because both of us- -

TIPPER GORE: Yeah.

GORE: - - bring the same set of expectations to the call. We are lucky and we're - we're aware of that. I've especially been lucky, because Tipper's gotta graduate degree in psychology. And she has the vocabulary and- -

TIPPER GORE: Or have applied it. [LAUGHTER]

GORE: - - and, uh- - and experience. Yeah, I'm, uh- - I'm her project. I gave her a bracelet, uh, a few years ago with an inscription on the inside of it, to the bravest person I know. And, uh, that's true. She's a very brave, courageous person. And it's the kind of courage that, um, i- - is hard to explain unless you're there and see it. It's- - it's- - it's a spiritual courage to, uh- - to do the right thing. And I'm inspired by that. In many ways, the feeling that we have for one another is deeper and more intense now even than during the first romance. And we've been lucky in that, uh, even though we met when we [LAUGHTER] were very young, we've been able to grow together and stay connected.

TIPPER GORE: Uh-hmm.

GORE: Even as we've changed. We're very- - in many ways we're very different people, uh, each of us from when we first met. But we've made the journey together, and that's a source of great joy.

OPRAH: And the source of [APPLAUSE] that great kiss. That's great.

GORE: Hmm, hmm, hmm.

OPRAH: We'll be right back. [MUSIC/APPLAUSE]

OPRAH: [MUSIC] Next Tuesday we'll be live with, uh, your opponent, George Bush. And for information on how to register to vote- - I'm hoping all of you will- - or to get voter registration forms for your state, you can go to oprah.com. I thank you, Mr. Vice President.

GORE: Thank you.

OPRAH: You know, Jeffrey Katzenberg had told me that you were a really fun, funny guy.

GORE: Um, hard to believe.

OPRAH: Hard to believe. [APPLAUSE] But I believe he was right.

GORE: Yeah. Ohh.

OPRAH: I believe he was right. Thank you for this hour.

GORE: Thank you for having me. And thank you all for- - [APPLAUSE] for being -

OPRAH: Really great.

GORE: Thank you.

OPRAH: [APPLAUSE/LAUGHTER] Good, I get a hug. [MUSIC]

Appendix IV: *Queen Latifah* with Al Gore

October 26, 2000

LATIFAH: Welcome to Queen Latifah on location from Betendorf Iowa. In the house. Today's guest, Vice President Al Gore is here. Now there's just six days left in this presidential campaign, and we wanted to talk to the Vice President. So we had to catch up to him right here on the campaign trail. This is a unique opportunity for all of us to ask the man who may be our next president questions on issues important to us, right? -All right. This is also a chance for the vice president to address an audience of young Americans, and that's you, and that's you. The single group of people least likely to vote. It's time to turn that around, do you not agree? -[APPLAUSE] Okay. So let's get to it. Give it up for the 45th Vice President of these United States, Al Gore. Woo! [LAUGHTER]

GORE: Thank you. All right. Thank you very much.

LATIFAH: Thank you for being here. Woo!

GORE: Thank you for having me. All right.

LATIFAH: Oh please, have a seat. Get comfortable. [LAUGHTER]

GORE: Thank you for having me on your show.

LATIFAH: Oh, thank you so much for being here. What should I call you? Should I call you uh--?

GORE: Well, you know that Paul Simon song, *You Can Call me Al*.

LATIFAH: You can call me Al. all right. Al. I feel privileged.

GORE: [LAUGHTER]

LATIFAH: I will call you Al. well, thank you for letting us jump on the campaign trail with you, and do this, this is

GORE: Thanks for coming out to Betendorf, great community.

LATIFAH: That's right.

GORE: Part of the Quad cities. -

LATIFAH: That's right. -Now, this is an audience of people, many under the age of 25, and a lot of them don't feel like they can relate to either candidate. What can we tell them, or what can you tell them, to help get inspired to go out and vote.

GORE: Well, you can make a difference, and you ought to know that. This is the closest election in 40 years. Since the time when John Kennedy won by a, a, a margin of one vote per precinct. --The environment is at stake in this election. If you care about the issues like global warming, if you care about clean air and clean water, uh, helping kids with asthma. And if you want to keep the economy strong, so that when you guys get out of college there are still a lot of jobs being created. If you want to invest in education. Balance the budget. That's what I stand for. Also, one point, I want to make college tuition tax deductible, \$10,000/year for all middle class families. [APPLAUSE]

LATIFAH: That's a great deduction, and --. My brother's uh, a student at Penn State, and I'm sure it would be definitely useful. Um how old were you when you first voted?

GORE: Uh, 21. The law hadn't been changed yet.

LATIFAH: Yeah, we get to vote at 18 now.

GORE: Right. Right.

LATIFAH: 18. so I expect a lot of you will be out at the voting booths. That was around the same time you met your wife, Tipper.

GORE: Yeah, that's right. I actually met her when I was 17, um, we went to a party after my high school senior prom. And she had a date with somebody else, and so did I.

LATIFAH: Did you steal Tipper from some other guy?

GORE: [LAUGHTER] I called her up the next morning, and uh, asked her out the next weekend, and we've basically been together ever since.

LATIFAH: that is amazing.

GORE: We've been married 30 years this year. And uh [APPLAUSE]

LATIFAH: Congratulations.

GORE: Thank you very much.

LATIFAH: Congratulations.

GORE: We've got uh, four, four children, and as of 15 months ago we became grandparents for the first time.

LATIFAH: All right, congratulations.

GORE: Thank you very much.

LATIFAH: Wyatt, right? I love that name.

GORE: Wyatt. Wyatt.

LATIFAH: We do a lot of shows on relationships here.

GORE: Yeah.

LATIFAH: A lot of um, families in crisis, a lot of couples in crisis.

GORE: Right. Right.

LATIFAH: Thirty years. How do you keep the passion going in your relationship, after all of that time.

GORE: Oh it was easy, it was easy. [LAUGHTER] you've gotta work at it. And, and if you love one another, you've got to grow together. And I'm not posing as an expert on this, but based on our experience, we've been very lucky, uh, because we have found each other and fallen in love with each other at each new stage of our lives. You know, as you grow and get older, you evolve and uh, you're so different. At, at each new stage of your life. And we've been lucky to, to, to find each other all over again. It's been great.

LATIFAH: Speaking of finding each other all over again, I know everyone remembers that kiss seen around the world. That's passion. Take a look at this. Oh, yeah.

GORE: [LAUGHTER]

LATIFAH: Oh, look at the love in that hug. That's how you do it.

GORE: [LAUGHTER]

LATIFAH: What a doting husband. That's the way you're supposed to look at a woman. Oh, I'm getting all giddy just looking at that.

GORE: Somebody, one of the uh, one of the political analysts said, were you trying to send a message? And I said, well, I was trying to send a message to Tipper. And she said, I got it. [LAUGHTER]

LATIFAH: And that's the important part. She has definitely picked it up for 30 years, you guys really are a good example though, I think.

GORE: Thank you.

LATIFAH: Um, now we also have some photos of you, back, back in the days as we say. Uh, check these photos out. Why don't you describe some of these photos for us.

GORE: Okay. Uh, that's my dad teaching me about his uh, fiddle. When I was about 4 years old. There I am with my dad and uh, my sister Nancy, who was 10 years older than me, is driving the Jeep on our family farm. And my mother is behind her. My mother was one of the first women to graduate from Vanderbilt Law School, back in the 1930's. And that's, that's Tipper and me when we were about the age when we met. Maybe a--

LATIFAH: Looking good.

GORE: --uh, maybe about a year after we met. And that's uh, that's when we got married. I was in the Army, uh, on, about to go to Vietnam. Uh, that's from around that same period of time. And uh

LATIFAH: I like those glasses. Tipper was funky.

GORE: That's uh, yeah. Tipper's actually pregnant with our first, first child in that picture. And you in that, that, we're in a canoe on the river by our farm in TN, and you see that big pillow that I put in there for her? That's one of those pillows with, arms on itó

LATIFAH: -with the arm rests

GORE: --you know, and uh, she was very pregnant with our first child, uh, Karenna.

LATIFAH: -That's so sweet.

GORE: And uh, there, this is before our son was born. That's Karenna on the right, and Sarah, in, on my knee, and Kristin on Tipper's knee. That's on our farm in TN. There are the same three, and I'm reading them a story, and that's Karenna peeking around from the uh, the, the drapes. That's my dad, uh, later in his life. When I was in the United States Senate.

LATIFAH: What did he think about you being in politics?

GORE: Oh, he was very proud. Uh, he, he was a real hero to me. He, he was uh, the greatest man I ever knew in my life. And he, he had real courage. He supported civil rights back in the '50s. and the Voting Rights Act in '65. And he was a great man. He opposed the Vietnam War, he actually lost his last race for reelection because he took so many courageous stands. Now, here's our whole family today. Kristin is on the far left. She's a comedy writer out in California now. Sarah is right next to me, I'm going from left to right, uh, and she's a senior in college. Tipper is to my left, and that, that is our son-in-law, Drew, Dr. Drew Schiff, and our, our grandson Wyatt is in his mom's arms, Karenna, our oldest daughter. And that's my son Albert, uh, who just turned 18. He is a, uh, just last week. He's a senior in high school, and captain of his football team, and having a great season.

LATIFAH: I hear you play puppet with uh, with your grandson?

GORE: Yes I do. I, I play everything with my grandson. I, I'm very good at duck sounds.

LATIFAH: Duck sounds?

GORE: And, and uh, we get down on the floor together, and uh, uh, you know, being a grandfather is even better than

LATIFAH: -Than being a parent?

GORE: than, yeah, and better than my friends told me it would be. I saw a bumper sticker that said, if I'd known how much fun grandchildren were, I would have had them first.

LATIFAH: [LAUGHTER] We'll be right back.

[COMMERCIALS]

LATIFAH: Well, we got a lot of stuff to go over with you, and I want to open this up to the audience. But first, you know you have this reputation for sometimes being kind of straight up and down.

GORE: Stiff. [LAUGHTER]

LATIFAH: Yeah, what, I don't know I just find you to be pretty, pretty smart. Um, but I got this feeling every once in awhile the Vice President here likes to get a little loose. So I'm gonna ask you a few quick questions that might give us a peek at your wild side. Have you ever worn leather pants? [LAUGHTER]

GORE: Hmm. I don't think I have. I had a leather vest. I used to have a motorcycle and I had a uh--

LATIFAH: Oh, yeah. [APPLAUSE]

GORE: I had a uh, I had a leather vest when I wore the motorcycle, but I don't think I ever had leather pants, no.

LATIFAH: I think you need a 2000, I think you need a 2000 leather to go with, since you don't have your vest. Where is it? We got us a little gift for you here.

GORE: Ooh. That's nice.

LATIFAH: Just in case you feel like getting on a bike again, taking a little ride. [APPLAUSE]

GORE: [LAUGHTER] Thank you.

LATIFAH: -That'll be from Queen Latifah to you.

GORE: Thank you very much. I appreciate it. I've still go uh, that's very nice, I appreciate it. I've still got my

LATIFAH: -You're very welcome.

GORE: Motorcycle uh, driver's license, and uh,

LATIFAH: -Mm-hmm. Do you still ride?

GORE: [LAUGHTER] I haven't, I haven't in a while.

LATIFAH: -You gotta take a motorcade. Can I ride in your motorcade?

GORE: -I, I want to see the reaction of the Secret Service when I tell them that I'm gonna get on, get on the motorcycle again.

LATIFAH: Yeah, see, they wouldn't want me to be an elected official, 'cause I'm, I'm going too fast.

GORE: -I might, you know, I might do that. I used to, I used to uh, to really enjoy that a lot. Tipper and I would, uh, would go everywhere on that motorcycle.

LATIFAH: -Something free about being a, a motorcycle rider.

GORE: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

LATIFAH: Something only motorcycle riders can relate to.

GORE: Yeah.

LATIFAH: You and the road.

GORE: Yeah. [LAUGHTER]

LATIFAH: Ever get caught speeding?

GORE: Whoa. Yes. Yes. I don't think I got, uh, caught speeding on my motorcycle. Certainly in the, in the car, when I was younger, um, but that's not to say that I wasn't speeding sometimes on my motorcycle.

LATIFAH: -[LAUGHTER]

GORE: Uh, I look back on those days, and I, I feel like I'm very lucky to have survived.

LATIFAH: I feel you, I feel you. Now, how about, have you ever done anything crazy over a girl?

GORE: Well, just uh, on the motorcycle thing, once we, once uh, on a dare, we went double dating on my motorcycle. And you won't believe this, and it sounds impossible, but it, it actually did happen.

LATIFAH: What do you mean, we went double dating? Like four people on one bike?

GORE: Uh, yup. Yup. Yup.

LATIFAH: Are you serious?

GORE: I am dead serious.

LATIFAH: -You fit four people on a motorcycle.

GORE: It was in Boston, and uh, we had tuxedos on. [LAUGHTER]

LATIFAH: and you didn't get pulled over, in Boston.

GORE: Actually, now you are getting me in trouble here.

LATIFAH: four people [LAUGHTER] that's funny.

GORE: Actually there was a blue light. And I can't say for sure that they were coming after us, but uh, just on the chance that they were, we cut through an alleyway. This is a long time ago. Do not try this at home.

LATIFAH: [LAUGHTER] Fantastic. And finally, ever play a drinking game at a college party.

GORE: Whoa. Um, [LAUGHTER]

LATIFAH: Gotta take you back, take you back.

GORE: yeah, I think, you know I hate to make light of that so much, because I actually think they're, I, I think that sometimes that is taken too lightly. The answer, the answer is yes. But I think that it's uh, I think it's a problem, I really do. And, and I think that uh, I, I think that it uh, needs to you know, I think kids, a lot of kids, you know, know that that can get you into trouble.

LATIFAH: I think you might be right, my brother Angelo's a student at uh, Penn State, and he actually asked me last weekend if I knew someone who would be willing to come speak at his school about underage drinking.

GORE: yeah, yeah.

LATIFAH: It's just, you know, kids getting sloshed, and just really

GORE: yeah, yeah. Right.

LATIFAH: Good kids, they don't know how to drink, they just go for it and wind up in bad situations. So it's something to think about.

GORE: And, and particularly, I think one good thing is that uh, kids today uh, I think have really taking to heart the message about not drinking and driving. There's still too much of it, but the whole designated driver deal has really caught on, most of you guys are in, in with that, aren't you? -and, and I think that's good, that's caught on.
[APPLAUSE]

LATIFAH: That's right. All right. When we come back, the issues. Racial profiling, running mates, and one of my favorite topics: rap music. We'll be right back.
[LAUGHTER]

GORE: [LAUGHTER]

[COMMERCIALS]

LATIFAH: And we are back, on location with Al Gore here at Scott Community College, in Bettendorf, Iowa. [APPLAUSE] [LAUGHTER] I'm sorry, I love doing that, what can I say? Now I've been seeing a lot of publicity lately about your position on gun control.

GORE: Mm.

LATIFAH: Um, should Americans who wish to own a gun fear you?

GORE: -No, no.

LATIFAH: Because a lot of what I saw was, well, it just seemed like a bunch of people who were afraid that their rights were gonna be totally stripped from them. Uh, should they fear that?

GORE: -Yeah, yeah. Absolutely not. No, what I stand for, uh, is common sense gun safety measures. And nothing I've proposed would have any impact at all on hunters or sportsmen, homeowners. Uh, you know, the problem is that there are too many of these cheap handguns and assault weapons, that have been getting into the hands of the wrong people. Uh, you know, back when uh, I fought for the Brady Law, to have a background check, some of the uh, uh groups, tried to make it sound as if that was gonna take guns away from people and all that. And it didn't happen, of course it didn't happen. -That was a myth. Uh, now, the, the idea of uh, child safety trigger locks, and having a, a closing of the so-called gun show loophole, so that the background checks apply to all criminals and felons and people who really should not gain access to a gun, uh, they're trying the same kind of approach, and it just doesn't uh, hold water. But, you know, they put a lot of money behind it, and they get that message out there. But you know, hey, look. This is the era when Columbine High School woke people up. And, and when you've got too many of these tragedies that have taken place around the country, so co- use common sense, let's ñ

LATIFAH: That's right. Speaking of kids and guns, uh, last year on my show we talked to the mother of a five-year-old boy who shot and killed a little girl, uh, in his classroom. I'm sure a lot of you heard about this, in the Detroit area.

GORE: -Mm. I saw that show. I saw that show. It was a very powerful interview.

LATIFAH: Um, he killed this little girl in his classroom. You got a lot of teens committing very violent crimes. Uh, what can, what can we do to, to help these parents who are dealing with this? This little boy, his mom was really begging for help. I can't, you know, she was involved in a work a work for welfare, or welfare to work program, rather. Um, so she was going 40 miles away from home every day. That's why the boy was with his uncle, um, to not have to travel, and he got a hold of this gun. But she'd been asking for help, as I've seen other parents whose kids have

committed crimes ask for help. What can we do on that side of it? 'Cause I think gun control doesn't go without parent's help, you know?

GORE: Oh, absolutely. It, it's, it's wrong to give the impression that uh, just dealing with guns is gonna solve the problems that uh, where guns are part of the picture. The main thing is better parenting. And, and uh, for some parents that means that you've gotta recognize the need for childcare. Uh, if it's a stay at home parent, there should be financial help there also. Uh, if, if you've got a school system where, uh, the kids are getting out of school way before the parents get home from work, you need an after school program.

LATIFAH: -Right, after school program.

GORE: You've gotta have community services. Uh, if somebody is on welfare and gets off welfare and gets a job, they should not be penalized by losing the health coverage, by losing public housing at an affordable rate, etc. And so we've got to have all parts of the picture. To, at, at the same time. Another piece of the puzzle has to do with the glorification of violence in entertainment.

LATIFAH: Well let's talk about that.

GORE: All right.

LATIFAH: Um, I make my living as an actress, as a talk show host, of course, which is the most recent of my careers. But I started off as a rapper. Um, and then went into acting.

GORE: - Right. Right. Right.

LATIFAH: And I, I probably could be accused of doing a violent movie. A movie called Set it Off, where I played a bank robber. -Um, your running mate has been pretty vocal about the entertainment industry.

GORE: -As have I.

LATIFAH: Well, I mean, how do you stand on that, because, you think we shouldn't be allowed to kind of just do those things?

GORE: -Well, see, I, I think that, no, absolutely not. I'm totally censorship. So is Joe Lieberman. But if there is material that a movie company or a video game maker uh, or some other entertainment company says look, this is not suitable for young children, and if you are the parent of a young child, you need to, you need to be careful with this, and then they turn right around and start advertising it behind the backs of the parents, straight to the kids. That's wrong. That's wrong. There was a finding recently that a lot of uh, some movie companies were using like, nine and ten

year olds in focus groups, to market very violent, adult-rated material, uh, and then they were advertising it for kids. That's where they were hoping to make some of the money. And, that's, that's not right. That's hypocritical. Uh, and, and parents deserve some help. So you know, if you're gonna make adult material, very violent material, explicit sexuality, uh, the First Amendment allows that. Nobody can take that right away. But children deserve some protection. And it is wrong to assume that young children are able to handle stuff like that. They're not just miniature adults--

LATIFAH: -I agree.

GORE: and, and it has an impact on them. The, the kids at Columbine left a tape afterwards, that said they were obsessed with this uh, video game Doom, that's so violent. And they said, we're going to the school, it's gonna be just like that video game. Well, you know, that's not the only reason that happened. But you can't ignore the words coming out of their own mouths. And, and the fact that some kids are vulnerable to imitating behavior like that, and other kids just get numb, uh, to violence, so that they don't react in a natural human way, with outrage and saying, hey, stop, stop. You know, I think that when the average kid sees 20,000 murders before high school graduation, that cannot be good for us. That doesn't, that's not to say that, that we should take violence out of entertainment. Violence has been an entertainment since long before Shakespeare. It's always been a part of it. But parents deserve some help, in, in managing what their kids are exposed to.

LATIFAH: So what is, what is the help that you give them, then?

GORE: Well, the ratings ought to be uh, real, and the movies ought not to look the other way when these little kids uh, come to R-rated movies. Uh, there ought to be uh, the V chip which, which uh, has the great parents of giving parents some control over what they're kids see on television. Uh, the Internet service providers need to give uh, uh, filtering tools to parents, and I've negotiated with them, or participated in that process, uh, to the point where they are now offering these filters and also giving parents a chance to, to automatically see a listing of all the Internet pages their kids have visited recently. And if the kids know that, you know, that's a power in the hands of parents.

LATIFAH: I think it's also gonna come down to investment. You've gotta invest in positivity. I mean, at the end of the day, you got a lot of record companies, I know, that uh, will sign a rapper or an artist who, you know, may talk about Satanic worship, may talk about you know,

GORE: -Racism, mm.

LATIFAH: all kinds of you know, cusses, left and right.

GORE: -Misogyny.

LATIFAH: Of course. But that stuff can be encouraged, even. Uh, do what you feel, do what you want, more, more, more. The more you push the envelope, the more money you can make. So I think, I think, positivity needs to be encouraged

GORE: -Appealing to the basest and worst instincts.

LATIFAH: as well, and supported as well

GORE: Yeah.

LATIFAH: Investment in making more positive types of material.

GORE: -Absolutely.

LATIFAH: It's gotta, it's gotta go hand in hand, I think.

