

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB NEWSMAKER LUNCHEON WITH LYNNE CHENEY, WIFE OF
VICE
PRESIDENT DICK CHENEY

TOPIC: CHENEY'S MEMOIR, "BLUE SKIES, NO FENCES"

MODERATOR: JERRY ZREMSKI

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MR. ZREMSKI: Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press
Club. My name is Jerry Zremski, and I'm the Washington bureau chief
for The Buffalo News and the president of the National Press Club.
I'd like to welcome our club members and their guests who are joining
us today, as well as those of you who are watching on C-SPAN.

We're looking forward to today's speech, and afterwards I'll ask
as many questions as time permits. Please hold your applause during
the speech so that we have time for questions. For our broadcast
audience, I'd like to explain that if you hear applause, it may be
from the guests and members of the general public who attend our
luncheons and not necessarily from the working press. (Laughter.)

I'd like now to introduce our head table guests and ask them to
stand briefly when their names are called. From your right, Chris

Berry, president and general manager of News Talk 630, WMAL; Laura
Robertson, international producer for CBN News; April Ryan, White
House correspondent and Washington bureau chief for American Urban
Radio Networks; Pete Williams, NBC News justice correspondent and a
guest of Mrs. Cheney; Katherine Skiba, Washington correspondent for

the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel; Clarence Page, syndicated columnist for the Chicago Tribune; Liz Cheney, daughter of Lynne Cheney. Skipping over the podium, Melissa Charbonneau, the vice chair of the NPC Speakers Committee and the Speakers Committee member who organized today's lunch, and White House correspondent for CBN News. Skipping over our speaker for a moment, Rick Dunham, former National Press Club president and the Washington bureau chief for the Houston Chronicle; Betsy Fischer, executive producer for NBC's Meet the Press; Kelly Wright, FOX News correspondent and host of "Fox and Friends Weekend"; Jeff Gannon, online columnist of "A Voice of the New Media" and author of "The Great Media War"; Marguerite Sullivan, director of The Center for International Media Assistance and a former president of the Washington Press Club; and Dick Cheney, vice president of the United States of America. (Laughter, applause.)

Our guest today is a noted historian, a bestselling author, and the spouse of someone who we thought would be spending this lunch hour in an undisclosed location. (Laughter.) Lynne Cheney, whom I suppose we could now call the vice first lady, was the homecoming queen and state baton-twirling champion back in Wyoming while in high school, and she never predicted back then that her high school sweetheart, a nice boy with a crew cut named Richard, would someday become vice president of the United States. In fact, when the football captain and class president first asked her out, she asked him, "Are you kidding?"

Those days in Wyoming were idyllic days for the young girl who would become Mrs. Cheney, and she writes about them in her new memoir, "Blue Skies, No Fences." The Washington Post called the book "an homage to her childhood, her husband's childhood and the American West."

Mrs. Cheney joins us today to discuss her new book, but chances are that she's got plenty of other things to say as well. She honed her skills as a political commentator by serving as co-host of CNN's Sunday edition of Crossfire, and while on a book tour this month, Cheney joked with Comedy Central's Jon Stewart that she arrived on the set bearing a gift -- an action figure of Darth Vader, the Star Wars villain that Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton once compared to the vice president. (Laughter.)

A staunch defender of her husband and the Bush administration, Lynne Cheney has been an outspoken supporter of the war on terror. Her message: Freedom is fragile and must be defended. It's a lesson known -- that Mrs. Cheney, known to some as the conservative culture warrior, says should be taught to America's children.

Mrs. Cheney was a Reagan appointee to head the National Endowment for the Humanities, and today, as the nation's second lady, Lynne Cheney continues to champion the importance of education and history. She founded the James Madison book awards to promote excellence in American history. She is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, and she has written five best-selling books about America's history for children and families.

Today, though, Mrs. Cheney joins us to talk about some history that is a bit more personal in nature -- the history that's recounted

in her new book. Mrs. Cheney, welcome to the National Press Club.
(Applause.)

MRS. CHENEY: Well, thank you so much, Jerry. And thanks to the National Press Club for hosting this event. I wanted to extend special gratitude to Melissa Charbonneau who extended the invitation for me to be here today.

There are so many outstanding journalists at this table. I go down the table and I meet people from FOX News and the Houston Chronicle and Meet the Press and Chicago Tribune. And then I came to Pete Williams -- (laughter) -- who is from Dick's and my hometown of Casper, Wyoming, and he introduced himself as "Pete Williams, Natrona County High School, The Gusher." (Laughter.)

And I am so glad that members of my family could make it today. My daughter Liz is here. My granddaughter Elizabeth is here. My daughter Mary is on a shuttle from New York as we speak, and you know how unreliable that is, but we hope Mary will get here. And of course I am so glad that Dick could make it today. (Applause.)

You know, my husband is a great guy. He has been taking a lot of grief lately. (Laughter.) Day after day the Democrats running for president just flail on him, including Barack Obama. Now, I have told Barack he really does need to keep these disputes in the family. (Laughter.)

