

MAY 15 '93

DEAR BRIAN,

THANK YOU FOR YOUR EXCELLENT C-SPAN PROGRAM. IT IS SO NEEDED & A BREATH OF FRESH AIR.

I NEVER COULD GET THROUGH ON THE PHONE, SO DECIDED TO SEND YOU THESE ARTICLES WHICH I THINK HIT THE TARGET. PERHAPS YOU CAN HAVE YOUR PANEL COMMENT ON THE HEALTH CARE LETTER — BECAUSE THE CLINTON WRECKING BALL & OTHERS.

FOR US TO UNDERSTAND WHY THE MAN DOES WHAT HE DOES, WE NEED ONLY TO LOOK TO HIS BACKGROUND. THAT TELLS THE WHOLE STORY.

HE HAS ALL THE TRAITS OF AN ADULT CHILD OF AN ALCOHOLIC (LIKE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE IN US). THESE TRAITS AFFECT HIS ACTIONS.

He never make the uniform of his country —
never had a mission responsibility — never gave,
or took orders.

He never held a private enterprise job

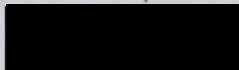
He never owned his own home with attendant
responsibilities, etc. etc.

He comes from the academic world.

He loves to campaign, but does not know
how to govern.

Thank you for listening.

- A Regular listener who can't
get through on the phone.



P.S. Perhaps someone can explain
his "double speak" —

TAXES ARE TAXES

TAXES ARE NOT INVESTMENTS

Why does he say one thing, but really
mean another thing?

ESSAY

Charles Krauthammer



How the Doves Became Hawks

"If there is one overriding principle that will guide me in this job, it will be the inescapable responsibility . . . to build a peaceful world and to terminate the abominable injustices and conditions that still plague civilization."

—U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Madeleine Albright, Feb. 1, 1993

IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE AMERICAN LIBERALS HAVE been accused of excessive interventionism abroad. About 30 years. John Kennedy in his Inaugural Address promised to "pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty." It was the single most ambitious formulation of American goals in the cold war.

Such expansiveness led Kennedy into Vietnam. And that led liberals not just to desert the Vietnam adventure, but to desert the very vision of American internationalism that Kennedy, and Democrats from Harry Truman to Hubert Humphrey, had championed.

With Vietnam, American liberalism entered a period of profound isolationism. Just about every subsequent intervention, from Nicaragua to Kuwait, aroused loud liberal protest. The high-water mark was reached on Jan. 12, 1991, when Democrats led the fight to deny President Bush authority to use force against Iraq—and came within three votes of carrying the Senate.

Another age, another presidency, another trumpet. Bill Clinton declared in his Inaugural Address that America will act "with force when necessary" to protect its "vital interests." But he did not stop there. He then pledged American action when "the will and conscience of the international community is defied."

Thus was enunciated the Clinton doctrine of humanitarian intervention. Yes, there will be interventions for our national interest. But there will also be interventions for reasons of conscience. It has been a long road from Vietnam: the

conscientious objector has become the conscientious warrior.

This declaration was greeted as a breakthrough, a new vision of America in the post-cold war world. A breakthrough it is. And a dangerous one. It is getting us into Bosnia where, despite convoluted attempts at fashioning some rationale based on some vital American interest, everyone knows we are going in for reasons of conscience.

Is conscience a good enough reason? Many liberals think so. Indeed, for many, conscience is the only good reason. The new liberal orthodoxy is that only disinterested intervention is pure and pristine enough to justify the use of force. Violence undertaken for the purpose of securing American interests is not.

This is the key to understanding the amazing transmutation of cold war and Gulf War doves into Bosnia hawks: their deep suspicion of motives of national interest. In a recent debate, Anthony Lewis called George Bush a "gutless wimp" for letting the Serbs overrun Bosnia. It was pointed out that the gutless wimp took half a million Americans to war to liberate Kuwait. "Yes," replied Lewis triumphantly, "he did because of oil, O-I-L, the famous three-letter word." Any wimp, you see, can go to war for some vital national interest. Real men go to war for reasons of right.

