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ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO

9

LANCER'S BOYS CLUB, FRIENDS SCHOOL

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BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 PRESIDENT: Parents, honored guests,  
3 gentlemen of the Lancer's.

4 Janet Reno was sworn in as the nation's  
5 78th Attorney General by President Clinton on  
6 March 12, 1993. From 1978 to the time of her  
7 appointment, Ms. Reno served as the State  
8 Attorney for Dade County Florida. She was  
9 initially appointed to the position by the  
10 Governor of Florida, and subsequently was  
11 elected to that office five times.

12 Ms. Reno was a partner in the Miami  
13 based law firm of Steel, Hector and Davis from  
14 1976 to 1978. Before that, she served as  
15 Assistant State Attorney and as Staff Director  
16 of the Florida House of Representatives  
17 Judiciary Committee, after starting her legal

18 career in private practice.

19 Ms. Reno was born and raised in  
20 Miami, Florida, where she attend Dade County  
21 Public Schools. She received an A.B. in  
22 Chemistry from Cornell University in 1960, and

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1 her law degree from Harvard Law School in 1963.

2 During her three year tenure, Ms.  
3 Reno has directed a number of significant  
4 prosecutions by the Justice Department.

5 Only a month after taking office, Ms.  
6 Reno ordered the FBI to proceed with the gas  
7 attack on cult leader David Koresh at Waco,  
8 Texas, and took full responsibility for the  
9 FBI's subsequent actions.

10 She spearheaded a civil rights  
11 investigation of a series of fires of churches  
12 in the South, including one where Reggie White,  
13 of the Green Bay Packers, was pastor.

14 Ms. Reno and the Commissioner of

15 Immigration and Naturalization cooperated in  
16 strengthening surveillance and enforcement  
17 along the Mexican border, anticipating a surge  
18 of illegal immigrants.

19 She oversaw the investigation of  
20 Daiwa Bank of Japan, which pleaded guilty of  
21 fraud and conspiracy, covering up over \$1  
22 billion in losses from illegal bond trading,

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1 and paid record fines of \$340 million.

2 In this, our final meeting of the  
3 Lancer's 50th year, it is fitting to note that  
4 Ms. Reno's official biography is the shortest I  
5 have received this year from the prominent  
6 people I've introduced to you. That, to me,  
7 reflects the inherent modesty of an effective  
8 leader and public servant.

9 It is a privilege to welcome as our  
10 guest speaker, for this closing session at the  
11 Lancer's 50th year, the Attorney General of the

12 United States, the Honorable Janet Reno.

13 (Applause)

14 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Mr. President,  
15 gentlemen of the Lancer's, family, friends  
16 and marvelous chorus.

17 It is a great honor for me to be here  
18 this evening, because of your commitment to  
19 community service. Your commitment to helping  
20 others, is to me the tradition that makes this  
21 nation great, and I commend you.

22 It is a little over three and a half

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1 years ago that I received a call, saying  
2 that I would be invited by the White  
3 House, to talk to the President about  
4 becoming the Attorney General. It was a  
5 call I had never anticipated and then,  
6 suddenly, in three and a half weeks, my life  
8 passed before my eyes as I was preparing to  
9 answer questions with the United States Senate

10        Judiciary Committee.

11                    But what became clear to me is that  
12        the people I had known through my life, my  
13        American history teacher in high school, my  
14        high school classmates who contacted me and  
15        cheered me on and answered questions,  
16        had been involved in my life had  
17        made such a difference and continued with me.

18                    From this group that has meant so  
19        much to you, you will draw strength and courage  
20        and wisdom for the rest of your life. The  
21        friends you make here will be with you for the  
22        rest of your life.

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1                    And I hope you will draw from the  
2        tradition that this organization has  
3        established and go forth to figure out how you  
4        can help others. Become known for yourself,  
5        don't become known for how much money you make,  
6        or how big your house is, but become known for

7       who you are, what you stand for, and what you  
8       do for others.

9                   Public service has been the greatest,  
10       most wonderful undertaking that I have ever  
11       been engaged in. I have been in the private  
12       practice of law, in small firms and large  
13       firms. I have worked for the legislature. I  
14       have been a prosecutor. And now, I serve as  
15       Attorney General.

16                   There is no money in the world that  
17       can ever substitute for the satisfaction of  
18       public service. Now, granted, you get cussed  
19       at, fussed at, criticized, in the paper, and on the  
20       television. You get calls telling you just  
21       what you did wrong. But you also get so many  
22       different rewards.

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1                   As a prosecutor in Miami, I was  
2       responsible for collecting child support. It  
3       can be one of the most difficult tasks I know.

4       The person claims not to have very much money.

5       You have to continue to go after them, find  
6       them.

7                   The parent who has custody of the  
8       child is calling you regularly to find out why  
9       you haven't gotten child support. And then, on  
10      Sunday night, she calls you at home, screams at  
11      you, says she's going to lose her apartment the  
12      next day if you don't get the child support  
13      collected.

14                   But when you finally do, and she sees  
15      you next, she gives you a big hug, and says  
16      she doesn't know what she would do without you.  
17      Those are the rewarding moments.

18                   It is a touching moment when you have  
19      dealt with the family of a homicide victim.  
20      You have struggled to find the person who did  
21      it. You struggle to develop the evidence  
22      sufficient to prosecute them. You get the

1 conviction. You get the sentence the defendant  
2 deserved. And suddenly, you walk out of the  
3 courtroom and the victim's family is there to  
4 thank you. No money that I could make in  
5 private practice will ever substitute for those  
6 moments.

7           And you help defendants. One day, I  
8 was walking through a downtown office building,  
9 and a man came up to me and he says, "I want to  
10 thank you." And I said, "What do you want to  
11 thank me for?" And he said, "You arrested me  
12 and convicted me." I said, "You're the first  
13 person that ever thanked me for that."

14           He said, "No. Let me tell you what  
15 happened." He said, "I had a real drug  
16 problem. I'd lost my job, then I lost my  
17 family, and I got arrested and your prosecutor,  
18 with your approval, got me into a drug program,  
19 made sure I stayed there as a condition of my  
20 probation. I've been drug free for two years.  
21 I've got this job I'll never lose. And I've  
22 gotten my family back. And I just wanted to

1       thank you."

