

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON FEATURING CHRIS MATTHEWS

SUBJECT: GERALD R. FORD FOUNDATION LUNCHEON

MODERATOR: THERESA WERNER, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

LOCATION: NATIONAL PRESS CLUB BALLROOM, WASHINGTON, D.C.

TIME: 12:30 P.M. EDT

DATE: MONDAY, JUNE 4, 2012

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THERESA WERNER: (Sounds gavel.) Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press Club. My name is Theresa Werner, and I am the 105th President of the National Press Club. We are the world's leading professional organization for journalists committed to our profession's future through programming and events such as this while fostering a free press worldwide. For more information about the National Press Club, please visit our website at www.press.org. To donate to programs offered to the public through our National Press Club Journalism Institute, please visit press.org/institute.

On behalf of our members worldwide, I'd like to welcome our speaker and those of you attending today's event. Our head table includes guests of our speaker, as well as working journalists who are club members. And if you hear applause in our audience, we'd note that members of the general public are attending so it isn't necessarily evidence of a lack of journalistic objectivity. (Laughter)

I'd also like to welcome our C-SPAN and our Public Radio audiences. Our luncheons are also featured on our member-produced weekly Podcast from the National Press Club available on iTunes. You can also follow the action on Twitter using the hashtag NPCLunch. After our guest's speech concludes, we'll have a question and answer segment, and I will ask as many questions as time permits. Now I'd like to introduce our head table guests, and I'd like each of you here to stand up briefly as your name is announced.

From your right, Keith Hill, editor, write for BNA; Kevin McCormally, editor, director of the Kiplinger Washington Editors; Andrea Stone, senior national

correspondent for the Huffington Post; Scott Wilson, White House correspondent for the *Washington Post* and the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation Journalism Award winner for the coverage of the presidency; Liz Spade, managing editor for the *Washington Post*; Steven Ford, Chairman of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation and son of President Ford; Alison Fitzgerald, freelance journalist and National Press Club Speakers Committee Chair; Chris Matthews, host of MSNBC “Hard Ball with Chris Matthews”; Ken Delecki, freelance editor and member of the Speakers Committee who helped arrange today’s luncheon.

Joseph Calvaruso, Executive Director of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation; Corinne Reilly, military affairs reporter for the *Virginian-Pilot* and the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation Journalism Award winner for coverage of national defense; Julie Bykowicz, national political reporter for Bloomberg News and a new young member of the National Press Club; Mark Schanz, senior editor, *Air Force Magazine*. (Applause)

The National Press Club is once again honored to host the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation for the presentation of its annual awards for outstanding reporting on the presidency and national defense. Our Club had a long association with the 38th President of the United States with the foundation which carries on his legacy. Gerald Ford spoke at the podium a record 18 times appearing before, during, and after his presidency.

Some of you at this luncheon have personal recollections of President Ford’s brief but historic presidency and his many years of public service. The loyalty he inspired among friends and associates is a tribute to the kind of person he was. President Ford died in 2006 at the age of 93 and his wife, Betty, died last year on July 8th also at the age of 93.

Reporters who knew President Ford admired his dedication to a free and unfettered press, although the press in “Saturday Night Live” were not always kind to him. (Laughter) The late Hugh Sidey of *Time* magazine covered many presidents and was a distinguished member of our club. He once said that Ford was the only president he knew who genuinely likes reporters. Former Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, a member of the Ford Presidential Foundation Board of Trustees, once told us that Gerald Ford was probably the most normal person ever to assume the presidency, perhaps because he didn’t seek the office in the first place.

The awards being presented today were established to further President Ford's support for a free press and the vital role it plays in informing our citizens and preserving our democracy. Steven Ford, one of President Ford's sons, and Chairman of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation will now make this year’s awards, assisted by Joe Calvaruso, Executive Director of the Foundation. Mr. Ford? (Applause)

MR. FORD: Thank you, Theresa. It's an honor to be here and Dad had a wonderful relationship with the press. Every morning, he would get up and he would, to

his last day, I'm telling you, he would have a stack of five or six newspapers that he would read every morning. He had the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *L. A. Times*. But the last one he read was always the *Grand Rapids Press*, the local newspaper. And I used to ask him, "Dad, why the *Press* at the end?" He says, "Well, you know what Congress and the White House is doing because of the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *L. A. Times*. But you actually find out if it's working when you read your local newspaper." So that's where he thought the rubber finally hit the road, was the local press. And they were the ones to find out what people are doing in Washington, D. C. and the federal government is actually reaching the people. So that was his theory on the press there.

But honor to be here, the Ford family is glad to be here. We have a lot of our trustees from the foundation. My sister, Susan and my brother Mike, if you guys would stand and say hello? (Applause) I want to thank Chris Matthews for being here and I want to thank the winners, we're proud to have you here. Every time I come over here, I think of all the stories that you guys missed and didn't cover. And I was sitting at the head table here and there was a story that Dad and Mom had a dog, Liberty, beautiful golden retriever. And one night, Liberty had to go use the facilities out on the south lawn of the White House. And she went over there and she nudged Dad, got him out of bed, and Dad had his pajamas on. He'd put his robe on, and slippers. He took the dog, Liberty, down the stairs, down the elevator to the diplomatic entrance at two in the morning.

He goes out to diplomatic entrance with the dog and he walks out on the south lawn, the dog does its business. He turns around and the Secret Service have not realized he's left the building. The next thing you know, Dad is standing at the door because the door has been locked, in his pajamas with the dog, knocking on the door to get back in the White House. So that's a story you missed. (Laughter)

Well, let's get on to the business of our winners here, the most important part of this day. And I'm going to start with our journalism awards, the Gerald R. Ford Journalism Prize for Distinguished reporting on national defense in 2011. Our winner, Corinne Reilly. The judges for the national defense have selected Corinne of the *Virginian-Pilot* as the winner of the 25th Annual Gerald R. Ford Prize for Distinguished Reporting on National Defense. From this remarkable group of entries, the judges selected Corinne and given her this award. Miss Reilly's poignant writing, which covered the NATO combat hospital in Kandahar, Afghanistan, was both horrifying and riveting at the same time. I can tell you personally, and the judges would say the same thing if they were up here today, you could not put her work down once you started reading the series of articles.