For post-cold war liberalism, self-interest is a tainted, corrupting motive for intervention. It is not just a dispensable criterion for intervention; it is disqualifying. The apparent liberal flip-flops on intervention now begin to make sense. In the Persian Gulf, where American national interests are seriously engaged, they opposed armed intervention. In Somalia, where American national interests are not at all engaged, they supported armed intervention. And in Bosnia, where American national interests stand to be seriously jeopardized by intervention, they are positively enthusiastic for intervention.

Not, of course, out of any desire to injure America. On the contrary, out of the deep desire to purify, to redeem America by making it an instrument of justice. The critics do not lack for patriotism. On the contrary, they sincerely wish to ennoble America with a foreign policy of altruism. And because only intervention devoid of self-interest is morally unimpeachable, it is the only kind that a good conscience can support.

What to say of these liberal hawks? That they are marked by good faith but a terrible confusion. The confusion is between individual and national morality. In private conduct, altruism is the ideal. For a nation, it can mean ruin. In private conduct, self-interest is a suspect motive. Intervening in a fight for reasons of right is the stuff of western heroes. Intervening in a fight because you need the weaker party's oil is not.

But it is fatally naive to transfer such reasoning to foreign policy. Nations are not individuals. Nations live in a state of nature. There is no higher authority to protect them. If they do not protect themselves, they die. Ignoring one's interests, squandering one's resources in fits of altruism, is the fastest road to national disaster.

In such a dangerous arena, thinking with one's heart is a serious offense. Foreign policy is not social work. Yes, we should risk war when our will and conscience are challenged. But only when our most vital interests are challenged too.

God protect us from our better instincts. In the post-Soviet world it is difficult to enunciate firm principles of American action. But until we figure out what we must do, we can start by prudently deciding what we must not do: allow ourselves to be driven to war by unreflective, overweening moralism. ■

Beware the Clinton wrecking ball

Eugene Kennedy

President Clinton proudly announced some weeks ago that he wanted to break down the walls that had been needlessly erected between different departments of the government. Now, covered with lath and plaster, he wonders why the building has collapsed on him. One imagines Oliver Hardy wiggling like a powdery whale out of the wreckage at his side, adjusting his crushed derby and saying, "A fine mess you've got us into this time."

As in the old comedies, nobody has been fatally hurt and there is plenty of time to clean up the set. Nonetheless, Mr. Clinton's approach suggests that it may be rooted more in superficial philosophies, if they are not excessively honored by such a designation, than in any real understanding or respect for the traditions and procedures of government. The president's strategy is designed to bypass or to usurp the functions of many of the structures through which the nation manages its affairs. His tactics are to float over these objective institutions on the air currents of subjective interpretation, releasing trial balloons along the way.

This "we can do it without you" attitude has been attempted with the national press, which, although not an institution in the sense that Congress is, takes pride in its traditions of being adversarial and objective. These are as welcome to Clinton's "we feel good, you feel good" staff as the rising sun is to Count Dracula. The Clintonians' effort is better summarized in the line from so many Judy Garland-Mickey Rooney movies, "Let's put on a show!" The results, even in the old musicals, was kids singing and dancing in a hay-strewn barn.

This revelation of amateur theatricality flows from the inability or unwillingness, spiced with arrogance, of presidential aides to understand or respect traditional governmental processes.

The near chaotic outcomes threaten to impair executive branch effectiveness and raise significant questions about Clinton's understanding of the nature of leadership. When leadership is blurred in concept and operation, it automatically creates an environment in which its wisdom and persuasiveness are immediately contested. In recent days, Mr. Clinton's authority has been publicly challenged from within the White House by such aides as gay activist David Mixner, a champion of subjective feeling, and Budget Director Leon Panetta, advocate of objective analysis. This dissent on domestic matters is matched by that from within the State Department on foreign affairs.

These reflect Mr. Clinton's own style of ignoring or trying to work around the authority and competency of the institutions, such as Congress, with whom he must work straightforwardly in order to succeed. His relationships with the armed forces have led to his being mocked by its rank-and-file members not so much because the president defends gay rights but because his approach to implementing them undervalued and seemed to write off at discount the institutional structures of the military.