2                       That is why public service is so  
3       rewarding. Not to be a person who is famous,  
4       not to be somebody just to be the Attorney  
5       General of the United States, but to do  
6       something that can truly help other people.

7                       As you consider what you undertake  
8       for the rest of your life, consider public  
9       service. It does not have to be for all of  
10      your professional life. You can practice law  
11      in private practice, become a judge, go back to  
12      private practice, engage in other activities.  
13      But remember, public service is a wonderful  
14      undertaking.

15                      You know full well the value of  
16      community service. You know because of the  
17      Lancer's that you can truly make a difference,  
18      that you can touch the lives of others, and  
19      that you can do that regardless of whether you

20 undertake service in government. It doesn't  
21 make any difference how old you are.

22 One of my favorite scenes is from a

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1 community meeting that I went to where an old  
2 man stood up, and he said, "Do you know how old  
3 I am?" I said, "No, sir." And he said, "I'm  
4 84 years old."

5 He said, "Do you know what I do three  
6 mornings a week, three hours each morning?" I  
7 said, "No, sir." He said, "I volunteer as a  
8 teacher's aide."

9 A young woman who had been seated  
10 next to him stood up, and she said, "I'm the  
11 first grade teacher for whom he volunteers, and  
12 the gifted kids can't wait for their time with  
13 him because he expands their horizons more than  
14 I can. The kids with learning disabilities  
15 can't wait for their time with him  
16 because he has the patience of Job,

17 and he's raised their reading level far  
18 more than I could in the entire year."

19 It doesn't make any difference  
20 whether you're 18 or 84, each of us can touch  
21 the lives of others and make a difference.

22 But I would like to challenge you to

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1 an undertaking, from this point on, in the  
2 community you live in, continue to reside in,  
3 go to learn in, always be part of that  
4 community in trying to develop a structure in  
5 the community that reweaves the fabric of  
6 society and communication and care around  
7 families and children at risk, who are alone,  
8 afraid, and disenfranchised.

9 As a prosecutor, I wanted to focus  
10 attention on juvenile justice because I  
11 thought, let's get kid's off to a fresh start,  
12 let's make a difference. But I would pick up  
13 the presentence investigation of an 18 year old

14 who we had adjudicated delinquent, or an armed  
15 robbery, and I would read that presentence  
16 investigation of his first 17 years.

17 I could find five places along the  
18 way where, if society and the community had  
19 intervened in that child's life, we could have  
20 kept him from crime. We could have kept him  
21 from dropping out. We could have kept him from  
22 drugs. And we could have given him a safe,

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1 constructive future.

2 But we had waited because we didn't  
3 want to invest in children as a nation. And  
4 for too long in these last 30 years, children  
5 have been the forgotten and neglected people of  
6 our society.

7 I started to figure out what we could  
8 do earlier. And I worked with the school  
9 system to develop a dropout prevention program  
10 focused on 11 year olds. But that was too

11 late, because already the child had begun to  
12 fall a grade level behind and act out in other  
13 ways to attract attention to themselves. So we  
14 developed an early neighborhood intervention  
15 program surrounding Head Start.

16 But at that moment in 1985, the crack  
17 epidemic hit Miami . And I had to  
18 figure out what to do about crack involved  
19 infants, newborn infants and their mothers.  
20 The judge wouldn't send the child home with the  
21 mother. The epidemic hit so suddenly that baby  
22 after baby continued to stay in bassinets in

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1 the nursery, and we had a real problem.

2 But as I went to that nursery with  
3 the doctors, to try to figure out what to do  
4 with these infants, you could see the  
5 difference. A crack baby who had not been held  
6 or talked to, except when changed or fed, for  
7 six weeks, was not responding with human

8 emotion.

9 A baby who had been born with severe  
10 birth defects, across the nursery, but who had  
11 both parents or one parent with her, around the  
12 clock, was beginning to respond with human  
13 emotions, with smiles, with recognition. And  
14 you understood how important those first years  
15 of life were.

16 But then the child development  
17 experts sat me down. And they said, "Janet,  
18 fifty percent of all learned human response is  
19 learned in the first year of life. The concept  
20 of reward and punishment and a conscience is  
21 developed during the first three years."

22 And I thought to myself, what good

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1 are all the prisons going to be 18 years from  
2 now if these children never understand what  
3 punishment means, and if they never develop a  
4 conscience? What good are the great education

5 programs going to be if we have to spend our  
6 money on remedial programs because we didn't  
7 build a firm foundation in the first three  
8 years?

9                   And I became dedicated to trying to  
10 develop communities in the place that I loved,  
11 Miami. But now, as Attorney General, I am  
12 still dedicated to that effort, because I  
13 realize that, unless we make an investment in a  
14 child's whole life, from the time he or she is  
15 born, we are not going to build enough jails to  
16 solve the crime problem. We are not going to  
17 have enough people with the skills necessary to  
18 fill the jobs, to maintain this nation as a  
19 first-rate nation.

20                   Our medical institutions will be  
21 brought to their knees because we will prefer  
22 to pay monies for crises that cost a lot five

1 years from now rather than paying for

2 preventive medical care that could ensure a  
3 child a strong and healthy future.

4 So as you grow into positions of  
5 leadership in the community you choose to live  
6 in, think about how we can reweave the fabric  
7 of community around our children.

8 Some people say it takes a lot of  
9 money, and to some extent, it will take some  
10 money. But that investment will more than pay  
11 off in money saved down the line.

12 We've got to make sure that every  
13 child in America has appropriate, preventive  
14 medical care from the time they are born. It  
15 makes no sense in a nation that says to a  
16 70-year-old person, you can have an operation  
17 that extends your life expectancy by three  
18 years, and yet we turn to the family of a child  
19 who needs preventive medical care, and we say,  
20 "sorry, you make too much money to be eligible  
21 for Medicaid, but you don't have health  
22 insurance, and so we can't help you."

