CSPAN/FIRST LADIES PAT NIXON
APRIL 15, 2014
11:15 a.m. ET

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

PAT NIXON, FORMER FIRST LADY: I stay in the wings and don't come out in front too often, so this is quite unusual for me, but I do want to thank all of you for your friendship and your loyal support and for planning this wonderful evening for me. I shall remember it always. And thanks to the young people for this great welcome.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SUSAN SWAIN: Pat Nixon, the first Republican first lady to address a national convention, Miami, 1972. She went from a hardscrabble background to the White House. As first lady, she traveled more widely than any before her, made volunteerisms her issue, and was a chief supporter and behind-the-scenes political adviser to her husband, President Richard Nixon.

Good evening, and welcome to C-SPAN's series "First Ladies: Influence and Image." Tonight, we'll tell you the story of Pat Nixon, although her time in the White House was really eclipsed by her husband's resignation from office in the wake of Watergate. So we're going to tell more about her record and learn more about her life before the White House, what she did while she was there, and her legacy.

Here are our two guests to tell her story. Tim Naftali is a presidential historian and the former head of the Nixon Library. And meet Mary Brennan, who is a Pat Nixon biographer and also history professor at Texas State University.

Well, welcome to both of you. Let's start with this perception of Pat Nixon. She is described in your book, actually, as an enigma. So what should people know? What are a couple of things about Pat Nixon that they'd be surprised to learn?

MARY BRENNAN, BIOGRAPHER AND HISTORY PROFESSOR: Pat was fun and funny. People who knew her talked about her sense of humor. And she was adventurous. As a young woman, she worked for a hospital in New York City, and she would go out with the patients who had tuberculosis and take trays from the cafeteria and slide down the hills. That's the kind of thing that she would love to do.

TIMOTHY NAFTALI, FORMER HEAD OF THE NIXON LIBRARY: She was a working woman. In many ways, she was a pioneer. Her wit was strong and, at times, biting. She didn't always take herself seriously, and she probably did not want to be first lady.

SWAIN: Well, during her time, the media sometimes referred to her as "Plastic Pat." Once of our viewers on Facebook referred to that in the conversation we have going there. And he said it was because she always smiled, but never conveyed any emotion. Is that really where that name came from? And if so, what was going on there?

BRENNAN: Actually, the name came from very early on during the first controversy that she had to deal with during the Checkers speech. The cameraman -- there was only one camera, and so he told her, "We never know when you're going to -- when we're going to come onto you, so just keep a smile on your face." And so she kept that smile the whole time.

And I think there were other reasons she was holding that smile, as well, but I think that started this idea that she was just this rigid personality. And afterwards, it just kind of kept coming back to that.

SWAIN: What were the public opinion polls of her like when she was in the White House?

NAFTALI: Well, she was always much more popular than Richard Nixon. In fact, a lot of the public felt a great deal of sympathy for her, particularly as the demonstrations got raucous outside of the White House, because of Vietnam and later because of Watergate.

I wanted to add something to what Mary said. It's really important when we think about her image to think about how much of it she didn't control, because this was a very -- the modern White House, Nixon White House in many ways was a model of the modern White House in the television age.

The White House decided how the presidential family would be used or not used. And we -- I hope we'll get into this a little bit more -- but Pat Nixon did not have the opportunity to control as much as she would've liked the way in which she was presented to the American people.

SWAIN: And was this precedent-setting, the first White House to go to this extreme with media?

NAFTALI: No, I mean, after all, the Kennedy White House had thought a lot about Jackie, and the very fact that Jacqueline Kennedy went to Dallas, she was going to Dallas because the president knew he needed her help in what was supposed to be just a political tour.

No, this was not the first time. Jacqueline Kennedy was really the first. Eleanor Roosevelt, of course, thought about her own public role, but she pushed that. I mean, I'd say that she's unilaterally responsible for that. The Roosevelt White House wasn't pushing her in front.

I think Jackie Kennedy is really the first first lady that is part of a media strategy. Pat Nixon did not play the role, the public role that the White House wanted her to play.

BRENNAN: Well, I actually think that it goes further back. I think the Republican Party used her during the Eisenhower -- when she was second lady and really wanted to use this image of Dick and Pat as this young couple that mirrored America, at the same time, had these two young children. And so I think the Republican Party actually helped to create that image of her as this ideal housewife. And then once it was there, they couldn't really stop it. It kind of took on a life of its own.

NAFTALI: Do you think that -- that -- were they doing the same thing with Mamie?