Over the last week or so when I've been asked why I wrote this book, I've explained that it really began years ago when I began writing stories for my husband and my daughters for Christmas and birthdays. And in writing those stories, one of the resources I turned to was another relative who is here today, my uncle Dale Vincent (sp) -- Colonel Dale Vincent (sp) -- and his wife Mildred, who shared their stories with me. (Applause.) So I made Christmas and birthday presents because I really loved the idea of homemade gifts, but as anyone who knows me will attest, I do not spending time in kitchens -- an aversion I believe I inherited.

As I tell in my book, my mother didn't like to cook and was forever trying to get out of the kitchen as fast as possible. One of her methods was to cook everything on high -- (laughter) -- which had certain disadvantages, particularly when combined with a 1950s device called a "pressure cooker." (Laughter.) If you left the heat under

the pressure cooker on high for too long -- which my mother did about once a month -- the whole thing would explode, coating the stove and walls with broth and pasting bits of chicken to the ceiling so they hung down like tiny stalactites. (Laughter.)

So I am averse to cooking way deep down in my genes, and deeply incompetent at it besides. But I can write. So instead of handing my loved ones boxes of divinity or tins of fruitcake, I've given them stories about the wonderful years in which Dick and I grew up and about the determined and hopeful people who made it possible for us to come of age in the Rocky Mountain West.

I've explained this when I've been asked why I wrote this book,

and it is a true answer. It's just not exactly a direct one. The answer that really addresses the question of why I wrote "Blue Skies, No Fences" is that I loved the idea of it. More than any idea I've ever worked on, I knew it would be fun. And I'm not sure exactly why I've hesitated to admit that. Maybe I have a suspicion that when you are in public life you aren't supposed to let it be known that you're having fun.

But I was pretty sure from the outset that this book would be a project that would bring months -- years, indeed -- of pleasure. And although writing is always hard work, it has done exactly that. The research for it has been a joy. Whether it's been talking to my relatives, my friends, going through newspapers from my hometown from the 1940s and '50s, or reading some of the documents stored in great treasure houses like the National Archives, and I have learned so much -- first and foremost, what memoir writing is about.

When I started thinking about the memoirs I've loved, I realized that they weren't about the person who wrote them so much as about other people -- the men and women with whom the memoir writer shared a special time and place. When I think of Russell Baker's classic memoir, "Growing Up," it's not Baker I remember so much as the depression years in Baltimore and his amazing mother and his uncles and how familiar he made them all seem to me, though they were from a very different time and place than mine.

So I hope that what my book conveys is the way we were in the years after World War II -- the 1940s and '50s -- decades of remarkable confidence and optimism, when the future seemed as bright as the blue skies overhead and the possibilities of life as endless as the prairies that surrounded our hometown of Casper, Wyoming.

I hope readers will remember the people I write about, beginning with my mother, a remarkable woman whose family was living in a dugout when she was born -- a cave, essentially, hollowed out of the side of a hill with the opening framed in. This is not an unusual way for pioneer people, and Wyoming was the frontier very much more in the recent past than other parts of the country. Not an unusual way for pioneer people to house themselves while they were building another place to live.

My mother grew up in a Wyoming oilfield, lived for several years with her family in a Ragtown -- a gathering of dwellings that took its name from the nature of those dwelling: tents, essentially, with wood partway up the sides. She worked from the time I was small, first behind the soda fountain of Boyd's Confectionary, which was less than a block from the house we lived in. She would take me with her, holding my hand as we crossed 13th Street, steering me past the mahogany stands and display cases inside the drugstore, then lifting me up onto one of the black leather-and-metal stools at the soda counter. "You stay here, Linnie," she would say. And I would, scribbling on paper napkins with a Crayola or playing with straws from the round-domed holder that sat on the counter. "Say hi, Linnie," she'd tell me when someone she knew came in for a malt or a cherry phosphate. And on the rare occasions when there was a customer she didn't know, I would be introduced right after she introduced herself. "This," she would say, "is my little girl, Linnie."

My mother later joined the police force, and though her duties were mainly clerical, the job provided a perfect perch for monitoring my teenage activities. (Laughter.) She had every patrol car in town

reporting to her where I was at all times. She also became great friends with the fellows on the police force, as well as with the reporters who covered the county courthouse. And this meant she was usually in possession of some pretty interesting information. When a local man's wife was found buried in concrete in the basement of their home, she knew all the details before they were in the paper -- including how the family's faithful Saint Bernard had led police to the grave by scratching on the cement.

My mother's friendship with the reporters covering the police beat also meant she was in the perfect position to see that my every accomplishment was recognized in the way in she thought it should be. (Laughter.) By the time I was in high school, I had proved myself adept at an archetypal 1950's activity for girls: baton twirling. Now, I will tell you, for years after Dick and I came to Washington I tried to keep this under wraps -- (laughter) -- being sure that this part of my past would keep me from being regarded as a serious person. It was a great relief to me as the years advanced and I found out that Ruth Bader Ginsburg had also been a majorette. (Laughter, applause.)