1                   That's just plain wrong.

2                   It is important that we establish  
3                   early childhood education programs. If those  
4                   first three years are so important, why are  
5                   waiting until kindergarten? Traditionally, the  
6                   family filled that role. But in so many  
7                   instances, either both parents are working, or  
8                   single parents are working, or parents are  
9                   indifferent. And we've got to make sure in our  
10                  school systems that Educare, solid,  
11                  constructive child care is available to all  
12                  children in an appropriate way.

13                  We've got to focus on our schools.

14                  Something is wrong with a nation that  
15                  pays its football players in the six-digit  
16                  figures and pays its school teachers what we  
17                  pay them in this nation.

18   (Applause)

19                  We've got to develop.

20 The Carnegie Foundation says today "that  
21 children are more alone than at any time in  
22 history."

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1 Alone in terms of no adult around  
2 them during a significant number of hours,  
3 after school and evening hours. We have got to  
4 make sure there are programs for young people  
5 throughout this land, that provide constructive  
6 opportunities for continued education, for  
7 appropriate recreation that can make a  
8 difference.

9 There is so much that we can do. But  
10 how do we go about it? It doesn't take just  
11 money. One of the most touching scenes I've  
12 seen recently is in a school in Sacramento,  
13 California. A large number of immigrants,  
14 lawful immigrants, were in the school. They  
15 were learning English. They were being tutored  
16 after school. The program was special, for a

17 police officer, who had worked from 7 to 3, on  
18 the regular shift, was volunteering at 4:30,  
19 because she had been a school teacher  
20 previously in life, and she wanted to  
21 contribute on her own time.

22 A high school student was there doing

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1 his community service requirement for his high  
2 school. And the kids couldn't wait until their  
3 time with him because he told them funny  
4 stories and made the education seem so much  
5 more relevant to them.

6 Each one of us can make a difference  
7 in our community, if we build a structure that  
8 can make a difference, and give our children  
9 rungs and ladders to climb on, even to  
10 developing the skills necessary to fill the  
11 jobs that can earn a living wage.

12 There is so much that we can do if we  
13 look at a community and a child as a whole and

14 figure out how we provide the rungs of the  
15 ladder.

16 But what I would urge you, also, is  
17 that as you engage in public service, as you  
18 take the marvelous qualities the Lancer's have  
19 given to you, and move forward in your life to  
20 become leaders in your community, don't forget  
21 your single most precious possession, your  
22 family.

19

1 Raising children is the single most  
2 difficult thing I know to do. About 11 years  
3 ago, a friend died, leaving me as the legal  
4 guardian of her 15-year-old twins, a boy and a  
5 girl. The girl was in love, and I've learned  
6 an awful lot about raising children in the last  
7 10 years.

8 (Laughter)

9 It takes hard work, intelligence,  
10 love, and an awful lot of luck. But it is the

11 single, most rewarding thing I know to do. I  
12 will never forget putting that young lady on  
13 the plane to send her off to college, and then  
14 going to see her graduate cum laude in three  
15 years. And on each occasion, she threw her  
16 arms around my neck and said, "Thank you. I  
17 couldn't have done it without you."

18 Those are the moments you never  
19 forget.

20 And then I remember my childhood. My  
21 mother worked in the home. My father worked  
22 downtown. My mother taught us to play

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1 baseball, to appreciate Beethoven's symphonies,  
2 to bake a cake, to love poetry. She punished  
3 us, and she loved us with all her heart. And  
4 there is no child care in the world that will  
5 ever be a substitute for what that lady was in  
6 our life.

7 And, in raising us, she taught me

8       some of the most important lessons of my life.  
9       We were four children in a family, a year  
10      apart, and we lived in a small wooden house,  
11      which we were quickly outgrowing. My father  
12      did not have enough money to hire somebody to  
13      build a bigger house.

14                   And one afternoon, my mother  
15      announced that she was going to build the  
16      house. And we all looked at her and said,  
17      "What do you know about building a house?" And  
18      she said, "I'm going to learn." And she went  
19      to the brick mason, and to the plumber, and to  
20      the electrician, and she asked them how you  
21      build a house. And she listened, and she came  
22      home. She dug the foundation with her own

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1      hands, with a pick and shovel. She laid the  
2      block. She put in the wiring. She put in the  
3      plumbing. And my father helped her with the  
4      heavy work when he came home from work at

5 night.

6 She and I lived in that house, and it  
7 is still my home. She lived there until she  
8 died, just before she came to Washington. And  
9 every time I came down that driveway, as a  
10 prosecutor and had a very difficult problem  
11 that I didn't know how to handle, that house  
12 standing there in the woods, was a  
13 symbol to me that you can do anything  
14 you really want to; if it's the right  
15 thing to do, put your mind to it.

16 That house taught me a more  
17 important lesson, in August of 1992, when  
18 Hurricane Andrew hit that area head on. At  
19 about 3:00 in the morning the winds began to  
20 howl with an unearthly noise that I have never  
21 heard before.

22 You could hear trees beginning to

22

1 crash around the house. My mother got up, sat

2 down in her chair, folded her hands, and sat  
3 there totally unafraid, though she was very old  
4 and ill and frail. But she knew how she had  
5 built that house. She knew that she had put in  
6 the right materials, that she had built it the  
7 right way, that she had not cut corners.

8                   When we came out in the light of day,  
9 the whole area around the house looked like a  
10 World War I battlefield. There were barely any  
11 trees standing. But the house had only lost  
12 one shingle and some screens. And it's a  
13 symbol to me: Build it the right way. Build  
14 your life the right way, put one block on top  
15 of another, in terms of education, in terms of  
16 experience, in terms of service, but do it  
17 right.

18                   For one of the lessons I learned was  
19 when I decided to run for office the first  
20 time. I campaigned for the Florida  
21 legislature, and I tried to do and act on what  
22 I do and say, what I believed to be right.

1                   A man had run for office and had been  
2                   elected to the legislature 15 years before. He  
3                   was the only legislator in Florida to vote for  
4                   a resolution ending the segregation of our  
5                   public schools. He knew that he was going home  
6                   to overwhelming political defeat because of  
7                   that vote. But he did it as a matter of  
8                   conscience.