BRENNAN: Well, Mamie was so much older. I think that Pat had to kind of fill in for Mamie. Mamie was more the grandmother, and she wasn't making public appearances the way that Pat was. And so they needed Pat to be this perfect housewife who could do all of these things at the same time.

SWAIN: It's interesting, because it's a bit the flip of what we learned with Lady Bird Johnson and Jacqueline Kennedy, because Jacqueline Kennedy didn't campaign very much. Lady Bird, the older, less glamorous of the two, was out on the campaign trail making a lot of appearances, all in the role and all these cases of setting an image with the public.

BRENNAN: Oh, yes.

NAFTALI: Let me ask you, did -- you've done marvelous work on Pat Nixon -- how did she feel about sitting on the stage when her husband gave the fund speech or the Checkers speech as it’s known?

BRENNAN: She hated it. It was one of the most painful experiences of her life, an experience that she would -- that in some way, I think, defines the way the two of them related to politics, because Pat was a very private person who would not -- who did not want anyone to know about her private life. And here you have her husband telling all their finances, what money they owed, that she didn't have a fur coat. And so for her, this was a horrible experience, whereas for her husband, he celebrated that every year.

SWAIN: Well, speaking of her husband, let me get into some video, because here is former President Richard Nixon talking about Pat, his wife, in an interview in 1983.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

RICHARD NIXON, FORMER PRESIDENT: She probably is one of the most intelligent women ever to have been first lady. Political discussions, she doesn't say much, but she can always go to the heart of a matter. She's got an enormously good intuition. I think these are factors -- the average person just thinks of her as somebody that went along for the ride and so forth, "Plastic Pat" as they called her, although I'm sure some of them didn't believe it.

If she had been the wife of a liberal, my God, they would've canonized her. But because she was my wife, they had to find ways to knock her.

It's quite remarkable, despite the fact that she has not had a particularly positive press, not nearly what she deserves, people remember her as being dignified, they remember her as one devoted to her family, they remember her, too, as one -- she may not have worn foreign designer gowns, but she was blessed with natural beauty. She really didn't need them.

The ladies in the press, and some of the men, as well, who covered, criticized Mrs. Nixon very cruelly, and this hurt her incidentally. It shouldn't have, but it did. She should've considered the source.

And they said, why didn't she make speeches? That shows she doesn't have a mind of her own. It's not true, though. She's just smart. She knows you can't have two voices out of the White House. She had ideas, and she expressed them privately.

And another thing it shows, which these critics, among the ladies in the press, what they wouldn't understand, they won't appreciate at all, she was self-assured and self-confident. She didn't have such a big ego that she had to go out and prove that she had a career in her own right. To her, what was important was the career of her husband.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: So we hear in there a lot of criticism by the president, the former president, that much of Pat Nixon's perception problems were an unfriendly media.

NAFTALI: Well, that's not surprising since that's how he viewed his own perception problems. But, you know, Julie Nixon Eisenhower has written a remarkable book about her mother. It's -- well, first of all, the fact that a presidential child writes about a first lady is interesting. But it's not just about Pat; it's about the family. And it's a very revealing book.

And there is a line in the book where Julie talks about how her mother was really involved in discussions in the vice presidency, because the discussions all happened at -- was it Forest Lawn where they lived? Forest -- the...

BRENNAN: Yes.

NAFTALI: And so she said, "My mother was involved, but not so much in the White House." And then she said, "Because my father decided that he wanted to keep his personal and private lives more -- his personal and public lives more separated." It was Richard Nixon's decision that she not be as involved in discussions about policies. So he plays a role in deciding that she's not as much of a part of this White House as she might otherwise have wanted to be.

SWAIN: We'd like very much for you to be involved in our conversation this evening. Three ways that you can do it. You can tweet us, @firstladies is our Twitter handle and you can reach us there. A conversation is already underway.

We also have a Facebook page, and you'll find it at facebook.com/cspan, and there is a discussion where people are posting comments, and we'll try to work our way into as many of those comments as we can during our 90 minutes.

And then our phone lines, 202-585-3880, if you live in the Eastern or Central time zones, 202-585-3881, if live in the Mountain or Pacific time zones or farther west, and we'll get to your calls throughout the program.

Well, speaking of the media, in 1968, Pat Nixon was interviewed by Gloria Steinem, the feminist who was writing an article in New York Magazine. She asked Pat Nixon what woman in history she most admired, and here's what Pat Nixon had to say: "I never had time to dream about being anyone else. I had to work. My parents died when I was a teenager, and I had to work my way through college. I never had it easy. I'm not like all you."