This series, aptly entitled, "A Chance in Hell," described the military system that fights with equal determination for survival of all its seriously wounded patients from soldiers in the field to Sam, 80 years old, to a 10 year old Afghani child shredded by an IED. Miss Reilly's stories provide a window not only on the trauma to the injured soldiers, but to the emotional impact on the international medical teams and caregivers who treated those soldiers.

In a very direct way, this set of articles helps bring the reality of war to a public largely disconnected from that war. The judges were impressed with the clarity of Miss Reilly's writing, her straightforward conversational style, largely without the flourish of adjectives, but nonetheless powerful and profoundly moving. The judging panel felt that her work helped foster better understanding of national defense issues and more than admirably met the foundation's criteria for quality, insightfulness, resourcefulness and brevity. If you would please come up and we'll give you that award? (Applause)

MS. REILLY: Thank you. I went to Afghanistan for this story with a photographer from my newspaper. And, you know, both of us had been to conflict zones before, but it's safe to say that we were truly blown away by the level of sacrifice that we witnessed at the hospital at Kandahar. And I think we both decided early on that the best way that we could honor that sacrifice would be to document it as faithfully as possible. And if this award is any indication that we succeeded in doing that, then I couldn't be any prouder to be here.

I'd like to thank the Ford Foundation and my newspaper, the *Virginian-Pilot*, as well as everyone who worked on this series. And most importantly, thank you to everyone at the Kandahar Roll 3 for putting their trust in us and allowing us to document their important work. Thank you. (Applause)

MR. FORD: Our second award winner is for distinguished reporting on the presidency. The judging committee has selected Scott Wilson of the *Washington Post* as the winner of the 25th Annual Gerald R. Ford Prize for Distinguished Reporting on the Presidency. Covering the presidency with distinction in modern times is uniquely challenging. A large number of highly talented reporters, often the best in their respective organizations, they're all pursuing the same news stories every day with a limited number of disciplined sources.

There's extreme pressure, and it can be applied on those who go outside of the familiar narrative. In this environment, that encourages conformity. Scott Wilson of the *Washington Post* stands out as a nonconformist. Bringing his readers on the scene analysis of the White House activity is not available anywhere else. He readily places events in historical context. He illustrates colorfully with anecdotes and firsthand observation. He explains motivations, he reports both on what the President does and equally important on what the President does not do.

In short, he educates his readers and helps them put in the confusing din of daily news coverage into an understandable context. Wilson is able to write critically without being offensive or partisan. He reaches out broadly to sources both inside and outside the White House, yielding an evenhanded perspective on the performance and results of the Obama presidency. He is equally at home with domestic and foreign policy, politics and personalities. Wilson is adept at spotting a trend and explaining it, and his reporting frequently becomes the instantly accepted wisdom in Washington.

Scott Wilson writes for the serious reader and consistently meets that reader's expectations. In every respect, the judges found his reporting on the presidency in 2011 outstanding. Scott? (Applause)

MR. WILSON: Thank you very much for this honor, particularly to the Ford family and foundation. It truly is humbling. It means so much to me and to my family, especially my kids who got out of school to be here. I can already feel the pressure building for next year as a result. (Laughter)

I began covering the White House three years ago. It was my first national assignment, and follows eight years of reporting for the *Post* from overseas. Where witnessing, describing, explaining, were the hallmarks of foreign correspondents, chiseling the small cracks in the cement wall around this President to get a glimpse of who he is and what he believes has been an entirely different challenge. It is one I would have been unable to confront effectively or maintained my sanity trying without help from my exceptional colleagues. It can be a hugely frustrating assignment; fast moving, staged, often superficial. And having editors and reporting partners who are committed to depth and originality, despite the often competing imperatives of speed and spice in the hyper competitive internet age, has made my learning curve a lot less steep than it would have been, and my reporting a lot more fulfilling.

This prize is honoring one person for work that many people have had a huge part in producing; the stories are the result of countless hours of brainstorming, argument, painstaking editing and in this media age, the generous promotion of colleagues who make me so much better than I actually am. I'd like to thank some of them who took their time to be here today. First, my managing editor, Liz Spade, who had the confidence in me to give me this assignment and has been an encouraging, inspiring force behind it ever since.

My national editor, Kevin Merida, whose work as a writer on everything from the MBA to Clarence Thomas to Candidate Obama I had admired long before I began working for him three years ago. He is a great inspiration and steady hand and an editor you want to do your best for. It is a privilege being part of his staff.

His deputy, Cameron Barr, is simply the finest editor of words and ideas I've ever worked with. Our partnership began years ago when I was the *Post* correspondent in Jerusalem, then continued as editors together on the foreign desk. His guidance, insights, care with words and creativity, are the driving force behind much of this work and much of my work over the years. I owe him a huge debt of gratitude.

The *Post* has been a wonderful professional home to me for nearly 15 years, and it is not only because of editors like Kevin and Cameron, but fellow reporters such as Anne Kornblut and Chris Cillizza. Anne is an award-winning White House reporter who has taught me how to write about the President. She's been a trustworthy sounding board, an idea machine who injects essential humor into what can often feel like a "bang your head here" exercise covering such a closed institution and private President.

Chris is the state of the art of national political reporters; smart, original, entrepreneurial, a must-read. And he has generously provided not only his ideas and vast knowledge, but also kindly promoted my work among his legion of Twitter followers and television viewers. It has made a huge difference. To all of them, thank you. It's an honor to work with you at a place that while undergoing rapid and sometimes bewildering change is still committed to making a difference with its journalism. It is a great thrill for me to work for the Graham family. I trust them implicitly, which means a lot in this time of turmoil in my industry.

Last, but not least, I'd like to thank my wonderful family for putting up with me. My wife, Andrea, and my daughters Kate and Meg, and Ben-- and my son, Ben. Sorry, Ben. (Laughter) I'm difficult. I bring my work home, literally and figuratively, and they have become used to it; first abroad and now here. But their curiosity about what I do-- okay, sometimes confusion about what I do-- and patience with me cure my frustration and self doubt. They're a lot of fun and make this work fun, too. Thank you. You are the best things about me, and thank you for being here to share this humbling moment with me. Thank you all. (Applause)

MR. FORD: Let me close out my part of this program. We had two great winners. I do want to mention, we had an honorable mention. The judges felt, and we have several of the judges here, some of them trustees, some of them not, the judges felt very strongly that we had an honorable mention for distinguished reporting on national defense. And that would be Sean Naylor. Sean, you're sitting back there, just stand please? (Applause) The judges for national defense selected Sean of *Army Times* as the winner of the 25th Annual Gerald R. Ford Prize for Distinguished Reporting as an honorary mention. For honorable mention, the judges selected Sean, the panel felt that Mr. Naylor's articles provided persistent insights into a volatile, dangerous and strategically critical part of the world. His in depth research, excellent sources and ability to connect the dots provide an important information on an area that has today received relatively little attention in the press. So thank you very much. Theresa?