9                   He was campaigning for mayor, and he  
10                  got himself elected. But as he and I  
11                  campaignied that November, he said, "Janet, just  
12                  keep on doing and saying what you believe to be  
13                  right. Don't pussyfoot. Don't equivocate.  
14                  Don't talk out of both sides of your mouth, and  
15                  you'll wake up the next morning feeling good  
16                  about yourself. But if you try to be  
17                  everything to everybody, and please everybody  
18                  all of the time, and say what you don't really  
19                  believe, you'll wake up the next morning  
20                  feeling miserable."

21                   Well, I didn't feel exactly good the  
22                   next morning because I had lost my election.

24

1           But I remembered what John Orr taught me, and  
2           it has been one of the most important lessons  
3           in my life. For now, when I approach problems,  
4           I know I have tried to study it as hard as I  
5           could, prepare myself as thoroughly as I can,  
6           and then make the best decision I know how, and  
7           move on to the next issue.

8                   It also helps to have learned, as  
9           somebody put a biography of Abraham Lincoln on  
10          my bedside table, that Abraham Lincoln lost his  
11          first election. It helps to know how to lose.  
12          It's not the end of the earth. And remember  
13          that as you face the losses of the future.

14                   But always remember, as you serve  
15          your community, as you seek public service or  
16          not, as you pursue profession, the occupation,  
17          the calling that you undertake, remember to put

18       your family first.

19                       To seek jobs where people will adapt  
20       a workplace to a family, where through  
21       flex-time and appropriate leave time you can  
22       spend quality time with your family. You-all

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1       grow up before you know it, and you should  
2       enjoy your children as they grow.

3                       In these three and a half years I've  
4       had a chance to travel across this country to  
5       see people doing so many things, wonderful  
6       prosecutors trying their best, people  
7       rebuilding communities.

8                       In Boston, yesterday, I saw young  
9       people and police officers, doctors and judges,  
10      working together in community initiatives. That  
11      encouraged me.

12                      And after these three and a half  
13      years, I can tell you, flat out, I have never  
14      been so confident of America's future, because

15 of the spirit of young and old, alike, that I  
16 sense across this land.

17 Some suggest -- they look at the  
18 future pessimistically. I think you can look  
19 at the future with great optimism, particularly  
20 from what I have heard about the Lancer's, and  
21 the contributions that you will make in this  
22 next century.

26

1 One of the reasons that I have looked  
2 forward to coming here tonight is because I  
3 understand that you ask great questions. And  
4 probably better questions than newspaper  
5 reporters.

6 (Laughter)

7 So I would welcome your questions,  
8 now.

9 PARTICIPANT: (Inaudible)

10 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Here we go.

11 PARTICIPANT: (Inaudible)

12                   ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO:  First of all,  
13    don't let people talk about cynicism in this  
14    country.  You hear it, but mostly you  
15    hear it in newspaper editorials; they didn't do  
16    this right, they didn't do that right.  They  
17    can pick out what's wrong with Cal Ripkin, the  
18    cynics, and anybody that can do that, they're  
19    few and far between.

20                   First of all, just look at what you  
21    can do when you touch the life of a person.  
22    And what I think is so important, in terms of

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1    how we reach out.  One of the first steps,  
2    as we seek employment or I , as an  
3    employer, is to formulate a workplace so  
4    parents can spend more time with their  
5    children.

6                   I've developed flex-time, parental  
7    leave time, job-sharing programs, telecommuting  
8    programs.  It all doesn't fit perfectly, but

9 we're recognizing that children and family are  
10 important. Government can be so important in  
11 terms of early childhood development programs.  
12 And state after state, across this nation, is  
13 developing healthy start, and fresh start  
14 programs that are so constructive in terms of  
15 early childhood development, health care and  
16 appropriate Educare.

17 These are government programs that  
18 are making a difference, and they are catching  
19 on in state after state after state. Now  
20 sometimes -- and I get a little bit cynical  
21 myself when I say this -- I think they do it  
22 because I persuade them. When I first started,

28

1 saying, "Look. You'll save money if you make  
2 this investment up front."

3 I will give you an example,  
4 last night I was at the Hartford Connecticut  
5 Downtown Council. It was mostly the

6 businessmen of Hartford, who were interested in  
7 the commerce of Hartford. I talked to them  
8 about the things I've talked to you about  
9 tonight: About building community around  
10 children.

11 I got applause after applause.  
12 Businessmen, who came up to me, saying that  
13 really makes sense. Cut through that  
14 underbrush of cynicism that you will find, and  
15 you will find, in America. A great number of  
16 people who want to work with you in developing  
17 programs.

18 You will find young people  
19 volunteering in child care institutions. There  
20 is so much that we can do. It's going to vary  
21 from community to community because there may  
22 be a private, not-for-profit corporation doing

29

1 a wonderful job in one community that the  
2 government has to do in another.

3                   In terms of teachers, the single most  
4                   important thing that you can do, as you grow up  
5                   and you have a family, is to become involved in  
6                   your child's school. One of the things that  
7                   I've tried to establish is parental leave time  
8                   that permits parents to go spend time at their  
9                   child's school volunteering, participating in  
10                  educational groups.

11                  But just keep talking and believing  
12                  and putting family and children first. And  
13                  it's beginning to catch on. People are talking  
14                  about it, and it's exciting.

15                  PARTICIPANT: (Inaudible)

16                  ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: One of the  
17                  issues -- and anybody that has seen me on  
18                  television will know that what I say if there  
19                  is a matter pending, an investigation pending,  
20                  or a prosecution pending, that I really cannot  
21                  comment on it because it would interrupt the  
22                  investigation. Or if it's a prosecution

1 pending in Court, I can't really comment on it,  
2 except as to matters that are a matter of  
3 public record, because the case should be tried  
4 in court, and not in the headlines.

5 So I really cannot respond to your  
6 question except to say that what we are trying  
7 to do is to resolve the matter as peacefully as  
8 possible, and trying to do everything we can to  
9 make sure that it's resolved without any sort  
10 of violence; that we uphold the law and that we  
11 retain our legal options.

12 Each issue is going to differ. Waco  
13 is a totally different situation than the  
14 Freeman, and we have to make our best  
15 judgements, try to do everything we can to  
16 resolve it peacefully.