The president and his aides accept as an article of the

creed of modern living that tearing down walls is an intrinsically good idea, as, indeed, with much self-celebration, staff members working in the Executive Office Building have literally done. They called it progress after they unsealed old barriers between offices so they could drift in and out of each other's workspace, as they like to call it, boom boxes blaring the music of a new era in the background. This may be like a rock concert with festival seating, or a dormitory party at which the marijuana makes the participants mistakenly feel extraordinarily wise and insightful. It is not, however, government, which, on the basis of hard-bought wisdom and experience, expresses itself through the traditions, often as homely as they are effective, of its institutions.

This is an administration obsessed with inner states, feeling good ranking right up there with being good. Newsweek perceptively footnoted the White House culture of the subjective by reporting poll results on whether people think that the president "cares about people like me." This is like worrying whether the pilot cares about the passengers when the real question is whether he can fly the plane.

Thus "peace of mind" rather than objectively sound health is touted by administration insiders as the, excuse the word, objective of the endlessly forthcoming health care package. Indeed, Mr. Clinton reacted to Leon Panetta's complaints about presidential priorities with a classically subjective interpretation. "He had a bad day yesterday," the president explained, smiling like a television healer about to lay hands on him, "because he got his spirits down. I want to buck him up."

That interpretation transfers the budget director's problem from his intellect to his stomach and the president's solution is to teach him how to spell R-e-l-i-e-f.

Mr. Clinton's administration may soon deserve to be reviewed as the revival of the rock musical "Tommy" recently was in the Wall Street Journal. "There is no character development," wrote Edwin Wilson, "for Tommy or anyone else, just symbols, trappings, iconography. Therefore, when a big moment arrives, it is not because a truth has been revealed or a catharsis achieved, it is because the music builds, and, equally important, the visual effects multiply, accelerate, turn grand. The young audiences . . . know when these big moments are coming. The light and music tell them . . . and so they cheer it on." Every American wants Mr. Clinton to succeed but he will not do so by compromising his most essential attribute, credibility, through a "touchy-feely" government that gets more out of touch every day by failing to work through the objective institutions that, although flawed, are the mainstays of our democratic system.

Home Alone III: The White House

WASHINGTON—There are many objective reasons to beware of American involvement in the Balkans. But one largely unspoken reason lurks in the background. And that is: If we are to have a war, do you really trust this White House to run it? Say what you will about George Bush, on matters of war and peace he was a serious man. That seriousness got him, and us, through a major war relatively unscathed.

The Clinton White House, with its star-struck young staffers (the deputy chief of staff keeps a video camera in his desk to catch Hollywood stars passing through the West Wing) pulling their celebrated all-nighters, complete with pizza delivery and bull sessions, gives the impression of a college dorm: energetic, youthful, lightweight. The kind of gang you'd want tinkering tirelessly with stimulus packages and forestry plans. But do you really want them ordering bombing runs on Serbia?

The prospect of war is always worrisome. It is worrisome even with grown-ups in charge. The fact is, however, it is hard to find them in this White House.

The problem is not just the relative youthfulness of the White House staff. The problem is with the few grownups around. It starts at the top. The president's last three weeks of toing and froing, agonizing, bluffing and trial ballooning on Bosnia is indeed the stuff of late-night college bull sessions, not of a world leader trying to marshal an alliance for great things.

The Clinton people keep insisting how damn complex the thing is, as if the gulf—which required balancing the Arabs, the Soviets, the British, the French, the Turks, the Israelis, the Chinese, the United Nations and the U.S. Congress—was not. And the president keeps whining that the Bosnian affair is so distracting. "When I realized that the Bosnian Serbs had rejected [the] settlement and with it the opportunity to bring an end to the slaughter," he told Tom Brokaw, "I felt really badly because I don't want to have to spend any more time on that than is absolutely necessary, because what I got elected to do was to let America look at our own problems. . . ." If only these ill-tempered Slavs would behave themselves and cut the killing, Bill Clinton could concentrate on his Btu tax.

The result is a Bosnia policy of wallowing and petulance (directed especially at the Europeans) of the kind heard from Joe Biden, the Democratic elder leading the Balkan charge in Congress: "I can't even begin to express my anger for a European policy that's now asking us to participate in what amounts to a codification of a Serbian victory." More dorm room talk. Go ahead, Senator. Express your anger. Get in touch with your feelings. Then tell us how you propose to undo the Serbian victory.