GORE: Absolutely. And the First Amendment, that protects the right of those companies to put out inappropriate material, also gives us the right to say, hey, wait a minute. We are not going to support companies that behave in an irresponsible way. And if they get that message, then they'll respond to a new signal from the marketplace.

LATIFAH: All right, well, we gotta take a break. But when we come back, a little pop culture game. So don't go away, we'll be right back. [APPLAUSE]

[COMMERCIALS]

LATIFAH: We are back in Bettendorf, Iowa with Democratic Presidential candidate Al Gore. Al Gore, in the house. That's right.

GORE: [LAUGHTER]

LATIFAH: On *Queen Latifah*. [APPLAUSE] [LAUGHTER]

GORE: All right.

LATIFAH: um, all right, now we're almost out of time. Let's play a little pop culture game.

GORE: Mm.

LATIFAH: Movies. Action or drama?

GORE: Mmm. Action.

LATIFAH: All right. Cable: HBO or Discovery?

GORE: Mmm. I like them both. I like the Sopranos, and but I like the nature shows on Discovery too.

LATIFAH: Me too, oh, this is a man after my own heart. [APPLAUSE]

GORE: yeah.

LATIFAH: On a woman: leather or lace? [LAUGHTER] I mean, on your woman, leather or lace?

GORE: Lace, lace.

LATIFAH: Lace, lace. Okay, music. Folk or funk?

GORE: Uh, folk.

LATIFAH: Folk, all right. And sports: Mets or Yankees.

GORE: Oh, no, no, no, no, no.

LATIFAH: Mets or Yankees.

GORE: No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. You tried to slip up on me with that one.

LATIFAH: That was, he's quick, he's quick. I was hoping to getó

GORE: Who are you for?

LATIFAH: Mets or Yankees.

GORE: Ah [LAUGHTER]. All right. Yup.

LATIFAH: You know, who do you go for? I you know, I love both the home teams, it's so difficult, uh. They're all so cute, I, there's cute guys on both teams, that's who I'm going for. Yeah. [LAUGHTER] [APPLAUSE]

GORE: [LAUGHTER]

LATIFAH: Okay. Favorite transportation trend. SUV or sports car? How about that?

GORE: Mm. I like uh, sports cars. Sure.

LATIFAH: That's right, see. Now Mr. Mr. Vice President, you've shown such importance when it comes to family. I know you change your schedule to get to your son's football games, to get to your daughter's soccer games and lacrosse. Um, and I know, well, at least I read, that uh, your dad was not able to be there sometimes when you had things to do as a, as a youngster. Was that part of the reason that you worked so hard and so diligently at being in your kid's lives like that?

GORE: Well, he was a great dad. Uh-

LATIFAH: -Not to take anything away. 'Cause you got a lot of hardworking parents out here

GORE: -ah, I'm just saying. But uh, you know, both Tipper and I uh, came from small families. She was an only child, I had one sibling ten years older. We both wanted a big family and we always wanted uh, to be involved with our kids. But some um, ten years ago, eleven years ago, uh, we almost lost one of our children. And it was uh, a real turning point that kind of uh, shook me up in a way that caused a big change, and we've always, especially since then, made our family a priority. Faith and family are really at the center of my life. And, I, I, you know, I just enjoy being with my kids and now my grandson. And Tipper and I have always been devoted to them. I've been fortunate to have work that allows me a lot more flexibility. And that's why I want, uh, to expand laws like the Family and Medical Leave Law, so that all dads and moms have more flexibility to balance work and home. I want to raise the minimum wage a dollar an hour. [APPLAUSE] I want to have

LATIFAH: -Yeah, it's about time. Come on

GORE: more tax breaks for working families.

LATIFAH: I'm gonna get up and go to the audience, 'cause I know we have such a bright audience here, I know we got some good questions. You got a question for the Vice President? Stand on up for me. You guys are cozy out here. What's your name?

VIEWER: Natalie Thompson.

LATIFAH: What would you like to ask?

VIEWER: Um, I just had a question. Um, in the next four years, I was wondering what you were planning to do about the nuclear energy policy that your administration hasn't done in the last eight years.

GORE: Well, first of all, uh, I'm not opposed to nuclear energy, but I think we've got to have a, a solution for the problem of nuclear waste. And I don't think it's fair to just rush it up, uh, uh, without saying that the science has to assure us that it is safe. And we've also got to pay attention to the problems that uh, have a relationship to nuclear

weapons. Because in some of the foreign countries, they've actually used some of their power plant technology to speed along the proliferation of nuclear weapons. So I think we've got to solve those problems.

[APPLAUSE]

LATIFAH: Thank you.[UNINTELLIGIBLE]

VIEWER: Hi. I'm a nineteen year old single mother, and I was wondering how you're gonna help single mothers with, low-income single mothers with childcare in the next four years.

GORE: I want to make childcare, uh, tax deductible, with a, with what's called a tax credit. Now, let me tell you why that's better than a tax deduction. Because if you don't make enough money to pay a lot in taxes, you will still get the benefit of it. You'll get it in cash. 50% of childcare, uh, ought to be shared, paid for, in, in this form. Uh, you know, working mothers are doing a great job, but they need help. Childcare after school care, uh, job training, uh, health care for all children. Uh, one of my top priorities is to make sure that within the next four years, every single child in America will have high-quality health care. [APPLAUSE]

LATIFAH: Would you think about proposing some kind of legislation to regulate the day care?

GORE: That's a, that's a state issue. I, I think it should remain a state issue. However, I think that at the national level, we need to raise the standards by making it easier to pay the daycare workers adequately.

LATIFAH: -and get quality people.

GORE: -Right now they are not getting enough money to attract the right people into daycare. [APPLAUSE]

LATIFAH: -Mm-hmm. Right. We need to do the same thing for teachers.

VIEWER: Last election, the lowest turnout rate for age groups was my age group, 10-24. What would four years of Al Gore benefit people of my age group?

GORE: I'll make college tuition tax deductible. [APPLAUSE] Uh, I'll make this economy stronger still. With an economic policy that doesn't squander our surplus on a tax cut for the top 1%, as my opponent has proposed. Instead, I'll balance the budget, pay down the debt, keep interest rates low, keep creating jobs so that when you get out of uh, of college, there'll be good jobs waiting for you, where they're actually competing to attract you to, to uh, jobs of your choice. Uh, and I'll clean up the environment, in ways that create still more jobs. These are the kinds of priorities that I think are really important.

LATIFAH: We'll be right back. [APPLAUSE]

[COMMERCIALS]
[APPLAUSE]

LATIFAH: And we are back, coming to you from Betendorf, Iowa. [APPLAUSE]
That's right. It's a loud crowd here today. Uh, you had a question for the Vice President?

VIEWER: I have been a victim of racial profiling. And my deepest concern is, what will you do, if you're elected president, within the next four years, to eliminate the process of racial profiling.

GORE: I promise to make a ban on racial profiling the first civil rights act of the 21st century. [APPLAUSE]

LATIFAH: -That's right. Immediately.

GORE: -it has no place --

LATIFAH: You have a question?

VIEWER: Yes, I have a question. Um, the Clinton administration has promised health care reforms since '92, and I'm just wondering what you're gonna do about it, 'cause a lot of our seniors are our forefathers who built this country to make it what it is today, and they don't get the care that they need.

LATIFAH: -This is true.

VIEWER: And, you know, in Europe, they pay, we pay 3 to 4 time more for our medicine than Europe does, and I just want to know, what do you plan to do about that?

GORE: I've got two proposals. And I'll make them happen. The first is called the Patient's Bill of Rights, to take the medical decisions away from the HMOs and insurance companies, and give them back to the doctors and the nurses and the health care professionals. The second is to add a full prescription drug benefit for all seniors, under the Medicare program. The big drug companies are fighting against that. They support my opponent. Because right now, the drug companies are able to charge the highest prices to senior citizens of anybody. That's why you get these folks getting on buses to go to Canada and Mexico to get a fair price. That's outrageous. And the reason is, if you're in a group health plan, or you're getting your health, health coverage at work, that company or that plan is bargaining with the pharmaceutical companies to bring the price down. But seniors are on their own. Nobody's sticking up

for them, because it's not part of Medicare. And the reason the drug companies are against it being part of Medicare, is they know that if Medicare gets involved, Medicare's gonna be a tough bargainer. Well, that's one of the reasons why I want them involved. We need new competition, to bring the price of prescription medicines down. We want the drug companies to make profits, we want them to go out and discover new medicines. But they're spending much more money now on advertising of these new drugs, and promotion of new medicine. Uh, and they make, they make by far the highest profits of any industry in America. And they're, and it's wrong for them to charge seniors more than anybody else. So I will give them a prescription drug benefit under Medicare, and bring new competition, with speedier approval, of the competing medications, so that we bring the price down for everybody. [APPLAUSE]

LATIFAH: That's right. We'll be right back.

[APPLAUSE]

[COMMERCIALS]

LATIFAH: Well, I know you gotta go, 'cause I know you got a lot of, lot more campaigning to do before this election. One last question from me. Why Gore vs. Bush?

GORE: Because I will fight for you, and the people in this room, and middle class families and working men and women around this country. If you want somebody who will do what the, the special interests want, and sugarcoat it, and make it sound like it's for the average person, then uh, you know, you probably want to vote for the other guy. But if you want somebody who will take on the special interests, who is willing to keep this economy going by, by really fighting for working men and women, that's what I am all about. I want to keep the economy going, and balance the budget, and give middle class tax cuts, instead of giving it to the very wealthy. And I've got 24 years of experience in how to do that, and, and that's why the special interests are supporting the other guy instead of me. I'm running and I want you to vote for me because I want to fight for you. [APPLAUSE]

LATIFAH: Bottom line, go out and vote, it's, it's at least your choice there. So please, go make that choice. Thank you Vice President Al Gore.

GORE: Thank you.

LATIFAH: Good luck.

GORE: -I enjoyed it. Thanks for the jacket, too.

LATIFAH: That's right. Rock that when you, when you take those secret service guys out on that bike.

GORE: -get back on the, all right. [LAUGHTER]

LATIFAH: Um, thank you so much.

GORE: Thank you.

LATIFAH: Uh, I wish you the best of luck in the election.

GORE: Thank you.

LATIFAH: Uh, see you next time on *Queen Latifah*. Thank you Iowa. Thank you Iowa.

GORE: Thank you. Thank you very much.

[END INTERVIEW]

Appendix V: *Rosie With Al Gore*

October 20, 2000

ROSIE: With the election less than three weeks away, I'm delighted that our first guest decided to pay us a visit. He's received the support of the American Federation of Teachers, the National Association of Police Organizations, the AFL-CIO, Jim and Sarah Brady, the Sierra Club, and me. It's an honor to welcome him to, uh, the show. Please welcome the democratic nominee for the president of the United States, vice president Al Gore.

[APPLAUSE][MUSIC]

ROSIE: Well hi, Al. How are you?

GORE: I'm doing great. Thank you, Rosie.

ROSIE: Very nice of them, huh.

GORE: It's nice to be here. Thank you. Thank you.

ROSIE: And typically, the only people not standing are the reporters, you know, because they're so busy jotting things d- - we've never had reporters here, sir.

GORE: Really?

ROSIE: It's the first time.

GORE: Not even when Tipper was here?

ROSIE: I don't believe they were here. It's just for you. There you go.

GORE: I'm flattered. Thank you.

ROSIE: How've you been?

GORE: I've been great and you have been too.

ROSIE: Yes, good to see you. I haven't seen you- -

GORE: Is Mia sleeping through the night yet?

ROSIE: No. Well she slept through the night for two nights and then, you know, she's h- - she's had it rough. You know how it is, foster kids. We've spoken about that. - And she's had a hard three and a half years, so, tryin' to let her know that the world is a safe place and- -

GORE: Well, bless you.

ROSIE: Hopefully, she'll be able to sleep through.

GORE: How's your little, uh, grandson?

GORE: [LAUGHTER] He's doin' great.

ROSIE: Yeah?

GORE: He's almost a year and a half old -and, uh, did I mention he was born on the fourth of July?

ROSIE: No, is he really?

GORE: Yeah.

ROSIE: That was perfect timing. You'll have to thank your daughter for that.

GORE: Uh, y- - well [LAUGHTER]. Uh, anyway, he's doing great. He's- - he, uh- - he's wonderful. He called me the other day.

ROSIE: He called you on the phone?

GORE: Called me on the phone.

ROSIE: At one and a half?

GORE: Yeah, I had been talking to his mom, Karenna, who you know, uh, the night before. I was eating breakfast the next morning- - this is a true story. Uh, the phone rang and I picked it up. I heard a baby's voice. The closer I listened the more I realized it was Wyatt and I said, hi, hi, and Karenna heard me on the speaker phone [OVERLAP], came in from the other room and picked it up and said, dad. I said, Karenna. She said, oh my gosh, Wyatt has called you on the telephone. I didn't even realize we had a redial -button. Now, she was jumping to conclusions there. I- - I think that he might have actually dialed my number. I'm not ruling out that possibility.

ROSIE: [LAUGHTER] You never know. W- - nowadays, two year olds can almost be on the internet, you know. You're gettin' ready for Halloween, you're all- - I know you're a very Halloween family.

GORE: I love- - I love Halloween. Tipper does too. -We've always, uh- - well of course we have four kids and, uh, I can't wait until Wyatt- - well, Wyatt has his first Halloween costume this year.

ROSIE: And what- - uh, uh, Winnie the Pooh, [MUMBLE]- -

GORE: Uh, no, uh, oh, Tigger.

ROSIE: Yeah, you gotta go with the Disney Store.

*GORE: Well, -one of his aunts got him, uh, his first Halloween costume. We've always, uh, had a- - had a good time with, uh -the kids coming, ringin' the doorbell and so forth. We love them.

ROSIE: Did you give out full size bars?

GORE: Yeah.

ROSIE: Of course, you gotta. -Those people who give out the little snack size- -

GORE: Hey, once a year, come on.

ROSIE: Come on, splurge.

GORE: Absolutely.

ROSIE: Now, um, your son had a birthday yesterday.

GORE: Yes, yes, 18.

ROSIE: 18. And this is the son that- - that you almost lost in a car accident.

GORE: Uh, thank goodness there- - he had a full recovery, long since. He's just great. -We're very proud of all- - all four of our children.

ROSIE: Yeah, that was life, uh, changing, I suppose, for you and your wife.

GORE: It was. Yeah, it was, uh, a real shaking event that caused me to change my priorities in life and really, uh, reexamine, uh, the way I was spending my time. It really made a huge difference for me.

ROSIE: When you make a decision like, uh, running for president, do you consult your kids - - y- - you say, what do you think, 'cause this is gonna really affect your life as well.

GORE: Oh yes, absolutely. -And they've all been extremely supportive, and, um, the two older ones have gotten out on the campaign trail quite a bit to give speeches and help out that way. Uh, my third, uh, daughter, Sara has helped me with speech writing and, um, she- - she was the one who helped me the most with my convention speech, and, um, so it's a family- - uh, it's a family effort.

ROSIE: They're used to it, 25 years now, -in public service. They must be- - it's all they know.

GORE: Karenna was, uh, just three years old when I first ran for Congress, so - the others have known- - hasn't- - have known me doing nothing but that.

ROSIE: Yeah, 'cause you dedicated your whole life to this. I suppose that they- -

GORE: I was a reporter for five years, uh, after I came back from Vietnam -and, um, then, uh- - and- - and I was very disillusioned as a young person. I had seen, uh, not only Vietnam but Watergate. My- - my dad was a Senator -and he was an anti-war, uh, senator, lost his seat, uh, mainly because he had the courage to- - to, uh, support the Voting Rights Act and, uh, oppose the Vietnam War, but I decided to, because my draft board was in a small town in Tennessee, to- - to volunteer. I went to Vietnam. But when I came back, I thought that politics would be the very last thing in the world that I ever did and I was a journalist for five years but I began to see in the city where we started our family, Nashville, how some of my neighbors would roll up their sleeves and get to work, uh, you know, badgering the- - the, uh, council to do something right for the- - for the city and, I- - I decided to try my hand it and I found out that I loved it and, uh, I- - I really of course believe in this country with all my heart and I believe that- - that all of us have an obligation to try to make it a better country and the good news is we can.

ROSIE: Yeah, and we have I think, you know. A lot has been said about what's been done in the last eight years. A lotta good, if you ask me. Uh, we've asked the audience what they have to ask you 'cause, you know, the debates we had, and there's a lotta people saying this and saying that and we got 20 questions for you. We're gonna go, we'll break, come back, give you 20 questions --, just you give me the answers right from the heart and that'll be that.

GORE: There you go.

ROSIE: There you go. All right, the vice president, questions from you, the home viewers, right after this.

GORE: Thank you.

[COMMERCIALS][MUSIC][NON INTERVIEW]

ROSIE: Well we're back with the vice president and we have now questions from the, uh, audience, when they wrote to us on our website and also sent us, um, questions by fax. Here's question number one. As a parent, I'm concerned about violence my kids are exposed to on TV and movies and videogames and the internet. What do you propose to be done to protect kids from these dangerous influences?

GORE: I think parents oughtta be given more tools to protect their children from material that parents themselves deem inappropriate. That's not censorship, it's parenting. I think that, uh, well first of all, the V chip ratings- - you can't have the government determining content. That is censorship . I'm opposed to anything like that. But I think that the- - the industry needs to exercise more self restraint and r- - you know, recently there was an F.T.- - a Federal Trade Commission report showing that some of the companies that label the material inappropriate for children were turning around behind the parents' backs and advertising adult material directly on kiddie shows and- - and at children. I think that is hypocritical and out- - outrageous. Joe Lieberman and I, both of us have worked on- - on this. Course, Tipper's been workin' on this for 15 years. We- - we gave them six months. Said, look, let's call for an immediate cease fire. It's- - it- - it's insane for kids to see 20,000 murders on television by the time they graduate from- - from high school. Just- - I mean that cannot be good for us. Uh, a- - and we gave them six months. If, at the end of that time, they haven't cleaned up their act, we're gonna call for tougher legislation with the F.T.C. having the right to go after false and deceptive advertising. If they've said this is not good for kids, then they shouldn't advertise it to kids.

ROSIE: See, you know, when I was a kid, it seemed that all the violent shows or the cop shows had to be on after ten o'clock -so that, you know, if you were up then, if you're a kid, you shouldn't be up then, that's bad parenting, but, you know, it's not like a kid can come home from school and see violence -on TV like they can now, which is sad.

GORE: Right, plus what was called violence then is not like, uh, what- - what's on the- - on the screen and in the videogames, uh, uh and on the internet and music now [OVERLAP]. Um, it's j- - it just gets worse each year. They keep pushin' the edge back. And kids are not- - Tipper's taught me this- - that kids are not like miniature adults who can handle things the same way -grownups do. It sounds obvious, but she's really studied this. And some kids, uh, have nightmares when they see violent stuff. Some kids, uh, are vulnerable to acting out, uh, what- - and imitating what they've seen.

ROSIE: Or worse, they're desensitized -you know, and they think it's no big deal to bring a gun to school or what not. Okay, here's another question for you. How you- -

how do you plan to make prescription drugs more affordable for seniors. We seem to be- - get that- - that question a lot.

GORE: Yeah, because the prices have been goin' way up -and people on, uh, fixed incomes, as many seniors are, are havin' a hard time. Uh, I wanna- - uh very simple, I wanna add it to the Medicare program to give all seniors prescription drug benefits under Medicare. The way it would work is very simple. Uh, if you're on Medicare, you- - you pick your own doctor and the doctor tells you what prescription you need, and no HMO or insurance company can take that away from you or overrule your doctor. Then you go to your own pharmacy and fill the prescription, then Medicare pays half the bill. If you're poor, Medicare pays all the bill. If you have very high expenses, everything above 4,000 dollars out of pocket is completely paid. That's h- - that's how it works.

ROSIE: That's simple and easy. You know, we had some issue in our family. My nephew was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis -and, uh, yeah, my brother was with an HMO and, you know, to go- - to try- - luckily, to have the resources that they have for- - through me and financial and the contacts to get the- - the baby the best treatment - but not everybody has that luxury.

GORE: Right, that's right, and- - and, uh, it's outrageous that, uh, the- - the recommendations of doctors are now routinely being overruled -by clerks workin' for HMOs who sit behind computer terminals. They don't have a license to practice medicine, they shouldn't have a right to play god. We need a piece of legislation known as the Dingle Norwood Bill. It's a bipartisan patients' bill of rights that takes the medical decisions away from the HMOs and gives them back to the doctors.

ROSIE: That seems sensible enough to me. How do you plan to make, uh, schools accountable for quality- -

GORE: Well I think testing is- - is important -but it's not good enough by itself. I think that- - I think that, um, states oughtta be required to test all students. Uh, I go farther than that and require, in my plan, testing of all new teachers, including in the subjects that they're supposed to teach. Uh, we need accountability. We need local control, but my plan starts there, doesn't end there. I think that education oughtta be the number one priority for our country because you know everything's changing, more computers, it's an information age, learning's more important. We have the largest generation of kids in school ever. Now there are 43 million kids in public schools today, and a lotta the classrooms are overcrowded. The real key is the classroom experience. You need more one on one time. That means you need fewer kids -in each class, which means two things, in turn. You gotta recruit new teachers - and that means treating teachers like the professionals they are- -

ROSIE: And increasing their pay- -

GORE: Absolutely- -

ROSIE: Without a doubt.

