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MADELEINE ALBRIGHT INTERVIEW
MAKERS: WOMEN WHO MAKE AMERICA
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Madeleine Albright
Former U.S Secretary of State
August 26, 2011
Interviewed by Betsy West
Total Running Time:

START TC:00:00:00:00

INTERVIEWER:

Madam Secretary thank you so much for talking to us.

Madeleine Albright
Former U.S Secretary of State

INTERVIEWER:

Secretary Albright, you had an unusual childhood. Tell me a little bit about your early years on how you came to America?

00:00:18

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

Well I was born in 1937 in Czechoslovakia and my father is a Czechoslovak diplomat who after Munich and the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Nazis uh went to England to join the government in exile. So one of the things that really differentiates me from people my own age that are Americans, is that I actually lived through World War II in England and we lived in London. I was

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there during the Blitz, spent time in an air raid shelter, uh had a very British accent and was a very proper little English girl. And then after the war my father went back to Czechoslovakia and continued his career in-

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Madeleine Albright & Her Father

1940s

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

the diplomatic service and became uh ambassador, the Czechoslovakian Ambassador to Yugoslavia. I always love telling the story; the little girl in the national costume that gives flowers at the airport, that's what I used to do for a living, and so I was uh... uh perfect little daughter.

00:01:26

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

I had... My father didn't want me going to school with communists so I had a governance and got a little bit ahead of myself in school and in Europe you can't move on to the next grade uh unless you're a certain age, so my parents sent me to Switzerland to school. Um and I was there when I was ten years old. Um and learned to speak French and then the communists took over Czechoslovakia. My father did not want to uh work for a communist government and so he took a job that was under, as the Czechoslovak Representative to The United Nations for a commission on India, Pakistan having to do with Kashmir, and um then we got to the United States and he defected and asked for political asylum and in November... November 11th,

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1948 we arrived in America on the SS America uh appropriately and I was very happy that I could begin my American life.

INTERVIEWER:

As a little girl, who did you identify with more? Your mom or your father?

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Madeleine Albright & Family

Czech Republic Embassy, Serbia, 1940s

00:02:28

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

Probably both. But my mother was a much more kind of um emotional, mystical person and I'm very uh realistic and that's kind of what my father was. But as I get older, uh I have to tell you, I identify more and more with my mother because of all the kind of normal mother things about worrying who is where and... and all that. But I really grew up, uh, as the perfect daughter. I always wanted to please my parents, but especially my father.

INTERVIEWER:

By the time you got to college,--

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Working On Student Newspaper

Wellesley College, 1958

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INTERVIEWER:

-it sounds like you had adjusted, you were kind of a typical American co-ed. Can you tell me a little bit about your college years and your expectations of what your life was going to be like?

00:03:13

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

Well I worked very hard to become an American. I wanted desperately to... to be uh an American teenager and to... to really uh... I didn't... I lost my very British accent. This was not an easy thing to become totally acclimated since my mother was this wonderful character and uh read palms and was very entertaining for people and my father, uh who also wanted to be an American, decided that taking up fishing in Colorado was the way to do. But he fished in a coat and tie so none of this was very simple. When I went to... I got to Wellesley, which I loved, um and in contrast to my high school, where I was on a scholarship, I was on a scholarship at Wellesley but it didn't matter to anybody. And um... And I loved everything about Wellesley. It was a school that gave me the opportunity to really pursue what I had always been interested in, was political science and international relations.

00:04:13

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

I knew what I wanted. I knew what major I wanted. I knew what I wanted to study and um I loved everything about it. I had gone to a girl's high school, but really going to a women's college was absolutely perfect for me and my best friends are still from Wellesley. And we were really... It's very interesting to go to a women's college because obviously you have all the

leadership positions and um so the head of student government and the head of the newspaper, or everybody are girls, women. And so I think you develop a sense of confidence about being a leader.

INTERVIEWER:

So, at the same time that Wellesley had such a high academic standard, there was an expectation, was there not, that you were being prepared for the life as a wife and a mother potentially?