17 These are difficult issues. But  
18 Director Freeh of the FBI has done so much in  
19 terms of developing the negotiation capacity of  
20 the FBI.

21                   Today I talked with a number of the  
22                   agents who are out in Montana, by telephone.

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1           They are really dedicated to this goal.

2                   PARTICIPANT:   (Inaudible)

3                   ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO:   I had always  
4           wanted to be a lawyer because my mother had  
5           gotten me very interested. They were both  
6           very interested in American history.

7                   My grandfather was a lawyer, and I  
8           had a chance to watch him.   And my  
9           father was a newspaper reporter who, when we  
10          were little, would take us to court with him,  
11          because he covered the police station and the  
12          courthouses.   So I saw lawyers and police  
13          officers.

14                   So when I was 13 years old, I told my  
15          mother I wanted to be a lawyer.   And she said  
16          that's the one thing I would forbid you to do.  
17          Because in those days, ladies didn't become

18 lawyers.

19 I was so shocked, because here's the  
20 lady that had built a house, who seemed to be  
21 encouraging me to do so many things: She  
22 encouraged me to be a Foreign Service Officer,

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1 to be a physicist, to be any number of things.  
2 And I thought it was kind of close-minded of  
3 her not to want me to be a lawyer. But I  
4 listened to her.

5 So when I went to Cornell I decided  
6 to major in chemistry and become a doctor. And  
7 I found the chemistry fascinating, but I  
8 realized that I really wanted to be a lawyer.  
9 So I went ahead and applied to law school. And  
10 when I called to tell her that I had been  
11 accepted at Harvard Law School, she whooped  
12 with joy over the telephone, and  
13 confessed she had always wanted to do it herself.

14 And the reason I wanted to be a

15 lawyer is because the law seemed  
16 the best place to make sure that people  
17 didn't tell me what to do, even if it was the wrong  
18 thing to do. So that they didn't boss me  
19 around the wrong way. And that I could reach  
20 out and try to help others, and serve others,  
21 and use the law to make the right decisions.

22 And I've never regretted it. It has

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1 been a wonderful profession for me. I've been  
2 able to do so many different things in the law.  
3 To draft laws for the legislature, now to this  
4 wonderful opportunity to serve the nation as  
5 Attorney General, to collect child support,  
6 which as I say can be a real drudge, but very  
7 rewarding.

8 I've represented people in private  
9 practice. I've represented big corporations.  
10 And the law is a wonderful, wonderful  
11 profession. I love it, and I love lawyers.

12 But I don't like greedy and indifferent  
13 lawyers. And most lawyers, fortunately, are  
14 not that. But I think sometimes the profession  
15 gets a bad name because there are some people  
16 who are more interested in making money than  
17 making sure that the law serves the people.

18 I think all lawyers, however, have an  
19 extraordinary challenge. About 80 percent of  
20 the poor and the working poor in the United  
21 States today do not have enough money to have  
22 real access to legal services. And I think all

34

1 of us, as lawyers, have a special  
2 responsibility to develop new programs, to  
3 engage in voluntary legal service for people  
4 who can't afford it, to ensure all Americans  
5 their rights.

6 PARTICIPANT: (Inaudible)

7 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I'm not  
8 talking just about government programs. I'm

9 talking about a church that I talked with  
10 yesterday, that organizes day care and evening  
11 care programs for parents who cannot afford  
12 child care for their loved ones. And not just  
13 child care, but good, educational  
14 opportunities, good opportunities for field  
15 visits. It is a wonderful school.

16 But, then, they have a Summer Camp to  
17 go to with afternoon care, with a day care  
18 for the children.

19 They organize children during the summer,  
20 bring in people to work with them, bring in  
21 community leaders to talk with them.

22 That's what a church can do. I'm

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1 talking about people who volunteer as Little  
2 League coaches in the inner-city where it's  
3 difficult to be a coach. That's not government  
4 at work, that's people selling popcorn and hot  
5 dogs on a hot summer afternoon to get money for

6 team uniforms.

7 I'm talking about doctors who  
8 volunteer their services to help the needy and  
9 to help the poor, and who go out of their way  
10 to set up office hours so that people can go to  
11 the place where the service is needed.

12 I'm talking about an extraordinary  
13 person I saw yesterday, who begs, borrows and  
14 steals from private foundations to set up a  
15 program in a prominent hospital that serves  
16 children who have been witnesses to violence,  
17 either domestic violence in the home or  
18 otherwise. And that hospital has made a public  
19 contribution to the community through its  
20 efforts.

21 There is so much that we can do in  
22 terms of community organizations, private

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1 not-for-profit organizations, business  
2 organizations. One of the most exciting things

3 to see in a city or community is when business  
4 groups form partnerships with particular  
5 schools and adopt particular schools.

6 I've adopted an elementary school in  
7 Washington, D.C., that I try to attend as  
8 regularly as possible.

9 The American Bar Association has  
10 established pro bono programs where lawyers  
11 offer their skills in community mediation and  
12 in teaching conflict resolution in the schools.  
13 That's not a government program.

14 What I'm trying to say is, take the  
15 government programs, take the private  
16 contributions, take the business community,  
17 take the schools, and come together reweaving  
18 the pieces. Sometimes it may be a government  
19 piece, sometimes it may be a private  
20 not-for-profit piece, sometimes it may be a  
21 volunteer; but I'm convinced that it's not a  
22 matter of money. It's a matter of putting

1 together a comprehensive package that can make  
2 a difference.

3 If we develop great childhood  
4 development programs early on, they can go for  
5 naught. If that child is left to his own devices,  
6 from the moment he leaves school at 3:00 until  
7 his parents get home at 7:30, doesn't have  
8 appropriate supervision.

9 There is so much that we can do, if  
10 we use the resources we have, as wisely as  
11 possible, to make a difference up front.

12 PARTICIPANT: (Inaudible)

13 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Never heard  
14 anything like that. I have talked to Pat  
15 Shroeder, I wouldn't even think that there was  
16 a chance it was true.