GORE: Uh, in- - in return for better performance [APPLAUSE] [OVERLAP], and, um, absolutely. And also you gotta build new schools and modernize existing schools -and local communities find it very hard to do that on their own because, uh, the- - the parents with kids in school are now outvoted more in the communities. The population is aging, there are a lotta young people without kids, so they have less political power than they did in the past. At the same time, the- - the schools are more crowded than in the past. -We've- - we've really gotta make this the top priority. For me, it's- - it's priority number one.

ROSIE: And you are against school vouchers.

GORE: I am, simply because it's the wrong time, uh, to drain money away from public schools- -

ROSIE: - - and I couldn't agree more --I think it'll be death of public education in America.

GORE: It would be. It would be.

ROSIE: How are you gonna continue to help lower income families afford quality child care, which is a huge problem for most of the women watching TV here.

GORE: Absolutely, a w- - well, I- - I ha- - I make it a priority in my economic plan. It's good for our economy, good for families, good for the kids, to give a, uh- - a tax credit that is, uh, deductible, which- - which means, um, uh, when you, uh- - refundable, excuse me. A- - and what that means, it's a technical word, but if you don't pay enough in taxes to get the benefit from a deduction, you still get money from it, so that you get help in paying for half of your child care expenses. That's part of my plan. Now also, if, um, a parent decides to stay at home longer after a baby is born [OVERLAP], I think that- - I think that that parent oughtta get some economic help too. I don't think they should be discriminated against. I think we oughtta give more choices to people to decide what works best in their lives -so they can bring the- - the changes that are good for their families.

ROSIE: Some of my friends are working so that they can pay for the daycare, like a, uh, you know, a married couple and like the wife is working just to pay for the daycare- -

GORE: And the daycare workers are not paid enough. I talked to a young woman who majored in child development. Her dream was to work in- - in, uh, child care. She

couldn't pay back her student loans on the salary that she was gonna get. She went to work in a running shoe store instead.

ROSIE: Right. That's wrong.

GORE: Well, you know, we need good people in running shoe stores- -

ROSIE: No, but [LAUGHTER] we have- - we have- -

GORE: It's more important to raise our kids well.

ROSIE: Exactly. We have very skewed priorities when it comes to education, I think, and it is my opinion as well, the most important issue. We're gonna take a break, come back, more of your questions with the vice president, after this.

[MUSIC][NON INTERVIEW][COMMERCIALS]

ROSIE: All right, we're back with Al Gore. Uh, a lot of people were writing in questions that we tried to like incorporate into one question about, you know, their disappointment in the lack of morality from president Clinton and how they feel that that's an important issue and, um, why has that sort of tarnished you, when it has nothing to do with you?

GORE: Well I hope it hasn't because I am who I am. I condemned his personal mistake, do so again. He's my friend. We've worked together, we've been able to- - to do some good things for the American people. Um, I'm not, uh- - uh, trying to, um- - to make this race about the past. It really is about the future and when I say I- - I am who I am, Tipper and I've been married for 30 years. We've devoted ourselves to our children, now our grandson. Um, I'm a Vietnam veteran. I've spent the last quarter century, not in pursuit of some, uh, personal fortune but working for hardworking men and women and middle class families and, um, I'm tryin' to make this country a better place and I think this race is about the future.

ROSIE: Well I definitely think the last eight years that the country has been a much better place than it had been in- - in a long time. This is my passionate issue, as you might know. You've done so much to advance the cause of gun control. How do you plan to make schools gun free and, um, will you be able to really stand for gun control when it seems that the forces against it have so much power. No cell phones.

GORE: [LAUGHTER] Well look, I think, fir- - first of all, hunters, sportsmen, not affected in any way by any proposal that I've made but handguns in the hands of the wrong people are causing too many problems in our society. Too many moms and dads, uh, have suffered losses. Too many communities and neighborhoods have been ripped apart, so sensible gun safety measures I think are absolutely essential. Uh, I cast the tie breaking vote, uh, to close the, uh, so-called gun show loophole, you know, the

Brady Law. -If you just call it a gun show and put up a tent, it doesn't really apply. I think it should apply. I- - I favor a three day waiting period, uh, to be restored under the Brady law. Uh, mandatory child safety trigger locks. Somebody said, will policemen have to use those. Well, of course not. Of course not. Uh, this is about common sense. It's not about law abiding gun owners. It's about getting guns outta the hands of children -and criminals and felons and fugitives and stalkers.

ROSIE: There was a question at the debate, uh, the other night, where someone said they saw an ad that the NRA had claimed that if George Bush is elected, that they will have an office in the White House. They did in fact make that statement.

GORE: They did.

ROSIE: Yeah, good to know. Okay -there's been some, uh, talk this campaign that, uh, Texas ranks low in health care for women and tril- - children. It didn't seem to be answered in the debate. True or not true.

GORE: 50 eh out of 50, uh, in the environment and in- - well they're the smoggiest state with the smoggiest city, Houston. Uh, and number 50 in health insurance for children. -Uh, excuse me, health insurance for, uh, families. 49th for children, 49th for women.

ROSIE: Okay. One of the president's most important functions is to report- - uh, place Supreme Court justices. Uh, what rights could be at risk now that three or four appointments are on the verge of- -

GORE: A woman's right to choose is hanging now by a five to four balance in the current Supreme Court. The next president will appoint two or three, possibly even four justices of the Supreme Court, and that means that rights that- - that women have taken for granted for almost 30 years, uh, would be taken away, because, uh, there's a very sharp difference of opinion on that. I wanna make abor- - abortion safe, legal, and rare. I wanna reduce the number of instances when women have an unwanted pregnancy and the number of times they feel like they're pressured to make that choice. Uh, but I am totally opposed to having the government come in and substitute its judgment for that woman's decision about her own body and her own destiny and her own future. A woman should have that right to choose.

ROSIE: Yeah. I, uh, happen to agree with you on that as well, although personally I don't think I could ever bring myself to have an abortion. I've luckily never been in that position. I- -

GORE: A- - and you know, it's different from your personal view -on what, uh, is right or wrong in an individual situation. Uh, the- - the point is, situations vary .All kinds of, uh, circumstances can arise. And the- - the federal government should not be in a position to come in and order a woman to do what it thinks is the right thing for

her, uh, in- - instead of giving her- - you know, we talk about trusting people. Well- - well what about trusting women to make the- - that kind of judgment about their own body and their own future and destiny. That's what I think -makes the most sense.

ROSIE: Um, what do you plan to do for working parents whose children may not have some place, uh, safe to go after school.

GORE: I've made, uh, after school care a priority measure. I wanna work with communities and states and private groups, business, to ensure that we have quality after school care, uh, in every community in the country. Um, why not have schools be centers of community. Invite the families to play a bigger role in- - in the life of the school. A- - and r- - now with more parents working- - you know, uh, at the beginning of the last century- - I still can't get used to calling the 20th century the last century, but- - but at the beginning of the last century, only 20 percent of women worked outside the home. Now it's, uh, 80- - 80 percent, uh, o- - of- - of mothers work outside the home. And a lot of kids are getting out of school before either parent gets home from work, or if it's a single parent, and that's when most school vi- - eh most youth violence takes places, most experimentation with drugs, most unwanted teen pregnancies -so we ought to have after school care that is safe, that has supervised uh homework, that has a- - alternative activities like learning how to use computers and drama, art, uh, sports. Uh, th- - this is- - this is crazy, to leave kids to their own devices in those vulnerable afternoon hours when nobody's watching.

ROSIE: Yep, I agree with that. Uh, you helped enact the Adoption and Safe Families Act, which greatly increased the number of children in foster care who were adopted. How do you plan to keep this trend going, something close to my- -

GORE: I- - I am a huge fan of adoption. Incidentally, I'm not really sure that's a, uh- - I- - I know it's not a partisan issue, but I want you to know the passion that I feel for it and I- - I do admire what you have done in- - in pushing the cause of adoption. We have a lot of- - of caring adults in this country who would make great parents and who want to adopt. We have a lotta kids who need homes and don't have them. We have to break down the barriers separating those parents from those kids. We need to encourage adoption, we need to, uh- - we- - we need to help financially, we need to- - to give the same rights to adoptive parents as to all, uh, parents. We need to really encourage a big increase in adoption- -

ROSIE: A national standard so it didn't vary state to state would help so much - because that's how the corruption takes place, individual lawyers- -

END INTERVIEW

Appendix VI: *Live with Regis with Bush*

September 21, 2000 - Guest co-host Susan Hawk

REGIS: You could- - you could be sitting with the next President of the United States. Do you know that?

HAWK: Yeah, yeah. Uh, I mean that's the whole thing. Of course.

REGIS: It's- -

HAWK: He could be the next one.

REGIS: He could be.

HAWK: He's not right now.

REGIS: No yet, no.

HAWK: But he- - but he's next. [LAUGHTER] He could be next. Closer than what I or you would have a chance to be, yeah. [LAUGHTER]

REGIS: I'm telling you, too much time on that island. [LAUGHTER] Uh, let's bring him out now. As we say, he could be the next President of the United States. The Republican candidate for the Presidency, Governor George W. Bush. [APPLAUSE/MUSIC]

HAWK: He looks like you.

REGIS: He wants to be me. Yeah, check it out. Check it out, Governor. Very nice.

HAWK: --

REGIS: Yeah, there you go.

BUSH: What do you think?

REGIS: I love it.

HAWK: It looks good, it does.

REGIS: Yes, the Regis Collection right there. [APPLAUSE] Oh, you old devil. He w- - he gave Oprah a kiss, but he wore my shirt and tie. That's -- [APPLAUSE] [LAUGHTER] Not missing a trick, I'll tell you that. Anyway, nice to have you.

BUSH: Thank you, sir.

REGIS: Thank you so much for coming. And you've met our, uh- -

BUSH: I did meet Susan.

REGIS: Yes, Susan Hawk. You ever watch *Survivor*, Governor?

BUSH: I did.

REGIS: Did you really?

BUSH: I did, yeah. Coming down the stretch in particular, I was wo- -

HAWK: Oh, it's --

BUSH: I was fascinated to see who was gonna survive.

REGIS: Yeah.

BUSH: A guy like me. [LAUGHTER]

HAWK: --who survived.

REGIS: It is --

BUSH: I feel like I'm going through *Survivor*.

HAWK: After the journey. Just watch your last speech then.

BUSH: That's exactly [LAUGHTER] right. Be careful about what you say.

HAWK: Yeah, watch the animal analogies, yeah.

REGIS: It may come back to haunt you.

HAWK: Be careful what animals [LAUGHTER] you use.

REGIS: Isn't she a riot, Governor? But anyway.

BUSH: I like Susan's- - I like her spirit. I like her spirit.

REGIS: She's got a good spirit. She's a good lady.

BUSH: She is.

REGIS: But you don't have much time to watch TV or enjoy yourself in times like this, right? The- - what's the last movie you've seen?

BUSH: *Saving Private Ryan*.

HAWK: Oh, great movie.

BUSH: A great movie.

REGIS: Yeah, yeah. In a movie house or on TV?

BUSH: Uh, uh, it was a rental.

REGIS: Oh, you rented it?

HAWK: Yeah, he had a- - yeah.

BUSH: I haven't been to a movie house in a long time.

REGIS: Yeah, sure. I'll bet. And do you have enough- -

BUSH: There's not enough tickets to pay for the entourage that [LAUGHTER] I'm- -

REGIS: Yeah, right.

HAWK: Not enough seats in the theater?

BUSH: Not enough seats.

REGIS: Yeah, you travel with quite a crowd, I'll tell you that.

BUSH: Yeah, well.

REGIS: You ever watch the big *Millionaire* show?

BUSH: All the time. [APPLAUSE]

HAWK: --

REGIS: How, uh- - what else is he gonna say? Wh- - when you play along at home, how high do you go?

BUSH: Uh, [LAUGHTER] let's see, uh.

REGIS: Thirty-two, sixty-four, a hundred and twenty-five --?

BUSH: All the way.

REGIS: All the way.

BUSH: Yeah, I know. It's, uh- - it- - I have watched your show. It's a lot of fun. And, uh- -

REGIS: Good. Now, you know, I keep hearing this W, George W. Bush. And now here in New York, when they- - they just call you W. You know, you- -

HAWK: How's that work with just W?

BUSH: At least they're calling me.

HAWK: I like that, W.

BUSH: Yeah.

HAWK: That's a great name.

REGIS: What is the W for?

BUSH: Uh, Walker- -

REGIS: Walker?

BUSH: My middle name.

HAWK: Oh, Walker, Walker Bush.

BUSH: George Walker Bush.

REGIS: Yeah, yeah. Now- -

BUSH: There's another George Bush that's been- -

HAWK: There's a Texas Ranger named Walker.

BUSH: Yeah, he's a good friend of [LAUGHTER] mine by the way.

HAWK: Yeah. Is he really?

BUSH: Yeah. Chuck Norris.

REGIS: Yes. He's down there all the time. And he's in pretty good shape- -

BUSH: But there's another George Bush that used to roam around, actually still roaming.

REGIS: [LAUGHTER] Yeah, yeah.

BUSH: And, uh- - and, uh, so the George W. distinguishes me from George H. W.

REGIS: Yeah.

HAWK: Okay.

BUSH: I certainly don't want people to be confused here as we're coming down the- - in the- - in the political process.

HAWK: No. because you look like --

REGIS: Did your father ever tell you that I played him in tennis?

BUSH: Yeah, I think he said, uh, he won. [APPLAUSE]

HAWK: Did he? [LAUGHTER]

REGIS: See, there he goes again.

BUSH: --

REGIS: Well, actually he's an awfully good tennis player. And you're in pretty good shape yourself.

BUSH: I'm in pretty good shape. I run a lot.

REGIS: Now do- - you jog every morning?

BUSH: I do.

REGIS: Did you have a chance to jog this morning?

BUSH: No, I'm going to jog in Cleveland, Ohio.

REGIS: Oh, you're going to Cleveland [APPLAUSE] today?

HAWK: Oh, you're going there and go -- It's a great town.

REGIS: Where were you last night?

BUSH: I was at the Waldorf Astoria.

REGIS: Now what'd you do?

BUSH: Well, our daughter came, uh- - came down from New Haven and we had dinner with her. We hadn't seen her in a couple of weeks.

HAWK: --food. Yeah, she just went to college, right?

BUSH: She just went to college. And, um- -

HAWK: Okay.

BUSH: So great to see her.

REGIS: She's going to your old- -

HAWK: She bring any boyfriends with her or?

BUSH: Thankfully not. [LAUGHTER]

HAWK: She's not bad. Good.

BUSH: She's doing well. We had dinner.

REGIS: Oh, that's nice.

BUSH: Sacked out and- -

REGIS: Oh, good, great.

BUSH: Got a little rest.

REGIS: Sure. Well, you look good this morning. Now let's just show- -

BUSH: It's only cause I got a Regis outfit on. [LAUGHTER]

REGIS: That's right.

HAWK: That's right.

REGIS: You look- - you look better than I do in that. [LAUGHTER]

HAWK: You're --

REGIS: All right, here we go. Just a couple of pictures now. Here- - here you are with your dad, little baby- - [OOHING] little baby George W-

HAWK: Ahhhhh.

REGIS: Okay. Now what do we have here? This is uh- -

HAWK: It's a gray pony.

REGIS: Oh, he's on his pony.

HAWK: Do you remember that pony's name?

BUSH: That's before I was lifting weights. [LAUGHTER] Um, Widow Maker.

HAWK: Oh, wow. I remember my first pony's name.

BUSH: --

REGIS: You had a pony?

HAWK: I had a pony. Eight-years-old, had a pony, Sugar.

REGIS: Sugar. What happened to him?

BUSH: In Wisconsin?

REGIS: In- - in Wi- -

HAWK: Sh- - oh, yeah- - oh, yeah. I had her for the longest time and then we got too m- - I had to sell her. I cried so hard. It was terrible. [LAUGHTER] It was hard, the hardest thing I ever did.

REGIS: Governor, you got a minute? [LAUGHTER] Governor in a Little League here. There he is, yeah.

HAWK: Ah-ha.

REGIS: Now your dad was- -

BUSH: That was in Midland, Texas.

REGIS: Midland, Texas. Your dad played first base as I recall for- - for the Yale baseball team.

BUSH: Yeah, he was a good player. I, uh- - I define mediocre. [LAUGHTER]

REGIS: Did you pitch for the Yale team or?

BUSH: Yale freshman.

REGIS: Ah, good for you.

BUSH: Uh-hmm.

REGIS: All right, good.

HAWK: Oh, wow.

REGIS: And then went on, of course. Your baseball career with [OOHING] the Texas Rangers.

HAWK: Oh, that's great. There's --

REGIS: These are the little girls, yeah.

BUSH: I had- - we had dinner with that child right there last night.

REGIS: Ah-huh. Are they both going to the same school?

BUSH: No, sir. One goes up East and one goes to the University of Texas.

[OVERLAP/AUDIENCE COMMENT]

HAWK: Oh, wow. [LAUGHTER]

REGIS: And here, of course, is the whole family right there.

BUSH: Yes, sir.

REGIS: Yeah, your wife's very attractive.

BUSH: Thanks.

REGIS: Yeah, she --

BUSH: I couldn't agree- - I- - I agree completely.

HAWK: -- She looks great --

REGIS: Very, very nice.

BUSH: She's a fabulous woman as well.

REGIS: Yeah. Seems- -

BUSH: Obviously very patient.

REGIS: And had a lot- -

HAWK: To put up with you, eh?

BUSH: Yeah, you got it.

REGIS: And had a big affect on you?

BUSH: She has had a big affect on me. She, um- - she reminds me that, um- - that I gotta watch what I say and- -

REGIS: Uh-hmm.

BUSH: - - watch what I eat.

REGIS: Yeah.

BUSH: And watch what I wear. [LAUGHTER]

REGIS: Are you enjoying campaigning? And it would seem to me to be the biggest strain on somebody's nerves and, uh, stamina and everything else.

BUSH: Well, that's- - it's- - it's a test to determine who can be the president- -

REGIS: Yeah.

BUSH: And I enjoy it. I love people. I love my country. I love going to Wisconsin. [LAUGHTER] And, uh. [APPLAUSE]

HAWK: We got good food in Wisconsin.

BUSH: You got a great governor in Wisconsin.

HAWK: We do. Tommy- - Tommy- -

BUSH: He's a good friend of mine. And, uh, I- - I- - I enjoy it, I do. I've- - I've- - I've got something to say to America

REGIS: And you want to get out there and say it. You think the best man always wins?

BUSH: I didn't think so in 1992. [LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE]

HAWK: It may not always be the strongest or fastest man but the man that says I can.

REGIS: There are so many factors.

BUSH: You may be right.

REGIS: In a race like this, you know, there's the spin factor. There's all of these things.

BUSH: The only thing I know to do is just to speak my mind, tell people what's on my heart.

REGIS: All right.

BUSH: And just let the chips fall where they may. I trust America, I do. I trust the American people.

REGIS: Well, we're gonna give you a chance to do that in just a minute. We'll take a break right now, Governor. We'll be right back with, uh, W. [APPLAUSE/MUSIC]

[commercials]

REGIS: Ah, let's talk a few of the issues here. And of course the education issue is a big one. You sent your kids to, uh, public school, right?

BUSH: I did, Austin High School.

REGIS: Uh, there are a lot of, uh, people- - especially here in New York City where- - where the neighborhood school is rundown, and beat up, and dilapidated, and not

worth sending their child to. But they have no alternative. As I understand it, a school voucher could give them that alternative.

BUSH: Of course. Or charter schools. Uh, my attitude is if, uh- - if, uh, children are going to schools that won't teach and won't change- -

REGIS: Uh-hmm.

BUSH: - - parents have gotta have different options.

REGIS: Yeah.

BUSH: Because the whole- - the whole- - the whole world focuses on process. And we need to be focusing on results.

REGIS: Uh-hmm.

BUSH: We need to be asking, are children learning? And if they are, we oughtta praise the hard-working teachers and principals.

REGIS: So could a president do something about that?

BUSH: Of course. The president can say if you receive Federal money, money to help disadvantaged children, you've gotta measure and show us whether or not the disadvantaged children are learning to read and write and add and subtract. And if they are, there needs to be a lot of praise. But if we find children in- - in schools that aren't teaching children to read and write and add and subtract, we cannot sit idly by. And so what I'm gonna say is, that money, that it's gonna go to the school district, the Federal portion of the money- -

REGIS: Uh-hmm.

BUSH: - - needs to go to the parents so the parent can make a different choice, whether it be another public school, a charter school, tutoring, special tutoring for his or her child.

REGIS: Uh-hmm.

BUSH: A Catholic school. It doesn't matter to me. What matters to me is to whether or not children are learning.

HAWK: Yeah, right, learning.

BUSH: That's the most fundamental question our society's gotta ask. And the great danger is that we don't educate every child. And as this economy shifts from one that

required, uh, you know, brawn- - uh, brawn to brains, we better make sure every child from all walks of life learns.

REGIS: Is that what you try to do in Texas?

HAWK: --

BUSH: That's what we are doing in Texas.

REGIS: You're doing it in Texas?

BUSH: We're not trying to do it in Texas. We are. We've got a really good record.

REGIS: Uh-hmm.

HAWK: --

BUSH: It may be hard to- - to believe that a Republican can sit here and say that the public schools in Texas are the best they've ever been. But I can say it, because there's, uh- - uh, there's a standard of, uh- - that we've measured by. And, uh, uh- - amongst the, uh, other states in the nation our minority students, uh, have improved some of the best.