MS. WERNER: Thank you, Mr. Ford, and congratulations to this year's winners. President Ford once said that, "I have had a lot of adversaries in my political life, but no enemies that I can remember." One of Ford's political adversaries was Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, a liberal Massachusetts Democrat with whom he served for many years in the House of Representatives. Despite their political differences, O'Neill and Ford were friends. The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation will be honoring that friendship with an award in O'Neill's honor at its annual dinner tonight.

O'Neill was Speaker of the House from 1977 until his retirement in 1987. Toward the end of his career, he hired our luncheon speaker to be his press secretary. Chris Matthews was born in Philadelphia and graduated from the College of Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts. He served in the Peace Corps in Africa from 1968 to 1970. After coming to Washington, Matthews worked as a U.S. Capitol policeman before

working for four Democrat members of Congress, and then as a speech writer for President Jimmy Carter.

He worked for O'Neill for six years during the Speaker's epic legislative and political battles with President Ronald Reagan. Matthews worked in Washington for San Francisco newspapers from 1987 to 2000. He started his talk show, "Hard Ball with Chris Matthews," in 1997. And in 2002, he started the syndicated weekly political talk show, "The Chris Matthews Show." He is the author of six books including *Hard Ball: How Politics is Played*. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming Chris Matthews to the National Press Club. (Applause)

MR. MATTHEWS: Thank you, it's great to be here for Tip and for Jerry and for their friendship. And I want to talk about that today. And by the way, congratulations, Corinne. I couldn't believe you were a little nervous speaking here, and I kept thinking, "I never get nervous speaking. But going to Afghanistan would really get to me." (Laughter) And Scott, you're great. You're great.

Every time I got on the bus covering campaigns, and I'd watch people with the quality newspapers and they'd sit around me and I'd watch them file a few things and check a few things, and then I'd pick up the paper, a beautifully turned out factual piece the next day. I was always blown away by the straight reporters. You know, commentary is easy, it's very easy to say what you think. But reporting is work. You guys are good.

So I want to talk about what's going on today and the way it used to be. I always tell kids when I write a book, like the book I just did on Jack Kennedy, *Elusive Hero*, which was not mentioned, but that's a good book (Laughter). It's still available for Father's Day. By the way, on Father's Day, they sell one-fifth as many books as at Christmas, by the way. It's a big opportunity to mention that.

I always tell young people, in their 20s, it's all true because times have changed, and you have to tell them about the past in a way, and as your parents, and as a new grandparent, I must say, I feel the responsibility to always tell people about the past because my parents always did that and they made me seem much older than my age because they always told us about the war, World War II. They were always talking about the war. Remember that phrase from your parents, "The war. Before the war, after the war. Housing was never as good after the war as before the war, although people like the Catholics got in the door after the war." So some good things happened. The Jewish people, too. So lot of things before and after the war were different.

You know, politics is different today, and I don't think it's better. My secular religion, after being here 41 years in this city, this city without smokestacks, without factories, it only makes one thing here. The only thing we do here, if you look around, is make deals, good deals, compromises. It's called legislation, it's called government. That's what we do here. We come here from different points of view. We keep our points of view, but we find a way to govern this country. That's what we do, that's why we're here, that's why we cover it; because it's important how we run this great country.

And I think sometimes people come here with another point of view. I think the only point of view is to try to make the government work. And I think about all the different directions we do come with and I worked for the Speaker, had one point of view, and Jerry Ford had another. But, you know, I think it takes a couple of things for this city to work. One, you have to listen to the other side, even if they're lame brained, you know, you got to listen. You got to listen to the Tea Party, believe it or not. They might have something. Maybe. You have to listen. You have to listen. You just have to listen. It's like being married. (Laughter) You know? The guys who get all the good girls listen.

And two, you have to be willing to negotiate, because if you don't negotiate, you'll never make a deal, you'll never arrive at any agreed-upon direction for the country. And if you don't do that, we don't have a direction, we just have chaos, and right now it's something like that.

So I want to talk about Jerry Ford and Tip O'Neill. Tip O'Neill was one tough guy. I can tell you, he was one tough boss. People say, "Did you like that job?" All I can tell you, it's the toughest job I ever had. As Kirk O'Donnell, his chief counsel said, we got to bat a thousand around here. You don't bat a thousand, it's somebody's fault; mine. So, I knew how tough it was. It was always tough. But Tip O'Neill had one great quality that made him a man of the House; he loved it. He loved that place. Like San Francisco, if you go out there and love San Francisco, they'll love you. I worked for the papers out there. The one key ingredient, when you go to San Francisco, tell everybody you meet, "I love this city," and you'll be incredibly welcomed. Because loving the city is what unites everybody.

What makes you a man or woman of the House is you love the House. I remember once telling Jerry Ford-- or not Jerry Ford, Jerry Brown, very different story-- Jerry Brown said, "Why would anyone be running for the House?" I said, "The camaraderie." He said, "What?" He had no idea what that meant. He certainly had no value on it; hanging out with the guys was not his idea of heaven. But hanging out with the men and women of the House is what it's about. It's about sharing that community.

Tip O'Neill, like Jerry Ford, loved the floor. They were both floor leaders, they liked being out on the floor. They liked being where the action was. They loved the cloakroom. The Democrats had their cloakroom, Chez Ramon, there was this guy that had a-- he only did boiled hot dogs and tuna fish, but everybody would go there for lunch.

He loved Codell's, dare I say junkets? They loved them. And it's the best thing in the Congress, is junkets. Because it's a time for the husbands and the wives to get together with each other and it creates a wonderful friction remover where you're able to actually-- when you get really mad at the other guy, your wife will say, "But you like that guy, I know you like that guy." And it's an amazing thing, how it cools things down on

both sides. Junkets work. They're expensive, but after two weeks together, you're probably going to be friends. I found out every time I got on one, I loved it.