17 PARTICIPANT: (Inaudible)

18 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: What we had  
19 suggested, from the Justice Department's  
20 perspective, is that there are some instances  
21 where an award may be excessive. And that what

22           should be done is a combination where the judge

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1           could cap the award in appropriate proceedings.

2                       We devised, made a recommendation  
3           and it was passed. But the law didn't go far  
4           enough, as far as President Clinton was  
5           concerned, in terms of protecting consumer  
6           interest; and so he vetoed the bill.

7                       But the cap that we devised seemed to  
8           meet the needs of a number of different people,  
9           while at the same time providing for that  
10          extraordinary case, where punitive damages in  
11          substantial amounts were clearly warranted in  
12          order to prevent further reckless disregard of  
13          human life.

14                      PARTICIPANT: (Inaudible)

15                      ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I wondered  
16          about that all the time. I looked at a  
17          periodic table the other day, and I realized  
18          how old fashioned I had become.

19 (Laughter)

20 But I will tell you something.

21 When I went to Harvard Law school,

22 there were 544 in our class

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1 and there only 16 women. And the Dean and his  
2 wife had the women out to dinner so that they  
3 would to make them feel at home.

5 And he would go around asking us what  
6 we majored in. I told him I majored in  
7 chemistry. He said, "Well, you'll do okay." He  
8 said it's surprising, but those who have  
9 majored in the natural sciences seem to do  
10 better at law school. That's the only  
11 advantage I've seen of my chemistry degree.

12 (Laughter)

13 Except I'm very glad I did, because I  
14 have a much greater feeling for the sciences,  
15 for the physics I took, the chemistry I took,  
16 the calculus I took. And I could have learned

17 my government on my own, I think. But I know I  
18 couldn't have learned my chemistry on my own.

19 PARTICIPANT: (Inaudible)

20 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: When I took  
21 office, the ATF had already had its  
22 confrontation with David Koresh and his

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1 followers at the Branch Davidian Compound.  
2 What we tried to do in that situation was  
3 resolve it peacefully. But in that situation,  
4 you had an occurrence where four agents had  
5 been killed, and numerous others wounded.

6 So you can't judge each situation on  
7 the same basis. We have tried to learn from  
8 everything we could in that case, to apply it  
9 to the future. But in that situation you will never  
10 know what is the right thing to do,  
11 because, based on everything that one knows  
12 now, he could have done something drastic six  
13 weeks down the line, and we would be testifying

14 before Congress as to why we didn't go in  
15 earlier and do something.

16 So you just have to take each case,  
17 try to do everything you can to resolve it  
18 peacefully. I can't tell you -- certainly, in  
19 this time -- there have been these incidents.  
20 But there have been other circumstances, over  
21 the last 30 and 40 years, and I think we've got  
22 to be prepared for all circumstances.

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1 The Ruby Ridge Case arose before I  
2 took office. And, again, as I look back over  
3 history, and as I look back over things that  
4 you tend to forget, that occurred 10 and 15  
5 years ago. I'm not so sure it's on the rise,  
6 but I think it's something we've got to be  
7 prepared for.

8 Clearly, in this modern time, where  
9 people can put all sorts of information on the  
10 Internet, it is important that we be able to

11 respond to issues of terrorism, such as the  
12 World Trade Center, or the Oklahoma City  
13 bombing, and to take appropriate precautions,  
14 while at the same time adhering to  
15 constitutional principles and doing it the  
16 right way.

17 We should not let our circumstances  
18 rush us into judgement.

19 PARTICIPANT: (Inaudible)

20 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: You have to  
21 understand my position with regards to the  
22 media. My father was a newspaper reporter for

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1 the Miami Herald for 43 years. My mother was a  
2 reporter for the Miami News. My grandfather  
3 was the chief photographer for the Herald. My  
4 aunt was the music critic of the Herald.

5 (Laughter)

6 And my brother is a columnist for the  
7 New Day Newspaper, right now.

8

(Laughter)

9

My father taught me along the way

10

though, in his 43 years, never to believe

11

everything that you read in the newspapers.

12

And so, I would see the perspective of it. I

13

would see how -- he would wake up in the

14

morning just furious because some copy editor

15

had butchered what he had called in.

16

I have been -- I'll give you an

17

example. I have an availability to the press

18

every Thursday morning, because I think the

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media and a free press is very important. But

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I do think there's a certain cynicism because

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they'll start asking their questions:

22

"Ms. Reno -- so the question will

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1

become -- don't you think that this is going to

2

happen, and this is going to happen, and this

3

is going to happen?"

4

I said, "First of all, I don't deal

5 in 'what ifs,' and it's not going to happen  
6 unless you-all -- if you-all just keep raising  
7 these issues, and raising these hypothetical  
8 issues that cause the problems. Just report  
9 the news, and let's talk about what has  
10 happened."

11 And we get along very well. We've  
12 gotten to know each other over these three and  
13 a half years, since we do it every Thursday  
14 morning. And they appreciate it, and I've had  
15 a very good working relationship with the  
16 Justice Department press that traditionally  
17 covers it.

18 I think, on the whole, the media is a  
19 very important instrument in terms of  
20 uncovering wrongdoing. But I think it also has  
21 a real responsibility to report the good things  
22 that are happening in this country.

1 And in the last eight years, I would

2 say, I think the media is coming to realize  
3 this important responsibility and is fulfilling  
4 it in the better way than it has, so that you  
5 see less cynicism from the media and more  
6 recognition of some of the wonderful things  
7 that people are doing in the community.

8 And on the Internet, I think that's  
9 one of the great challenges. And what we have  
10 done is put together a working group in the  
11 Department of Justice, to analyze First  
12 Amendment issues, to analyze constitutional and  
13 free speech issues at the same time,  
14 recognizing the technology of the Internet.

15 There are some fascinating issues of  
16 consumer fraud, of what happens, can you -- one  
17 of the things we have to study, pursuant to  
18 Congressional mandate, what if somebody puts a  
19 bomb recipe on the Internet. Should that be  
20 permitted? Or is that covered by free speech?  
21 There are so many fascinating issues, and we're  
22 trying to address it.