Well, I'm going to use that as a segue to talk about her upbringing. She didn't begin life as Patricia Nixon. What was her birth name?

BRENNAN: She was named Thelma Catherine Ryan. Her father called her -- when he came home, he wanted to call her Patricia. He didn't really like Thelma Catherine. And so he said she was his St. Patrick's babe in the morning, and so he called her babe. He always called her babe. Her friend in school called her Thelma, which at high school they all called her Buddy.

When she went to college, when she went to junior college, she enrolled herself as Pat Nixon -- not Pat Nixon, obviously, Pat Ryan. But that was the first time that she consciously renamed herself.

As a child, she had a very hard time. Her mother died when she was not quite 13. She was -- then her father died four years later. She kept house for her brothers. They lived on basically a kind of hardscrabble farm, so they were always working. She had jobs sweeping out banks. She worked to sweep floors. She did all kinds of things, because they had to make money to be able to pay the bills, to keep the farm, and then eventually they rented out the farm and they had to pay their father's medical bills.

NAFTALI: She wanted to go to college, and they couldn't -- she couldn't afford it. And then -- was it her brother sent her? She went, what, to New York.

BRENNAN: Right, that was another way she made money. She drove a couple across the country.

NAFTALI: Oh, yeah.

BRENNAN: She drove them -- that was -- they paid her to drive their car across the country. She was going to visit some of her father's relatives on the East Coast, went and visited them, and then one of her aunts was a nun who worked at Seton Hospital and gave her job. And it was the middle of the depression, so she stayed on her own in New York City.

NAFTALI: But she was a pharmacist, was she?

BRENNAN: Well, she worked all different kinds of jobs in the hospital. She worked in the lab. She was a radiologist. She did all kinds of things, because she needed the work.

NAFTALI: But the thing was, she was supposed to -- the deal was, wasn't it, that she would get a return ticket.

BRENNAN: Yes.

NAFTALI: And she didn't use it.

BRENNAN: No.

NAFTALI: She decided to stay in New York.

BRENNAN: Because it was a job.

SWAIN: But there's a real story here, an American story of someone who comes from nothing and decides an education is her ticket out.

NAFTALI: Well, this is also important because it belies the Plastic Pat. This is a woman with a great deal of gumption and drive, who knows what she wants and wants the world. She's really interested.

She comes from Southern California, from a, you know, agricultural part outside of Los Angeles, in Los Angeles County, but outside of Los Angeles, and she wants to go to New York. And so she gets this opportunity to go to New York, and she stays. And she only comes back when her brothers tell her that they've raised enough money so she can go to college. She goes to USC.

SWAIN: Throughout the program, we're going to be visiting the Richard Nixon Library in Yorba Linda, California, to learn more about Pat Nixon. Here's our first stop, and this is a little bit more about Pat Nixon's early years.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

OLIVIA ANASTASIADIS, RICHARD NIXON PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY & MUSEUM CURATOR: Mrs. Nixon grew up in very humble beginnings. She spent a lot of time working at the farm. Here's an account from 1931. This is a farm account book that she kept the books. She was 19 years old when this all is happening. And she talks about how at the end here, total deposits, none made since a year ago January. So this sort of shows you how difficult it was to make a living. They barely made ends meet.

As a teenager in the Depression, Mrs. Nixon took on a lot of jobs, from becoming a pharmacist, an X-ray technician, she was a personal shopper selling clothing at Bullock's. She became a model, and she would also do call casting. She actually got on the list from Paramount Pictures and RKO Corporation to be an extra in films.

So she also, as part of this whole, you know, jumping from job to job, she also had a speaking role in a film called "Becky Sharp" from 1935. You can see her dancing in the film, but her speaking role was cut out.

And there's also -- what's interesting, her stage passes. And so this little stage pass shows her name and the restrictions that, you know, one had to go through when going to a studio. But eventually, she

persevered enough that she had enough money to attain her degree and from the University of Southern California. She became a teacher.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: And how did she meet Richard Nixon?

BRENNAN: She was teaching at Whittier High School, and she -- she loved theater. She had been in theater all throughout high school and in college. And there was a community theater production that was going on, and one of the older teachers suggested that she go and try out. And it was not just a suggestion; she kind of got the idea she should do it.

So she liked theater. She went to do it. And Richard Nixon, who was a young lawyer in Whittier, was trying to make connections every way that he could, and so he was also trying out for the show. So they were both there at the same time.

He said that he fell in love with her at first sight. He offered to drive both she and a friend home. He said in his memoirs that he asked her to marry him that first night. The friend said that took him three times driving back and forth. But he was very persistent. He ran after Pat. And she kind of held him at arm's bay.