Charles Krauthammer

Given the president's recent performance, I've been inclined to share the belief that the one authentic grownup in the White House is the missus. Indeed, the media spin at the 100-day mark was that in contrast to her scattered, lightweight, mushy husband, Hillary Clinton was the focused, stable, centered one.

I then read the full text of her "Politics of Meaning" speech delivered last month in Texas. A cross between Jimmy Carter's malaise speech and a term paper on Siddhartha, it undertakes to give us spiritual instruction regarding "the undercurrent of discontent" abroad in the country.

Didactic yet obscure, she muses: "We are, I think, in a crisis of meaning. What do our governmental institutions mean? What do our lives in today's world mean? . . . What do all of our institutions mean? What does it mean to be educated? What does it mean to be a journalist? What does it mean in today's world to pursue not only vocations, to be part of institutions, but to be human?"

She asserts: "We lack at some core level meaning in our individual lives and meaning collectively." She cites a dying Lee Atwater on "wealth, power and prestige": "You can acquire all you want and still feel empty."

She prescribes: "We need a new politics of meaning. . . . Now, will it be easy to do that? Of course not. Because we are breaking new ground. . . . It's not going to be easy to redefine who we are as human beings in this post-modern age. . . . But part of the great challenge of living is defining yourself in your moment And so on.

Heavy, as we used to say in college. Yes, there is more to life than power and prestige. Yes, there is more than politics and economics. Yes, life needs meaning. Most adults, I dare say, have come to these thundering truisms early in life.

Breaking new ground? Her speech carries the distinctive marks of adolescent self-discovery: the self-congratulatory didacticism; the belief, upon encountering some large universal truth, that one has discovered the wheel; the conviction, upon experiencing some spiritual transcendence, that no one has ever been there before; and the breathless need to instruct the whole unlettered world about it. All delivered with the knowing self-assurance, the superior air of a college student manifesto.

Are there no proctors in this dorm?

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CHICAGO TRIBUNE
5/16/93

Let Us Journey Into the Mind of Managed Care

To the Editor:

In the last few weeks I have had two experiences with health maintenance organizations that suggest what things may be like with plans for universal health coverage that stress managed care.

A young woman came to me after having suffered increasingly severe abdominal pain over a few hours. My findings on examination, coupled with a high blood count, were the basis for a diagnosis of acute appendicitis. The treatment is surgical. However, the H.M.O. required authorization before referral to another doctor. I phoned.

After a ring of several minutes, a recorded message advised me that all lines were busy, but that the call would be taken by the first available representative. Eight minutes later, a woman's voice asked me what the problem was. I explained. She said she was the wrong person to handle this and gave me the name of someone else. Could I be transferred, I asked? She said this was impossible.

After 10 more minutes, the man whose name she gave me advised me that she was mistaken, this was her responsibility, not his, and told me to call back. I asked to be transferred. He told me that was not possible.

I could not afford to spend more time, so I called the surgeon's secretary, and she went through the process, only to be told that the call could not be made by anyone except the referring doctor or his secretary. My secretary was unavailable.

I repeated the process and reached the woman who answered the phone the first time. She advised me that the individual who could authorize referring my patient to a surgeon was otherwise occupied and I should call back in a half-hour. I explained that the patient had an acute appendicitis and time was of the essence, which made no impression.

It took five hours between the time I was called by the patient and the time the surgeon was able to see her, confirm the diagnosis, obtain operating room time and get her up there. Fortunately, she had not perforated, but the surgeon advised me that if this had gone another hour or two, she would have. The young woman was certainly put at risk of developing a perforated appendix with peritonitis, which has a high mortality.

In the other case a middle-aged woman was brought to the hospital for a laparoscopic operation to remove an inflamed gallbladder with stones. This is done by introducing an instrument to the abdominal cavity and removing the gallbladder without opening the abdomen.

