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Grover Cleveland
Benjamin Harrison
Chester Arthur

Q. Mr. President, how do you feel, sir?
THE PRESIDENT Oh, fine, fine.

Q. You know, whenever you sneeze or cough, the world takes notice. What can you say to allay their concern that you had to come to the hospital today?

THE PRESIDENT. It was the best day to come, because everybody is off at the White House, so I figured that this was a good day for me to come for my examination, and as was the case last year, I found that I was in good health, just as I expected to be.

Of course, I haven't gotten the final results here, but they tell me to just go on doing what I have been doing.

Q. Did you have any thoughts, as you were getting dressed after the **physical**, about other persons in this hospital who might not be as well off **physically**?

THE PRESIDENT. Yes. As a matter of fact, I thought of that, particularly after signing the cancer bill yesterday. I thought of the people who might be here with terminal diseases. And last night, too, it was brought home to me. I don't get to see television very often, but David [Eisenhower] told me that I had to see an ABC show, "Brian's Song," about Brian Piccolo and Gale Sayers.¹ Believe me, it was really one of the great motion pictures that I have seen. Some will say it was corny, and the rest. I think it was a beautiful production, and one that every American ought to see. I was glad I got a chance to see it.

¹ "Brian's Song" was the story of the careers and friendship of Brian Piccolo and Gale Sayers, teammates with the Chicago Bears professional football team, until Mr. Piccolo's death from cancer in 1970.

But after seeing that picture, of course, I naturally thought of people who were in hospitals and what they were going through. I only wish I had time to go through and visit all the wards and wish them a Merry Christmas, but I must get back to sign some papers. I am going to have a little trouble. I got that eye dilation test today and I can't see a thing for 4 hours.

Q. Mr. President, as the chief physician for the Nation's health, at this particular time of the year, how do you feel about things? How do you feel the country is going?

THE PRESIDENT. The country is in better health this year than it was last year. Health is always a relative matter. We all like to think we are in perfect health, but no one is really in perfect health. But the Nation is moving forward, it is healthier, the economy is healthier, the chance for peace in the world is better, our people are coming home from wars abroad, and in terms of the relations of the nations generally, the people of this country, between each other, I think the Nation is in a better frame of mind than it was a year ago, not perfect, it never will be, but I think we are making progress. I felt it when I was in New York. I felt the Christmas spirit this year was better than it was last year when I was there. I hope this is not simply a superficial view, but I sense it from talking to people, the letters I receive, from the reports that I get from around the country.

Q. Mr. President, what can you tell us about Bob Hope's efforts in behalf of our POW's?

THE PRESIDENT. I can only say that the efforts that he makes and that anybody makes are deeply appreciated. This is perhaps the most discouraging aspect of our foreign policy at the moment, our inability to get a nation which basically is governed by international outlaws to abide by the very basic rules of international conduct in any way. But we are continuing to work on it, and I think efforts by people like Bob Hope may tend to emphasize to the North Vietnamese the fact that world opinion--if they pay any attention to world opinion--overwhelmingly believes that they should treat this as a humanitarian issue.

We are going to continue to treat that, of course, as the very highest priority in the weeks ahead as we complete our own withdrawal from Vietnam. We must, of course, do everything we can, and we will do everything we can, to see that our POW's are returned.

Q. Are you a Christmas morning early riser?

THE PRESIDENT. It is very hard to change habits. Once you have developed the habit of getting up early, it is hard to sleep in. I will try to sleep in, but Christmas morning I usually get up anyway. I like to get up and see the expressions on the faces of everybody when they see what is around the tree, and we do have a tree, too.

REPORTER. Merry Christmas, Mr. President.

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Richard Nixon
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