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22 Dec. 1999

Mr. Brian Lamb
C-Span
400 N. Capitol St. NW, Suite 650
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Lamb:

Your discussion with Professor Splaine this evening about what President Clinton might do after leaving office was based on a somewhat inaccurate assumption about his age relative to other presidents, and the lack of precedents for post-presidential occupations. Mr. Clinton is not the first person to leave the presidency so young, nor is he even particularly rare in this regard, despite his consistently youthful appearance. In order, the ten youngest ex-presidents are:

Theodore Roosevelt, who left office at	50 yrs., 5 months
Grover Cleveland, who ended his 1st term at	52 yrs, 11.5 mos.
Millard Fillmore, who left office at	53 yrs, 2 mos.
Mr. Clinton, who will be	54 yrs, 5 mos.
Ulysses Grant, who was	54 yrs, 11 mos.
Wm. Howard Taft,	55 yrs, 6 mos
Jimmy Carter	56 yrs, 3 mos
Franklin Pierce	56 yrs, 5 mos.
Calvin Coolidge	56 yrs, 8 mos
Herbert Hoover	58 yrs, 7 mos.

[Source: 1998 *World Almanac*, p. 479]

These represent just under 25% of the American presidents. Clinton is within six months of Grant and thirteen months of Taft in age at leaving office. Less than two years separate Clinton's age from Carter's at the time their terms ended--and I don't recall anyone asking of Carter, "He's so young--what will he do with the rest of his life?"

An anthropologist or a medical statistician would know how (as I do not) to make allowances for the fact that 53 was probably an older age in Fillmore's day than it is in Clinton's--general improvement in living conditions and hygiene, and vastly improved

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medical knowledge today make a huge difference. There is also the matter of perception: Taft and Cleveland, who were heavy men, seemed older; Coolidge and Hoover had serious demeanors (Coolidge having lost a son while in office), whereas Clinton has an always-ready smile.

There are good precedents here: two of these men (TR and Cleveland) ran again for president after a lapse of four years; one was elected. One man (Taft) served 7 years as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. (Now THERE'S an idea!) One (Hoover) became a consultant on governmental reform and reorganization for the opposition party. And one (Carter) founded a study institute devoted to peace, and went out and built homes for poor people.

There are of course options other than the conventional ones of teaching and writing. Mrs. Clinton, for instance, is running for the Senate. Suppose she's elected in 2000 and re-elected in 2006. In 2008 (after either Gore or Bradley finishes a second term) she'd be free to run for president. If she were successful, Clinton (who would have been as active in her campaign as she has been in his) would become the country's first First Gentleman. Or Clinton could follow the example of John Quincy Adams and serve in the Senate or the House of Representatives.

Alternatively, Clinton could take the example of Grover Cleveland and Theodore Roosevelt and, after a lapse of 4 or 8 years, run again himself for president. After all, the Constitution limits a president to two consecutive terms; but it does not, I believe, forbid seeking third and fourth terms after a lapse of years.

That's enough nightmare suggestions for the Gary Bauers, Cal Thomases, Bill Buckleys, and John McLaughlins of this world.

I'd like to make one other distantly related point: the conventional wisdom is that Theodore Roosevelt was a sickly boy who overcame asthma and other ills to become a sturdy, vigorous president; but that his cousin Franklin was a healthy young man who was made a partial invalid by polio, and weakened by twelve difficult years as president during the Great Depression and World War II, so that he died relatively young at age 63. Franklin, however, despite the heavy burdens of his twelve years and the lasting effects of his polio, outlived his cousin Theodore by three years!

Since Mr. Splaine's Univ. of Maryland address was not provided (and there are several campuses, as I recall), may I ask you to forward a xerox of this letter to him.

With best wishes, *and thanks for C-span,*



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