00:05:02

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

No question. I think that um there was this kind of a uh... an ambivalence about this because people wanted... You were trained uh to really think and be a very uh forward leaning person in terms of your intellectual uh interests, and but everybody really was looking to get married. And um it just was very unusual. Um I, myself, got married three days after graduating from college. Some of this has become, I think, a little apocryphal, but uh our commencement speaker actually did say that our responsibility was to raise interesting sons and so it kind of... I'm amazed that we all sat there. But- but basically uh we were a mixed group. The class of... I was the class of '59. Um and I think that um as one looks at um what happened to women that age, I think most of us uh had ambitions to do um something intellectually, but it was obviously also to get married.

00:06:08

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

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A very good friend of mine did a study of the classes of Wellesley that ended in 9's and so the class of '49, there were very few that actually had jobs. The class of '59 was the one that was kind of the breaking point. We actually had more divorces in our class because a lot of women had started out as wives and then developed a career. The class of '69, which is Hillary Clinton's class, was the one where already the women knew that they were going to have careers and the men they married understood it.

INTERVIEWER:

You've written that your journey to become the Secretary of State was extremely unlikely. I mean, how so?

00:06:53

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

Well first of all, I know when I became Secretary of State there are people who thought that I had planned this out for my whole life and one of the things that I have always found interesting is that adjectives attached to women are always different than the ones attached to men, so being called ambitious, which was what I was called, made me seem kind of conniving and threatening and that I had planned this all. Never ever occurred to me that I could be Secretary of State. Um I did always want to do something in international relations and um obviously as the perfect daughter of a diplomat I had thought about some doing some work in diplomacy, uh but what I thought I should do is to be a journalist and do... cover international affairs, and so my hope was to play that kind of a role. As I've said, I got married three days after graduating um and my husband was a reporter.

00:07:50

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

While he was in the army, um I had done what you're supposed to do if you're going to be a journalist is work on a small newspaper, which I did in uh Raleigh, Missouri. We arrived in Chicago where he had a job on a newspaper uh and we were having dinner with his managing editor and he said, "What are you going to do honey?" And I said, "Well I'm going to work on a newspaper." And he said, "I don't think so uh because you can't work on the same paper as your husband because of guild regulations." And even though there were four newspapers in Chicago at the time, he said, "You would not want to compete with your husband, so uh I don't think you should work on another paper." And instead of saying what I might say today, um I uh I just agreed and began a different life and I went to work for Encyclopedia Britannica doing... selecting illustrations. Every year they had a different set of articles that they reviewed and the year that I was there they were doing geographical locations, so my great international back- relations background allowed me to select the proper picture or map that went with something.

INTERVIEWER:

So, you accepted that, but tell me about the situation. You're a young married woman, and tell me about the letter that you wrote?

00:09:04

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

Well the thing that happened was that I happily-

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Madeleine Albright & Her Twin Daughters

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

– got pregnant and I had twins, much to my surprise and I had taken Russian and I thought well I have to do something interesting. Am I going to go back to school or I have to figure out something. And I then wrote a letter and... and when I found it I was really quite uh surprised at what I had said so brutally actually and I write, "Two years after I'm finished with college and I'm obsolete, I'm like a filing clerk who is replaced by a data processing machine, the craftsman turned out by the assembly line." And I... I write about how I had uh stepped off the platform after accepting my BA degree just fully confident that I would step into a series of interesting jobs and so then I say, "Two years later I am obsolete. Now it seems incomprehensibly naive to me to have thought that you could compete with men on an equal basis for interesting jobs, particularly a woman who's married and the mother of twins which I now am."

00:10:10

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

And the letter continues in terms of saying that I say, "Perhaps I was being overly pessimistic. Perhaps I could go out tomorrow and get a job as a typist." Although once I look at this letter I don't think I could've. Uh the next question is why bother? And I think this is worth saying. "Do I want a job merely to have a job or do I want to work in order to be doing something worthwhile?" And this puts me back to where I started, and so I think there is

an issue and as I say, "Two years ago the answers seemed simple. Good marks in college, a little persistence in job hunting, a husband who isn't against working wives, and there would be no problem. Now I can't imagine how I was ever so glib." But being an optimist I said uh that "I must admit though that I feel somewhat like a pioneer. I'm not satisfied to sit back for the rest of my life and contemplate in which order to clean the rooms. I want to find a solution and still feel that somehow it must be possible to be a responsible mother, a good wife and have an intellectually satisfying job."

