

a little bit of a late bloomer, but he exploded when he got going. I mean, for a man who—he literally started sort of from his sophomore year in college, and he just kept—whatever the bar was he always reached it and went over it. And he's still doing that.

*Mr. Hunt.* Did you see him play in college?

*The President.* One time. And he was good. He was really good. And, you know, now it's not even the same. I mean, he's like on another planet now.

*Mr. Hunt.* I know your favorite team is the Arkansas Razorbacks. But you and Patrick Ewing also share an alma mater together.

*The President.* Yes, Georgetown.

*Mr. Hunt.* Do you follow your former Georgetown Hoyas?

*The President.* I do. I always root for the Razorbacks and the Hoyas. I keep up. Georgetown is having a little bit of a tough season this year, but over the long run it's hard to think of a program that's done more than John Thompson's has to produce both good basketball teams and college graduates. And I think that's—I wish more people would model the Georgetown program.

*Mr. Hunt.* Let me ask you about that. You talked in your Inaugural speech about personal responsibility, you talked about the need for a more civil discourse, and you mentioned role models. What effect do you think it has on kids when famous athletes like Dennis Rodman engage in those well-publicized antics? Does it worry you?

*The President.* It does. It worries me more now than it used to, than it would have 20 years ago, because, first of all, all of us know the pervasiveness of the media in our culture. It means that we all know everything like that when it happens, instantaneously.

And secondly, there are an awful lot of young people out there, particularly young boys and young men, who don't have immediate, positive male role models who can contradict a lapse by an athlete. And I say this—I'm a big Dennis Rodman fan. I mean, I think he's an extraordinary athlete, and he's a very interesting man. And I don't mind at all some of the more unusual manifestations of his personality. But I think when he does a destructive thing like that, it's a bad thing. I'm sure in his heart of hearts he really regrets it.

You know, we all would hate to be judged on what we did in the darkest hour of the dark-

est day of our lives. And, unfortunately, when athletes are under all this pressure, they're also being watched all the time, when they're under the most stress and most likely to do or say something they wish they hadn't. And I'm sure in his heart of hearts he regrets doing that. But I would hope that at some point, in addition to paying this enormous fine and also trying to pay the gentleman that he kicked—which I think is a good thing—that he'll find a way to say, "I shouldn't have done it, and I really regret it."

Because I think it will only make him bigger, it will only make his fans think more of him. And it will send who knows what signal to some young person out there who, like Dennis Rodman, has enormous abilities and a terrific imagination and is a little bit different from the run of the mill person and therefore really identifies with Dennis Rodman. There's lots of kids out there like that, real smart, real able, a little bit different. And they've got to be fascinated by him. So I hope he'll find a way to say that—and I say that as I'm a real admirer of his basketball talent, and I find him a fascinating man. But he might be able to help some young people if he just says, "That's something I shouldn't have done, and I'm not going to do that anymore."

*Mr. Hunt.* You are a genuine basketball aficionado. Who is the greatest basketball player you've ever seen?

*The President.* Oh, Jordan.

*Mr. Hunt.* Is he?

*The President.* Oh, yes.

*Mr. Hunt.* In a league by himself?

*The President.* I wouldn't say that. I've seen some great players. I saw Michael Jordan play when he was a senior in college and North Carolina came to play Arkansas, and they were ranked first and we were, I don't know, fifth or sixth or something. And we beat them by one point. But it was a fascinating game. And he just is—you know, he's a wonderful player. But basketball, I suppose next to golf, is my favorite sport, although you can tell by the way I'm built and move around I have to be a spectator more than a player. [Laughter]

I have never been much of a player, but I love it. And the thing that I find exciting about pro ball is that it's played at such a high level that it seems to me that year-in, year-out on the whole, the group of players is getting better. I believe that is accurate. And so I think