HAWK: Have they?

BUSH: And I'm really proud of -- It requires more than just one person. It requires people coming together.

REGIS: Uh-hmm.

HAWK: Oh.

BUSH: Republicans and Democrats working together.

HAWK: Yeah, the whole state.

BUSH: You bet.

HAWK: Because it's the state's job to- - to educate.

BUSH: It is the state's job.

REGIS: Now what are we gonna do about the oil prices? Oil has never been higher. In fact, it- -

HAWK: Oh. Ah.

REGIS: It's as high now as it was in- - during the Persian Gulf crisis.

BUSH: Well, you know what it means.

HAWK: Oh. And we're paying taxes. The trucking industry is taking so much taxes.

REGIS: Thirty-six dollars a barrel. This could be a cold, hard- - a cold, hard [LAUGHTER] winter.

HAWK: Yeah.

REGIS: Oil reaching those levels.

HAWK: Yeah.

REGIS: It's gonna affect everybody.

BUSH: Yes.

REGIS: Everybody.

BUSH: You know what that means? It means we haven't had an energy policy in this country for a long period of time.

HAWK: And got --

BUSH: It means we've just been hoping things will be, uh, going well- -

HAWK: Okay.

BUSH: - - for the consumers.

REGIS: Now all Saddam- -

BUSH: And that's not the case.

REGIS: But all Saddam has to do is not export any oil.

BUSH: That's exactly right.

REGIS: --

BUSH: And so, uh, here's what we need to do. We need to use our strong hand, uh, in the- - in the diplomatic circles to make it clear to our friends overseas that we don't want them holding, uh, our nation and our consumers hostage. We expect them to increase the supply of crude oil so that the price oil drops. We also need to be exploring more at home.

REGIS: Why do we that?

BUSH: Why don't we do that?

REGIS: Yeah.

BUSH: Well, because there's a lot of environmental concerns with exploration. But I'm convinced that we can explore and main- - and- - and keep the- -

HAWK: Keep the environment.

BUSH: - - keep the environment. I do. I believe that.

REGIS: Hmm.

BUSH: Secondly, we need to- -

HAWK: We have to.

BUSH: We got to.

HAWK: We need the oil. And we gotta keep the environment.

BUSH: We also need more refining capacity.

REGIS: Uh-hmm.

BUSH: The more- - the more refined product that's produced, the less likely it is that the price of diesel's gonna go up. The more refined heating oil there is, the less likely it is that the price of heating oil's gonna go up. We need to- - we need to help low income seniors with their heating oil bills this winter.

REGIS: Well, you don't think we're ever gonna go to war again with him?

BUSH: With Saddam?

REGIS: Yeah.

BUSH: I certainly hope not. I mean I'm- - I'm gonna be a president that keeps the peace. But if we catch him moving weapons of mass destruction around the world, or if we catch him threatening our friends and allies- -

REGIS: Uh-hmm.

BUSH: - - there is going to be serious consequence to Saddam Hussein.

REGIS: All right, uh, [LAUGHTER] Govern- - I want you to- - I want you to answer this question. [APPLAUSE] I want you to sum up the whole thing, uh, uh, when you think I could be president, in one sentence. Tell us why these people should vote for you.

BUSH: Well, because I'm gonna usher in a period- - or call upon the nation to usher in a period of personal responsibility. I want each and every American to know for certain that I'm responsible for the decisions I make and each of you are as well.

HAWK: Yeah.

BUSH: If you happen to be a mom or dad, you gotta love your children. You gotta love them with all your heart and all your soul. There's a lot of public policy that I want to talk about. I want to share some of the surplus with the people who work hard. I want you to get some tax relief, Susan, so you can save, and dream and build.

HAWK: Tax refund.

BUSH: Tax relief.

HAWK: Relief?

BUSH: Yeah.

HAWK: Relief?

BUSH: And I- - I- - I want to strengthen the- -

HAWK: You cut it before --, right?

BUSH: - - military to keep the [LAUGHTER] peace.

HAWK: Like I don't have to pay it and then get it back?

BUSH: No. I cut it before you pay.

HAWK: Oh, that is a re- - yeah.

BUSH: I want you to know if you're a family of f- - a family of four in Wisconsin making 50,000 dollars a year, under my vision, you get a fifty percent reduction in the Federal- -

HAWK: Okay.

BUSH: - - income tax as you pay. And the reason I believe that's important is I worry about the working people being overtaxed. Uh, I worry- -

HAWK: And they're gonna pay for their kid's college and all that. --

BUSH: Exactly right. And so I would rather you have decisions over your money, as opposed to the Federal Government making a decision over your money.

HAWK: And I- - [APPLAUSE] yeah. I think either he does- - you have a good stand on the social security. I- - I like that, let me invest my own money.

BUSH: I want to- -

HAWK: That's gonna be a tough transition.

BUSH: That's okay. But- - but nevertheless- -

HAWK: I'm willing to try it.

BUSH: We've got- - we've got the money to t- - transition from a- - the old way in social security, which is the Government program. The Government'll decide the benefits to- - to a new way to allow younger workers to manage some of your own money- -

HAWK: Yeah.

BUSH: - - in safe and secure investments in the private sector so we get a better rate of return on people's monies than the- - than less than two percent rate of return.

REGIS: Uh-hmm.

HAWK: And give us a more responsibility is- - because Americans can handle it, trust me.

BUSH: You're singing my tune.

HAWK: Yeah.

BUSH: [LAUGHTER] We- -

HAWK: You're saying Americans are not--

REGIS: Governor, I- - I think you better take her with you.

BUSH: I do too. [LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE]

HAWK: I'd like to.

REGIS: All right, listen, it's been great having you on the show.

BUSH: Thank you, Regis.

REGIS: Say hello to your dad and good luck to you --

HAWK: Hey, thanks for coming.

BUSH: Thank you, Susan. It was good.

HAWK: It's great. A --

BUSH: I'd love to. I'm --

HAWK: You come to Wisconsin --

REGIS: Governor George Bush.

HAWK: I gotta friend --

BUSH: Thank you all.

REGIS: Good to have you and thank you.

BUSH: You've a good man.

REGIS: Good luck to you.

BUSH: You're a good guy. [MUSIC] Susan, the best to you. Good luck to you.

HAWK: Good luck to you.

BUSH: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

Appendix VII: *Live with Regis with Gore*

October 19, 2000 -Guest host Rhonda Jamgotchian

REGIS: So here it is, pounding down the home stretch, election day just two weeks away and he could be the next president of the United States, please welcome Vice President Al Gore, everybody. So, Vice President, how are ya?

GORE: How you doin'?

REGIS: This is --.

JAMGOTCHIAN: Very nice to meet you.

GORE: Nice to meet you, too.

REGIS: She's my co-host for the day.

GORE: Great, well, thank you.

REGIS: Yes, absolutely, have a seat.

JAMGOTCHIAN: Thank you.

GORE: Thank you.

REGIS: So, ha - you look rather refreshed, ready to go, this is been nothing, a piece of cake, this, uh, campaigning, huh?

GORE: I'm having a good time.

REGIS: Are you?

GORE: I'm enjoying it. Great to see all of you here.

REGIS: Uh, thank you very much for coming, we appreciate it. How do you relax on the campaign trail with all of these hands to shake and - -

GORE: Uh, I - - I - - like to have some time to myself each day, exercise, make sure that, uh, I get enough sleep, that's - - [LAUGHTER] that's - - that's - - that's - - uh, really the key to it for me.

REGIS: Yeah, it's really all work now, isn't it? You know, so many questions I want to ask you, but the story has it that your roommate at Harvard was - -

JAMGOTCHIAN: Tommy Lee Jones.

REGIS: Tommy Lee Jones.

GORE: Right, right.

REGIS: And Tommy Lee Jones I've interviewed before, very intense guy.

GORE: He is intense.

REGIS: Very, very, intense guy.

GORE: Very intense, yeah.

REGIS: Some people would even think, you know, Tommy can be a little scary [LAUGHTER]. Now, your first night at Harvard it's just you and Tommy in the room there.

GORE: Well, I'll tell you, uh, this is a true story. When I arrived as a freshman I walked into the room and the lights were off and I thought nobody was there and I suddenly noticed that in the middle of the room in a straight back chair, motionless, [LAUGHTER] was this guy.

REGIS: Oh, no kidding?

GORE: Just sittin' there, yeah, [LAUGHTER].

REGIS: See, what did I tell ya?

GORE: He was a great actor in, uh, college, also.

REGIS: Really, what was he - -

GORE: And he was a star football player, did you know that?

REGIS: I didn't know that.

GORE: Absolutely, he was a fantastic football player.

REGIS: But, what was he doing in the darkness sitting there?

GORE: He was getting - - getting - - used to the room, I guess. But, uh, but, uh, we became very, very, close friends that first year and we've remained close all these years.

REGIS: Ah, that's great. He's - -

JAMGOTCHIAN: We - - we - - hear that you're a practical joker.

GORE: Yeah, sometimes, I l - - I - - uh, I l - - I like that.

JAMGOTCHIAN: Any, uh, any you can tell us about, maybe on the President or someone else we might know of?

GORE: Uh, one time - - one time - - uh, when Tipper and I were on our farm in Tennessee I, uh, I found a bottle of, uh, Nair and, um, I was in the shower and so I - - I ñ - used, uh, my regular shampoo and lathered my hair all up and then, uh, you know, I - - I - - wiped it away from my eyes and I took the bottle of Nair and I walked out to Tipper and I said, what is this stuff? And, uh, and - -

REGIS: Thank God it didn't work, eh?

GORE: Yeah, she - - she - was already a little freaked about me losin' my hair, so [LAUGHTER].

JAMGOTCHIAN: That didn't help matters.

GORE: It didn't help, no, uh - -

REGIS: But, you grew up in Tennessee, here's a picture of you and your dad, the famous, uh, senator, uh, from, uh, Tennessee.

GORE: Yeah, I actually grew up in two places.

REGIS: Did you?

GORE: I grew up - - see, he - - he - - worked in Washington, DC, so - -

REGIS: That's right.

GORE: I - - I - - went to school there most of the time and, uh, uh, every summer was in Tennessee. That - - Tennessee always felt like that was home even though I spent more months out of each year in Washington.

REGIS: Sure, but in the summer's day you were in Tennessee on the farm.

GORE: Right.

REGIS: Now, as I understand it they tell me that you could, in your prime there, a - - as a farm boy - -

GORE: Yeah?

REGIS: Hypnotize a chicken, is that true?

GORE: [LAUGHTER] You - - your research staff has been too thorough.

REGIS: You can hypnotize a chicken?

GORE: I can, I can. It is a little known farm skill passed down from teenage wizard to teenage wizard.

REGIS: Would it work on a chicken like me?

GORE: Well, you're no spring chicken, but I think - - I - - I - - I - - think it would, I think it would.

REGIS: Okay, show - - show - - me.

GORE: Alright, now - - now - - the way it works is you - - you - - just stay right there.

JAMGOTCHIAN: Should I back away because I don't want to come into your - -

GORE: No - - no - - no - - I think - - I think - - I think - - you're f - - I think you're fine. But, with - - with - - chickens you - - you - - you - - draw a circle slowly around their heads until all of a sudden they go under.

REGIS: That's it?

GORE: No, no, no, no, it's not working yet. Alright now, Regis?

REGIS: Yes?

GORE: Between now and November seventh you will say good things about the Gore-Lieberman team.

REGIS: We had senator Joe here yesterday, you know. Wonderful guy.

GORE: Yeah, yeah, he is, he's a great guy.

JAMGOTCHIAN: So, oh, no go ahead.

REGIS: Now, I was just askin', are you glad these debates are over?

GORE: Well, I - - I - - wanted more of them, but I - - I - - am, uh, I - - I'm happy with the way they went, I had - - I had - - a good time, uh, in the debates.

REGIS: It was almost like a different Al Gore, uh, every night.

GORE: Different - - different - - format.

REGIS: That's what it was.

GORE: For me, it was kinda like the story of Goldilocks, the first one was too hot, the second one was too cool, the third one was just right.

REGIS: Just the way you want 'em.

JAMGOTCHIAN: These - - these - - town hall type - - type - - forums are - - are - - actually - - you're comfortable with those?

GORE: Yeah, I like that and it - - and, uh, uh, I - - I - - want to have them on a regular basis as president and I - - may use the same kind of technique that the, uh, debate commission used to use, uh, the polling techniques to get a real cross section of each community and then instead of spending time talking with, uh, advisors in the nation's capitol, go out all the time, on a regular basis, at least, to cities all over the country and communities and talk to - - talk to - - a cross section of each community so that challenges that, uh, need to be discussed, uh, are always there so that - - so that you're really getting it straight from the American people.

REGIS: Yeah, well, I guess you learned a lot during these last three months because you got out there and shook those hands and listened to those stories.

GORE: Yeah.

REGIS: Now, among other things, uh, you had time to climb Mt. Rainier.

GORE: I did, yeah, that was very fun.

REGIS: With your son.

GORE: With my son, uh, it was a wonderful father, son, experience. Tipper and I have - - have - - four children, our youngest is our son and, uh, we - - we - - went out and, uh, climbed that mountain together, we trained together and, uh, it was really a hard climb.

REGIS: But, now I notice everywhere you go the secret service guys are all over.

REGIS: Did they accompany you to the top of the mountain?

REGIS: Did they get to the top [OVERLAP]?

GORE: A couple of 'em did, a couple of 'em did, yeah, yeah, and, uh.

REGIS: Are they still speaking to you now?

GORE: Oh yeah, you know, a few - - a couple years ago, uh, my two oldest, uh, daughters and I ran a marathon together, the Marine Corps marathon, but the, uh, the - - the - - climb up Mount Rainier was significantly harder for me - -

REGIS: I'll bet.

GORE: Than a marathon. It - - it - - that was really tough, but it was great ex - - it's a great memory for - - for - - uh, my son and me to have.

REGIS: Absolutely, you've got the three girls, uh, w - - would you say you're a strict father as far as their dating is concerned?

GORE: Oh, I don't know, uh, I mean, um, my oldest, uh, um, compared me to, uh, that Robert DeNiro character in Meet the Parents, um, not really - -

REGIS: You give them a good look over when they come in?

GORE: Well, y- - yeah, I did. They're all, uh, our - - our - - daughters are - - are - - uh, almost grown up now. One of them - -

REGIS: Yeah, but they're very attractive girls, you know.

GORE: Thank you.

JAMGOTCHIAN: In fact, you have a - - a - - you have a new grandchild is that - - a year old?

GORE: Yes, our grandson is almost a year and a half old, Wyatt, and, uh, did I mention he was born on the fourth of July, yet?

REGIS: No.

JAMGOTCHIAN: No, you didn't.

GORE: He has - - he has - - excellent timing.

REGIS: We'll be right back with the vice president in a moment.

REGIS: Vice President, Al Gore, our guest, a nice, uh, cover of you on Rolling Stone, uh, uh - -

GORE: Oh, yeah, it's great, thank you.

REGIS: this - - this - - week and there was nice story there and incidentally, something about a good cop, bad cop, routine that you have done with President Clinton from time to time.

GORE: Yeah, well, sometimes if, uh, you know, uh, a foreign leader comes in and there's, you know, the - - the - - the - - role of vice president sometimes, in - - in - - in - - means that you have to, uh, to deliver the hard edge message, uh, I much prefer, uh, the way - -

REGIS: Be the good guy.

GORE: Well, yeah, of course, but when I was in the congress, I was in the House of Representatives for eight years and the, uh, Senate for eight years before I became vice president and, uh, there I - - I - - was known for working across party lines, working with Republicans, uh, I supported former President Reagan and modernizing our military, I supported former President Bush, uh, Governor Bush's father, by being, uh, one of the few Democrats to vote for the Persian Gulf war resolution. I like to work across party lines and bring people together, uh, but I've, uh, I - - I've certainly, uh, en- - enjoyed the experience being part of the National Security Council the last eight years and, uh, helping to - - to - - to - - bring some needed changes to the economy.

REGIS: Has the president given you any advice during this campaign?

GORE: Uh, n- - not too much, no, because it's something that you really have to do on your own. It- - it's a new time with new challenges.

REGIS: How - - how - - is he taking this because his days, you know, are numbered and I get the feeling he don't want to go?

GORE: [LAUGHTER] Well, he's - - he - - you know, he gets up every morning and - - and - - uh, really works hard and there are - - there are - - so many challenges that need to be, attended to, you don't have much time to - - to - - think about, those kinds of things, its - - you're - - you're - - you're - - just workin'.

REGIS: I'm sure.

JAMGOTCHIAN: Wh- - what's - - what's - - the first thing that you plan to do if you're elected president?

GORE: To send the campaign finance reform legislation to the congress, the McCain Feingold bill, and the reason is that all the other challenges, uh, r- - really are affected by that. I want prescription drug benefits for all seniors under medicare, but i- - if the big drug companies have the ability to - - to - - overwhelm popular opinion with campaign contributions and lobbying then it's hard to get that done. I want to see a patient's bill of rights to take the medical decisions away from the HMO's and give 'em back to the doctors, but if the HMO's and insurance companies have the ability to sway congress against what the American people want then, uh, it's hard to get that done. So, that's the first bill I will send and then - - then - - my top priority of all is to bring dramatic, major improvements to public schools, I think that's where our future lies.

JAMGOTCHIAN: And you're - - you're - - against the voucher - - voucher - - idea?

GORE: Yeah, I - - I - - just don't think that it makes sense to drain tax payer money away from public schools at a time when too many classrooms are overcrowded, when too many teachers, uh, can't even have one on one time with students because they're - - th - - they're - - they're - - operating in a crowd control, uh, fashion with 35, 40, kids in the classroom. We need to modernize the schools, build new schools, I want to recruit 100,000 new teachers, test students, have new accountability, also test all the new teachers, but instead of stopping there, then I want to make it the top priority for our national government to help local school boards recruit the teachers tr - - teachers like professionals, give 'em the training and professional development they need, modernize all the facilities, and I want to give a - - a - - 10,000 dollar tax deduction for college tuition to all middle-class families, so, uh, families can afford to send their kids to college.

REGIS: What about this social security? Uh, you and Governor Bush talked about it a lot over the last three debates and he was saying, look, the federal government is bringing us a two percent return on the money we've invested in our future as social security and he feels - -

GORE: That's not right, actually.

REGIS: That's not right?

GORE: No, because social security - - when you pay into social security, uh, yes, there - - there - - is a two percent, uh, addition to the value, but it's actually much more than that and it seems lower because the money paid in this year goes to pay the benefits for those who are retired this year. That's the way it's always operated. The problem that I have raised with, uh, my opponent's plan is that he's promised a trillion dollars to young workers, uh, out of the social security trust fund, but he's promised the same

trillion dollars to keep from cutting any benefits to retirees and you can't keep both promises. What I propose instead is to put social security in a lock box and protect it, keep it from being used for anything other than social security and then give a new tax incentive for a young, uh, families to save. I- - if you make under 60,000 dollars a year under my plan and you set aside a thousand dollars in a savings account, the federal government will match that with a thousand dollars, if you make under 30,000 you need only put 500 dollars in a savings account and the federal government will - - will - - match it with 1,500 dollars.

REGIS: Where is that money coming from?

GORE: That is coming from cuts in other programs, it's coming from the surplus, and it's coming from my decision to have a smaller overall tax cut, instead of giving 1.6 trillion dollars, uh, in a huge tax cut that gi - - that goes mostly to the wealthy. Under my opponent's plan, almost half of all his tax cut goes to the wealthiest one percent and, in order to qualify you - - you - - uh, for the lion's share of it, you'd have to be able to answer all the questions on your other show.

REGIS: And what's wrong with that?

JAMGOTCHIAN: So, if you - - for the undecided voters out there, if - - if - - you had to put in one sentence why people should vote for you, what would that be?

GORE: To keep prosperity going and to make sure that everybody participates. I want to fight for middle-class families and remember prosperity itself really is on - - on - - the ballot this year in a real sense, if we squander the surplus o- - on a tax cut that goes mostly to the very wealthy then we go back into deficits again and we don't have the resources to invest in our schools and to clean up the environment and improve our health care system. I think that, you know, p- - people say, it's your money, it is and that's why I don't want to give half of it to the very wealthy, it's your money, it's also your social security, it's your environment, it's your public schools.

REGIS: Mr. Vice President, let me ask you the most difficult question you're gonna get all day here in New York City. We have a World Series - -

GORE: Here it comes, here it comes.

REGIS: Just want to know, Mr. Vice President, who you're rooting for.

GORE: I'm for New York City.

REGIS: Ah, you son of a gun, he got that figured out a long time ago.

GORE: Who are you for? Who are you for?

REGIS: Yankees.

GORE: Oh, okay, alright - -

REGIS: But I like the Mets.

GORE: Alright.

GORE: Who are you for when Notre Dame plays Tennessee?

REGIS: Please.

GORE: Please.

REGIS: You know.

GORE: Please.

REGIS: You know, but we - -

GORE: And you know who - - who - - I'm for, too.

REGIS: Absolutely, good luck to you.

GORE: Thank you for having me Regis, thank you.

REGIS: Thank you very much --

JAMGOTCHIAN: Thank you so much.

GORE: Thank you very much. Really appreciate it.

REGIS: Good to have you here. Vice President, Al Gore, everybody. We'll be right back.