00:11:18

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

So um it was quite a surprise that it was so hard, but I did then decide that what I wanted to do was interesting things. I started working on my PhD. Uh it took me a very long time because I had uh... I actually would get pregnant to get extensions so that um... good technique. Um and so um, but I was... I got very involved in politics and I kind of put one foot in front of another and um it's an unlikely story, but uh it did take some persistence and I'm very... obviously very proud.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Washington, D.C., January 19,1998

INTERVIEWER:

You were frequently, as your career progressed, probably one of the only women in the room with a lot of very domineering type A men. What was

that like and how did you learn to cope with that? What were you like at the beginning and how did that evolve?

00:12:09

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

Well let me say that in many ways I was very lucky about the timing of things, which was that I did finally get my PhD, and so uh it gave me a certain amount of credibility and um even though... And I was always slightly older than everybody. I had started out after all this, um, working for Senator Musky as first as fundraiser and then as his chief legislative assistant. And so he could say when he hired me, this is not just Madeleine, my friend, housewife, this is Dr. Albright and... and I think that that did help. The question was how to learn when to speak up and how to uh really pursue, and it wasn't easy because part of the thing was that um... what often in this line of work and it's not just true of international relations, in many fields is that what a woman says is often dismissed and sometimes we do it to ourselves.

00:13:07

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

And I have spoken to... I teach and I've spoken to my students about this is that I would be in a meeting and I would uh be listening and I would think, "Well I'd like to say that," and then I thought, "Well that's really stupid. I can't say that." And then some man would say it and everybody would think it was completely brilliant and I'd be so mad at myself for not saying it. And... But this went on endlessly and the bottom line is it never stops and you have to make yourself um I call it kind of active listening to decide that you are going

to interrupt and so my motto is for... for young, old and medium aged women, uh that uh we have to learn to interrupt because you don't get called on uh just because people think you should be. You have to have some thoughts and interrupt. One of the times that this was really very strange, you would think that by uh the time I became Ambassador to The United Nations that I wouldn't have this feeling,--

01:14:10

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

– was I walked into my first Security Council meeting uh and they don't really, most of the good, interesting work doesn't take place in that room that's always on television, but in a room in the back. And I'm sitting there and there are fourteen men of all different races and countries sitting there like that and I thought, "Well I'll just wait to kind of figure out who's who and whether I know who my friends are and all of the sudden I look and there's this sign that said United States in front of me. And I thought, "If I don't speak today, then the voice of The United States is not heard." And it was one of those first times that it was really... kind of an out of body experience of thinking that I... I wasn't just a woman that nobody wanted to listen to, but that I was The United States and I had to speak.

INTERVIEWER:

Do you remember what you said and the reaction?

00:15:02

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

No. I mean it was... We were probably talking about Bosnia or something, but there was not a negative reaction. Um and so I think some of it is our own inner feelings and feeling that we're not gonna... that we're not smart enough or that we won't be respected or that if we disagree it's bad. I think the thing that I learned is that women take intellectual or political arguments personally and think he doesn't like me or thinks I'm stupid. Whereas men argue all the time and they go out and have a beer, and so I think some of this we do to ourselves.

INTERVIEWER:

So, you are on a good career path. You had a happy family, you were financially secure, your life seemed perfect, and then suddenly it wasn't. Can you tell me a little bit about what happened to your marriage and how that affected the direction that your life took?

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Albright Wedding

1959

01:15:53

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

I thought that I was happily married. Um, I had met my husband when we were um... I was between my sophomore and junior year. As I said, we got married right after college and... or my college. He was a year ahead of me and that you know three children and... and who... somebody who really did approve of the fact that I had a job and had been very supportive through all

the endless PhD work and everything else. I think the thing that um... You know one would have to ask him what happened, but basically it was a huge shock to me. Really huge and uh and it was a matter of how I had seen myself. I... I was... Um even though I had been at The White House on the National Security Council, uh staffer and known as Madeleine Albright, um that one of my friends on the National Security Council had read some article and she said, "Are you really Mrs. Joseph Medill Patterson Albright?"