1                   For those of you who understand  
2           computers, there are some fascinating  
3           challenges that we face with computers, for  
4           example. Now, with hackers being able to break  
5           into computer systems, we're faced with some  
6           real challenges.

7                   We had a situation recently where a  
8           hacker in Argentina broke into the Harvard  
9           University computer system. They did not have  
10          a warning on their system that it might be  
11          subject to surveillance. Because he  
12          was also invading other systems, and in  
13          to protect other systems -- we had to  
14          figure out who it was.

15                   Through the use of another computer,  
16          and through careful profiles, we were able to  
17          narrow the intrusion so that we intercepted,  
18          pursuant to court order, in an appropriate,  
19          very legal way, we worked it out so that we

order

20 intercepted only his intrusion and were able to  
21 identify him and trace it back.

22 So one of the great and fascinating

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1 challenges that we face is how do we use the  
2 new technology? How do we continue appropriate  
3 law enforcement tools while at the same time  
4 adhering to constitutional principles.

5 And if you really think it out, and  
6 remember that we control the technology and the  
7 technology shouldn't control us, I think we're  
8 going to be able to do it.

9 There has been no typical day, but I  
10 get up early in the morning, and I like to try  
11 to walk. I get frustrated when I can't, but I  
12 like to walk from about 6 to 7 in a few  
13 different parts of Washington. I then almost  
14 always have an 8:30 hearing, or meeting, with  
15 mid-management people just to go over the new  
16 materials that have come into the Department,

17 in the last 24 hours.

18 At 9:00, I meet with my senior staff,  
19 and we discuss the complex issues that we face  
20 that day. I will then have a series of  
21 meetings. I may go to the White House for a  
22 national security meeting or to an event, or

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1 meet with a group that wants to discuss the  
2 Americans with Disabilities Act and how we  
3 should be implementing it.

4 I usually just have lunch at my desk.  
5 I bring my lunch, and then I will  
6 go to a meeting. This afternoon I went  
7 to a meeting with the ABA, a group of  
8 lawyers who are interested in what they can do  
9 in teaching conflict resolution in the schools  
10 and in working with children and families, and  
11 conflict resolution in mediation.

12 I, then, went to the White House for  
13 a budget meeting, and I'm here tonight. But

14 each day is different, and it's fascinating.  
15 You don't know what the day is going to bring.  
16 It is one of the most rewarding experiences to  
17 have so many different issues thrust at you, to  
18 try to make the best judgement you can.

19 I have 107,000 people working with me  
20 in the various branches of the Department of  
21 Justice. And remember that includes the FBI,  
22 DEA, the Marshall Service, INS, the Bureau of

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1 Prisons, and most of the government lawyers.  
2 And it's just incredible the variety of issues  
3 that come my way.

4 PARTICIPANT: (Inaudible)

5 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I don't think  
6 we have to. I've not seen anything yet, and  
7 the example I gave in response to the question  
8 of, here is this modern technology and here is  
9 the -- it is a living constitution that is  
10 changing and adapting to it, and understanding

11 the technology, but not changing the basic core  
12 principles.

13 And I think that how we use those  
14 basic core principles, how we use the checks  
15 and balances, how we understand how government  
16 should be limited, I think the same applies,  
17 that we can't let government control its  
18 people, and we can't let technology control  
19 people.

20 I think it's a challenge. But I  
21 don't think that the constitution is dead by  
22 any means. I think that all of law is

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1 dependent on the people. There is a marvelous  
2 statement on the East side, along 9th Street,  
3 in Washington, on the East side of the building  
4 of the Department of Justice. And it says,  
5 "The common law is derived from the will of  
6 mankind, issuing from the people, framed by  
7 mutual confidence, and sanctioned by the light

8 of reason."

9 And I think that's a wonderful  
10 statement of what the law is. That's one of  
11 the reasons I'm concerned with the number of  
12 Americans who are poor, who don't have access  
13 to lawyers, because if too many people are  
14 thwarted in the quest for justice because they  
15 can't get to a lawyer, then they're going to  
16 rebel against institutions.

17 And I think it is important if the  
18 law, and if our democratic institutions are to  
19 have real meaning for all people to feel they  
20 have access to the law. That's my concern more  
21 than the constitution as a living document.

22 But there is one issue that I have

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1 concern about in terms of the constitution. We  
2 can go into court and get a court order that  
3 says, under the constitution or under the laws  
4 of this country, you've got to do this, you've

5 got to have a better this, or do this; or if  
6 you keep children here, you've got to have  
7 better equipment, or something like that.

8 But we have also got to figure out  
9 ways to provide that. Where do we get the  
10 resources to do it? How can we do it more cost  
11 effectively? We've got to think of the real  
12 world issues that surround court orders to make  
13 them truly effective, and to make them truly  
14 mean something.

15 PARTICIPANT: (Inaudible)

16 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: A young lady,  
17 who is age 10, asked me that the other night.  
18 "Do you think there will ever be a  
19 woman president of the United States?" And I  
20 think I felt very confident, and it made me  
21 feel really good to say, "I think in your  
22 lifetime, you will see a woman president of the

1 United States."

2 I think one of the -- if you look at  
3 it, because I just look at women lawyers, now,  
4 and if you think -- I'm 57 years old, and if I,  
5 when I was 21, there were only 16 women in our  
6 entering class at Harvard out of 544 -- I think  
7 now the class is about 45-percent women.

8 So they're coming up and they are  
9 assuming leadership positions. In the  
10 Department of Justice, six women hold  
11 leadership positions. The head of the Bureau  
12 of Prisons is a woman. Extraordinarily  
13 difficult job, so ably done by a woman who  
14 began as a prison psychologist from Morgantown,  
15 West Virginia, at the start of her career. And  
16 just by sheer ability and people skills worked  
17 her way to the top, and does an incredible job.

18 The head of the Immigration and  
19 Naturalization Service is a woman. And so, I  
20 think women are taking their positions  
21 throughout the country and, I think, shortly,  
22 we will see a woman as president.

1 PARTICIPANT: (Inaudible)

2 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I'm  
3 personally opposed to the death penalty for the  
4 reason that I think the whole purpose of the  
5 law is to value human life, and that is  
6 inconsistent with taking it.