GORE: Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

Appendix VIII: *Tonight Show* with Bush
October 30, 2000

Pre-Interview Sketch: [Leno leans over a pumpkin and lights a candle in it.]

Leno: Hi, Governor Bush, Happy Halloween!

Bush: How are you? I got some advice for you. You can't be lighting that stuff in here. The closet is full of stuff that's highly flammammable.

Leno: I think the word you're looking for is flammable.

Bush: No, it's flammammable.

Leno: I hate to correct you but it's flammable.

Bush: No, Jay look at that sign. Camera cuts: Warning Highly Flammammable.

.....

LENO : My first guest, you know running as the Republican candidate for president of the United States, from the great state of Texas, please welcome governor George W. Bush.

[MUSIC]

LENO : Good to have you - -

[APPLAUSE]

BUSH : Well, I got a little headline of my own here. It's, uh- - it's kind of an advance preview - yeah.

LENO : On November 8th- - Wednesday, November 8th, *The Los Angeles Times*, this the headline?

[APPLAUSE]

LENO : Well there you go. [Leno turns the board to camera revealing an *L.A. Times* headline fully mocked up: Bush Wins!! BUSH : There you go is right.

LENO : Now how's mom and dad doin', okay?

BUSH : They're nervous. Yeah.

LENO : Do you think mom's more nervous for you than she was for your dad?

BUSH : Uh, I don't know. It might be a tie, but I know she's darn nervous and, um, she's still tellin' me what to do though after all these years.

LENO : Who's more competitive, mom or dad? I prob'ly know the answer to this, but- -

BUSH : I'd have to say, mom.

LENO : Yeah. You know, she was on this show once and she shook my hand and I thought it was Arnold Schwarzenegger. See what- - you're not doin' any- -

BUSH : She's shakin' mine too like that too.

LENO : I get this, you're not doin' any jokes about my husband tonight are you? Said no. She's strong. She's really strong. And you- -

BUSH : She's a strong willed woman.

LENO : Yes, strong-willed woman. And your wife Laura's here. She's a big part of the campaign. Where- -

BUSH : She- - she's right over there- -

[APPLAUSE]

LENO : Has she ever given you campaign advice? Does she- -

BUSH : Yeah, quite frequently, of course. Like she gave me a little advice tonight. She said, whatever you do, don't try to be charming, witty, or debonair. Just be yourself.

LENO : Just be yourself . That's good advice. It's nice when the woman knows you. I know the campaign trail. It just must be a nightmare because every- - everywhere you go- - in fact, I- - I'm sure you've had this happen with you. I was talking- - w- - uh, when Al Gore was here one time, and we were talking, just out in the parking lot, and he went, and looked over, and there was a guy with one of those, uh- - with like a shotgun mike, aiming it. He was like a quarter mile away, just picking up every- - every little thing that you say.

BUSH : Yes, I- - I know what you're talking about.

LENO : Big time, yeah, big time. Oh. You know what I'm talkin' about big time.

BUSH : Big time.

LENO : Now what- - what happened in South Carolina? What happened there. There were- - there was somethin'.

BUSH : Well, we had a- - [LAUGHTER] yeah, it's interesting you would know that. Um- -

LENO : That's my job.

BUSH : The day- - well, the day of the primary, we were having, um- - we were having breakfast um, at the Ham House and a fellow dressed like a pig pulled up in a dump truck full of pig manure, dropped it- - all the manure, so we couldn't leave. The bus was stuck, the motorcade was stuck, and there we were in the Ham House, hemmed in with the pig manure pile. The policeman was upset so he reaches in and grabs the driver of the pickup truck and he pulls off the pig head, so I see the policeman with the pig head with the pig manure and I'm going, only in America.

LENO : So what happened? Did it- - is that- - now, is this a Secret Service job, the- -

[APPLAUSE]

BUSH : Yeah, they were t- - th- - I guess they were shovellin' for months. We- - we managed to get a cab or somethin' like that to get outta there but we went out the other way but it was an interesting experience. It- - people- -

LENO : Now, I have a Halloween mask I think you might, uh, get a kick out of. Eh, see what you think here. Put this on. Does this look a little bit subliminable?

BUSH : That's scary.

LENO : Subliminable?

BUSH : This was more scary.

[AUDIENCE LAUGHTER]

LENO : I'll be right back right after this. More with George Bush right after this. Don't go away.

[MUSIC][COMMERCIALS]

LENO : We're back, talkin' with, uh, George W. Bush [SOUNDS LIKE: to start]. Hey what'd you th- - I don't know if you even heard about this today. Uh, in this *Esquire* magazine that comes out on Thursday, uh, Clinton says he wants an apology from the Republicans. He feels he apologized to the country and he feels the Republi- - I can see your answer already on this one- - He- - the thinks the, uh, re- - Republicans should apologize for him- - for the impeachment thing. What do you think?

BUSH : I think we oughtta just move on. I think people are tired of that.

LENO : You all tired of it?

[APPLAUSE]

LENO : Now- -

BUSH : And I think it's- - I think it's time to forget that chapter.

LENO : Yeah, just- - just let it go.

BUSH : Move on.

LENO : Just move on, move on. Now, younger brother, Jeb, of course, governor of Florida. Now he has promised you- - he has promised you Florida. He's your brother here, how's he doin', how - I hear that one's kinda on the line.

BUSH : That's not what he says, but, uh [LAUGHTER] - Yeah, I think we're gonna do fine down there but little brother's, um- - he recognizes that Thanksgiving might be a little chilly if things don't go well. [AUDIENCE LAUGHTER] No pressure, brother.

LENO : Now, y- - it looks like Clinton is going to be out, uh, campaigning for Gore. What do you think- - does that help, does that hurt, 'cause according -

BUSH : Well you know, the- - the vice president was fighting to get out from behind his shadow, and now the shadow returns [AUDIENCE LAUGHTER] I, um- - I don't think it can help him.

LENO : No, don't think it will.

BUSH : I don't think so be- -

LENO : You think it'll hurt?

BUSH : I think it's gonna- - people are gonna say, well wo- - I wonder why he needs the president to come out and try to help him out, what's- - what's goin' wrong. But, uh, you know, let- - the people are gonna make up their mind on that.

LENO : Now this campaign, this last week, it seems to be gettin' nastier. And on- - sort of on both sides. I mean, I see things and no, that- - it's not our ad, no, we don't know this. Uh, now, the- - the Gore campaign, uh, hinting, oh, you might not be up for the job. I- - I think Lieberman was, uh- - w- - was saying that.

BUSH : I don't think it was- - I don't think that was a hint.

[AUDIENCE LAUGHTER]

LENO : All right, there you go. Boom.

BUSH : Uh, well my attitude is, um, that, first of all, there's some folks that believe if you spend all- - y- - you have to spend all your life in Washington in order to be qualified to be the president. I obviously don't agree with that. Matter of fact, I think prob'ly the less time you spent in Washington, the more qualified you are. [APPLAUSE] But secondly, you know, in all seriousness though, one- - one- - that's what they said about Ronald Reagan, if you remember when that good man was running for president. But those kinda folks forget that when you're a governor, you learn to lead. You set an agenda, and in order to get the agenda done, you've gotta bring people together from both parties to do what's right, and that's what I've done in Texas and that's one of the reasons why I think when it's all said and done, the voters are gonna say, well this man has been in a leadership role, he's performed, and we're gonna be for him.

LENO : You know, uh, Lieberman also running for Senate at the same time. He said]- - and I was doing jokes about it, you know, you got a job to fall back on. I was wondering why the Republicans haven't sort of gone, hey, don't you believe in your own guy, why are you still running for this office? Are they backing away from Lieberman because, uh, it's orthodox Jewish and looks like maybe we're pickin' on the guy.

BUSH : No, I don't- - s- - well, first of all- - first of all- - No, I understand. First of all, I appreciate that question, but first of all, he's not the issue. The issue is vice president Gore. That's the person who is, uh- - who could be president. I certainly hope not. Uh, we ha- - we just have a big difference of opinion, but- - but the vice president is, um- - is really, um, somebody who is- - to be respected [OVERLAP], but- - but, uh, he's not gon' be the president.

LENO : You think if you get elected, Gore will try to take credit for it?
[AUDIENCE LAUGHTER] We have, uh- -

BUSH : [LAUGHTER] I hope so.

LENO : Uh, you're gonna use that now, I can tell. You- - that's gonna wind up on the bus. We have- - these are- - I asked people to fill out questions. Uh, what embarrassing childhood story could Barbara Bush tell us about you?

BUSH : Well, she prob'ly could tell one about my brother Marvin.

LENO : No, not Marvin. Forget Marvin.

BUSH : He actually urinated in the steam iron one time.

LENO : Urinated in the steam iron. You know, an ordinary man can be president now, apparently, which is why- -

BUSH : Marvin's not running. Sorry, Marvin, about that.

LENO : Well I hope they weren't your pants he was pressing.

BUSH : That's right [LAUGHTER].

LENO : This is from, uh, Terence Bates. Uh, wh- - who is your favorite president, besides your dad obviously. Who- - who would be your favorite president?

BUSH : Ah, I got a couple. I'd say Ronald Reagan. He set a, uh [APPLAUSE]- - The reason why is I loved his optimism. He's a optimistic man who, uh, picked a really good administration, knew how to set an agenda, knew how to delegate. Um, I liked Abraham Lincoln of course. He was a really fantastic president who dealt with an incredibly serious situation. And did it well.

LENO : Here's another one. I'm a high school teacher. What would you tell students who want nothing to do with voting. They have no faith in politics or politicians. Uh, what do you do, what do you say?

BUSH : I would say that, uh, first I can understand why there's some cynicism. People have been let down. Uh, that, um, in order to encourage the young, politicians need to tell the truth. That, um, but she needs to tell her students that this country is founded upon the participation of our citizenry, that- - that we're only as good as the willingness of our people to participate, and, uh, that each vote does matter.

LENO : And you get the government you deserve. Yeah, okay. Here's a- - here's a hard hitting question from Karen. How do you keep your figure during the campaign?

[AUDIENCE LAUGHTER]

BUSH : Thank you, Karen. [LAUGHTER] Um, I run actually.

LENO : Oh, you do run. Now, what do you do a mile in?

BUSH : Well, about seven and a half minute miles.

LENO : Have you challenged Al Gore to a footrace?

BUSH : I'd be willing to put it all on a footrace?

LENO : Really?

BUSH : Yeah.

LENO : Ooh. Ow. [APPLAUSE] Can you come back tomorrow? Wow. Oh, that's pretty good. Ooh, I would like to see that h- - now that would be good.

BUSH : That would be an interesting way to do it.

LENO : That would make you an all around president. You win the debate, and then you get in- - and then you fight in an arena, then a steel cage [AUDIENCE LAUGHTER]. Okay, all- - oh y- - here you go. My Spanish is not good. *Es tu sobrino soltero?*

BUSH : Yes he is. The question is, "Is my nephew single?" That's George P. *Very* single.

LENO: *Very* single?

BUSH: *Very* single.

LENO: There you go. Well, governor, good luck to you. Thanks very much for stopping by. Say hello to your mom and dad for us, and we'll find out next Tuesday.

Appendix IX: *Tonight Show with Gore*
October. 31, 2000

LENO: My first guest, running as the Democratic candidate for president of the United Sta- - You know, it's amazing to me that I get to talk to these people. We do jokes about them and- - and god bless them, I thank you for coming here, re- - regardless of the party- - [LAUGHTER] It's always amaze- - these are the people that change history. Ladies and gentlemen, vice president Al Gore.

[APPLAUSE]

LENO: And a happy Halloween, sir.

GORE: Yeah, and to you. What a- - you got a lively crowd tonight. And the band is, uh- -

[APPLAUSE]

LENO: Now this must- - uh, this must be rough for you 'cause your- - I know you're a big fan of Halloween. I went to one of your Halloween parties once.

GORE: Yes, we- - we've always enjoyed Halloween. We've got four children. Uh, we now have a grandson that we're lookin' forward to introducing to Halloween. We've always had a good time and, uh, you- - some of the parties, uh- - you saw one of them.

LENO: Well, the thing that amazed me, was the kids have a little mask, whereas you and Tipper, y- - you're like four year olds. You have these elaborate- - I never saw such elaborate costumes. We have pictures here. This one here - this one. Now, look at this. Look at this. Now this, I guess, this is the year you went as the what, the Republican health care plan - what is that, uh- - what is that?

GORE: Yeah. yeah, That's why we need a patients' bill of rights.

LENO: Well look- - look- - look how much- - there's no zipper up the back. That's bandages.

GORE: Yeah, that took some time to get on.

LENO: That's amazing to me. And how long- - how long are we- - what are we talkin' here? How long does that take?

GORE: Uh, that took- - that took some time.

LENO: I'm just- - I'm just thinkin' 'cause as a taxpayer, how much time did this take 'cause this- - this was taken during the day during working hours. Now what's the other- - we have another one here. Now look at this here. good heavens and- - is this you without makeup? We know we did a lotta gel-

GORE: That's a- - that- - that was the, uh, werewolf year. I had actually [LAUGHTER]- - I'll never forget that Halloween. I'd just- - I had just run, um, with my daughters, Kristen, who you met, and Karenna. We'd run a marathon and I came back and had to get this werewolf makeup on but the k- - the, uh- - the kid f- - the kids love it. We have fun every year and, uh, you know sometimes, uh, [LAUGHTER] you're- - you're in the middle of a party of a party like this and somethin' comes up like, uh, you know, official business, some emergency- -

LENO: No, for normal people, it would be a little emergency. You're vice president of the United States. No, no. This is what I love- - you have to rush back from what you're doing to put the makeup on. All right, okay, then it's this makeup on and let's say suddenly, I mean, I don't kn- - is there, like, a red phone, is there a secure -

GORE: Yeah, yeah, as a matter of fact, uh, one year, um, we- - we were- - we were in the midst of the party and there was a foreign policy, uh, crisis that came up. I had to go talk on the secure phone and Tipper, uh- - Tipper got a big kick out of it because I was completely engrossed in the- - in the conference call with the National Security, uh, staff and- -

LENO: And w- - we have that pic- - this is the picture that - while you were talking to- - who was it now, the National- - where is it, is that the Pentagon?

GORE: Yes [LAUGHTER], well it includes- - it included them, yes.

LENO: We have the Pentagon on the phone, various agencies standing by, planes in the air, and this is you talking [AUDIENCE LAUGHTER], there you are. It's amazing. If you look- - Apparently this- - [MUSIC]. You see, when I- - when I saw this picture, I thought you were reaching out to the Green Party. That's what I thought that was.

GORE: Well I am, but, uh, you know, now, look. Yeah, I- - I just wanna be clear. If that happens, uh- - uh, if- - if I- - if I am in a situation as president, where- - where that happens and I have to suddenly address the- - the nation, I would- - I would, uh, explain that- - that it was recently, the president, I'm not really that. I mean, I- - I would- - and it might help if it was, uh, like a warning to Saddam Hussein or something, I- - [AUDIENCE LAUGHTER] You know, it might really resolve it.

[APPLAUSE]

LENO: It's hysterical. I just like this- - It's like a bad science fiction. The president is on the phone now. Well let's take a break. When we come back, we'll talk about the campaign. Got some good questions. [APPLAUSE] More with Vice President Al Gore right after this.

[MUSIC][COMMERCIALS]

LENO: Now- - he was tellin' me during the break, the Press Corps dressed up in Halloween costumes?

GORE: Yeah, I went out and gave a speech in Portland, eh, uh, Oregon this morning, and I looked out, and the guys on the TV cameras, one of them was dressed as Elvis Presley. Uh, th- - the other one had like a vampire, uh, getup on, or one of them had a -

LENO: Were you taking questions, like- - like, yes, Dracula, can I help you, I mean- - Dracula, at the *New York Times*, you know. Well let's talk about the campaign. Now, it's like, everything is open season. Like this- - there was a huge article about- - about this- - this rolling- -

GORE: What are you getting at, Jay?

LENO: Well, thank you for the million laughs. You know, and it- - eh, when it got slow, there was this whole talk about, uh, oh, this has been airbrushed because it- - it was too sexy or something.

GORE: Jay, I think people buy that magazine for articles.

LENO: Really?

GORE: Yeah.

LENO: All right. Well, I guess- - As far as guys' problems go, this isn't right up there. Now let me ask you- -

GORE: Can we move right along?

LENO: We'll move along. Now this week, President Clinton gave an interview and it came out in this, uh, *Esquire* magazine. It's- - it was supposed to be out next week- - oh, you give me that look [LAUGHTER]. No but- - now, he- - where he says- - he always seems to say something controversial right before everybody else is gettin' ready to do somethin'. I don't know- - I don't know why that is. I have friends like that myself.

GORE: You're like that.

LENO: I'm like that. I'm like that. But he- - he says he wants the Republicans to apologize for the impeachment, which of course, that was- - was one line in the interview, but you know how they- - they pulled that out. Do you- - you have any reaction to that?

GORE: Mm, well, I'm still waiting for the Republican congress to apologize for electing Newt Gingrich speaker [LAUGHTER]- -

LENO: Oh really, - [APPLAUSE] That's a good one.

GORE: Not that that- - not- - I don't want Newt to take that personally. I think the [SOUNDS LIKE: contract agenda] pretty bad.

LENO: Now, is the president out campaigning with you? I can't quite figure this out.

GORE: No, uh, eh, well Martin Sheen is gonna go out with me to this rally, uh- - uh, after the, uh- - after the show. Uh, no, but seriously, no, I made a decision that I'm gonna campaign o- - on my own. Uh, I'm campaigning as my own person and my own voice with my own agenda for the future and eh, you know, that's just what feels right to me. And I appreciate hi- - his help, getting out the vote, and, uh, he'll be doing, you know, a few things, but we are not gonna campaign together because I w- - I'm running on my own.

LENO: Now how about Ralph Nader? Is this just a pain in the neck, this guy?

GORE: Uh, I- - I really respect the- - the people who get motivated by the issues, like the environment. I'll put my record on the environment up against that of anybody [APPLAUSE]. He says, uh- - he says it doesn't make any difference who appoints, uh, the next three justices of the Supreme Court. I don't agree with that. Uh, and that there's no difference between, uh, Governor Bush and me. Look, I support a woman's right to choose, governor Bush does not. He- - I- - I support [APPLAUSE]- - I support, uh, middle class tax cuts, he has a tax cut for the very wealthy. I support the environment, he really doesn't. It kinda reminds me, uh, of the- - of the old joke about the veterinarian and the taxidermist who went into business together, and they put a sign u- - out front that said, either way, you get your dog back. There really is a difference. There's a difference.

LENO: You know what's gonna happen tomorrow? Now you have, PETA pickets Al Gore for telling dog joke. You can't win.

GORE: You already told a dog joke.

LENO: You ca- - you can't- - oh, that's right, I did. Now, we- - we have- - we have audience questions. These are- - these are real Americans. These are not those- -

GORE: Did you guys fill these out?

LENO: Yeah, they did. There wasn't- - there's not - These are not those Jim Lehrer plant guys. These are- - none of those. Let's see, uh, here you go, now here's a hard hitting question from Kathy. If you win, what's the first meal you will order as president? Oh wait, what is the first meal you would order?

GORE: Well, if it's as close as they, uh, are- - are saying it is, breakfast.
[AUDIENCE LAUGHTER] But- - but if it's, uh- - if the- - if the returns come in early election night, probably a Happy Meal from McDonald's.

LENO: Yeah. Here's one from Phil Castle, San Diego. It's interesting. Oh, this is interesting, and I didn't know this, did you- - do you feel that making voting compulsory, like they do in Australia, that's- - you have to vote in Australia- - would be a good move for- - for this country, making it compulsory?

GORE: That depends, uh- - that depends on how many electoral votes Australia has.
[AUDIENCE LAUGHTER]. No, eh, well, I mean, more seriously, I- - I want to- - I want our country to be the kinda country where people want to vote, where they think it makes a difference because we are in charge of our own destiny. Uh, a- - and that means, uh, campaign finance reform is important, it means, uh, shooting straight and telling people exactly what the tough choices are, and I think when we- - when we have that, people are gonna vote in much larger percentages.

LENO: Well here's one that- - oh, here's one about me. Uh, if you're elected president, how will you prepare yourself for the next four years of Jay's monologues, a- - and you'll be great for me, by the way. I gotta- - I wanna say, personal things aside, ah, ah.

GORE: Yeah. Right now, uh, I have my, uh, technical advisory staff working on the J. chip.

LENO: The J. chip, really, what is that? and how does that- -

GORE: In this case, J. stands for you, Jay. Any offensive political humor is just automatically- -

LENO: Oh, just wiped off. Just wiped off. Look, and you're not kidding. Look at that grin. I can see- - look, no that is a- - that is a very sneaky grin.

GORE: Actually, I mean I- - I've also- - uh, I've also given some thought to some other, uh, major changes. Instead of these boring, uh, Saturday radio addresses, I've been thinkin' about a presidential monologue every night about 11:30- -

LENO: Oh, that would be good. Well if I can help in- - if I can help out there, sir, you let me know. [LAUGHTER] Well this is the last time I will prob'ly see you until the big day and, uh- -

GORE: Just a week away.

LENO: It has been a pleasure. I've appreciated you coming by and seeing us and being a good sport and putting up with all the jokes over the years so good luck to you, sir.

GORE: Thank you very much.

LENO: Vice President Al Gore.