00:16:53

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

And she said, "We don't think of you that way." But I thought of myself as, you know, we all used our husband's names. So um there was an identity crisis in many ways. Anyway, all of the sudden there I was, forty-five years old, uh with three children and a husband who'd left, but it was not... I... I never had tried to present myself as a struggling single mother. I was not. My twin daughters were in college and my youngest daughter was sixteen, and so you know it was not something that was difficult in terms of finances. What was difficult was finding my own identity, and uh as it turns out I think those ten years, those '80s, were the ones that were uh the most influential in... in my own sense of being able to um have my own views um and be able to survive. Um and so they were very important years. I taught at Georgetown and I did a lot of different things. I worked on campaigns.

00:17:56

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

One of the early ones was working with Geraldine Ferraro who was the most amazing women... woman role model. And so... But those... It was hard.

There's no question about it and um I... and I regret the whole... I'm very sorry you know. I liked being married and uh I liked my life but the truth is that uh it came out okay in the end.

00:18:20

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

The thing that I did not like and I still don't like is when people ask me... I went to a Wellesley reunion actually and I was asked whether uh I thought that my career had caused the divorce. And I don't like the question. I don't like it because I think it's insulting in many ways. Uh I think that it's demeaning just in this issue to whether a woman can have a career and be married, but the main reason and I wrote this in my memoirs that I don't like it, is because I don't know what the answer is. Um and so I hate to think that uh my career caused my divorce and obviously there are two people in a divorce, so uh but it does kind of knock you over and has a lot to do with lack of confidence. The reason that I've been so honest about it and I was so honest in my book, was that I'm not the only person that this has happened to.

00:19:15

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

And I think if somebody that's actually in the end made it as I am very grateful to have made it, um and explains how hard it was that maybe it will help other people.

INTERVIEWER:

Looking back on it, was it a professional turning point?

00:19:32

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

Definitely. Definitely. Uh I mean I think in so many ways because I didn't... Obviously... I will repeat over and over again, it never occurred to me that I would be Secretary of State. Uh what I did... I had gotten my PhD. I was able to teach. I had a great job at Georgetown being a full time faculty member, and I enjoyed doing the political things. Uh I imagined that I would someday, somehow work in the government. Um and so I... I think in that way I didn't have... It all, in terms of timing, worked out in a way where I didn't have responsibility for my children. They were grown up and I um really was an independent player. Um and my children, in many ways, were my source of support rather than the other way around.

00:20:25

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

My contemporaries all had children um well I'd say very young. You know. And um and it just kind of happened. I mean you know you had... you got married and you had children and um and so in many ways less decision making than um younger women who uh start careers and then try to figure out when to have children, and um uh various questions about biological clocks, but I... It... There is... I did in many ways have a huge advantage in that my children were grown up.

INTERVIEWER:

You were a great staffer. That is the fate of a lot of very competent women, that they're staffers. Was there a moment when you thought specifically, "I

can go for a more high profile position here," whether or not it was Secretary of State?

00:21:18

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

Well the thing that happened is that I really did work in a lot of different campaigns and I um... and in Presidential campaigns, usually for losing Democratic Presidential uh candidates. And the one campaign that I did not work in was Bill Clinton's because— In fact, I was already president of a think tank um that the Center for National Policy and I couldn't go and work for one candidate. Um and what happened was that because uh one thing really lead to another in terms of my having developed an expertise on um relations with the Soviet Union and central and eastern Europe, and I was one of those perfect staffers that would be able to submit papers and... and uh present... and have them be presented to the candidate. And I got to know Bill Clinton uh when he came to do debate prep with Governor Dukakis.

00:22:14

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

So uh I had kind of kept in touch. I'd thought that I would probably have some job in the Clinton administration, but I did not think about what job that could be, and so when I was made Ambassador to The UN, it was a... actually a perfect job. The hardest part for me that I still can't believe that I did, was later, which was that as the second uh term was coming up, um Leon Panetta, who was the Chief of Staff, would call us all in and say, "So what are your plans for a second term? Would you want to be Ambassador to The UN again?" And I said, "Very happily." And he said, "What about something else?"