My mother made sure that my every baton twirling triumph appeared in the newspaper. Indeed, she made every appearance I made with my baton into a news item and there were many of these appearances. Old news clippings report that I twirled a Democratic picnic at the North Casper Clubhouse; at a gathering of women of the Moose; and at a band concert in Washington Park, where I was on the program with Ms. Brubaker (sp), a lyric soprano who sang a solo from "Madame Butterfly." I twirled at the opening of the Dave Johnson Power Plant in Glenrock -- (laughter) -- performing right after the Koshare Indians from Colorado; and I once appeared in a synchronized swimming show, even though I was a non-swimmer. My mother understood completely that I didn't want to get my hair wet and turn my eyes red and swollen, and so she regularly wrote me excuses to get out of required swimming classes. The result was that I was hard put to sustain a dog paddle, but you didn't have to be a water nymph to do what I did: twirl energetically aboard a small raft as it was towed from one end of the high school pool to the other. (Laughter.)

One evening at the Casper Women's Clubhouse, I followed Joanne Blougher (sp), a girl two years ahead of me who had won national recognition for her dramatic readings. She did a scene in which Joan of Arc prays before her execution. Every once in a while she'd pause and go, "Ding dong, ding dong," to indicate bells in a nearby church tolling the passage of time. After her last "ding-dong, ding-dong," Joanne, as Joan, exited somberly to be burned at the stake, whereupon I leapt onto the stage brandishing two flaming batons. (Laughter.)

When I think about my 16-year-old self marching down small town streets all over Wyoming in front of the city band, I am struck by the absence of cynicism in our lives. It was a time when you could throw yourself into baton twirling or customizing cars or building floats for the homecoming parade without ever worrying about someone looking

at you with a jaundiced eye. And for the most part, none of these activities eliminated you from other ones. You could be in car club and star in the school play or be the student body president. You could be editor of the annual, as one of my good friends named Paula was, and win the Pillsbury Bakeoff for your peach cobbler. You could be a baton twirler and take third-year Latin. You could even be a cheerleader one year, as a fellow we knew named Tally Swallow (sp) was, and the next year play varsity football, as Tally Swallow (sp) did.

To an unusual degree, I think we grew up with the idea that we could be and do anything we wanted. And this was true far beyond Casper. Over the past 10 days as I've talked to people who grew up all across the country I've had so many say to me, "My life was like that too." And not just in terms of playing jacks and wearing poodle skirts and listening to the Everly Brothers, but in terms of growing up and thinking that the possibilities of life were unlimited. When I was a child I used to dream that I could fly -- that I could will myself off the ground and soar above the earth. And I suspect there were kids from California to Maine dreaming at night that if they just tried hard enough, they could fly. And during their waking hours, they were thinking that life was like that. If you were determined, the sky was the limit.

The freedom we knew growing up was great for boys. One young man I knew played baseball and football and also hunted the prairies, fished the streams and with his more daring friends, used the 500-foot spillway of one of the great dams near Casper as a waterslide. But it was also a great time and place for girls. I was surrounded by strong women -- mothers, aunts, grandmothers, teachers -- and had imaginary role models I will never forget. "Wonder Woman" was my favorite.

I think there had never been a character quite like her in history for little girls to identify with.

I'd pump my tree swing as high as it would go, then bail out at the top ready to deflect bullets with my magic bracelets. Many years later, Gloria Steinem would put Wonder Woman on the cover of the first issue of Ms. Magazine and I would have a moment of complete empathy with the feminist movement.

(Laughter.)

Another character I admired was Sparkle Plenty, the beautiful daughter of Gravel Gertie and B.O. Plenty, who appeared in Dick Tracy comic strips. Although this was the 40s and 50s, and ambition was not often thought of as a desirable female trait, Sparkle wanted to conquer the world. She could play 27 tunes on her ukulele -- some while standing on her head, a skill that led to an appearance on Ted Tellums (sp) Talent Show which she won so decisively that she was called back for a second performance.

We didn't have Ted Tellum's (sp) Talent Show (sp) in Casper, but we did have the Bainbrick (sp) School of Dance. Located in a pink stucco building near the railroad tracks, it was run by Eddie and Clay Bainbrick (sp), a colorful and hardworking couple. Eddie had red hair

and spectacularly well-muscled legs -- Eddie was the wife.
(Laughter.) Clay, the husband, wore his hair slicked-back and his tee shirts tight.

Not every mother thought the Bainbrick (sp) School of Dance was an entirely wholesome influence (laughter.), but mine and many others did, and they took us to our weekly lessons, spent hours sewing up the costumes we needed for recitals. We were bunnies one time, hopping onto the stage at the Elks Club with white ears and cotton tails, soft-shoeing to the tune of "Glow Little Glow Worm, Glimmer, Glimmer." Our parents clapped and cheered, thrilled in these buoyant post-war years to have produced children who were such stars.

The culture we grew up in was so child-friendly, you could sing the words to all the popular songs at the time to your grandmother (laughter). And all of television was one big family hour, and how great the programs were -- "Your Hit Parade," "I Love Lucy," "The Jackie Gleason Show." I have recently discovered that you can watch "What's My Line?" a great show of that time, on the Game Show Network. Or at least you can, if you're willing to TiVo it for later -- I think it comes on at 1:00 in the morning.

But for me to watch it in Casper, Wyoming in the 1950s was to look into another culture. Here were erudite panelists trying to guess off-beat occupations wearing formal clothes. It was the first time I had ever seen a man in a black tie. John Charles Daly, Arlene Francis, Bennett Cerf, Dorothy Kilgallen chatted about Broadway shows and exotic vacations in places like Kaneal Bay (sp), the way we talked about going to the Skyline Drive-in, or to a picnic on Casper Mountain.