Also, Tip liked the food in the House dining room. Maybe he was the only guy that did, but he loved it. He loved anything they had in there. He loved the gym. His idea of going to the gym was grabbing a handful of cigars and saying to his secretary, "I'm going over for a rub." (Laughter) You had to be there.

They loved the other members of Congress on both sides of the aisle. I mean, he had a few people that bothered him greatly. He used to call a group The Three Stooges. Now, that was a moving group of people. They were all troublemakers, they were part of the Go Pack crowd. Gingrich was always one of the Three Stooges. He had a permanent membership in the Three Stooges. The other was Bob Walker from Pennsylvania, the guy who was always on the floor making sure they never got a pay raise. One time they had-- say there's a phone call. It's like high school, "there's a phone call for you, Mr. Walker." So he runs out to take the call and they pass by unanimous assent their next pay raise. This is how it worked. You know, it didn't happen that often, but it was somewhat mirthful. (Laughter) In fact, Jack Murtha did it. He was the guy behind it. "We got it this time, Tip. We got it this time." That was Murtha coming in the door.

His friends weren't all Democrats. I tell you, he had some really close friends. George Bush, Sr., was a close friend of Tip's, and I think that's because they both loved the House. Because the House is something that George Bush, if you think about it, won completely on his own when he was elected from Harris County from Houston. He didn't get in there because of the coattails of President Reagan or any of that stuff, or being like Reagan or saying "Be Reagan's third term." He got elected to the House on his own. I think that always means a lot to an officeholder, to have it all on your own. I mean, Nixon wanted to get elected on his own, that's why he didn't use Ike until the end. You always want it on your own.

And I think that's why Gore tried to do it on his own. He didn't quite make it, but he tried it the same. There's a lot of pride in being in public office, being truly elected by the people.

He liked George Bush, Sr., a lot. In fact, I don't know what he felt-- well, I could probably guess what he thought of Dukakis, but he really liked Bush. And he loved Sil Conte. They'd have cards every night, the wives would play together. They were down at Sumner near the Defense Mapping Agency, they hung out together.

Bob Michael, boy they were buddies, really. But the guy he really loved was Jerry Ford. You'd hear him talking about him all the time, you know? "Jerry Ford's living the good life out in Palm Springs. Dresses for dinner now. We don't fit in." (Laughter) It was great. It was always about status.

And I could tell when his real friends were around because his face would crinkle into a real nonpolitical smile, when Tip O'Neill would have the real Tip O'Neill smile,

that crinkly Santa Claus face of his, which he would get whenever his real buddies were around like Murtha. Murtha would always come in, I love Murtha. And then Rusty would come in and be jealous of Murtha because he'd say, "You just had Murtha sitting on your lap, didn't you? He was in here sitting on your lap." It's like a little boy's club, it's like a tree house over there sometimes.

The people's House, how proud they all were of that. And compared to the august U.S. Senate, which Tip once said was filled with the idiot sons of the rich. (Laughter) that's when he got really Irish and I loved it when he talked like that. Talk more like that too, come on. The real Irish attitude towards the elite, which is great when it came out. Because he used to cut the lawn at Harvard. He didn't go to Harvard, he want to BC. But he used to cut the lawn with shears back in the '30s when the rich people went there and there was no meritocracy back then. And he would be cutting with shears the lawn and the overseer was like Simon Legree, would come by and say, "Up off your ass, O'Neill. Shear the lawn on your knees." I mean, this is a memory and you're watching all these guys with the boater hats drinking champagne during Prohibition, you have a certain attitude. You know what I mean, as you go up, Irish like that? It's very interesting stuff. I loved that stuff.

You know, I think that he would sit around and even members of Congress, like Tip, would save seats. You only had to run against a communist once, that was his only opponent, in Cambridge. He got elected in 50 elections in a row, primaries and general elections, but they weren't all close. But he had to worry at home. The great thing about the House compared to the Senate is you have to stay in touch because they have elections every two years. And even if you're in a safe district, an inner city district, for example, you got to worry about the young opponent, you got to be home. And that's why you're right about reading the local paper. Tip would be in the room, I'd go in the back room and there he was with the *Globe*. He just loved the *Globe* because it would tell you what's going on at home. All politics is local. Somebody said that once, all politics is local. You got to keep track of what's going on at home.

You know, I have a great respect for people who lead when it's tough, when you're politically incorrect, when you're not-- and it's not you that everybody likes. And Ronald Reagan, I think, is going to be remembered for his consistency and his career that preceded well before his popularity, just like Churchill. You're respected for being right long before it was popular. And that's how people keep track of you. They don't want people adjusting every year to what's popular or moving, like a mood ring, into what's working. They love people that are pretty consistent and they said, "Yeah, he's been on that position for a while. I trust him on that. That's where he's been a long time." And he was like that.

And O'Neill, Tip O'Neill when I was with him those six years, were brutal. I mean, the nuns were coming at him. "Be nice to President Reagan." That was tough. I mean, it was really tough. He wasn't popular. Liberalism wasn't in fashion for a number of those years, although we did pick up 26 seats in '82 in our little comeback year. But it was tough to be unpopular. It's tough to get on airplanes with everybody hating you. And

Reagan put up with that for years and then he became popular. Tip put up with it and he finally came back by the end of the term and he got great numbers and popular at the end, but it was tough. And I respect people like that.

Jerry Ford did something as President, appointed President, that nobody-- I didn't like he did it. He pardoned Nixon. But when you think about what he did, it was very unpopular, probably cost him the presidency, he had the courage to do what was right. Because if we had let Richard Nixon's problems remain our problems for another two or three years, we would have never gotten out of it. It would have been two or three more years, at least, of fighting over Nixon. Instead he said, "Why don't we heal the country and start over again and get the country moving again?" And I think that was an example of, well, country first is not a bad motto, is it? Country first, not you.

So I was warned that when I went up to Massachusetts about 15 years ago and I went and looked up in the first pew at St. John's where Tip was christened, where he was married and where he was buried, to see Jerry Ford in the first pew. It was nice to see that because they stuck together. And I think most assuredly Tip would have been there for Jerry, were friends. And that's the way it was in politics when I worked in it.