And I said, "I would like to be Secretary of State." Which I cannot believe to this day that I actually said. Uh and it's mainly because my name had already come up. Um there was a time during the first uh term when it looked as though Secretary Christopher was going to leave and so the great mentioners began to mention me so it wasn't as if I had just come out of nowhere. I had done... I'd been fairly visible as Ambassador to the UN and it would never have occurred to me if it had not already been stated in some way.

00:23:33

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

I think about it now, it was so unlike me, but anyway I did say that.

INTERVIEWER:

The woman who had to buck herself up to become assertive or to speak your mind, you became then known for some real-

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Washington, D.C., October 2000

INTERVIEWER:

- tough talk at the UN, and you were very comfortable with a quick quip. How did that all happen?

00:23:51

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

I think I probably exude a lot more confidence than I have, but uh... But the bottom line is that I loved what I was doing. I also discovered that I had a

sense of humor and a lot of people would say, "Did you know that Madeleine actually had this kind of sense of humor?" But I clearly got more comfortable. The thing that really happened was that President Clinton uh made it possible for me to express myself in meetings. There's no way really to explain this except that we would go into the Oval Office, I was a member... Not only was I Ambassador at The UN, but a member of what's called the Principals Committee and member of the Cabinet. Um and uh we would be sitting there and um other people would speak; the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense and others, and President Clinton would say, "Well I'd like to know what Madeleine has to say." Um and so he was always um very respectful and interested and that certainly does a lot to build up your confidence. Uh and then I think that there were just um moments where uh things needed to be said and I am pretty straight forward, so that kind of came together.

INTERVIEWER:

And President Clinton, did he not— credited you with the best one liner?

00:25:13

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

Well I'll tell you about this. It was a very interesting thing that happened that maybe people will remember this, is that the uh Brothers to the Rescue, uh those were Cuban Americans, were piloting unarmed uh planes over international waters and they were shot down by the Cubans and I was Am- I was Ambassador at The UN and my instructions were to get condemnation of what the Cubans had done. And the um our government provided me with

the uh transcript of what the Cuban pilots were saying to each other, translated, and it was pretty lured in terms of them chasing these unarmed planes and... and saying um uh, "We have cajones. They don't have cajones." And you know really bloodthirsty and then they hit them and then they say, "We got them. We got their cajones." And so I was uh doing two things at the same time. One was trying to get official condemnation in the Security Council and the other was to explain to the press what we were doing.

00:26:16

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

And so um I just happened to say, "This is not cajones, this is cowardice." We were sitting in my office and... and somebody said, "Now that's really good. You need to say that." And I thought, "I can't say something like that." And so um I called my Chief of Staff, Elaine Shocas and I said, "Do you think I could this?" And she said, "Yeah. Go ahead." So we... I'm there saying it in front of the UN press, I thought they would all faint. Uh and it was really... And I... What happened was some of the Latin American uh representatives said they couldn't believe that I'd used such barnyard language. So what then happened was President Clinton asked me, having said that this was the best line, um also asked me to represent him at the memorial service to the pilots that was held in Miami in the Orange Bowl. And as I'm uh dr- going down there we knew that this was a really serious event and uh one had to be very serious about everything.

00:27:18

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

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All of the sudden we're driving on the freeway, people see me at the toll booth and they jump out and start yelling, "Madame Cajones! Madame Cajones!" And to this day when I'm in Miami I get called Madame Cajones.

INTERVIEWER:

The leadership around the world at that time still is, was then, predominantly male. How were you treated?

00:27:37

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

You know interestingly enough the question was when my name came up to be Secretary of State, um there were those who said that a woman can not be Secretary of State and they said, and there was a lot that kind of went on uh in the press and various discussions, that the reason that a woman couldn't be Secretary of State that is that other countries would not uh deal with a woman. And that um especially the Arab countries would not deal. So what happened, interestingly enough, is that the Arab Ambassadors, a number of them at the UN, said that we have um dealt with Ambassador Albright and never had any problems, so this is not an issue. So in publically the issue went away and the truth is I never had any problems because I was the United States. And I arrived, you know, it did help I arrived in a large plane that said United States of America, but I did not have problems uh with other countries, uh leaders.