The adults in our lives had no hesitation about inculcating values, no notion that everything was relative and you ought to back off on questions of what kids should admire. We studied heroes in school; celebrated Washington's birthday and Lincoln's; and wrote poems about our first and 16th presidents. We learned to love the country, tell the truth and work very hard. Looking at the Dick and Jane readers we used in grade school, I see now how busy everyone was, sweeping, mowing, doing school assignments, making repairs and deliveries. Even Spot, the family dog, kept an eye out for jobs he could do, like retreating (sic) stuffed animals when baby Sally abandoned them.

What we were supposed to value came through in our textbooks and in the examples adults set for us. Probably the hardest working woman I have ever known was my grandmother, Mary, my mother's mother. She would come home from her job doing repairs and alterations at the H&G Dry Cleaners, haul out the lawn mower and push it over the lawn wearing the same flowered housedress, knee-length hose and sensible shoes she wore to work. A cousin reminded me recently that this was grandma's outfit no matter what she was doing. (Laughter.) She once shot a prong-horned antelope while wearing her flowered housedress.

(Laughter.)

My mother and my grandmother and my aunts played a central role in one of the high dramas of my teenage years, which involved the man

who is today vice president. We were 17 years old and had been going steady for a while when he decided one day that he wanted to "play the field," as he put it.

(Laughter.)

Upon hearing this news, my mother called my Aunt Norma, who arrived with a couple of spring dresses she had just made for herself, and gave them to me to wear. My grandmother, immediately grasping that our strategy was to make me look as good as possible and, therefore, make Dick really sorry for his wandering eye (laughter), took me downtown to a fancy department store -- one I am sure she had never been in before, and bought me a glamorous black dress for an upcoming dance.

Meanwhile, a friend of Dick's asked me out, a guy named Joe, who had the best car in town -- a 1959 gold Pontiac Cadillac -- Catalina convertible, with a split-grill and double-fin blades in the rear. Wearing one of my aunt's new dresses, I cruised the A&W Drive-in with Joe in that car, and soon enough Dick saw the light.

(Laughter.) (Applause.)

Playing the field, start to finish, lasted exactly 11 days.
(Laughter.)

As much fun as the 50s were, they were neither perfect nor carefree. Television brought us the pictures of the Little Rock Nine, trying to make their way into Little Rock High School through jeering crowds, and we knew that was wrong. And we knew President Eisenhower was exactly right to send in federal troops. We had no idea that getting students in the door was just the beginning, or that there were so many other civil rights battles yet to be fought.

But as I look back over the 40 years since those images from Little Rock played out on our television set in Casper, I think the confidence we had that in America we could solve this problem, I think that confidence was warranted. We have traveled so far and we are all the better for it.

And although Sputnik worried us when it went up 40 years ago, we were also confident about our national strength in what we came to call the "Cold War." Two years after we graduated from high school, the Berlin Wall would go up, but 30 years after we graduated from high school, it would come down. Again, our faith in this great country was justified.

Optimism, backed up, to be sure, by determination and persistence saw us through. Indeed, those were the attitudes and attributes that created the world we knew. We owed our childhood years of blue skies and no fences to forebearers who had struggled mightily -- persevering through all the calamities that are part of the American story, and remaining hopeful.

My great-great grandmother was converted to Mormonism in Wales in 1848, just a year after Brigham Young had settled in the Valley of

the Great Salt Lake. She was a servant girl who, I am sure, had never been more than a few miles from home, but she got on a ship, sailed across the Atlantic Ocean to New Orleans, took one steamship up the Mississippi, a second up the Missouri River, and then cholera struck, killing her young husband.

A few months later, she had a baby, a son, and he died. But grandmother kept going, believing she would make it to the new Zion, which is how the Mormons thought of Utah, and she did. And she married again and had six children, one of whom was my great-grandfather.

Dick's great-grandfather, after serving throughout the Civil War, an event in which 600,000 were killed, he made it through the Civil

War and afterward, in a terrible accident in a saw mill, lost all the fingers on his left hand. He nevertheless, kept going, homesteading in Nebraska where he carved sod out of the plains and used it in that treeless land to build a four-room house for his family. After a few years, drought struck. He lost his farm, but in his 79th year he homesteaded again, (proving?) up his land before he died in 1911.

Awe inspiring as these stories are, they are not rare. The American past is filled with heroes and heroines who have no monuments, whose names aren't in the history books, but to whom we are most surely indebted. These men and women exist in the families of every one in this room, I suspect. And one of the purposes of my book is to encourage people to seek out these stories.

Family history, which used to involve a lot of tedium, has become a pleasure today because of the internet. So much information is now available on-line and there's a kind of growing cooperative effort across the country, down to the county level, that is so helpful. In the Notes on Sources in the back of my book, I indicate some of the resources that are available. There are so many and there are so many rewards.

Looking at the past through the eyes of my forebearers has helped me understand history in a way I did not before, and it is also a way to make the past compelling for children and young people.

I have often lamented that they consider history the most boring subject in school. But they quickly become engaged when you involve them in a search for their forebearers and in fleshing out the journeys taken by those who came before.