And I got to love the cycle of the week of the House of Representatives. I loved working in the House. Monday was always come back day for the Tuesday/Thursday crowd. Tuesday was the general debate. Wednesday was amendments, including the Republican vote to recommit from the minority. Thursday was always final passage. And usually when all the members would come in, it was great because it was just like in "Mr. Smith." They'd all come in and sit there and watch closing debate between people like Jerry Ford and Tip O'Neill when they'd give it their best, and everybody'd be there. Great drama. It was great stuff.

And I do remember one Thursday night, and I don't know who these members were, but I have always remembered this, they had a really hot debate, really hot. The typical Thursday night debate. Sometimes, Thursday, even white wine drunk at dinner, which made it a little more interesting. But it was a hot debate and one guy had been yelling red faced at the other guy from the other side of the aisle. And I'd been watching that. They'd been debating really heatedly.

And as the room began to empty out and everybody went to catch their planes, Thursday night, it was a wonderful ritual. It was like an accordion just closing. Everybody's leaving, this guy walked across the aisle and said to the Democratic member, "What are you doing this weekend," the guy he'd been yelling at. And after a bit of chit-chat, he said, "Say hello to your wife for me." Now, that is what it was like. And that's what it was like the way Jefferson wanted it, the way Madison wanted it. And that's the way it was with Jerry and Tip, the old days.

And I want to thank you for letting me begin my conversation with you about the current events, which are not as pleasant. But I want young people here, and there are

some of them here today, where are you? There you are. (Laughter) Younger than me, I'm a grand pop, it's all true. It really was like that. Thank you very much. (Applause)

MS. WERNER: Now for the fun stuff, the questions. Do you feel that hard ball political talk shows like yours is partly responsible for the growing lack of civility in our political discourse?

MR. MATTHEWS: Not at all. I think it gets it off your chest. And I think it can. I think there's some tendency of people to only watch their own show is a mistake. I think you want to look around. I would say take a look at Fox once in a while. If you don't like it, take a look at it and make sure you don't like it. In fact, maybe you won't. But I think you're crazy to go by one-- the days of Walter Cronkite are over. "That's the way it is" is not going to work again. It's too complicated, it's too many points of view. I just finished the Cronkite book, which is an excellent book by Doug Brinkley. He had a point of view, and we all knew his point of view. He was a liberal the whole time he was in television. We all knew it. If he didn't know we knew it, he wasn't aware of it, but everybody else knew it.

And the idea, he was a great reporter, an honest reporter, but he had a point of view. Today, those points of view are more transparent, they're more acknowledged. I always say to people if you watch television, you can't tell the difference between fact and opinion, you're rare because almost everybody can. I think Al Sharpton is pretty known for his points of view. I think people know what they're getting when they watch him. They know me, after all these years, they know where I'm standing. I think people are smarter than people who look out for them acknowledge. People are smart. They know opinion and they know fact. And I think they want-- three levels every night they watch my show. They want fact, they want the news, they want it around 5:00 because we're on pretty early.

Two, they want analysis, they want to know what it means, and they want to know that you think. They watch my show to find out what I think, all three. You got to be fact based. We fight over facts. I say every fact must come from a quality newspaper like *The Post* or *The Times* or *The Journal*, facts. It may come from AP but I don't want to hear it came from anywhere else, really. I'm really tough on that. I want facts.

And secondly, we do analysis and we always want to be smart on the analysis first, and then later with the opinion. I try to do all three, that's my job. And sometimes-- and I do find that people will tend to vote after they watch me. I can't imagine being able to follow my show without reading a good newspaper. You wouldn't know what we were talking about.

And secondly, I can't imagine watching a show like mine and not being committed to vote. So I think from both ends, in terms of forcing people to read the paper or getting the people that do read the paper to watch more-- but I always say to people watch something else. If you like it, watch "The Lehrer Hour," it's damn good. George Stephanopoulos is damn good on Sunday. I mean, I watched it yesterday. "Meet the

Press” is great. A lot of people watch these shows as duty. Put it together, put your own stew together. I don't know anybody who gets more angry after watching television. Lot of people get confirmed in their views.

I do think theirs is some ditto thinking that goes on in this country, people who listen to Limbaugh and that's all they listen to. I don't think they're growing, you know? (Laughter and Applause)

MS. WERNER: How would you rate your show? Very left, left, down the middle, right, very right?

MR. MATTHEWS: Well, you missed one; center left. I'd say we're 40 yard line. I think most people would say 40 yard line. I mean, my voting record as an individual is certainly not consistent. So, I pretty much advertise how I vote. I think my views on a lot of things are-- I thought the Iraq war was a disaster. I made that clear since 2001. I'm right on that. Fiscal policy, I want to see a long-term debt-- I'd like to see my daughter work for the debt commission for Simpson-Bowles. I think the President should have staked out a position day one in support of it. All right, they got 11 votes, I didn't get 14, but it's good enough for me, I'm going with it. I think if he'd done that, be better off. I think he should have gone with the Keystone pipeline. I don't know how you oppose jobs at this point. I can't even think of the environmental reason because nobody's told me what it is.

I think he should have sold more healthcare, explain why it's important to the middle class, not just to-- we already have a healthcare program for poor people, it's called Medicaid. Or it exists. If you don't like socialism, well we got that for poor people. This was a program to be fair to the middle class and force them to pay their share so there's no free riders anymore. It was a Republican plan hatched at the Heritage Foundation. He never sold it that way because he had to keep the left happy. But he should have sold it honestly. It was not a left wing proposition, it was a very conservative proposition. And he never sold it properly.

So I think we're pretty critical. But, I think I put it together. And I've been doing this longer than anybody. I've been on live TV since '94 every night, and I'm on six times a week and people have figured me out. I think people are smart, they figure you out. Like, you know, you get to know the person after a while, you know? I think.

MS. WERNER: What do you make of the changes taking place in the media? The decline of traditional newspapers and TV networks and the role of social media?