00:28:36

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

Um I had more problems with the men in our own government. And not because they were all male chauvinist pigs, but because, in fact, they had seen me go through this endlessly long rise of being um a carpool mother or a friend of their wives, or on school boards, or the perfect staffer. Um and all of the sudden I'm Secretary of State and they wonder why they weren't and so uh... but I did not have problems with men abroad. I did not.

INTERVIEWER:

Do you remember a specific example where that kind of jealousy or feeling came out? I mean how was that expressed to you?

00:29:14

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

Well I think sometimes just in put-downs. You know in terms of, "I can't believe that the Secretary of State," or more likely, "Madeleine would propose something like that." Or there was just kind of um a way of saying um... One of the problems I think generally with Washington is that people make themselves look smart by uh making the person sitting next to them not look so smart. But it was just kind of um an expression of... of lack of respect for what I was suggesting or blaming it on something else.

INTERVIEWER:

People talk about the Old Boys network. What about the Gals network?

00:29:55

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

Well, I think it's developing slowly. What I have decided is that women are very good at making friends and less good about networking. Men are better at networking than making friends, and so those are gross generalizations, but it's kind of a statement. I think we're learning to network. I think the men really do figure out how to help each other. Um some of it because they really want to help and some of it because they then see that they place... were able to place somebody in a position of power, which then would help them. But I do think women are beginning to learn to network.

INTERVIEWER:

And were you helped?

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

By other women?

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

00:30:34

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

Yes and no. Let me just say that one of the things was that I have often felt, and in this long story of my life, is that often women were more judgmental about what I was doing than men, and partially I'm prone to feeling guilty about any number of things, but could make me feel guilty, the other women. Uh especially as I was going through this rise of... and my children were little, of making me feel that I should've been with my children. You know, "Don't

you miss waiting for your children in the carpool line?" Or, "Don't you miss doing this?" And the truth is that I adjusted... I mean doing your PhD while your kids are going to school is not a bad thing, though I have to say it took me so long to do it that I started when my twins were... were three and finished when they were in junior high and they finally said, "You know mom, if you can't finish your paper, we're not going to finish ours." But I think that other women for a long time made me feel guilty.

00:31:33

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

I also think that because there's not a lot of room at the top, that a lot of women don't help each other, that there's a queen bee complex about not letting other women in. Uh that was my generation. I don't think it's true now. Uh but I really do think because there were not that many jobs for women, and so I... one of my other mottos is that there is a special place in hell for women who don't help each other. So it wasn't all men, but what did happen was at a certain stage uh when my name came up for Secretary of State, the women's groups did want to push for me to be Secretary, and I actually I want to be Secretary because of what I can do and my background not just as the woman's candidate. And I welcomed help but I didn't want it to be that. So then what happened was somebody at the White House uh made a dreadful mistake because they actually said to the press, "Yes. Madeleine Albright is on the list but she's second tier."

00:32:37

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

And that made the women so angry that they then did in fact push to uh... uh have this happen. But I would not have been Secretary of State if it hadn't been for Hillary Clinton. And the reason I know that is because Secretary... because President Clinton said it and we were at some event at an embassy abroad and he explained that Hillary had said to him, "So why wouldn't you make Madeleine Secretary of State? She is uh somebody who expresses your views well, understands the issues and besides it would make your mother very proud." So I did have the help of the most amazing woman, uh Hillary Clinton.

INTERVIEWER:

Tell me about getting the call from the president in December, 1996.