I have discovered -- and this is my last story -- that even when you don't succeed in unearthing the facts that you want about a forbearer, you often learn something else. A woman named America Lee, born in Illinois in 1841, married my great-great-grandfather -- she was my great-great-grandmother -- she married him some time before 1860, and after having six children died in 1874. Well, I wanted to know more about her. I mean, how could you not with this delightful name, America Lee? But despite all my best efforts, I could not find out more because I could not discover her maiden name.

But while I was looking for it, I began to realize that her

Christian name -- America -- seemed much more common at the end of the 1840s than at the beginning, which led me to think about that decade. When it began, Texas and everything west of the Continental Divide was foreign territory. When the 1840s ended, the American flag flew from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Many things drove this expansion, including the idea that a nation as great and good as ours ought to reign over the continent. Manifest destiny, I realized, motivated not only presidents and generals, it sprang from the hearts of farmers and shopkeepers and wives who, in one of life's happiest moments, looked at baby daughters and decided to pay tribute to the country. Going through the Census data and doing a count -- which is very easy to do in the age of computers and the Internet -- I found that in 1840, there were just 47 females named America in the United States. At the end of the decade, there were 5,081 of them, most west of the Appalachians, where the vision of expansion burned brightest.

I have had so much happiness and learned so many things in the course of writing this book, and I hope all of you will enjoy it, too. Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Thank you, Mrs. Cheney. We have a lot of questions -- a lot about the book, a lot on other topics starting with this. Do you think people who grew up in the west look at the world differently? And if so, how?

MS. CHENEY: It's hard to make large generalizations like that. But I think in our land, where there aren't many people -- our friend Al Simpson, how does he put it? "We have more cows and antelopes than people and we like it that way." (Laughter.) You know, you do tend to regard every other individual as important. You try not to ignore any of them. I take all of this as a huge generalization from the way we walk down the street at home and you walk down the street and you have your head up and you look other people in the eye. You can't do that in a large city. It would cause a lot of trouble. And -- you know, it's a way of avoiding other human beings, so maybe there's that.

Certainly in history, the openness of the west was a great difference that the pioneers noted. There are lots of tales about people actually going mad about the time they got to Scotts Bluff. You know, you'd run out of trees a long time ago and suddenly there was this feeling of enormous vulnerability when there was above you no shelter but only that great sky, and around you no trees, no plant life, but only endless prairie. So I think it is psychologically different to grow up in a land like that and the pioneers who saw it for the first time certainly felt that way.

MR. ZREMSKI: Small-town America seems to be on the decline with more and more people moving to the major metro areas. How much does this concern you and is there anything that can be done about it?

MS. CHENEY: Well, I would regret were we to lose the resource of small towns in the 21st century. But I do know that jobs for young people are a considerable problem in many small towns. Even in our state, Wyoming, which is undergoing a great boom right now -- a great energy boon -- even in our state, young people are still leaving after

high school or after college because there are so few job opportunities unless you want to go work in the gas fields, which many do and many make a great deal of money -- quite a fine salary doing that. But white-collar jobs are not as great as they should be -- there aren't as many as there should be -- and I know it's one of the problems my state is wrestling with and I assume others are as well.

MR. ZREMSKI: Many families today through no fault of their own lead very different lives than the ones that you recount in your book. Parents often live in the suburbs, may live a long way away from their jobs, may work extraordinarily long hours and it all takes away time from families. How much difference do you think these facts make to the typical American family?

MS. CHENEY: You know, there are so many good parents in our society today -- so many parents trying so hard. It's a less friendly culture to children now than it used to be and what the good parents I observe do is build a little shelter against the culture. And it's too bad, really, that -- you know, you have to build a shelter against influences you think aren't good for your children. But good parents say you do and in fact, that's what they do. It does take time. It's very hard in a town like Washington where many families have two careers to take the time to do that, but I've seen it happen in two-career families. I think that's the important thing -- is that dedication to being sure kids are protected. The culture they swim in

now can be toxic and -- you know, we need to try to make it as good for them as we can.

MR. ZREMSKI: Our children today have as many opportunities as in the '50s, yet many are turning to drugs and other destructive behaviors that limit their success. How can the media encourage and provide a sense of optimism for future generations of leaders?

MS. CHENEY: You know, whenever I see a positive story -- a story about someone who has overcome -- a story about someone who is succeeding against great odds, whenever I see this on television I want to call my grandchildren in and be sure that they see this. There is the opportunity to tell good stories. It's so hard, I know, when you're in the media because good stories don't seem as newsworthy usually as bad stories do.

But those good stories -- let me say, though, that for all the wonder of the '50s and all the joy we had growing up there, part of the good experience we had came about because drugs simply weren't available. My generation -- and that's not exactly a generation, but the pre-baby boomers -- you know, we're just ahead of the baby boomers. Five years later -- I was born in 1941. If you were born in 1946 or later, life changed. You know, it was one of those watershed years -- 1946, when the baby boomers came along because when we grew up -- when we were in high school and even in college, drugs weren't an option. It wasn't that we were especially virtuous, it's that they weren't part of the menu that you could choose from. Five years later, you could choose from that menu and it made an enormous difference. So positive stories about people who triumph over odds, maybe fewer stories about celebrities who are perhaps not triumphing over bad behavior -- (laughter) -- would be most useful. (Applause.)