MR. MATTHEWS: Well, I worry about social media because I love newspapers and I love editors. Because without an editor, I don't know where I'd be, I would have been, with the *Examiner* and the *Chronicle*. I love editors. I mean, there's nothing, nothing, like turning in a take out piece on Friday afternoon and getting the call back, “I got two or three questions.” Gail Benser [?] used to be my desk person. “And two or three questions. Where'd you get this?” And Phil Bronstein, the editor, would say,

“Where’d you get that, where’d you get-- who-- what's this official, how high are they?” And it's great. And then you get the call back, “You're free. You're off for the weekend.”

You know, and I love to be edited and I try to edit the people that-- I mean, who wrote this? I have a word for it when I do it, work when somebody writes something for me. Who wrote this, and there's an expletive there. And then I want to know where'd that come from, and let's check that out. And I do think I have an instinct for what may be wrong. Can't catch everything, but I know television you don't have a corrections page.

Social media, I want to know who the editors are, you know? I love-- everybody reads Huffington and all that, but I'm waiting to see-- editing is going to be a big part of it. You can't just have opinion pieces thrown in at you. There's always the danger of the opinion pieces because they don't get edited when they come from outside. But I think fact checking is-- you know, I worry about it. I just worry about fact checking.

And I always worry about weekend wire stories, even, because you have younger desk people that don't know the history and they'll say things that just aren't-- they'll let things get by them and it just drives me crazy. Like the controversy over Alger Hiss. There's no controversy, he was a red spy. I mean, just move on. There's no controversy. Don't throw that in because you're too lazy to look it up, you know?

I like to see adult editors. But in social media, I do worry about it because people come up with something they saw on a blog somewhere and I'll say, “Where'd that come from?” “Well, I read it on a blog.” I say, “Yeah? Why don't you not pay attention to blogs. How about you don't read any of them? That would be my view.” You know, it's easy to keep sane that way. But some people-- is that Cillizza over there? Cillizza, I didn't count you. You're a real journalist and a real newspaper, quality newspaper, and that's different than just somebody in their basement asking for pancakes after they brought down the government. “Hey Mom, guess what I just did.” First of all, get a job. So I don't have much patience for this-- now I'm making enemies now, which is part of my life.

But I do like journalists. I love straight reporters. I am fascinated by the ability every day of the A1 reporters that write for the first page. They are astoundingly good. Their editing is incredibly good. What goes in at the *Post* and at the *Times* and the *Journal* in the editorial-- in the news sections is just spectacular. And the quality of the op ed. pages in the *Times* and the *Journal*-- well, the *Times* and the *Post*-- are really good. I mean, the screening that goes on, the film that goes on, they have the best pieces in there. We have great journalists. I get up in the morning, I read *The Washington Examiner* just to find out what the other world is saying, which I find fascinating. It's a shopper. It's really got a lot of items, it's got a later deadline, I think. Lot of little items, and Steve Smith edits that. And it's got some right wing people who are good, smart conservatives like Byron York and people like that, are really good and I really pay attention to him.

And then I read the *Washington Post*, but I read it all different ways. The Philly score, the stupid scuttlebutt on the second page of Style, which I always check. I know I knock it, but I always have to check it. I always read the op ed. page and I work my way through the A section, all the way through it up to the great diplomatic stuff and the stuff by what's his name on that page right before it. What's that thing?

___: Al Kamen?

MR. MATTHEWS: Al Kamen is fabulous, Al Kamen is fabulous, and that stuff. And then I read the *Times* because you have to get ready for the Times. You have to do a little homework. You have to get your speed up, like a rev, be able to read the Times. And if you're in New York, you read the *New York Post*, but you got to get ready for the *Times* to read it. And then if I'm really ambitious, I go through the *Journal*, but my wife reads that, she's in business. But I think you put all that together, you know a lot. I don't know any country in the world is as lucky as we are to have that array of papers at your doorstep or in your driveway.

And then if you want to know more, just turn on your Sirius XM radio and listen all day to one of the three news networks. And I flip around, I flip around. CNN is fabulous. I flip around from CNN and I check Fox, because some of them are okay, some of the people are okay. I'm not big on Sean, but O'Reilly's kind of a mixed bag. He's not a simpleton right winger, he's an angry Irish guy who didn't get in the club. But there's something to him I do find unnervingly true sometimes. I do like his attitude.

But so it's fun. I mean, I think people have to put their own study-- I give this speech to everybody. I said, "There's not going to be somebody like Uncle Walter who's going to tell you exactly what happened." Because, you know, they had a point of view, it's establishment liberal. The big networks for years had establishment liberalism as their basis of true north. That's what they were, Cronkite and Edward R. Murrow, establishment liberal. Everything was liberal, basically, good, but it was a point of view. And they laughed at Goldwater. Cronkite mocked him with the way he pronounced his name.

It's all true, go back and look at the tapes. "Barry Goldwater said today," you know where he stood." So, the idea there was some objective reality out there that we're missing I think is a mistake.

MS. WERNER: Obama promised the public and journalists that he would have the most open administration in history. Has he delivered?

MR. MATTHEWS: Well, I don't know what the question is, really.

MS. WERNER: Transparency in government.

MR. MATTHEWS: Yeah, I don't know what the relative scorecard is. Is the scorecard something we could find? Do you have a point of view on this? Go ahead.

MS. WERNER: Do I have a point of view? I'm a moderator here, I actually don't have a point of view. But when he came into office he said that he was going to be the most open, he was going to be telling-- having press conferences and being open. Do you feel he has?

MR. MATTHEWS: I don't count them. I mean, I think a daily press conference [00:45:51], he's a journalist and he's doing what he's doing. And I think Gibbs is smart. Beat me at Jeopardy a couple of weeks ago. I think they have an open-- yeah, they have press conferences and he has a lot of them. I don't think people are dying for more prime time press conferences. I don't think that's a big issue.

I think the other candidate, I think, is used to a business press, if you want to compare the two, since we're into matching these days. I think that Romney's used to a business press which is you only get in when they want you in. CEOs only see journalists when they want to see them. And I think he'll have to deal with that differently as time goes on. I don't think he spends a lot of time answering questions at the rope line. But it's not a big issue with me because I'm in the commentary analysis business, and I don't have to do what a lot of straight reporters have to do, which is to get up close to these guys and get the latest break. You know, it's different. I don't really have the ability to judge that, you know? But you might ask Chuck or Chuck Todd or somebody, or Chris Cillizza or somebody like that.

MS. WERNER: In your opinion, why has compromise become so unacceptable in Congress?