00:33:21

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

Well so this is one of those things that's really hard to—to believe, is that uh there my name had been floating around as I said. I was Ambassador, sitting in New York and Erskine Bowles calls and he says, "If the President were to call you tomorrow would you take the call?" And you think, that's crazy. Of course I'd take the call. And he said, "If he were to ask you to be Secretary of State would you say yes?" And another crazy question. I said, "Of course." He said, "Well go home because the President is going to call you tomorrow. Go home to Washington." So I go back to Washington and um I um ask again my Chief of Staff, Elaine, to spend the night and so in the morning I get up and I didn't even want to take a bath for fear that I'd miss the phone call. And I forgot that President Clinton didn't get up real early so I kept... Elaine and I

were sitting there, and in my bathrobe and I'd say, "He's changed his mind. He's definitely changed his mind." I was completely convinced that he had changed his mind.

00:34:21

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

So finally, you know, around 9:30 or so the phone rings and it's... the White House operator says, "Please hold for the President of the United States." And then they put on some terrible music and I'm sitting there I'm saying, "He's changed his mind. He's changed his mind." And he finally gets on and he says, "Madeleine will you be my Secretary of State?" So it was a completely magical moment.

INTERVIEWER:

What did you say to him?

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

I said, "Absolutely. Yes. I'd be honored," is what I said. So.

INTERVIEWER:

And the ceremony, the swearing in?

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Swearing-In Ceremony

Washington, D.C., January 23, 1997

00:34:50

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

The swearing in was... well there are all the things that you... you know you have to figure out what you're going to wear and what your hair will look like and getting the kids and everything and it was amazing. And I did come up with one of... a line that I was really very pleased with cause I was thanking Warrant Christopher and I said, "I hope my heels will fill his shoes." And so that was the first time that kind of term had been used.

INTERVIEWER:

You mentioned your hair. I have to ask you, because there's so many great pictures of you in the hats, the stetsons. Tell me.

00:35:23

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

Well... The part of the thing that is difficult, there are advantages and disadvantages to being a woman in this job. The big advantage is makeup uh because you actually can make yourself look fairly decent. The real problem, however, is after you've spent the night on the airplane, you don't always look great. Besides, I like to wear hats, but the... My kids got the picture right away whenever I got off the plane with a hat. They'd say, "Mom, you were having a bad hair day." They knew that.

INTERVIEWER:

What's the most meaningful piece of advice that you've ever received?

00:35:57

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

I think the most meaningful one was actually from my mother and it was, "Be generous." I really do think it's a very important thing.

INTERVIEWER:

What advice would you give to a young woman pursuing a career, work, family balance?

00:36:14

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

Well first of all that there are no easy answers for women, because um we are who we are and... and to a great extent dictated by biology. Uh, I think that women can do everything. They just can't do it all at the same time. And we are very lucky in many ways because our life does come in segments and uh some of it broken up by um the time to have children or have a career and so I think that it's important to get the balance. One of the things that I always... When I was hired at Georgetown, I was hired as a role model, basically, because there were not women professors and it was right after my divorce and so I always found that question hard to answer because clearly there some balance hadn't worked. But I... I do... That's what taught me in many ways, that um you don't have to do everything all at once, but it's never easy. I have three daughters um uh all of whom are married and all who have children and all who have very dynamic jobs.

00:37:20

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

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And we talk about this all the time, that it's not easy and so there's no one particular um path or role. Everybody has to work it out for themselves, but to understand that it's not simple.

INTERVIEWER:

What was your first paying job?

00:37:35

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

My first paying job was in high school selling bras.

INTERVIEWER:

And what person you've never met has had the biggest influence on your life?

00:37:45

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

Well I think that that person is probably Harry Truman because um he was my first American President. Uh I remember we... the elections were going on while we were still uh in London waiting to come to America. He was the one that um really developed a foreign policy for the United States that I thought was so important - the Truman Doctrine and the aid programs and the establishment of NATO. And was kind of a prototype of an American from the middle-west who was strong, knew what he believed in, um and I am now President of the Truman Foundation and so I think if people that... He really... In my personal life, I mean I could talk about Lincoln or Roosevelt, but Truman... I thought about this and I think he really is the most interesting.

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INTERVIEWER:

Yeah, and style too. I see the similarities too. Three adjectives you would use to describe yourself?

00:38:42

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT:

Grateful. Optimistic. Uh and hard working.

END TC: 00:38:52