MR. ZREMSKI: You mentioned drugs. Drugs have become not just an urban phenomenon in recent years and have increasingly touched rural areas of the country. Do you feel that the government's efforts to take care of the drug problem in rural areas has been as effective as it has been elsewhere?

MS. CHENEY: I just think this is a challenge that we're going to face for decades yet to come and that government efforts, while important, can only succeed if they're built upon the efforts of families -- the efforts of parents to be watchful. But you're right. It is a problem even in our home state and in rural areas across the country. Not the drugs we used to think about -- you know, maybe in the '60s and '70s, but methamphetamine is a disaster in many small communities.

MR. ZREMSKI: You spoke of the wholesome lyrics of songs from your childhood. What do you think is at the root of the kind of controversial lyrics in some of the music of today?

MS. CHENEY: I hesitate to speak out on this. I did it once -- (laughter) -- and I found myself a large figure on the screen at

Eminem concerts. (Laughter.) So I guess what I understand even less than why the lyrics are there is why it is regarded as so unfashionable or some kind of assault on free speech to speak out about them.

I think we should all speak out about them. I think we should listen to them first of all and figure out what our kids are listening to. But it is -- I really -- this is a question I would just pose to the audience for you to take home and think about. Why is that we're not supposed to be angry about this? Why is it that we're not supposed to speak out about it? And why for heaven's sake is it regarded as an issue of free speech? Don't parents and grandparents who are troubled by it have the right to speak freely.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hear hear. (Applause.)

MR. ZREMSKI: You mentioned the Internet and its role in research family history, but in general is the Internet helping young people learn, or is it a time-consuming distraction for them?

MS. CHENEY: So much depends on parents, doesn't it? And so much depends on who is in the home when kids get home from school. Doesn't have to be a parent; it has to be some sort of caregiver, though, who is paying attention.

I think the Internet is transformative. When I was a little girl I read a book by Arthur C. Clarke called Childhood's End. And I would recommend this book to all of you. It's very old now, it's science fiction, but it's so good. It was the inspiration, I think, for the movie, Independence Day. Remember when the big flying saucers came down and were close to the earth. Well, that's sort of where it starts. But by the end of the novel something has happened, and it happens to the young people.

And I call it almost a hiding behavior. Suddenly they're all connected, and suddenly they've left behind a generation before them that isn't connected in that way. So prescient it seems to me this novel is.

I think the Internet is transformative; it's here; it's an amazing tool for research and knowledge and learning. But it is something that parents need to be careful about and that caregivers need to tend to.

MR. ZREMSKI: Okay, moving beyond the topics covered in your book, one questioner asks: You're a highly accomplished woman. Why only a moment's empathy with the feminist movement? What wrong with feminists? (Laughter.)

MS. CHENEY: I love feminists. But they don't often love people who are Republican. (Laughter.) So that has proved a bit of a stumbling block for me. (Laughter, applause.)

MR. ZREMSKI: As a smart educated woman do you have any advice to give to other women about how to deal with men who think you should only be allowed to twirl a baton? (Laughter.)

MS. CHENEY: You know, it's hard to imagine that such people exist in our liberated times. And you know the -- the values that I took away from growing up in Wyoming are good for people generally, but perhaps especially good for women. Maybe we still do have to work harder than men to achieve the same goals. But having in yourself in the first place that idea that working hard is not only the source of achievement but of great pleasure is maybe the most valuable thing that we can give to our daughters and our granddaughters, and that we can treasure ourselves. (Applause.)

MR. ZREMSKI: You mentioned that sense of national optimism of the 1950s. Has that changed in recent years, and if so, why?

MS. CHENEY: You know, I think it has. But if you remember what I said about the 1950s, our optimism and confidence was partly based on not seeing the problems, and particularly in not being aware until the decade drew to a close, until the '50s drew to a close, of -- of the threat of communism, the Soviet Union. We were having a little holiday from history. In a sense, we had that same holiday from history during the 1990s when we thought, ooh, the Cold War is over. We're safe. It's the end of history someone wrote, and it turns out of course that it wasn't.

So yes, I think we are less confident. But I think our realism is very, very healthy, and the optimism about the strengths of this country and our ability to overcome whatever challenges we face is I think one that we should value very much. So maybe we aren't as confident, but I think we can be optimistic about America.

MR. ZREMSKI: We have quite a few somewhat political questions --

MS. CHENEY: Uh-oh.

MR. ZREMSKI: -- uh-oh, including this: Your husband has been

the target of extraordinary criticism in recent years. Has it changed him? (Laughter.)

MS. CHENEY: You know, I think Dick and I are very lucky to have spent 40 years in politics before being in politics in the current day. This is a really nasty environment; take it from me. But if you've been around for awhile, you know, maybe this shouldn't be the case, and maybe it's too bad it has to be the case, but you do develop something of a thick skin, and so it just kind of rolls off. So that's one thing. I would hate to be a young person entering politics today without having gone through that period of -- what's that word?

Acclamation? Acclimatization? You know what I'm trying to say. The period of getting used to it that we've had.