When the surgeon got in, he noted that the duct from the gallbladder was dilated, indicating a high likelihood of stones in the duct. Following removal of the gallbladder, he tried something innovative. He introduced his laparoscope into the duct through a small incision and looked down. There, sure enough, were stones.

He improvised further and tried to push the stones down into the duodenum, the area of the small bowel into which the duct normally drains. He was successful. He then put in a small



tube to drain the duct and sent the patient back to her room.

His approach saved the patient a major operation and a hospitalization of normally a week to 10 days.

The next day a representative of the insurance company called to say that the patient could only be allowed one postoperative day for a laparoscopic cholecystectomy, for which she had a code number. The surgeon said he had done more and explained.

The caller asked what was the code number for what he did. The doctor responded that there was no code number because he had done an innovative procedure. She said she was sorry but if he couldn't come up with a code number, she would have to go

with the only code she had, which allowed only one day.

The surgeon protested that the patient had a fever, that she was still suffering pain, and he planned to do an X-ray to introduce dye through the tube he had left in the duct to see if there was another stone in the duct. He was told this was not permissible for the code number they were using.

The surgeon asked with whom he was talking, and she said she was a nurse. What is appalling is that a nurse was making over the telephone a judgment about a patient's condition that was at variance with the surgeon's, and mine.

The patient was kept in the hospital for several days more, until it was safe to send her home. The claim was rejected, and the rejection will have to be appealed, which means the surgeon and I will have to write lengthy letters explaining the circumstances, and may have to go to a hearing.

If these two episodes are harbingers, I shudder at the problems that will lie ahead for unsuspecting patients. LOUIS J. VORHAUS 2D, M.D.

New York, May 7, 1993

Wasteful Middle Man

To the Editor:

Re "The Changing Definition of Health Insurers" (Business Day, May 10), on the giant insurance companies that will control health-care delivery under Clinton health reform: Do we want huge insurance companies to determine the medical care Americans receive?

My experience in running a \$15-million health organization employing 300 people has shown me that the insurance industry's managed care neither reduces costs nor increases access to quality care. As documented in the industry's annual reports, by adding its own costs, it inflates America's health bill.

To cite one example, U.S. Health-care's 1991 report states that \$183 million was spent for administration, marketing and other operating costs, and the report records a profit of \$151 million. How can managed care's added costs cut health expenditures? This money should be shifted to direct care.

HANNAH ACHTENBERG
Exec. Dir., League Treatment Center
Brooklyn, May 11, 1993

The ailing of a president, 1992

WASHINGTON—SPECIAL HEALTH REPORT:

PATIENT: The Presidency of Bill Clinton.

SITUATION: Patient was rushed into emergency room shortly after he was blind-sided by a Republican filibuster.

SYMPTOMS: Multiple confusions. Lack of focus. Perceived conversion from small-government "New Democrat" to tax-and-spend "Old Democrat." Vital signs of public support dropping fast.

DIAGNOSIS: Apparent and inexplicable infection by the George Bush Syndrome, characterized by acute trouble with the vision thing and atrophy of the skills that, under better conditions, enabled patient to be elected. Source unknown. Check White House drinking water.

Patient also suffers from acute wonkiness (scientific term, *policius ad nauseam*), otherwise known as "agenda clash" or "Creeping Carterism," after a similar condition suffered by an earlier patient.

Condition is characterized by an irresistible desire to think aloud about every idea, plan or program that comes to mind. Heaved into the whirling barrel of public attention, they collide against one another like lottery balls and manifest themselves in symptoms like those listed above.

Additional symptoms and aggravating conditions: fuzzy public image. Even those who voted for patient have begun to question who he is these days, what he stands for, what he's thinking and whether he has any deeply held beliefs. Patient also suffers from faulty receptors to public perceptions.

For example, to counter often-repeated charge that he veered off his promise to focus on the economy "like a laser beam," patient ordered a computerized time management study of how he had used his time during his first 100 days.

The results: He spent 25 percent of his time on foreign policy, mostly Russia and Bosnia, 40 percent on health care and economic issues and a mere 2½ hours on the volatile issue of gays in the military (one hour with the Joint Chiefs, one hour of "other meetings" and a half-hour of answering questions about it).