MR. MATTHEWS: Because of the way the voters are behaving. I grew up in a ticket splitting state of Pennsylvania. And everybody from Pennsylvania knows what it was like. You would vote for the state rep or the state senator because you wanted your kid to get a state scholarship. There's one of these gimmicks. You got to get the state scholarship if you knew the state senator. And you'd vote for the congressman because you're hoping your kid would go to one of the service academies. Now, that may be the way of working where I grew up with aspiring middle class people, that was the way they looked at things; you had to have an edge.

And also was a state of basically a purple state where you had almost every election except two in the 20th century, were split. If there was a governor and a senator running that year, it always went both ways. It always did. So, Hugh Scott would win the same year that George Leader would win for governor going way back to the '50s. It was like this all the time. Bill Scranton could be very popular, Jack Kennedy could win the state big. It would just be-- it was always a ticket-- well, there aren't many ticket splitting states left. And I'm told by experts on the numbers that this year's going to see less ticket splitting than ever, that people are going to vote straight.

Now, Massachusetts could be the exception because obviously Scott Brown's in the running, at least in the running. He may be even slightly favored. And so generally,

people are going to go vote-- if they vote for Claire McCaskill, they'll probably vote for the President. But if they don't, they won't in either case. I mean, I look at the trickiness over in-- how do you vote for George Allen and Barak Obama? How does that work? Ha! That's a tricky one. That's a tricky one. I think it's-- so people are telling their vote.

The other thing is the way our districts are broken up by neighborhoods, which are segregated, obviously, in this country, racially segregated neighborhoods. So you have-- if you're a black member, remember the black caucus, your only fear is the younger person to your left. If you're from Utah and you're a Republican your only worry is a younger person to your right. So you never can err by going to your left if you're a member of the black caucus, or go to the right if you're from one of their mountain states, or conservative states.

And so the tendency is always to hedge towards the safe end of your party spectrum. And so if you're a liberal you're probably 100 percent of the rating. There are a lot of 100 percenters out there, why not? Why let somebody get to your left? I know in politics, it's always safer to be with your base. And therefore, these guys and women tend to vote with their base. It's the safest move and you figure you'll fight it out for the independents. And I think I talked to a member of Congress the other day, Pat Murphy, he said there's only 40 House seats that are up for election every year, 40 House seats. The rest are all taken. You can't lose a general election.

Now in California this year, it's going to get weirder because they have a new kind of system where the top two vote getters get to run in November. But that's probably going to be two Democrats and Democratic seats. You know, it's not going to be a big surprise.

So the voters are basically, because the way we've been apportioned and gerrymandered, you don't have many seats-- they do have them in places like Bucks County. Around the country, you'll see these seats, they're actually swing seats and they're tough. And a guy will hold it like four years, then somebody else will come in there. Fitzpatrick one year, Murphy the next year, back and forth, Pete Kostmayer. You know, Pete Beester [?] before that, back and forth all the time. Greenwood had it for a while, Jim Greenwood. I mean, these seats are-- but how many seats are like that? Dingle, still here. I mean, all these guys are here for a long time. Massachusetts doesn't change.

And Texas came to be more than a one-party state. So anywhere you have these one party districts, you're going to have this kind of voting where they don't want to risk going to the center because some young kid will come along and say, "He sold us out. He's not a real Tea Partier." You know, Lugar just got bumped, Bob Bennett got bumped. These guys are getting bumped. And I'll tell you, I don't think Orrin Hatch is in from the cold yet, either. He could get bumped out in Utah. And it's sad, I think, that you can't put it together yourself the way reasonable people do, which is they have-- they don't buy the blue plate special. very few voters are-- you know, they love unions, they're pro choice. They go down the list on every single thing, they're against free trade. I mean,

are there people like this? Yeah, there's some, but I think they're about 30 percent on either side who are just down the line left or right.

And I like it when people stand up and say, "You know, actually on this issue, I'm not with the party. I disagree with it." But you hardly ever hear that, you know? And then you're marked as some kind of a pro life nut because that's the one issue you disagree with the party on, like Bobby Casey or somebody like that, you know. His father was always put off like that. But, you know, if our voters become independent, we'll have more independent politicians, I think. That's pretty sobering, isn't it? (Laughter)

MS. WERNER: What do you think the biggest mistakes that the Obama campaign and the Romney campaign have made so far?

MR. MATTHEWS: Well, Romney hasn't made many mistakes. He has the strategy of being the last man standing. He doesn't try to sell his personality. (Laughter) No, I mean it. The guy, all he has to do is knock-- it's like roller derby, just knock the other guys off the court. A lot of the super PAC money, knocked off Gingrich, knock of-- I watched these side-- they were like Dresden bombings. You couldn't hide on-- you could watch *Entertainment Tonight* all night and you still would be ahead. You can't hide from the incoming. It was relentless negative advertising and it was done by these super PACs like Restore Our Future.

And so he's found himself as the nominee now, basically through a process of elimination. Brilliant campaigning. I think he has a very strong team. I haven't seen mistakes a lot from him because he's won every contest, in a sense, he blew them all away. And now they're all endorsing him to various degrees.

The women are coming back, according to polling this week. The Republican Party historically falls in line, you know how it works. They don't fall in love, they fall in line. Democrats will have to like you. I mean, Republicans are basically an organized political party, so, which is unusual. I remember growing up as a kid in the early '50s, I'd watch the conventions and there was always a woman at the front-- at the head of the convention saying, "Will the delegates please clear the aisles?" And they never did, at the Democratic convention. And I notice the Republican convention, and when they said, "Clear the aisles," they did. It's an extraordinary political party. They're obedient. And Democrats just see who has the hot hand. Who's got the hot hand? Oh, this guy Barak. In a million years, the Republican Party wouldn't run a guy named Barak Hussein Obama. A million years, they wouldn't do it. They got to run a familiar name. Nixon, '52, '56, '60, '68, '72. Hmm. Bush, '80, '84, '88, '92, 2000, 2004. Oh, let's go for a real wild guy, Bob Dole. '76, '96. But the Republican Party insists on you being around a long time, having lost a number of times, beaten up a number of times, gone through this horrific hazing and when you're really almost through, they run you. This is what they did. They finally ran McCain that way. They ran this guy, Romney, good family, been around. "I knew his father." That's perfect Republican. You'll get in the club with that one.