7 Secondly, I used to ask, I did all  
8 the interviewing, the final round of  
9 interviewing, when I hired prosecutors at home.  
10 And I used to ask them, "What is your view on  
11 the death penalty." You would see them look  
12 around, and say, "Oh, I'm for it," thinking  
13 that that is what I wanted to hear. They  
14 didn't know what I thought.

15 And I would say, "Why?" "Well, I  
16 don't know. Well, it's a deterrent." "Well,  
17 why do you think it's a deterrent?" "Well, I  
18 don't know."

19 Most of the studies show that there  
20 is nothing that proves that it is a deterrent,

21 or that it is not a deterrent. And before we  
22 start taking people's lives, I think we ought

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1 to have the very sound and rational grounds for  
2 doing so.

3 Finally, I think that all punishment  
4 is arbitrary. When a father spanks his two  
5 boys, one will say, you spanked me harder than  
6 you spanked him. And if he feels he has been  
7 unfair, he'll make up for it as time goes by.

8 For a sentence, short of death, you  
9 can make up for it by pardon, clemency,  
10 mitigation procedures. But once you carry out  
11 that death penalty, there's nothing you can  
12 make up for.

13 And so I think there is only one  
14 purpose for the death penalty, and that is  
15 vengeance. If I had walked into my home, while  
16 my mother was alive, and somebody had slain her  
17 and was still there, I, if I had the physical

18 power to do so, would tear them apart, from  
19 limb to limb. Because vengeance is a very  
20 personal thing.

21 But I don't think government should  
22 engage in that vengeance. At the same time, as

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1 a prosecutor, then I am satisfied that the law  
2 is being applied correctly. When I'm satisfied  
3 of the person's guilt, I can ask for it. But  
4 if I were in the legislature, I would vote  
5 against it.

6 Also, one point influences me. I was  
7 asked by the Governor of Florida, some eight  
8 years ago, to reinvestigate the case in another  
9 jurisdiction in Florida, a case we had not  
10 handled, in which a man had been prosecuted,  
11 convicted and sentenced to death for the  
12 poisoning death of his seven children in 1968.

13 He had always proclaimed his  
14 innocence. He was saved from the electric

15 chair by a Supreme Court order which set aside  
16 the Florida death penalty statute, but remained  
17 in prison those 21 years.

18 We reinvestigated, and determined  
19 that the evidence had been insufficient to  
20 charge him originally. It was clearly  
21 insufficient to proceed on now. Because of the  
22 death and the incapacity of some of the

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1 witnesses, we could not tell exactly what  
2 happened.

3 But we felt that he was probably  
4 innocent and that he should go free. And for  
5 as long as I live, I will remember that man, as  
6 I looked over my shoulder, walking out of the  
7 court house, a free man for the first time in  
8 21 years. I thought, what if the death penalty  
9 had been imposed?

10 And so, it is a matter that I know I  
11 have responsibility for at a federal level, and

12 one that I pursue very, very carefully, and  
13 with all deliberation.

14 PARTICIPANT: (Inaudible)

15 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I have a  
16 great idea for you. The same mother that built  
17 the house and said I couldn't become a lawyer  
18 wouldn't let us have a television in the house  
19 because she said it contributed to mind rot.

20 (Laughter)

21 (Applause)

22 I have an admission to make. I faded

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1 regularly, but I don't watch television except  
2 for special programs that are interesting or  
3 special features. And I don't watch the  
4 evening news, and I scan the papers. And if I  
5 see somebody, you know, I'll read it enough to  
6 make sure I know what's going on, and so far, I  
7 haven't missed anything.

8 If somebody has -- if they think I --

9       they need -- that I need to know that somebody  
10       has gotten on television and said, Janet Reno  
11       did this, this and this, I'll hear about it the  
12       next day. I don't have to see it.

13                       But one of the great lines, and I  
14       keep it on my wall, directly across the desk  
15       from me, so I can look at, and see it, is by  
16       Abraham Lincoln. And he said, "If I were to  
17       read everything bad that people said about me,  
18       I might as well close the shop for business."

19                       I intend to keep on doing the best I  
20       know how, the best I can, and I intend to keep  
21       on doing it until the end. If the end brings  
22       me out all right, what people said about me

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1       won't make any difference. If the end brings  
2       me out wrong, 10 angels saying I was right  
3       won't make any difference. And I think --  
4       don't watch television so much.

5                       (Laughter)

6                   But at the same time, television is a  
7 marvelous medium for helping people to  
8 understand. And I think one of the best ways  
9 we can cope with this is to let the media know  
10 that we want to be informed, we want to know  
11 what's going on, but we want to know the whole  
12 picture, and not just what bad is happening in  
13 the world.

14                   By the way, on a woman becoming  
15 president, after I graduated from law school I  
16 tried to get a job with a very prominent Miami  
17 law firm. And they flat out wouldn't give me a  
18 job. I came to interview and they kept me  
19 waiting, and then they told me I could leave.  
20 And I learned from one of the young associates  
21 in the firm that they wouldn't give me a job  
22 because I was a woman.

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1                   Fourteen years later, they made me a  
2 partner in their law firm. And that year, they

3       hired their first black lawyer, one of the  
4       first black lawyers to be hired by any major  
5       Miami law firm.

6                I was his supervisor. He became a  
7       partner. He became the Secretary of Labor, in  
8       Florida, the vice chairman of the Board of  
9       Regents, and one of the community's most  
10      prominent lawyers.

11               So, yes, times are changing.

12                               (Applause)

13               PRESIDENT: Ms. Reno, if you would  
14      please join me here at the podium. In  
15      appreciation for the time you have spent with  
16      us this evening, and the charge you have given  
17      us to become more involved in our communities  
18      and our careers, and most importantly our  
19      families, we would like to present you with  
20      this sterling silver plate.

21               ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Oh, thank  
22      you. This is like Christmas.

1                   PRESIDENT:  It reads, "To Honorable  
2    Janet Reno, with appreciation.  Lancer's Boys  
3    Club, June 7, 1996.

4                   Thank you very much for a wonderful  
5    evening.

6                                   (Applause)

7                                   (End of Proceedings)

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