Patient's vision has apparently narrowed too far to realize that, despite his scientific data, perception is nine-tenths of reality in politics.

The fact that patient spends time on a study of how he spends his time indicates condition may be worse than first diagnosed.

CONDITION: Critical.

PROGNOSIS: Surprisingly good, despite current dire condition. Patient is not called "the Comeback Kid" for nothing. Previous reports of death after run-ins with Gennifer Flowers, Vietnam phobia and lack of recall about inhaling proved to be greatly exaggerated.

Clarence Page

As one visiting British journalist said, patient seems to be "incapable of sustained error."

Patient already has taken three important steps toward self-healing and recovery: restructured top staff, delegated more work to Chief of Staff Mack McLarty and hit the road. Like earlier patient, Ronald Reagan, patient's health rebounds almost instantly when he bypasses reporters and takes his message directly to the public.

PRESCRIPTION:

■ Sharpen focus lens. Pollster Peter Hart prescribed in November: Choose the three issues you plan to campaign on in 1996 and stick to them as your main agenda. Result: Patient failed to stay on regimen and condition lapsed to current sorry state. Renew prescription.

■ Theme therapy. Patient looked good with the "New Covenant" during acceptance speech at Democratic National Convention in New York City, but inexplicably dropped it. Patient hates sound-bite politics, but sometimes to build a Great Society you have to cross the New Frontier with a New Deal that comes tripping off the tongue in a way that sticks firmly in the public mind.

■ Message control. If the Reagan era should have taught Clinton anything, it is this: Don't step on your own message. Coordinate your actions around a "theme of the day." Give one strong story and picture to the media each day and they can be shamelessly easy to satisfy. Play hard to get and the media will find their own stories to talk about, setting up issues you might rather avoid.

LONG-RANGE OUTLOOK: Patient will have ups and downs, but shows strong chance for recovery.

Already showing good responses to ingestion of humble pie. Threatened by revived infestation of Republicans, led by Bob "The Prince of Darkness" Dole, who have taken to following patient around his recovery track.

Patient seemed to be rallying, regaining strength by week's end.

Projected strength and command of message (short answers) in Friday press conference. Condition appears to be improving, but expect patient to continue to suffer periodically in the polls as he insists on tackling tough issues, despite his weakened state.

CAUTIONARY NOTE: Expect possible relapse when national health care plan is expected to be released by patient's better half in mid-June. Long-term recovery linked directly to economy. Suggest prayer. It couldn't hurt.

Clinton risks flying too near the sun

By David Warsh
Boston Globe

Throughout this dreadful week for President Clinton, a question has been nagging that is so simple it sounds a little dumb.

Why didn't he do the easier thing?

Why, for example, didn't he take a prominent Republican into his Cabinet, to make it a somewhat bipartisan administration from the start? Failing that, why didn't the president do a deal with Sen. Bob Dole and the Senate Republicans, or at least try harder to split their ranks?

It seems clearer with every passing day that there was no mandate to the election, and that Clinton's go-for-broke strategy has been a mistake. Ordinarily the president is a nimble and inventive fellow, able to learn from his mistakes. But in the matter here, he seems unlikely to reverse course.

The answer, it seems to me, has to do with a deep-seated tendency in Bill Clinton to overreach. Call it the Icarus Factor, after the youth in Greek mythology who flew with wings of wax too near the sun.

The Icarus Factor has to do with the most intimate questions of Clinton's personal identity, who he is and why he does what he does. Consider a series of events that are seemingly far removed from the turmoil over health care, trade and the budget.

Surely there is no more interesting marriage in America than that of the Clintons. Their hectic life sometimes leads to striking oppositions. As Hillary Rodham Clinton kept a vigil in Little Rock over her dying father early last month, Bill Clinton traveled to Vancouver to see Boris Yeltsin.

After an occasionally slapstick dinner at a fancy restaurant—Yeltsin became briefly furious because he thought Clinton was delegating tasks to the Russian vice president, a bitter Yeltsin rival, when it was Al Gore that Clinton had in mind—the president ended his evening by having over to his hotel suite movie actress Sharon Stone and a handful of other Hollywood nabobs for coffee and dessert. (We know this thanks to a dispatch by the New York Times' Maureen Dowd, a virtual exclusive, from which almost all the following details are drawn.)