Appendix X: *The Late Show with Bush*

March 1, 2000

LETTERMAN: Well, I'm worried because we have George W Bush, the governor of Texas and early on in the campaign I said this guy looks like he could be a colossal boob. Well...

Laughter/Cheers

The reason I said that of course is because I had no idea that there was a chance in hell he'd ever be on the show. Here at CBS you can pretty much get away with saying anything. So he's on the program tonight and the first thing I'll do when we open up Campaign 2000 I will tell ...I mean he *should* be here. This satellite thing that don't go here, we don't like that, that's for beginners, the satellite deal. You run that little satellite game by Ted Koppel, you know what I'm saying, so the thing that I will remind the governor of when we get him on the satellite there, from wherever he is out there on the campaign trail is that the road to the White House runs through me.

Cheers/APPLAUSE

It's always been true. It's true now. It will always be true and I don't care if I have 100 bypasses it will still be true.

LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE

Okay here we go, it's time to turn on the big campaign 2000 theme.

Music

Here's the man behind the brains behind campaign 2000, our executive producer Rob Burnett. Rob You're the one who secured this booking of George W. Now why isn't he in the chair here with us tonight? How come he's on the satellite?
BURNETT: It's a scheduling conflict.

LETTERMAN: What do you mean, we're here every night. I got no conflict.

LETTERMAN: Wait a minute ,wait a minute next Tuesday is what? you tell him genius...

BURNETT: Super Tuesday.

LETTERMAN: that's right. Next Tuesday is Super Tuesday. New York is included in the Super Tuesday is that correct? Will he be here next week?

BURNETT: Yeah but it's over the weekend and we won't be here.

LETTERMAN So he's leaving town before the actual event?

BURNETT: His schedule and our schedule don't match up.

LETTERMAN: What about Monday? We have an opening Monday night. Get him in here Monday. Can we get him in here Monday? If you get him in here on Monday I'll cancel the satellite thing right now.

Applause/laughter

LETTERMAN: Alright does he know that I said he was a boob?

BURNETT: I think they're aware of that yes.

LETTERMAN: Should I just play dumb on the boob thing?

BURNETT: I wouldn't start there.

LAUGHTER

LETTERMAN: I'll tell you what I'll ask him if heard about the surgery. Kind of soften him up. There for awhile he looked down and out. He really upset the Catholics. I'm saying if you want to go after somebody go after the Presbyterians. Seriously.

LAUGHTER

Put a stick in their nose if you know what I'm saying and get them all worked up and then check your email and call me in the morning. So where is the governor right now?

BURNETT: He's in St. Louis. At St. Louis University

LETTERMAN: Okay ladies and gentlemen, turn on the giant CBS satellite and please say hello to the Governor of Texas. George W. Bush. Governor how are you?

BUSH: I'm great, Dave. Thanks. (He raises his hand in hello.)

LETTERMAN: Welcome to the *Late Show*. Let me remind you of one thing, governor. By God, you look like you've been on vacation. You look like a million damn dollars.

BUSH: I appreciate that.

LETTERMAN: How do you do that? I know campaigning is difficult work. How do you look so youthful and rested?

BUSH: Fake it.

LAUGHTER

LETTERMAN: And that's pretty much how you're going to run the country?

LAUGHTER

BUSH: Exactly exactly.

APPLAUSE/LAUGHTER

LETTERMAN: Governor, I want to remind you of one thing. The road to Washington runs through me. You're aware of that, aren't you?

BUSH: It's about time you had the heart to invite me.

AUDIENCE BOO

LETTERMAN: You're winning delegates left and right here tonight. I know you're on a tight schedule and I have some questions I want to run by you. In watching the campaign, you keep saying, "I'm a uniter not a divider. I'm a uniter not a divider." You say that isn't that correct? what exactly does that mean?

LAUGHTER

BUSH: That means when it comes time to sew up your chest cavity we use stitches instead of opening it up. That's what that means.

AUDIENCE BOO

BUSH: A uniter is somebody who brings somebody together.

LETTERMAN: okay and you stick by that. You're running by that? But diversity is the backbone of this country.

CHEERS

BUSH: It's true.

LETTERMAN: Alright, Who's the real reformer, you or McCain?

BUSH: I think I am. I've got a record in the great state of Texas.

LETTERMAN: Who's more like Reagan, you or McCain?

BUSH: a—ha. that's what the voters I guess are going to have to figure out.

LETTERMAN: Here's a tough one. Who's running the dirtier campaign, you or McCain?

LAUGHTER

BUSH: Not me.

LETTERMAN: Who likes interns better, you or McCain?

LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE.

BUSH: That's the wrong party.

LETTERMAN: One more...

BUSH: I want to do something, do you mind?

LETTERMAN: Wadda you got in mind?

BUSH: Well I understand that I've morphed from a boob to a dweeb.

LAUGHTER

LETTERMAN: Governor, I have no idea what you're talking about.

LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE

BUSH: Let me say I've done extensive research and you've started a grassroots movement. When I come on your show, I want to present this to you personally.

Holds up T-shirt "Dweebs for Bush."

LETTERMAN: Yah! Dweebs for Bush. I'll go along with that. Nice going

BUSH: As the president of the Dweebs for Bush Club. Yessir. We touched a nerve.

LETTERMAN: Now, governor you will be coming on the show, is that correct?

BUSH: I can't wait. I can't wait.

LETTERMAN: I got another question for you. Are you tired of this world leader's situation where the guy in Boston asked you the quiz about the world leaders? Are you tired of that?

BUSH: Naaahhhh

LAUGHTER (disbelieving)

LETTERMAN: You want to try one more? (a dare...)

BUSH: David... (tries to interrupt)

LETTERMAN: One more...

BUSH: Let me say one thing about that world leaders deal. My mother raised me not to show off and I didn't let her down.

LETTERMAN: Listen Governor, who is the president of the Hair Club for Men?

LAUGHTER

LETTERMAN: Hah? We'll come back to that.

BUSH: You're not talking about Uncle Sy Sperling, are you?

BELLS/APPLAUSE

LETTERMAN: What were you doing at Bob Jones University last week? How did that go? Didn't turn out the way you'd hoped, huh?

BUSH: I missed a chance. I should have stood up there and said if you're going to bash Catholics I'm going to come after you. That's the way I feel. I've got a good record in Texas bringing people together, as you mentioned, being a uniter not a divider.

LETTERMAN: I heard later that you didn't realize that the people at this university and that Bob Jones his own self had been attacking your father when he was in office and yet you show up there on campus. To me, I 'm thinking do I have the best staff I need to be running this campaign? Did heads roll there, governor?

BUSH: Heads got knocked, that's right.

LETTERMAN: Go after the Presbyterians!

BUSH: [LAUGHS]

LETTERMAN: Listen. Nice of you to come on here. So we're going to see you Monday night? Is that correct?

BUSH: No, I'll be back in California, unfortunately. But I'll be back in New York. and I look forward to coming on your show if you'll only have me.

LETTERMAN: We'd be more than happy and honored to have you, governor. Thank you very much. Enjoy your time there in St. Louis. There you go, ladies and gentlemen.

Appendix XI: *The Late Show with Gore*

September 14, 2000

The segment is preceded by an aerial shot of Gore entering the building.

LETTERMAN: On the show tonight your Vice President, Mr. Vice President Al Gore. Also Crosby, Stills and Nash. Crosby Stills, Nash and Zevon. (Warren Zevon is playing with the band.)

You know, thank you very much for putting up with this. Understandably so, whenever you have Dignitaries and Heads of State, the place is swarming with secret service. We've had this all week. We have had these guys up our nose. Earlier on we had to put on name tags. Staff members putting name tags. Everybody was frisked at least, even two or three times. And what' this? Now wait a minute. (shot of Secret Service being frisked by staff.) There's your tax dollars at work. Then they came in and made us close down the sweatshop in the cellar. (shot of young people in sweatshop.) We had to shut that down. Then we had to put away the Late Show bear. (Shot of *Late Show* bear.)

But now, the great thing about being in the secret service. Once all of that preparation work is finished they can kind of relax and enjoy the show. There's a guy I saw a guy in the secret service. Is he still back there? Can you see....? Now wait a minute! Hey! Now that's not, (shot of girl twirls gun around on her finger)

[LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE]

I don't know if that's the way that's supposed to work

Nice to see you. Bum Phillips, former coach of the Houston Oilers and Tennessee Titans.

After 8 years in tin the same job, it looks like our first guest may be getting a promotion. Ladies and gentlemen please welcome your Vice President of the United States, Al gore.

[CHEERS/music Gore goes to greet Paul Schaefer, and Phillips in the audience]

GORE: Thank you.

LETTERMAN: Never miss an opportunity to steal a vote. I like that. GORE: I was really impressed with the way he handled those horse x-rays.

LETTERMAN: How are you?

GORE: I'm doing great, thank you. Nice to be back on your show.

LETTERMAN: By the way when you were at the convention and you kissed Tipper, your wife --

APPLAUSE

You realized people were watching, right?

LAUGHTER

GORE: One of the political analysts said, "Were you trying to send a message?" I said, "I was trying to send a message to Tipper."

LAUGHTER

She said she got it.

APPLAUSE

I was overcome with emotion. When I came out here I just felt like giving you a big kiss.

LAUGHTER

LETTERMAN: Yeah, well,

GORE: The crowd...

LETTERMAN: Why don't you get a focus group on that and call me?

LAUGHTER

LETTERMAN: I mean the guy's right, even I said it, sending that message, it was if it was something you thought about or you didn't think about, undeniably symbolically it said you can count on me, I've got a wife I'm still crazy about, I'm not going to be chasing interns.

GORE: Come' on.

APPLAUSE/CHEERS

Come on. Gee. Gimme a break. I was offstage watching her do that slide show right beforehand. She presented all these pictures that she had taken of our life together..

LETTERMAN: A family album.

GORE: Yeah. Basically. My friend Tommy Lee Jones was standing right there with me, we were watching over this curtain over the entrance in the hall and it was really very emotional. When I went into the hall there were all these thousands of people. I got up there and it was a moment that she and I had worked for together, and I don't think, it's not particularly unusual that you'd want to share this with her.

LETTERMAN: It's interesting that things have really coalesced for you and the campaign at the convention. This one gesture has become well, I don't know, it's really kind of energized people hasn't it?

LAUGHTER

GORE: I've been surprised at the amount of commentary and reaction to it. I really have. I mean to me that was just a little peck.

APPLAUSE/ CHEERS

GORE: You know, If I'd really wanted to give her a big kiss.

LETTERMAN: Al, how long have you been on the road?

LAUGHTER

How would you describe NY Times reporter Adam Clymer?

GORE: I think he should be treated as the professional he is.

LETTERMAN: What about that moment, I guess it was Labor Day, when you see your opponent in any race, there must be a moment when you say: Oh this is going to be good. OTOH, As you know in the public arena, we're all vulnerable

GORE: In all seriousness, that kind of thing could happen to anybody the mike is open,

LETTERMAN: Constantly on..

GORE: and if you're on the stage with your running mate, and the crowd is cheering, you know, you just say whatever's uh, on, on your mind.

LETTERMAN: Has anything like that ever happened to you?

GORE : Well I hope not. *[AUDIENCE LAUGHS]*

LETTERMAN: Yeah, you know what I'm talking about.

GORE : I'm not sure what you mean Dave, what are you getting at?

LETTERMAN: Just go ahead, I don't know where this was, we have video tape now
...

GORE : Oh no, what? What? Oh-oh.

LETTERMAN: The Vice President and Joe Lieberman. Tape roll, roll the video tape. *[PAUL LAUGHS]*

[VIDEOTAPE]

GORE: Hey, you know what, I gotta go on that Letterman show. That show is so lame.

JOE LIEBERMAN: Oh, yeah, big time.

[AUDIENCE LAUGHS/GORE COVERS HIS EYES]

GORE : That is so embarrassing. Let me just say, uh, I mean, before I say anything else Dave I just want to say, I am very sorry that the microphone picked up that comment.

LETTERMAN: Well I believe ya.

GORE : Yeah. Mistakes were made.

LETTERMAN: Apparently mistakes have been made in this case, absolutely. Uh, we got to, uh, pause here for a second and, uh, when we come back we're going to ask you about a lot of stuff but also about, uh, evaluate your eight years as Vice President, because you're pretty much finished up here and, and by the way, one way or the other ...

GORE : How do you, how do you mean that?

LETTERMAN: One way or the other you won't be Vice President anymore.

GORE : Yeah.

LETTERMAN: And by the way while you're out campaigning, I hope you're not neglecting your Vice Presidential duties.

GORE : Uh, are you kidding me? I mean the highlight, I'll just give you a preview of after the commercial, the high point was clearly when I was on your show breaking the ashtray.

LETTERMAN: Alright we'll talk about that. We'll talk about that and other things with your Vice President ladies and gentlemen, Al Gore, we'll be right back.

[COMMERCIAL BREAK]

LETTERMAN: Al Gore ladies and gentlemen. Let me, uh, let me ask about a couple of things that have been goin' on and we'll talk about your eight years in, uh, as Vice President and we'll talk about whatever else you want to talk about. What, Wen Ho Lee, do I have the guys name right? Now what, what happened there? This guy was, was stealing nuclear secrets at Los Alamos?

GORE : There, he was alleged to have been doing that.

LETTERMAN: Right.

GORE : And there were accusations made ...

LETTERMAN: Did he confess more or less that he was downloading something?

GORE : Uh, first of all I don't think it's, they're, they're actually reasons why, uh, I shouldn't talk about an on going legal proceeding, but let me just say in general terms that he was just, uh, uh, you know, given a lot of, um, he was absolved of a lot of the charges that were made earlier, and ...

LETTERMAN: He was in jail for nine months, is that it?

GORE : Yeah. Yeah.

LETTERMAN: But did he say he was swiping secrets from us?

GORE : I don't think that he said that. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] Uh, you know the, the underlying, uh, problem was very, very serious because if, you know, nuclear secrets have to be protected.

LETTERMAN: Absolutely.

GORE : Ab--, completely, and absolutely.

LETTERMAN: Right.

GORE : And so, uh, they evidentially thought they had a good case.

LETTERMAN: Now Janet Reno said she's not apologizing. The judge said we owed him an apology, Janet Reno says are you kidding me?

GORE: Uh, I'm gonna let, I'm gonna let the Justice Department speak for itself on that because ...

LETTERMAN: You know you're not under oath Mr. Vice President.

GORE: I know but I, I'm not gonna get into the details of a court case that I'm not part of.

LETTERMAN: Now here's, here's my point. If anybody ought to be stealing secrets it should be us Americans. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] We, we shouldn't have people stealing our secrets. [AUDIENCE APPLAUDS] Speaking, speaking of stolen stuff, tell me the story about the uh, tape. Now here's what I heard that, uh, somehow, I guess it comes by FED EX to your office in Tennessee ...

GORE: No, no, no. It comes, it came to a friend of mine, a friend of mine is, uh, was gonna play, uh, George W. Bush in the debate prep, uh, preparation sessions and, uh, it came to him. And I, I, I actually haven't talked to him about it and don't know for sure but he opened it and apparently it was stuff from the inside of the other campaign including their video tapes and stuff and he just said, I mean, he did exactly the right thing, I've really proud of him, because he immediately, after he saw what it was, he immediately closed it back up, called his lawyer and said look I'm not, I'm obviously not supposed to be seeing this. This could have been stolen. I want nothing to do with it and they handed it over to the FBI so that they could investigate a possible theft from the Bush campaign or from within the campaign, who knows, and then he, uh, then we said, we agreed that he ought to withdraw from my prep sessions because it was, it was the ethical way to handle it.

LETTERMAN: What, what, what are we talking about? What, what, what is so volatile, so important on the video tapes. It was, you would have learned their debate strategy?

GORE: Yeah.

LETTERMAN: But, to me their debate strategy so far is non existent so what, what really is there to learn. There's nothing going on. And, you, you think this also was the work of Wen Ho lee?

GORE: Uh, I don't know him. They might have been preparing for the, for the, uh, for the Letterman Show debate.

LETTERMAN: Oh you know, oh yeah. And by the way, thank you for stepping up and accepting our invitation. You [AUDIENCE RESPONDS]

GORE: Of course.

LETTERMAN: But you know, you know what I think it is is it looks like a dirty trick. It looks like they were gonna set you guys up and they said, alright, send them something secret and if they don't reveal that they got it, then we'll blow the whistle on them, then there'd be even more trouble because they're in a little bit of a hole now with this ass [BEEP] thing and then the [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] and, and, you know

GORE : I, I, just want to tell the audience at home, inside the studio here we don't hear that bleep. And, uh, [AUDIENCE RESPONDS] you know, I mean, inside the studio that sounds a little more free spirited than it really ends up being on the air.

LETTERMAN: It's just all in ...

GORE: It seems to me like you get a ...

LETTERMAN: All in fun.

GORE: You get a kick out of saying that.

LETTERMAN: It's the happiest thing that's ever happened to me in my life. I mean, it's Labor Day, there's nothing going on and it's Labor Day and then suddenly this. Oh the lovely thing.

GORE: Big time.

LETTERMAN: Because yeah, big time. That's the kind of thing I'm always doing.

GORE: Yeah.

LETTERMAN: Alright, so lets talk about, uh, eight years as Vice President and I'm guessing now from your vantage point you recognize that the job of President is probably far more difficult than you ever would of guessed. And I right about that?

GORE: It is, it is an extremely difficult job. And, uh, I have seen how the, the really tough problems come in, in clusters. Uh, trouble spots around the world, domestic challenges and that was really the, the, the biggest surprise for me and seeing it close at hand.

LETTERMAN: [STUTTERS] But as Vice President, now when you went in as Vice President did you have an agenda beyond just being the Vice President on the ticket and, and representing the president and The United States?

GORE: I defined, I defined my responsibility really very simply and that is to do, to serve my country by doing everything I could to help him be the most affective president he, he could be.

LETTERMAN: And how would you evaluate the job that, that you did in that capacity?

GORE: Uh, I think that I served my country honorably and well. [AUDIENCE REACTION]

LETTERMAN: Good for you. You have, from the first inauguration to, to this moment just give me one or two things that really, when, when they happened you went home and you said to yourself, I'm, I'm so proud and happy to be doing what I'm doing. There must have been moments that just filled you with great joy.

GORE: Um, when I, was able to cast the tie breaking vote to put in a place a brand new economic plan in the first year that turned, that helped to turn the biggest deficits into the biggest surpluses, create 22 million new jobs, create the strongest economy in history, uh, and really turn around the, the direction of our nations economy. I'm not satisfied. We've got a lot of hard work to do but I think it made a difference to a lot of people that we were able to, to, improve the economy compared to what it was.

LETTERMAN: So you go home and you think to yourself, by gosh, government actually does work. We can get this thing to work somehow.

GORE: That was one thing. Another one was when I was able to go over to the, to the, um, international negotiation on global warming and help to get a treaty called the Kyoto Treaty, it's, it sounds a little arcane but actually it's a very serious environmental problem that we have to take the, the leading role in addressing.

LETTERMAN: Well, you know, to me, [STUTTERS] and forgive me for being uh, dopey about this, it just looks like we're screwed already. Because I was, I was reading a couple of weeks ago in *The New York Times* and they said that the polar ice cap has melted for the first time in 50 million years. Well that, that's not exactly true, but it's now like a free flowing river. It's worse now than it's ever been before and the ambient temperature of the polar cap area has increased 11 degrees over the last 30 years. Now how are we going to lower that? How are we gonna get that temperature back down?

GORE: You are such a wonk. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

LETTERMAN: What? We don't bleep that here in the studio ladies and gentlemen. We hear that right here.

GORE: I don't know, I, I mean, I think that, you get into all these facts and figures and statistics, are you obsessed with global warming?

LETTERMAN: Well it just, just bothers me. *The New York Times*, the thing is the ice cap is melted through. Now that ain't right.

GORE: Well, um, I, I've actually been to the North Pole.

LETTERMAN: Yeah, was it melted when you were up there?

GORE: No, it wasn't.

LETTERMAN: We'll see.

GORE: But you can tell the North Pole from the rest of the Arctic Ocean and sometimes there's little places of open water and if it happens to be at the North Pole that in itself is not significant.

LETTERMAN: It's bigger now. It's bigger now.

GORE: Well.

LETTERMAN: There's guys up there water skiing. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

GORE: The ice is, the ice is thinner. It's thin by 40 percent and, most importantly, and this really is a serious deal, they predict that within 50 years in the summertime it may be completely melted. That is a big, big deal.

LETTERMAN: Exactly. That is an enormous problem and how do we reverse that? There's no way we're gonna reverse that?

GORE: Yes we can. Lis--, listen. The idea that it's a hopeless challenge, that we're already screwed as you said is one of the -- [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] Now, is that, what is the CBS policy, is that word bleeped or not?

LETTERMAN: You can say virtually anything.

GORE: Okay. Um, this is no isn't it?

LETTERMAN: Yeah. Hang onto that. I'll tell you what. We got to do a commercial when we come back we'll fix this polar ice cap deal. We'll be right back here ladies and gentlemen.

[COMMERCIAL]

LETTERMAN: Vice President Al Gore ladies and gentlemen I'm a wonk. Alright. So back to the environment and, and, and tell us how we can fix this.

GORE: Well.

LETTERMAN: And we have to do it in a hurry, honestly. Undeniably there's trouble.

GORE: We have to fix it in a hurry. I have to explain it in a hurry.

