

Jan. 3 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1995

[At this point, the President left the reporters to speak with his fellow hunters. He then resumed speaking with reporters.]

The President. We didn't see many today, but we got two shots. There were a couple more that came in close, but they came in so fast that we weren't ready. But these were really the only two we could shoot at. And I had the charity—this crew over there, they all sat there and let me shoot at it. [Laughter]

Q. Are you glad to be home?

The President. Yes. I really started feeling like a person when I was about 5 minutes out on the water today.

NOTE. The President spoke at approximately 9 a.m. at the Robinson farm. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Exchange With Reporters at Cotham's Mercantile Store in Scott, Arkansas January 3, 1995

The President. We have a lot of people who come in who still use it as a country store, but as you can see, a lot of people come in and eat every day. We have people drive every day from Little Rock. But it's a regular pharmacy.

Q. It reminds me of the stores along that one street in Plains, Georgia, where Jimmy Carter lived. They had stores like this.

The President. They've even got a little museum here that I helped them put together, Plantation Museum. You saw that land coming back, all that farm land you saw, this is the heart of our rice country. We grow about 40 percent of America's rice on the land that we came across today.

Q. Forty percent?

The President. Yes.

Q. Wow.

The President. Arkansas is the number one rice-producing State in the country, more than California or anyplace. And you can see why, because of all the little—you see all the little rivers and creeks and everything.

Q. You've got the paddies.

The President. Yes. Good topsoil, and it's also a lot of high-tech stuff. They literally flood those rice fields. They have a little laser beam that they go down and throw that laser beam across that rice field to make sure the water level is just right, not too low so that the crop—[inaudible]—not too high so it rots. Just right. It's amazing.

Anyway—and we also went through—did you see the cotton field we went through?

Q. Sure did.

The President. And the name of the nearest town to where we were hunting today was Cotton Plant.

Q. Right. In fact, that's the dateline on all our stories.

The President. And cotton was a big crop here, but closer to the river, going back before the Civil War, but back here all the way up to the point. But that land, most of that land we saw today, we drove across was hardwood forest until the twenties. The timber companies came in and tore all the hardwood down. But because the topsoil was so thick, because the water was so great, it became great agriculturally. Fifty-three percent of this State is still covered with timberland. You couldn't tell that from today. It's a very different place. But anyway, that's—

Q. You sound homesick for—

The President. This was all a big part of my political base, all these places we've been through here today. I never lost—this State.

Q. [Inaudible]—county?

The President. Woodruff County. Benton County is the next—

Q. Woodruff County is where we were this morning.

The President. Woodruff County.

Q. Do you have a recommendation for us for lunch?

The President. All of our counties here have big sportsmen, like Tom's sponsor of Ducks Unlimited. With all these ducks, the sky is full of ducks and geese, and they come down from Canada down what's called the Mississippi Flyway, right down the river. And the reason