I will also tell you though that sometimes the attacks are so bizarre and so surreal as in this whole Darth Vader thing -- (laughter) -- that you know it's a source of humor. And I think that is a very good way to deal with political adversity is to laugh at it. I had a great deal of fun going on the John Stewart Show and giving him a little Darth Vader doll.

MR. ZREMSKI: How much responsibility do Republicans bear for the political polarization in the country today?

MS. CHENEY: Hardly any. (Laughter, applause.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Why?

MS. CHENEY: As I said to John Stewart, what kind of question is that?

MR. ZREMSKI: Is it a shared responsibility between the two parties?

MS. CHENEY: I've answered it.

MR. ZREMSKI: Okay. Okay, moving along to really more serious questions. As the mother of a gay daughter, how do you feel about the Employment Nondiscrimination Act?

MS. CHENEY: You know, first of all, I don't -- I don't like questions that reflect on the fact that I don't -- that fail to reflect the fact that I have two daughters. And I'm very happy that my daughter, Liz, is here today. And I would like all of you, my daughter Mary did get on the show one time, and she's here. (Applause.) So that's my answer and I'm sticking to it.

MR. ZREMSKI: How do you feel about the Republican presidential candidates?

MS. CHENEY: I have a lot of friends who are moaning and groaning, and you know, rubbing their foreheads. And I tell them, snap out of it. We have some good candidates. Dick and I are scrupulously neutral in who ought to -- on who ought to emerge from the primary contest. But we have some good candidates.

And I'm especially impressed when I listen to both the Democratic debates and the Republican debates about how sound the Republican candidates are on issues of national security. That gives me a great deal of comfort, frankly. When I vote in 2008 that will be my main issue, not my only one to be sure. All these other issues that people are concerned about are important. But that will be the main one for me, and I'm very glad to see people on our side of the aisle who are projecting such strength when it comes to how do we deal with the challenges that face us in the 21st century.

MR. ZREMSKI: As someone with a Mormon family background, how do you feel about the focus on Mitt Romney's Mormonism?

MS. CHENEY: You know, frankly, I've been appalled by some of it. I've read articles on the Internet -- and I know I shouldn't be on the Internet reading articles -- (laughter) -- but, you know, not in obscure sources. There was one in Slate Magazine that spoke about Mormonism in such virulent terms that it was just shocking to me.

I mean, I thought we had long ago passed the time when we -- we looked at someone's religion and held it up and tried to tear it apart to see if this person was qualified to be president. Most religions don't stand up well to that kind of test, you know, where you subject them to rational tearing apart and analysis. That's not what religion is about. It's not a left-brained activity; it's a right-brained activity. It's about belief, and we should let people have their beliefs and, you know, quit criticizing them for it.

MR. ZREMSKI: You've had some critical things to say about Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton. How well do you know her? Or is your criticism based on what she says and does publicly?

MS. CHENEY: You know, I think I've probably been evenhanded in criticizing all the Democratic candidates for president. (Laughter.) I'm getting quite fond of Barack, actually. (Laughter.) But you know I'm trying to think what I said. I think what I've said basically is that her -- because I am a national security voter, I have been troubled by her national security statements which seem inconsistent and deliberately so, you know, voting against funding for the war, but voting, or saying in a debate that we would have troops in Iraq perhaps through 2013. It's one of these things where for every yin there's a yang, so pretty soon you don't know what is going to be the next statement.

Her only -- how shall I say it? -- the only thing I can be sure about Mrs. Clinton's stance on Iraq is that there'll be another one. (Scattered laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: There is a poll out that says that 25 percent of Republican women would vote for Hillary Clinton. Any comment on that?

MS. CHENEY: I think it's really too bad if we make gender even the basis for polling questions. Just as we should have passed beyond a person's religion as relevant to whether he or she is qualified for high office, I think gender ought to be irrelevant. It ought to be the person who can lead us best in a time of challenge.

MR. ZREMSKI: You mentioned what you see as Senator Clinton's inconsistency on foreign policy. Senator Obama has been widely criticized for some of his comments on foreign policy -- you know, a willingness perhaps to meet with dictators that other candidates would not meet with. What are your thoughts on what he's had to say on foreign policy on the campaign trail?

MS. CHENEY: I honestly think that Senator Obama has been criticized for those stands in a way that perhaps some of the other Democratic candidates haven't been for their stands. You know it really caused a kind of firestorm when he said some of the things he said, when he quit wearing his flag pin for example. So I think there's been a pretty close eye on Senator Obama.

MR. ZREMSKI: How do you feel about multicultural education?

MS. CHENEY: Well, I'm all for it. But first of all we need to teach children about the country in which they live. We need to be sure they're -- have a strong and sturdy foundation in American history. And then of course we should move on to let them know about the whole world in which they will live, in which they will live in a much more interconnected way than any of us have.

So multicultural education is a good thing. It's just that it needs to be balanced and coupled with a very deep and strong education in the history of the United States.

MR. ZREMSKI: Now some kind of forward-looking questions. You and Vice President Cheney have been part of the fabric of Washington for decades. Where will the Cheneys spend their time after the next president is elected? Washington? Wyoming? Somewhere else?