Now Stone, a Grace Kelly look-alike, is the star of last year's dirtiest hit movie, an ice-pick murder thriller called "Basic Instinct." She was fresh from the covers of People magazine and Vanity Fair. Her

Commentary

fiance came along as well, as did their friends, actor Richard Gere and his wife, model Cindy Crawford. Actor Richard Dreyfuss and producer Bud Yorkin were there as well.

The president and his staff clearly enjoyed the badinage during their couple of hours with the celebrities after days of talking policy with the Russians. Asked to describe the atmosphere of the meeting, White House communications director George Stephanopolous called it "hot." "It was hot in the room and we were all sweating," said Stephanopolous, a debonair bachelor. What was Sharon Stone wearing? "A blouse and slacks or something—I'm not sure," he said. "I was too busy watching Cindy."

All this occurred Saturday night. Sunday, at midafternoon, Mrs. Clinton ended the 16-day vigil that had begun when her 82-year-old father suffered a serious stroke, and returned to Washington. The story about Vancouver appeared in the Monday morning paper. On Tuesday, Clinton appeared with a long scratch on his jaw and another below his ear. On Wednesday, reporters were asking questions about the scratch. First Dee Dee Myers, the press secretary, said that it was a shaving cut. Later Clinton emerged to say that he got it wrestling with his daughter, Chelsea, "rolling around like a child again." The same day Hugh Rodham died. And a couple of days later, Clinton delivered a moving, tough-minded eulogy of his late father-in-law at funeral services in Little Rock.

Any busy person familiar with the lingering death of a parent knows how interior and personal is the event, how many difficult decisions must be made about when to stay and when to leave. Perhaps not a single word passed between the Clintons about the Vancouver nightcap upon their reunion at the White House. Perhaps she hit him with a rolling pin. Who knows? Certainly the people who know the Clintons best aren't talking.

These are the kinds of questions that you can't pursue very far in Washington because of the tight veil of secrecy that surrounds the White House and the severe sanctions that attend attempts to violate it. The Clintons have been reported to have threatened to fire the entire Secret Service as their protectors over leaks by agents about their private life—including, in one Newsweek report, Mrs. Clinton throwing objects at Mr.

Clinton.

Yet you must admire the extreme discipline that the U.S. press is displaying in the face of a firestorm of rumor about the Clintons' private lives in *le tout* Washington—and it is a firestorm. The press apparently will not go forward without new building blocks of information, and with a little luck, these won't emerge. We already know enough about the Clintons' marriage bond: it is strong, durable and complex.

Yet these conjectures about risk-taking have an obvious relevance in a week when the administration has come to be seen as being deeply divided about both its political tactics and goals. Budget Director Leon Panetta and House Speaker Thomas Foley sent separate wake-up calls to the White House via public warnings. Leaked stories appeared exploring significant rifts among presidential advisers on trade and health care. Often these divisions are reported to trace back to differences of opinion between Hillary and Bill—or at least Bill as others see him.

According to Jeffrey Birnbaum and Michael Frisby, writing in the Wall Street Journal, the president is steering a zigzag course between politics and policy, "between his own deeply rooted sense of what makes the most effective policy and taking the course that he knows will improve his standing with the electorate." Thus he is continually at war with himself, they say.

Just maybe, however, the war includes his wife, and goes a good deal deeper than the usual differences between Old Democrats and New Democrats. A powerful ambivalence, at the core of their marriage, about just what is possible in life would explain a lot.

The Clintons seem to have evolved a tolerance for each other's risk-taking. Taking responsibility for restructuring a sixth of GNP in a three-months blitz isn't a whole lot different from having Sharon Stone to your hotel while your father-in-law is lying on the edge of death. It is the sort of thing that can seem well within your right one moment and unnecessarily audacious the next. It's a fundamentally incautious thing to do.

In this analysis, then, the reason that Clinton didn't low-ball his administration's strategy from the beginning—by seeking to co-opt the Republican leadership by acknowledging some successes during the last 12 years—is simply that he simply likes a little danger. He courts it. He tries the hardest thing. He flies too near the sun.