LETTERMAN: Alright.

GORE: Uh, what we can do is to, to create a lot of new jobs by stimulating the, the creation of new kinds of cars and trucks. Detroit is actually geared up to make them if we're all ready to signal to them that we want to make the, the shift over.

LETTERMAN: What about the oil companies? How do they feel about this?

LETTERMAN: We need to, well, uh, you know, they're going to have a market but we need to fuel much more cleanly. We also need to convert the old dirty power plants and the boilers and the furnaces. We can create a lot of good jobs doing this and all of the things that need to be done to reduce the greenhouse gases ought to be done for other reasons anyway and Joe Lieberman and I want to make this, uh, a number priority to, to have the US get out in the forefront and lead the world in making the transformation to really stop global warming because it can be done.

LETTERMAN: What about OPEC? How do they feel about this?

GORE: OPEC is, uh, not happy about efforts that will, that will sharply reduce the, the use of oil. But, uh, you know, we, we have been talking with them. Look at what's happening now, you know? Uh, the, the price of oil is going up. How many times have we gone through this and yet we, we still haven't crossed the River Khan and said we are going to become more energy independent here at home by making new technologies developing our own resources using renewable sources. I mean, I just think it's a huge wake up call ...

LETTERMAN: Well, but you know what it's gonna take and by the way we do our part to fight global warming, it's nice and cool in here isn't it ladies and gentlemen? Huh?

GORE: It is a meat locker in here.

LETTERMAN: You need a guy, you need one guy and maybe it's you, maybe it's you Mr. Vice President, you need one guy to stand forward and say, I have the guts, I have the brains, we have the resources, here's the challenge, in X number of years we will convert, uh, the way this, this planet runs.

GORE: Absolute, absolutely.

LETTERMAN: And you gotta, you gotta stick to it.

GORE: That is exactly what I want to do.

LETTERMAN: And you'll do that then?

GORE: Absolutely. [AUDIENCE REACTION] Absolutely.

LETTERMAN: This is fun, isn't it?

GORE: It is, it is.

LETTERMAN: Now you have, you have a little top ten list for us.

GORE : Uh, from the home office in [UNINTELLIGIBLE] Nebraska. I hold here in my hand Dave ...

LETTERMAN: Yeah.

GORE : The top ten re--, rejected Gore Lieberman campaign slogans.

LETTERMAN: Rejected, these have been rejected. They thought about them and rejected them. Ten of them. No dice. Top Ten rejected slogans.

GORE: I, I want to emphasize that these have been rejected. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

LETTERMAN: Ah don't be a wonk will ya, come on.

GORE: You of all people.

LETTERMAN: Hey let me ask you, did you call Oprah a wonk?

GORE: I didn't feel like saying that. Number ten, vote for me or I'll come to you home and explain my 191 page economic plan to you in excruciating detail. Number

nine, remember America, I gave you the internet and I can take it away, think about it. Number eight, your vote automatically enters you in a drawing for the \$123 billion dollar surplus.

LETTERMAN: Wow.

GORE: That's a good deal. That is a good deal.

LETTERMAN: I had no idea.

GORE: Voter participation's gonna go up. Number seven, with Lieberman on the ticket, you get all kinds of fun new days off.

LETTERMAN: Can you do that?

GORE: Well you know, hope for us, we're gonna work 24/6. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] Number, number six. We know when the microphone is one.

LETTERMAN: Yeah.

GORE: Number five, vote for me and I will take whatever steps necessary to outlaw the term, what's up? That's popular. That's popular.

LETTERMAN: Thank God.

GORE: I, I, don't know, we may have been premature in rejecting that one. Number four, Gore Lieberman, you don't have to worry about pork barrel politics.

LETTERMAN: I guess now.

GORE: You can see how we rejected that one.

LETTERMAN: I forget these have been rejected.

GORE: Yeah, uh, number three, you'll thank us in four years when the escalator to the moon is finished.

LETTERMAN: You know reconsider that.

GORE: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Num--, number two if I can handle Letterman I can handle Saddam Hussein.

LETTERMAN: Yeah.

GORE: And the number one rejected Gore Lieberman campaign slogan, I'll be twice as cool as that president guy on The West Wing.

LETTERMAN: There you go. Thank you very much Mr. Vice President.

GORE: Thank you.

LETTERMAN: Your Vice President ladies and gentlemen Al Gore, we'll be right back.

GORE: Thank you.

Appendix XII: *The Late Show with Nader*
September 28, 2000

LETTERMAN: He's a best-selling author, a consumer advocate he's devoted more than 40 years to public service, now he hopes to become our next president, Ralph Nader

[BAND PLAYS *BABY, YOU CAN DRIVE MY CAR*]

LETTERMAN: Welcome to the show, Ralph, thank you very much - -

NADER: Thank you.

LETTERMAN: I know you're a very busy man. I appreciate your time here and we just, uh, talking before you came out and here are just a few of the things that you have been responsible for, uh, becoming, uh, part of the American way of life.

Air bags in automobiles, fought long and hard for that --

APPLAUSE

Before that, of course, seat belts - -

APPLAUSE

NADER: Seat belts, yeah.

LETTERMAN: Yeah, uh, no more smoking on airplanes, you were also responsible.

APPLAUSE

NADER: Yeah, yeah, yeah, right.

LETTERMAN: I mean that - -

NADER: Uh, uh.

LETTERMAN: That's a pretty impressive list.

NADER: No more overbooking on airlines. I gotta tell you a story, the last day of smoking on domestic airlines, on two hour flights or less, this was 1987, and I take a flight from Washington to Buffalo and I'm the last person on the plane. There's only one seat way back in the window and so I'm coming down the aisle. everybody's in

their seats. I'm coming down the aisle and I see this guy in the middle seat looking up with a devilish gleam in his eye when he saw me and I said, what's going on here? So, I get in the seat and he says, "You're the one, you're the one whose keeping me from smoking!" And all the way to Buffalo he is puffin' on his cigarette and blowing it in my face.

LAUGHTER

And I'm jiggering the air-jet trying to beat it back and I thought I saw him fingering a cigar, you know? Anyway, just before we land he's smokin' away and I'm saying - he's - - I'm saying, enjoy it. He says, "You've made my day," and I said, "Enjoy it because you're never gonna do it again."

[LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE]

I hope, uh, uh, I hope I haven't lost non-smoker vote, I mean the smoker vote here.

LETTERMAN: Tell me about the Green Party, what is it we ought to know about the Green Party that most of us probably don't know about it?

NADER: Well, obviously, it's for dramatic improvement in environmental health globally, you know, you don't cut down all the forests and - - and - - ruin the - - the - - water and you know, let the cars go, pave everything over and - - and - - nuclear power, no, and solar energy, yes, and all that. But it's also to clean up the politics. A lot of what McCain and Bradley voters voted for, you know, to get dirty money out of politics and have public elections funded by public money. It's the best investment anyone can make, also universal accessible health insurance and the other thing that's really unique is to get rid of that terrible law that's 53 years old, that Taft-Hartley act that keeps tens of millions of workers in low paid jobs like Wal-Mart McDonalds from tr - - forming trade unions and lifting their standard of living.

LETTERMAN: Do you have any policies regarding road rage, Ralph? Is there anything - - anything - - could be done there? Let's - -

[LAUGHTER]

NADER: Yeah, it's - - it's - - the modern public transit

[LAUGHTER]

LETTERMAN: Let's talk about the environment because that's the only thing I have just a - - just a - - fleeting knowledge, when - - when - - Al Gore was here a couple a weeks ago, I said to him, I said, uh, you know, even if we change everything tomorrow, even if we convert to solar power, even if we stop paving, if we stop clear

cutting, if we stop stream polluting, even if we stop all of these things, I believe, we're probably still screwed. I mean it really seems that way to me --

[LAUGHTER]

NADER: I always -- I always -- thought you were an optimist.

[LAUGHTER]

LETTERMAN: Huh, oh, yeah. How -- honest to G -- and -- and -- then most people -- if -- if -- you accept that there has been global warming, I find in talkin' to people, that's just fine, they like the idea that you can play golf in January.

[LAUGHTER/ APPLAUSE]

Everybody thinks that ain't bad, you know what I'm sayin'? They don't care. So -- so -- ho -- how -- uh, how -- how -- do we convince people there is a problem and -- and -- then, for the love of God, what if -- I mean, for heaven sakes, uh, uh, Gore admitted that the, uh, ice cap, the polar ice cap had melted 40 percent, well, well, uh, how you gonna get that back, you're not gonna get that back, are ya?

NADER: Well, it hasn't melted that much. But, look 65,000 Americans die every year from air pollution. That's preventable. You've got all kinds of people who get sick, they're property's damaged, their beaches are spoiled, the surfers for example, out in California, have been contacting us, full of bacteria. The beaches, they're closed regularly. Now, I mean, it's everywhere, you know, we've got three percent of virgin forests left and they're being cut down, huge amounts of soil erosion going down the Mississippi full of pesticides and herbicides into the Gulf of Mexico creating a dead zone the -- the -- size of Western --

LETTERMAN: Well, I mean you're -- you're -- this proves my point, I mean, it's beyond --

[SCATTERED LAUGHTER]

NADER: No, but the -- no, but the -- more c -- the more we know about it, the more we're gonna act. Because you hear Rush Limbaugh and all these guys say, [imitating Limbaugh] 'There's nothin' wrong, you know, there's no such thing as global warming, uh, don't worry about it, no such thing as an ozone hole, we got plenty of trees to cut down,' and -- and -- we can't keep going that way, but, look it, we've got solar energy ready to go, in fact in this country --

LETTERMAN: Right, but how then do you make the switch over? Everybody that's employed by the petroleum industry in the world, how do you tell these guys, thanks, it's been great, we don't need the crude oil more. We're goin' solar boys!

LAUGHTER

NADER: It - - it'll never - - it'll never - - be that fast, but it'll be a re - - steady progress year by year and there'll be far more jobs in every community dealing with solar energy, building it, repairing it, installing it, then the oil rigs.

LETTERMAN: But the U.S. President, how do you begin that steady progress? What's the first thing a person can do that makes any definitive difference?

NADER: One is you level the playing field. Why are our taxes used to subsidize the oil, gas, coal, and nuclear industry? Uh, the solar energy credits can work, uh, showing how people, uh, can save money by investing when they buy their houses with solar, uh, water heaters, you know, it - - it's - - it's - - easy to do if we really wanna do it. But listen, there's a faster way to get solar energy and that's, uh, if Exxon owned the sun, then we'd get it just like that.

[SCATTERED LAUGHTER]

LETTERMAN: Uh, that's it, we gotta - - we got to pause, but we'll be right back with Ralph Nader.

[COMMERCIALS]

LETTERMAN: Now, Ralph, you know, uh, you know George W. Bush.

NADER: Yeah.

LETTERMAN: You know, uh, Al W. Gore - -

NADER: Yeah.

LAUGHTER

LETTERMAN: And I'm told here that you referred to, uh, George W. as being beyond satire, does that ring a bell?

LAUGHTER

NADER: Yeah.

LETTERMAN: Yeah. Can you expand on that?

NADER: Because George W. Bush is really a corporat - - a big corporation running for president disguised as a human being, I mean, how can you satire that?

LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE

LETTERMAN: And Al Gore - -

NADER: Al Gore - -

LETTERMAN: You describe him as a gee wiz, techno, twit.

[LAUGHTER]

NADER: Yeah, I mean, You show him any, uh, Silicon Valley technology he just goes gaga and he don't say, well, what is it for? How is it gonna really improve our lives? How's it gon - - not gonna invade our privacy? Al Gore's dilemma every day on the campaign trail is to figure out whether he's a great imposter or a great pretender.

LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE

LETTERMAN: That's what I feel every day.

NADER: You know, there's a story about - - it - - th - - th - - there's a story about Al Gore, uh, a reporter came up and he was eating chocolate chip ice cream and, of course, says, uh, is this your favorite ice cream? And he sort of, you know, like he's lookin' for focus groups, pistachio ice cream, how many people like chocolate chip,

[LAUGHTER]

he couldn't figure it out, you know? Which way's he gonna come down, huh?

[LAUGHTER]

What's the makeover of the day?

LETTERMAN: Now he told me - - he sat right there and he said that he would step forward and he would become the environmental president, that he would take care of all of our environmental problems or at least try, do you believe that?

NADER: No, uh, you know, he's had eight years, he was in charge of EPA and the environment, he gave the auto industry eight years, no fuel efficiency standards, uh, compared to what his book said about the auto industry, uh, weak on pesticides, supported WTO, Naftas, very anti-environmental, um, he, uh, uh, you know, he - - he - - hasn't spoken out against nuclear power, there may be more nukes on the way, uh, so why should we believe him? After eight years of hittin' his knees before these

corporations why should we believe him? I mean, when I hear him say he's gonna fight big oil and big drug companies, uh, going around the country - -

LETTERMAN: It's impossible. Can't happen, can it?

NADER: And - - of course not, I mean, I - - there's a forked tongue operating here, you know, the Pinocchio.

LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE

LETTERMAN: What about, uh, speaking of, uh, big corporations, what about the Firestone tires?

NADER: That's another thing. I mean, this is my favorite agency. I helped build the auto safety agency and it saved, you know, millions of injuries and prevented hundreds of thousands of lives, uh, because of safer cars and highways and they have - - they have - - taken that car, uh, safety agency and wrecked it. Clinton-Gore, it's turned into, uh, a consulting agency instead of enforcement agency and that's why three years ago State Farm told them about the Firestone tires, the roll-overs, the deaths, and Ford Explorer, and they didn't do anything about it they --

LETTERMAN: Too much money involved.

Now - - now - - what about the people who say, jeez, I like the environment, I - I like Ralph Nader, he makes sense, but I - - wonder if - - voting for him is just throwing away my vote?

NADER: No, no. Throwing your way - - your vote is throwing away your vote in the direction of the two major parties that have wasted our democracy, that are excluding competitors on the presidential debates, you know?

APPLAUSE

You know, I hear young people saying - - I hear young people all the time and this Green Party is gonna get a lot of young people votes, I hear them all the time sayin', I'm not turned on politics, well, I say to them right down to the air you breathe, the water you drink, the health insurance you don't have, if you don't turn on politics, politics is gonna continue to turn on you.

APPLAUSE

LETTERMAN: Good for you, yes, sir.

Appendix XIII: *The Late Show with Bush*

October 19, 2000

LETTERMAN: On the program tonight the governor of the Lone Star state and James Brown. What a show.

Whenever we have the important dignitaries members of the White House or running for the White House and the Secret Service comes in and checks the security. (cut to pictures) We've been through it enough that it's fairly cursory. Just a pat down. Look at this, Let's check the doll. Hey wait a second. What about the dog? Better pat down the dog. Then we have to put away the *Late Show* bear.

[LAUGHTER APPLAUSE]

Okay, here we go. For the past six years, our first guest has been in charge of the largest state in the country if you don't count Alaska and who does these days.? He now wants to be your president. Here he is ladies and gentleman, the governor of the Lone Star state, George W. Bush.

*The band plays Deep in the Heart of Texas.
Bush shakes and waves. Crowd claps along with the music.*

BUSH: Thanks for having me

LETTERMAN: You have the red tie. I have the blue tie. That's the way it works, doesn't it.?

BUSH: (Bush taps mike.) I'm always checking these days.

Yahhhhh

BUSH: I'm glad you noticed (re: ties).

LETTERMAN: First of all thank you very much for honoring your commitment. When you were on the show via satellite, I guess you were in St. Louis in March, I said come in to the studio and be a guest on the show. Thank you for honoring that commitment. I know you're very busy and running around and so forth and we appreciate it..

Bush laughs.

LETTERMAN: What?

BUSH: I *am* busy.

LETTERMAN: The other thing about me I don't know if you've known this about me, if people have told you this. Almost from the very beginning I've been hard on you.

BUSH: Really?

LAUGHTER

LETTERMAN: I've told jokes, I've said unpleasant things. I've been shooting my mouth off left and right and I'm thinking, I wonder to myself, first of all, you must know about that, right?

BUSH: No wonder your ratings went up.

LAUGHTER

LETTERMAN: Does it bother you that I'm always yacking about stuff?

BUSH: I'm glad you're saying my name.

LAUGHTER

LETTERMAN: I'm doubly grateful that you're here given the circumstances. Why is the campaign so close, why do the polls show everything so close?

BUSH: Well, because my message about me trusting people and my opponent trusting government.

[BIG APPLAUSE]

LETTERMAN: That's what does it?

[APPLAUSE]

The election is what? 2-3 weeks away, is it good to have it this close or is this exactly where you want to be?

BUSH: It's a pretty good sign, running against a tough opponent, kind of like an incumbent. The economy's pretty good, and If I'd been on your show a year ago. If

you'd have invited me, if you'd have been this close with three weeks to go, would you like your chances? I'd say I would.

LETTERMAN: What do they say about turnout? Is it going to be a big turnout?

BUSH: I hope so. Which is kind of sad when a democracy don't vote. I'm doing whatever I can to encourage people to vote -- Particularly for me.

LETTERMAN: And does it still hold...

LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE

LETTERMAN: Sounds like you got a lot of my family here.

LETTERMAN: Does it still hold true, when times are really very good, people say 'Oh don't bother us, we're not voting, everything is fine,' and they don't come out.

BUSH: I don't know. I wish I could answer that question. I'm worried about the fact that a lot of folks say my vote say my vote doesn't matter. I'm working hard to rally the troops. And get the best people to show up. I'm one of those candidates who say what I believe and puts my faith in the people.

LETTERMAN: Is this the closest campaign you've ever fought?

BUSH: It's hard to tell what the results are going to be. I remember Governor Richards in 1994 and we thought it was going to be close.

LETTERMAN: Didn't she have great hair? Didn't she have the best hair ever?

[LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE]

BUSH: She had a darn good sense of humor. I'll tell you that.

LETTERMAN: That was close at the end too?

BUSH: I pulled away at the end a little bit.

LETTERMAN: Are you tired of this campaign? I know I am.

Bush laughs. audience laughs.

The thing is like three years. It's so grueling.

BUSH: It's a long run. It's good. It's a good test of will and discipline and focus and desire.

LETTERMAN: But are you exhausted physically?

BUSH: Not really. I feel pretty good.

LETTERMAN: How do you keep yourself feeling good? I know you exercise. You take some time out every day. You run every day?

BUSH: I try to run every day.

LETTERMAN: How much do you run?

BUSH: About three miles a day.

LETTERMAN: What's your time in 3 miles?

BUSH: Between 7 and a half minutes and 8 minutes a mile.

LETTERMAN: That's pretty good.

BUSH: Not bad for an older guy.

LETTERMAN: That's not bad.

APPLAUSE

LETTERMAN: What's been the best part and the worst part of the campaign? And I'm guessing that you'll say there is no bad part of this campaign but tell me what the best part is?

BUSH: I think the best part is meeting people. I love-- I'm a people person.

LETTERMAN: Are you really? You're a people person.

BUSH: I'm also a person.

LETTERMAN: But if you weren't running for any office, you'd just like having a lot with people?

BUSH: I do like people. Remember I was in the baseball business I'm gregarious guy. Selling tickets for the mighty Texas Rangers. I can proudly tell you here in NY and tell you that I fired Bobby Valentine and he's still for me.

LETTERMAN: And who do you like now for the series?

BUSH: I like that NY club, I do.

APPLAUSE/LAUGHTER

BUSH: How about you?

LETTERMAN: I like the Yankees.

BUSH: I've got friends, the owners are good friends of mine on both teams. Joe Torre is a distinguished citizen. Bobby V. is a good man. He and I are good friends.

LETTERMAN: When somebody has an office like a governor and then you're like in the middle of your second term, right? and then they announce 'I've been governor for one and a half terms and now I think I'd like to be something else.' So you go on to run for another office. In your case, it's pretty good, you're going for the biggest around. A lot of people do this. I always think to myself 'Is that some kind of breach of confidence between the candidate and the voters that wanted him to stay as in this case governor?'

BUSH: It would be if I'd told them I wouldn't run. If I had said in 1998 I promise not to run for president, that would have been a breach but I told, I told them I was going to think about it. The people of my state knew full well there was a chance that I would run for president.

LETTERMAN: So you took care of this ahead of the fact.

BUSH: Of course.

LETTERMAN: That's smart. (points to his head)

BUSH: No that's honest.

LETTERMAN: This thing you mentioned tapping the microphone and so forth. That was exciting.

[BUSH LAUGHS.]

When that happened I was very excited.

[BUSH LAUGHS MORE]

BUSH: I'm glad somebody was.

LETTERMAN: I do that kind of crap every night.

[BUSH LAUGHS]

Uh, I- - I mean, I'm always apologizing to somebody for something but -- when that happened, I said to myself, this is the- - this is the only honest moment of the campaign, when you called that guy an ass- - Uh, oh that- - [LAUGHTER] oh, and why- - and why not? Now did you- - did- - did you ever feel the- - the need to apologize to him for saying that?

BUSH: Not really, no.

[APPLAUSE, LAUGHTER]

LETTERMAN: Really? I'm always writing letters of apology. Honest to God, that's what I do half my day.

BUSH: Ah, it was inappropriate that people heard me say that, but, um I- - I was turning- -

LETTERMAN: -- As a- - -- did everybody descend on you and say, 'Oh my God, guess what you've done? You've just called this guy a horrible name. Or was it just like, so what, let's keep moving?'