MS. CHENEY: You know, I'm sure we'll probably be around. I'll be able to wave you all from time to time. But we're certainly going to spend more time in Wyoming. I have regretted over these past seven years it's been now, every September and October we're not there. Now August is a wonderful time, and we often get to Wyoming in August. But as Dick will tell you, and my daughters will tell, my granddaughters, as Pete Williams will tell you, in September and October, the Aspen turn and the cottonwood turn, and in the beautiful valley in which we live there are these great swathes of gold against the blue mountains, the Tetons. It is a time of most incredible beauty. And I can guarantee you that we will be there in September and October. (Laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Well, perhaps that's related to the next question which is, after you and Vice President Cheney leaves the White House, would you consider a political career of your own?

MS. CHENEY: I've had a lot of byways in my life. As the people at the table from the National Endowment for the Humanities will testify I even thought I could be an academic once. So I've gone down a number of different byways.

But I think what I've discovered is that writing is my career, that writing is what I love to do, bringing order out of the chaos, bringing order out of the chaos of research, gives me such great

pleasure.

And another thing that has given me pleasure is that my granddaughter Elizabeth sitting over there -- is she still with us? -- tells me she wants to be a writer. (Laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: One of our questioners writes, you have written some racy novels. Are you going to write more? (Laughter.)

MS. CHENEY: Yes. (Laughter, applause.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Just out of curiosity, we had Senator Webb here a few months ago. Have you ever read any of his books? And what do you think of them?

MS. CHENEY: He's actually written a book on the Scotch-Irish. Dick's family, his mother's side of the family, is Scotch-Irish. These are people who came from Northern Ireland. They came from Ulster. They were Protestant, driven out of Ireland for many reasons, they came by the tens of thousands, including Dick's ancestors and including some of Jim Webb's ancestors. He wrote a wonderful book about it, and I look forward to doing some more research and seeing if perhaps Dick and Jim Webb are related. (Laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Please elaborate about the family relationship with your husband and Barack Obama. Also, have you planned to reach out to him for a conversation and possibly invite him to a family reunion? (Laughter.)

MS. CHENEY: I was -- we have always known in our family about Dick's Puritan ancestors, the Cheney's that came to Massachusetts. They were escaping Charles I. He was persecuting Puritans, and so they left England and came to Massachusetts. And it's a very interesting branch of the family.

But in the course of doing this book I discovered another Cheney branch. And it goes over to Maryland. It's so interesting. One branch of Cheney's came to escape Charles I; the second branch probably came to escape his successor, Cromwell, who beheaded Charles I. They were anti-royalist -- or they were royalists, pardon me, the Puritans were the anti-royalists.

So I found this other branch. It's amazing. There is a house right now being excavated near Annapolis that was the place where the first Richard Cheney came in 1658 to Maryland. So this is just very rich historically.

And I got that genealogy pretty well in hand when I read in the newspaper one day, I think it was the Baltimore Sun, that someone had done a genealogy for Senator Obama. And they mentioned that one of his ancestors had been Maureen Duval (sp). That's the name of a man. And Maureen Duval was also in Dick's family tree. They both -- one way to describe the relationship is to say they are both descendants of this Frenchman who came to Maryland no doubt seeking religious freedom, because Maryland was known for tolerance.

So I think this is actually quite a wonderful American story,

that a Frenchman who came to the United States seeking religious freedom would have descendants to all these many years later who have led such diverse lives as my husband and the senator have.

MR. ZREMSKI: We're almost out of time, but before I ask the last question we've got just a couple of other important matters to take care of. First of all let me remind our members of future speakers. Tomorrow, the 19th, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, UN -- U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations will be here to discuss the U.S. and the UN.

On October 29th Dr. Andrew Van Eschenbach, commissioner of the U.S. Food & Drug Administration, will be here. And on November 5th, Dave Obey, congressman from Wisconsin, will address the club.

Next, this is a place of many traditions, and our traditions include presentation of a plaque to our guests.

MS. CHENEY: Thank you very much.

MR. ZREMSKI: And the coveted National Press Club mug.

MS. CHENEY: Thank you very much. (Laughter, applause.)

MR. ZREMSKI: And the last question is, with all the family research you did for this book, did you uncover any genealogical connections to other president candidates such as Mike Gravel, Dennis Kucinich and Hillary Clinton? (Laughter.)

MS. CHENEY: No. You know, in fact, what I was really interested in is not the people you've heard of. The stories I was most anxious to uncover was those hidden heroes that I talked about while I was speaking, the men and women who aren't in museums, whose names you don't know, but whose strength and determination and optimism built America. So those are the stories I concentrated on.

MR. ZREMSKI: Great, thank you. (Applause.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Thank you very much, Mrs. Cheney. And let me just mention quickly that Mrs. Cheney has offered to stay for a few minutes and sign books if anybody has a book they'd like to bring up, which is a very nice generous decision. So thank you for that.

Thank you all for coming today. I'd also like to thank National Press Club staff members Melinda Cook, Pat Nelson, Joanne Booz and Howard Rothman for organizing today's lunch. Also thanks to the NPC library for its research. The video archive for today's luncheon is provided by the National Press Club broadcast operations center. Press Club members can also access free transcripts of our luncheons on our website, www.press.org, and nonmembers may purchase transcripts, audio and video tapes by calling 1-888-343-1940.

Thank you. We're adjourned.

(Applause.)

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