And these other guys come out of nowhere. Jimmy who? Bill Clinton? What club would that be? I mean, it's unbelievable, they're totally different political parties. And by the way, when you lose as a Republican, they run you next time. In the Democrats you lose, they shoot you. (Laughter) And so that's why people like Al Gore would have to go grow a beard and go into a cave somewhere and then that's why nobody knows where Michael Dukakis is right now because no one has ever asked where-- nobody-- it's an amazing political party. You lose-- Jimmy Carter, it's unbelievable. If you lose the Democratic party, you're finished. If we lose in the Republican Party, "Come on back. Jack Kemp, he's available. Let's put him on the ticket, '96. Put him on the ticket, let's bring Dole back." Twenty years later, they brought Dole back. Who wanted that? It's a totally different culture. It's a wait your turn political party. And the Democrats are a hot hand political party.

And the advantage of being Republican s you're always forgiven for being beaten because they beat you. They wanted to beat you up. And then you come back like four-- you know, if Republicans had ran McCain the first time, it would have been interesting. You know, I always say if Nixon had won in '60 before all the embitterment and all that what happened later, it might have been different. You know, they wear them out and they get so bitter by the time they get in there. The rules are you have to completely bow to everything. Now, this guy Romney, I don't think he's driven by hard principle. I mean, basically, whatever the guys at Liberty University wanted in the speech, I'm sure he was willing to give. I'm sure he'll tell Dan Senor and the rest of the neocons what they want to hear, in general, everything they want to hear. Because that's why they're there, to tell them what to say.

And he'll do the same thing with Grover Nordquist on tax policy. Always put that D in there, by the way, it's Nordquist. Actually, it isn't, but I put it in there. (Laughter) And then the neocons, they're cultural right-- Donald Trump, proof of the pudding. Anything Trump wants, he gets. It's unbelievable. He worships him like the golden idol, you know, bail. I mean, why? Because he wants to keep the party together, he wants all elements of the party. That's why he's going to win because he said it the other day. I won 50.1 percent, and this is how I get it. I mean, this is-- you want transparency, you get it from him. He openly tells you how he's going to win the presidency, by getting every element of the conservative movement for him and he'll accept what they want. And then he'll go in there and then he will then become independent of them. That's the tricky part. Because he is a moderate and I think he's a practical guy, but how many deals will he have to obstruct, that's the question.

And Obama, his mistakes have been pretty obvious. I think he should have explained the healthcare bill as a moderate Republican plan coming out of the Heritage Foundation, not a left wing plan. It's not socialized medicine. You should have never let that get started. I think he did that to keep the left happy. I think he should have never used the word stimulus. It's the worst word I've ever heard in politics. It suggests just peeing it out the window, wasting your money. What does stimulus mean? It means nothing to the average-- jobs programs, road building, stuff that mean stuff to people. Not

just paying off the states and localities by meeting their bills. Why don't you build something that--

Eisenhower built the interstate highway system. He called it the national defense highway system. All Obama has to do is say, "I rebuilt the auto industry. Now I'm going to build the highways. My way is the highway. I'm going to start doing construction in this country, get a lot of people working because this is what they do in Europe. Because Europe had the Chunnel and the TGV, the 365 miles an hour and you don't even know you're moving. The bullet trains are all over Asia, and we're sitting around with Amtrak which is like a buckboard and that's all we got. And it's about time we caught up with the world in our public sector because guess what? The jobs that have disappeared over the last four years have been in the public sector. And if somebody would just look it up, private sector job growth has been there, but it's been offset by pullbacks and layoffs in the states and localities across the country. It's so ironic that nobody knows that. Why hasn't he told us and why hasn't he done something about it?

Interest rates are zero. People are sending their money to Germany and paying for them to keep it. It's a good time to invest in infrastructure and do things to put people to work. And a lot of people are out of work. Anyway, I think he ought to do it and tell the Republicans to say no. If they're going to say no to spam, get them to say no to steak. If they're saying no to every little thing he puts up there, why doesn't he go up with something big? That's what I say he does wrong. He doesn't think big enough. He ought to jam it-- just like Truman did at the Turnip Day speech in Philadelphia at 1:00 in the morning in 1948. Called the House back into session, the Congress back into session, and post the problem. "We have X many people unemployed, let's put them to work. Let's do it." And at least then the public would know what the election's about. So that would be my advice to how he can fix it. (Applause)

MS. WERNER: We're almost out of time, but a couple of housekeeping items to take care of.

MR. MATTHEWS: Oh, I'm not done?

MS. WERNER: Almost, almost. I got one more for you. But I do want to remind you on June the 9th, the Press Club is having its annual Beat the Deadline 5k race. Have you signed up? There'll be pancakes.

MR. MATTHEWS: I'll be glad to.

MS. WERNER: There'll be pancakes. And P90X founder, Tony Horton--

MR. MATTHEWS: How much is that in miles?

MS. WERNER: Three point one. And you don't even have to run, you can just sign up to support. I'll eat your pancakes, too. On August the 28th, we have General James F. Amos, Commandant of the United States Marine Corps. Secondly, I'd like to present

you with our traditional coffee mug because this will make your coffee taste better when you're fact checking.

MR. MATTHEWS: Thank you.

MS. WERNER: And my last question for you is what do you think about how you are portrayed on “Saturday Night Live?”

MR. MATTHEWS: Well, great. I mean, Darrel Hammond is a genius. Darrell Hammond does Clinton like he is Clinton’s soul. It's unbelievable, he's unbelievable. He gets to the soul. He asks me-- and he’s done Cheney. I once saw “Saturday Night Live” and I watched-- it’s Cheney, not Cheney. Just call the phone book, call Laramie and ask, it's Cheney. Before they start at 11:30, they are actually live, it is “Saturday Night Live.” And Darrel Hammond would like be prowling around as Cheney in the Oval Office the way Cheney did, with that lip curl thing, you know? It was like he was already in character. It’s so great. He does the best Cheney. Anyway, I liked him doing me, too, thank you. (Applause)

MS. WERNER: Thank you all for coming today. Also thanks to the National Press Club staff including the Journalism Institute and Broadcast Center for organizing today’s event. And a reminder that you can find more information about the National Press Club on our website at press.org. Thank you, we are adjourned. (Sounds gavel.)

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