BUSH: Well, some people were a little concerned about it --. It's like that lady when I was working the rope line said, young man, I'm gonna wash your mouth out with soap. Said, just don't use Lava.

LETTERMAN: But, you know, just- - just find me the person who hasn't said that word and Ill give em a thousand bucks. You know, that's how I feel about it.

[LAUGHTER]

BUSH: I was looking. [looks out at audience] Yeah, [LAUGHTER].

LETTERMAN: Uh, but, you know, the s- - the same like with, uh- - with, uh, John McCain, when, uh- - after he- - I guess his- - his concession speech and there was a reporter there and he says, I- - we told you to just get the hell out and I said, well that's great, how about a little of that, why cant we have a little honest emotion?

BUSH: We did. [LAUGHTER]

LETTERMAN: [LAUGHTER] -- Now, uh, did the polls move at all on that? Was that any kinda pivotal moment in the campaign?

BUSH: I don't- - I hope not. I don't think so.

LETTERMAN: But that'd be great if they shot sky high, wouldn't it?

BUSH: Then we'd have everybody with an open mike, you know, but, uh, I, uh- - I really don't pay attention to the polls that much.

LETTERMAN: And- - and wh- - what had this guy done that irritated you? This is -

BUSH: Well, he picked on my friend, Dick Cheney at- - I don't know anybody else who picks on him [looking pointedly at Letterman] but he- - he, uh [LAUGHTER]- -

LETTERMAN: Oh, are you talking about- - Yeah, no, he- - [APPLAUSE] Step back for a minute.

BUSH: He was- - he- - he said something about my friend I didn't like. Obviously I didn't know the mike was open, and I just turned to Dick and, uh, expressed myself. I like his comment, he's kinda way went [OVERLAP] big time- -

LETTERMAN: Oh, yeah, big time. Oh yeah, big time, big time. And then the next day we called, uh, Adam Clymer to see if he'd, uh, wanna come onto the show and he said, let me get this straight. You're asking me if I'd like to be a guest on the show to talk about the governor calling me that name. And we said yes, and he said absolutely not and hung up.

BUSH: I don't blame him [LAUGHTER].

LETTERMAN: [taking mock offense] All right, eh, stay right there. We gotta do some, uh, commercials here. Well be right back with the governor of the great state of Texas, [APPLAUSE] George W. Bush.

[MUSIC]

[COMMERCIALS]

LETTERMAN: Welcome back to the program, uh, ladies and gentlemen. Lexis talk about the, uh- - the debates that just concluded. We had three of em, the first of em uh, was the, uh- - everybody was at the podium. How did you feel about working at the podium, did you like that?

BUSH: It's okay.

LETTERMAN: Yeah. Seemed to me, uh, and I didn't- - I didn't see all of the- - all of them, but I saw- -

BUSH: Wait a minute. [Letterman laughs]

LETTERMAN: [LAUGHTER] I saw most of the first two and very little of the third, but it seemed to me like the most effective debate as far as actually, uh, information was the second one. Did you feel comfortable with the second one?

BUSH: I felt very comfortable. I thought Jim Lehrer did a fine job and were kind of - - we weren't hiding behind our podiums, uh, lobbing political grenades at each other.

LETTERMAN: Uh, and then- - and then the most recent one, earlier this week, uh, I saw a little bit of it and you guys, it looked like, uh, elementary ballroom dancing. [Bush laughs] There was a lot of, I'm coming this way, and then I'm going that way and then you're coming this way. -- Was that alarming or disturbing or anything? is just- -

BUSH: Uh, no, it was just what it was. I mean, it was, uh, uh, it was- - it was a- - uh, I've never had- - uh, done one of those before like that, of course, and, uh- -

LETTERMAN: It just seemed odd to me. The whole thing seemed odd. Uh, and- - and how do you feel you did? I- - I guess the- - the- - they said that you did well. They said you- - did you win the, uh, people- - the poll showed that you won one, won two, won three. What -

BUSH: I don't know, I g- - I think its gonna all- - I guess the answer to that question is what happens on November the 7th. [OVERLAP] Uh, 'cause I don't think people are gonna make up their mind as a result of one debate or another debate. I think there's a -- - -

LETTERMAN: But what was the- - what was the [OVERLAP] feeling- - what was the feeling, uh, based on the evidence that your camp had. Did y- - you feel like you had done all right, that you had won?

BUSH: Well a lotta folks don't think I can s- - you know, string a sentence together [OVERLAP] and so when I was able to do so, it, uh [OVERLAP] - - expectations were so low, all I had to do was say 'Hi, I'm George W. Bush.'

[LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE]

LETTERMAN: Are the- - are- - are the debates the most important part of the campaign?

BUSH: I think they're an important part. I thought the- - you know, the convention was an important part, the whole- - you know, for me, kicking off the campaign was an important part 'cause a lotta people, you know, weren't sure what I was made out of and I got going and had a pretty good start and- -

DL : But now- - now more than ever, people are voting on impression rather than substance. Is that still true?

BUSH: I don't know if that's true or not. I hope they're voting on substance.

LETTERMAN: Yeah, and- - and so- -

BUSH: After all its- -

LETTERMAN: Go ahead.

BUSH: -- I'm for the people. [joking about Gore]

LETTERMAN: You're for the- - ah. We make, uh, we make a lotta jokes about you - - electrocuting people in Texas and I know you don't- - you don't electrocute em [audience laughter], uh, but -- is there a circumstance, uh, that you can imagine- - have you ever thought about this- - that might change your view on capital punishment?

BUSH: Well, uh, obviously if the- - if- - if the system were unfair, I'd think about it. But, uh, you know, it's a serious business. -- I hope you're not laughing at the expense of victims or the people that are put to death of course.

LETTERMAN: Absolutely not, absolutely not.

BUSH: It is serious business and I don't- - uh, the man asked me a question the other night. This was probably the part of the debate where you were asleep, [laughter] but the guy- - man named Leo asked me a very serious question. He felt like I was gleeful over the fact that we were executing people in Texas, and I told him I wasn't. I said, this is serious. My job is to uphold the laws of my state, and I do. And, uh, y- - yeah, it's - - it's tough business. I- - I happen to be one of these people who believe that if the system is fair, uh, that it's gonna save lives.

LETTERMAN: But- - but, well, yeah, probably so, but nothing you can imagine would cause a change of heart here? I mean the numbers- -

BUSH: Well if I was convinced that w- - lives weren't being saved, if the death penalty didn't save other peoples' lives.

LETTERMAN: Or- - or perhaps if someone was wrongly executed- -

BUSH: Well definitely on that. Of course I'd be worried about that and we've --- - you know, in my state of Texas, we've, uh, got lawyers looking at every single case. People got full access to the courts, and, uh, um, I believe that every person that's

been put to death has been guilty of the crime charged and has had full access to the courts of law, both at the state and federal level.

LETTERMAN: Do we have that- - the- - the scene in the movies where they're waiting on the call from the governor? Have you ever-

BUSH: Not in Texas. In Texas, you can't, uh- - the Governor of Texas can't grant clemency. I can grant a 30 day reprieve is what I can do and I did so by the way on a case in which there was some doubt, uh, as to whether or not the person committed a part of the c- - the crimes in which he'd been charged. In Texas, you can't be put to death unless you committed two capital offenses, and there was a man who'd com- - been committed in murder and for rape and there was a question about rape and there's some DNA evidence that could have exonerated him. We- - I put the 30 day stay on it so they could analyze the evidence and it turned out he was guilty of both.

LETTERMAN: Are the numbers of executions in Texas so far greater than any other state using, uh, the death penalty now?

BUSH: Uh, I think that's probably true.

LETTERMAN: Yeah. And- - and is there a reason for that? I mean- -

BUSH: Yes. Because our- - our, um- - well first, we're a death penalty state. Some states aren't death penalty states.

LETTERMAN: And how many are there in the- -

BUSH: I can't- - I can't answer- -

LETTERMAN: Is it like 20- - in the twenties, something, 27 or so?

BUSH: You know, I don't know. Sounds about right. Uh, secondly, um, our j- - our prosecutors seek the death penalty, and, uh, I mean, they- - they seek the death penalty and that's why they have it.

LETTERMAN: Now- - now do you know more about this than I do, and- - and, uh, because peo- - people are certainly, uh, opposed to this, and- - and are [low laughter] - The notion of this whole topic just makes me very uncomfortable, very squeamish, and I think people who oppose the death penalty would absolutely agree with that.

BUSH: I think so. I- - I'm sure people who are for the death penalty, uh, look in their conscience. I do. Uh, but, you know, that's- - this is a very serious subject matter, and people who are against the death penalty- - you're against the death penalty?

LETTERMAN: You know, uh, I - see, in certain circumstances, I think, yeah, it seems like it might suit here. In other circumstances, I - I think, geez, I don't know if I would be comfortable with that I just- - I just don't- -

BUSH: Well that's- - that's fair, and that's- - that's normal and, uh, our society's a society that is a society of law. Our state passed this law, and my job's to uphold the law, and I do.

LETTERMAN: Did they ever determine whether or not it deterred, uh, crime? Is it a deterrent- -

BUSH: Well I think it d- - I think- - I think that's probably- - that's a hard statistic to prove but if you were to c- - if, you know, I could be convinced it didn't deter crime, uh- - uh- - uh, you know, I may change my opinion about the death penalty. One thing we shouldn't do is have the death penalty to seek revenge. We shouldn't be seeking revenge.

LETTERMAN: Let's go on to, uh, the situation- -

BUSH: A more pleasant subject, perhaps.

LETTERMAN: Yeah, uh- - w- - uh, the situation in Yemen. Uh- - uh, d- - do we know any more about that, uh- - uh, are we actively pursuing that? If you were in the White House, would- - would you be doing something more aggressive? Are you comfortable with how this is unfolding? Was it an act of war? Uh, to me, its an act of war? Is it an act of war?

BUSH: Yeah, I'll tell you. Uh, I don't know what the intelligence briefings the president is getting today- -

LETTERMAN: Do- - do you get th- - the same briefings as he does?

BUSH: No, I don't- - I don't. But here's what I'd do. I'd- - if I found out who it was, they'd pay a serious price. I mean a serious price.

LETTERMAN: And wh- - what does that mean?

BUSH: That means they're not gonna like what happened to em.

[APPLAUSE]

LETTERMAN: Is this- - is this the kinda thing that starts wars? Am- - am I naive about this? Am I ignorant about this? Is this the kinda thing in the old days, would have caused a war? Will it cause a war? Should it? Should it not?

BUSH: Oh, it should not cause a war, but there should be repercussions. We need to send a message to terrorists that there's going to be a price to pay, You mess with the United States and kill our citizens, there will be a serious price to pay.

LETTERMAN: Now are you talking about retaliation or due process of law?

BUSH: [LAUGHTER] I'm talking about getting the facts and letting 'em know we don't appreciate it and there's a serious- - serious consequence. People need to know that our United States is a peaceful nation, but if somebody blows up our ship and kills soldiers, there's going to be a serious consequence and I'll decide what that consequence is when I'm the president.

LETTERMAN: Well be right back here with George W. Bush, ladies and gentlemen.

[MUSIC][COMMERCIALS]

LETTERMAN: Now here's a- - here's another topic that- - that makes me dizzy because I guess its just par- - partially, uh, ignorance and- - and just- - well, mostly all of its ignorance. Uh, the Middle East. What should we be doing now? Is there ever gonna be a solution? What is the problem? Wh- - why won't, uh, a negotiation stick? Why won't there be a summit that means anything? Wha- - what would you do now? What- - what, you know- -

BUSH: W- - well first, I, um- - I think it's important that our nation speak with one voice right now and I'm not gonna criticize the president, and I appreciate the president's efforts to bring peace to the Middle East. [APPLAUSE] But there's a lot of history and a lotta tradition.

LETTERMAN: Do you- - do you understand - do you understand why that doesn't work there? Do you understand why places all over the planet- - it's the year 2000. Why are people still behaving the way people behave? That seems so unusual and alien and foreign to us here in the United States, uh, supposedly a relatively, uh, sophisticated, peaceful, uh, society.

BUSH: I do understand. There's a lotta religious tension, lotta history, lotta pent up frustration. Um, the best thing the United States can do is to help provide a, uh, you know- - an opportunity for people to speak to each other and, uh- - but we can't have a- - a timetable that suits our needs. There's a- - we got to be patient but [OVERLAP] and strong and credible -

LETTERMAN: I know but patience, to- - to what extent. Honestly, it just- - I mean-

BUSH: Well, if you're - if you're trying impo- - you're trying to figure- - you're trying put a U.S. solution on the Middle East, and that's not gonna happen. It's got to be a solution that both the Palestinians and Israelis agree to.

LETTERMAN: But they- - they must be equally frustrated with it.

BUSH: I would hope so. I would hope so but their- - the frustration has now boiled up and boiled over into violence, and, uh, our nation needs to s- - be a steady hand in that part of the region. There's some practical things we can do. I think we need to develop an anti-ballistic missile system to help keep the peace in the Middle East, for example.

LETTERMAN: Eh- - eh, that would work?

BUSH: Yeah, I think it will work. Otherwise, I'm not gonna deploy it.

LETTERMAN: Um, what about places like- - like, uh, Bosnia and Rwanda. What- - what's going on there? Why are people behaving that way? What- - h- - how can people be capable of s- - of such evil honest to God- -

BUSH: Because there's hate- - there is hate in the world. There's still hate. People hate each other. I can't- -

LETTERMAN: But here in the United States, I mean, take a look at the Mets fans and the Yankee fans. But - but we're not- - you know what I'm saying?

BUSH: Yeah. [APPLAUSE] Maybe it's - - maybe it's because we got- -

LETTERMAN: Why- - why- - how are humans capable of this?

BUSH: Well 'cause we got the greatest nation in the world. We're fa- - we run on the fantastic values of respect and tolerance and, you know, all men are created equal. That's- - I mean, this is a great nation. We're a fortunate nation. Others aren't as fortunate as we are. But that doesn't mean we should retreat within our borders. Waive gotta help make the world more peaceful.

LETTERMAN: I heard something a coupla weeks ago, uh, coming outta your campaign and I just thought, well this is not true, he's not really gonna do that. Talking about wilderness lands up in Alaska or the Arctic Circle. You're gonna take trucks up there and drill for oil, and I said, oh, that's a joke. He's not gonna do that.

BUSH: Yeah, well. Th- - then you're not going to have any natural gas if we don't do it and, uh- -

LETTERMAN: So, y- - you think we need- -

BUSH: Absolutely. And guess what. The irony about all this is, to tell you how politics is outta Washington, the administration's opened up what's called the National Petroleum Reserve, which is in that part of the world. They're already exploring up there. And its necessary and I believe we can do so in an environmentally friendly way I do. And we need to. Either that or we're going to be dependent on foreign sources of crude oil.

LETTERMAN: When- - when Al Gore was here, uh, and I started t- - whining to him about the, uh, polar ice cap melting, and turning to slush and you can go up there and water-ski year round now [Bush laughs] and- - and he said, you don't have to worry about a thing. He says, I will step forward. I will be the one that will lead us to solutions to save the planet. Now- - now, d- - one, do you believe him when he says that?

BUSH: Not really.

[LAUGHTER/applause]

LETTERMAN: Do you - - do you believe the planet needs saving?

BUSH: I believe- - I- - I do. I think we can, uh, do a much better job with the environment and were making great progress with the environment. On the other hand, I don't want the people who work for a living, everyday people, have their energy bills outta sight, when I know we can move natural gas- - which by the way, burns cleanly from Alaska, uh, through pipelines that can be constructed with the environment in mind. It- - we got gas up there- -

LETTERMAN: Well what are you burning down in Texas? It- - don't you have bad air pollution down in Texas?

BUSH: Actually, its getting better.

LETTERMAN: Getting better but it- - I mean, getting better by how much?
[Letterman laughs at the inadequacy of the Bush's response]

BUSH: Well we got a lotta cars. We're a big city. We got a lotta autom- - we got a lotta automobiles.

LETTERMAN: Yeah, but you know what I'm saying. If in fact this is true, is it the worst country - eh, the worst state in the country for air pollution? Is that true or the-
-

BUSH: Well, were the best in reducing toxic pollutions. Waive reduced our industrial pollution- -

LETTERMAN: But if you're the worst and you reduce it by this much -

BUSH: Well I'm not so sure were the worst- - you know maybe- -

LETTERMAN: But its a problem. Isn't it a problem?

BUSH: Well, its a big city. Houston's a big city.

LETTERMAN: Well I guess it would- - its not as big as New York. Its not as big as Los Angeles.

BUSH: Well Los Angeles may be, uh- - I wouldn't necessarily be comparing Los Angeles to Houston, but nevertheless were making progress.

LETTERMAN: But listen to me, governor. Here's my point.

BUSH: I am listening to you. [Bush laughs] I don't have any choice but to listen to you.

LETTERMAN: In- - instead of sending these guys up looking for, uh, natural gas, uh, in Alaska or wherever the hell you're going to do it, wh- - why cant- - why cant we take some of the- - that- - that fund, the- - some of that money and- - and look for alternative means of energy?

[APPLAUSE]

BUSH: You mean you want to plug in your- - plug in your electricity?

APPLAUSE

LETTERMAN: Well we got to start somewhere.

BUSH: I- - I think we oughtta be looking about it but I'm a practical guy. I- - I think we can develop alternative uses of energy. As a matter of fact, in Texas, under the Electric Dereg Bill I signed, were gonna have more alternative uses of- - of energy than any other state, but, hey, its going to be hard to get your electric car to drive you from where you live to New York. They don't have the technology necessary. I'm a person that deals with the problem at hand. The problem at hand is, the Arabs have got us over the barrel, so to speak. They- - we- - were importing 57 per cent of our crude oil. We don't have enough refining capacity. People are going to start paying high bills and I'm worried about it. I'm worried about what it'll do for the economy.

LETTERMAN: I'm not smart enough to counter any of these things, [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] but- - but sooner or- - sooner or later, were gonna have to make a change- - gonna have to make a significant change.

BUSH: I think we can do that- -

LETTERMAN: Not- - not just lip service, not just an item on a campaign- -

BUSH: There's no question we can do that. But the technology is not available now- -

LETTERMAN: Polar ice cap is melting. That's all I know.
[LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE] Eleven degrees warmer than it was 50 years ago. All right, well be right back, ladies and gentlemen with the, uh, governor here.

[MUSIC][COMMERCIALS]

LETTERMAN: Do you like- - do you like me better than Oprah?

BUSH: [LAUGHTER] Not enough to kiss you.

LETTERMAN: Yeah, thank you, thank God for that. Um, I understand you have a little, uh, something for us. You've prepared, uh, as, uh, seems to be traditional around here, the top ten list.

BUSH: I do.

LETTERMAN: Oh great - [MUSIC] What is the category?

BUSH: First of all, its from the home office in [LETTERMAN LAUGHS] Crawford, Texas.

LETTERMAN: Oh, Crawford, Texas?

BUSH: Yeah, come right outta Crawford. Hi everybody. The top ten changes I'll make in the White House- -

LETTERMAN: Oh, here you go, this is right up your alley.

BUSH: Yeah. Number ten, to save taxpayer dollars, calls to winning sports teams will be collect. Not bad. Number nine, new rule at cabinet meetings. You can't talk until you ride the mechanical bull. [APPLAUSE]

LETTERMAN: Have you ever been on a mechanical bull?

BUSH: No, uh- -

LETTERMAN: Do they still have those down in Texas?

BUSH: Yes. Number eight.

LETTERMAN: Another form of capital punishment, I believe, isn't it? mechanical bull? [LAUGHTER].

BUSH: Number eight, goodbye boring presidential radio address, hello Dick Cheney spins the hits of the '80s, '90s, and today.

LETTERMAN: Ah, there we go. Pretty good.

BUSH: Thank you. Number seven, make sure the White House library has lots books with big print and pictures. [APPLAUSE] Number six. Just for fun, issue executive order commanding my brother Jeb to wash my car [OVERLAP] [APPLAUSE]. Number five. Number five, first day in office, my mother's face goes up on Mount Rushmore. [CUT TO IMAGE OF BARBARA BUSH ON RUSHMORE]

LETTERMAN: Wow. Wow that was- - well look at there. Wow. [LAUGHTER]

BUSH: Number four, look into hiring a security guard for our nuclear secrets. [APPLAUSE] Number three, will not get sick on Japanese leaders like other president Bushes I know.

LETTERMAN: Oh no, that- - why cant we let bygones be bygones.

BUSH: Number two. Give Oval Office one heck of a scrubbing. [BIG APPLAUSE]

LETTERMAN: Oh my. Oh my g- - a job for Cheney. That would be Cheney's job, right?

BUSH: And number one. Tax relief for all Americans except smartaleck talk show hosts.

LETTERMAN: Hey, wait a minute. Hey. [MUSIC] Well listen, I hope you've enjoyed your time here.

BUSH: I have.

LETTERMAN: And, uh, I've enjoyed chatting with you. Been a lot of fun, been very interesting.

BUSH: Thank you sir.

LETTERMAN: Uh, and the election is w- - is it just three weeks away?

BUSH: Little less, yeah.

LETTERMAN: All right, well good luck to you and we'll see what happens.

BUSH: I'm asking for your vote.

LETTERMAN: All right, win- - win or lose, come back and see us again.

[OVERLAP] All right? All right. Thank you very much. Governor George W. Bush, ladies and gentlemen. We'll be right back.

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