Now, she did eventually come home and tell her roommate that this guy had really put the moves on her and that she wasn't sure she was going to go out with him, but that she thought he probably could be president someday.

SWAIN: So you've both spend a lot of time in documentary materials about them, and there's so much speculation about the partnership between the two of them and the source of their couplehood. What was it about the two Nixons that attracted them to each other?

NAFTALI: Well, I would think -- and Mary will know this better -- because I don't think that they're quite as close in the presidential years. It's their intelligence. They're both highly intelligent people. And they're both quite determined. Richard Nixon could not walk over Pat Nixon, or Pat Ryan. And I think that both drew them together and at times I think it pushed them apart. But there are some similarities in their characters. They both have strong characters.

BRENNAN: Well, I think they both came from backgrounds in which there had been problems. You know, Nixon had -- I mean, Richard had a brother who died. Pat's parents died. And so I think that there was -- they both had the sense of tragedy in their lives.

And they were both -- I would add, in addition, I would add ambition. They both wanted things. I mean, Pat was not going to be happy staying in Whittier. She wanted to see the world. And I think she saw that in Dick, that this was not just going to be something that was -- she wasn't going to have to stay where she was.

NAFTALI: I mean, this is something that, you know, as you think about first ladies, particularly modern first ladies, a number of them are very driven, very ambitious women who in some ways have moved beyond -- they're pioneers for women of their era and they decide to submerge their own ambition, sublimate it somewhat.

BRENNAN: And I think that that's true to a certain extent she's doing that, but I also think that she also sees him -- because they share an ambition and they're going to go places, I don't think that she sees it as she's giving up her teaching career as much as this is going to allow her to do something else, and this is -- she's not sure where she wants to go. But she wants to go; she wants to do things.

And so I don't see it as she's just giving up everything as much as, okay, I have to be married, because if I don't get married, then I'm going to have problems, but let's go ahead, and this guy is going to be moving, he's going to be a mover and a shaker.

NAFTALI: But what about -- I just want to ask about -- because in your book, you talk about the really interesting letters that she writes after the war.

BRENNAN: Yes.

NAFTALI: And isn't she sort of hinting?

BRENNAN: Well, she writes -- the letter he's talking about is the letter that she wrote when he's getting ready to come home. And she -- while he was overseas during World War II, she was living in San Francisco. She worked for the Office of Price Administration. She wrote him this wonderful letter in which she said that she had missed him terribly. They wrote to one another every day during the war.

And she said that if she had not been so worried about him, she would've had a wonderful time during all of this, because she was on her own, she had money, she was in this wonderful city, so that he should be careful when he came back, and love her, love her very dearly, because otherwise she would regret that she was giving up everything. She knew what was possible.

So, yes, she did know that there was this other life. But she was also, I think, aware of the fact that there was a balance. I think she was always kind of aware of, how much was she going to be able to do if she didn't have him back? But she wanted him to know that he needed to pay attention to her.

SWAIN: Well, we have video of their letters, their courtship letters, which have recently been released by the Nixon Library, and we'll show that to you next.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JIM BYRON, RICHARD NIXON FOUNDATION: President and Mrs. Nixon began courting in 1938. They met at a play in Whittier. It was called "The Dark Tower." Each auditioned for a separate role, and that's how they ended up going out on their first date.

And she initially put him off for a while. She wasn't very interested in his romantic advances. But he said to her, and he later said that he said this impulsively, "I'm going to marry you someday," and she sort of laughed. And they were married in 1940, two years later.

So what we have here is a rare treasure. These are some of the letters that President and Mrs. Nixon wrote to each other between 1938 and when they were married in 1940 and that showed their courtship. These are incredibly rare. They were just recently released by the Nixon Foundation in 2012.

So this is a letter that was written by President Nixon to Mrs. Nixon. It's not dated. But he writes to her, "Dearest heart," he says, "let's go for a long ride Sundays, let's go to the mountains on weekends, let's read books in front of fires. Most of all, let's really grow together and find the happiness we know is ours. My love to be, dear heart, Dick."

So what this letter really shows us is a romantic side of a young President Nixon that really wasn't public before these letters were released. Here, Mrs. Nixon writes to him, after he gave her a gift of some sort, "Gee, Dick, guess I'm a pretty lucky Irishman. Honestly, the surprise was such fun. Best of all, it was knowing you had remembered. Thank you ever so much." And then she replies with this kind note and includes a shamrock.

In this one, she was being a little friendly, a little flirty, but she writes, "Social note -- romantic? In case I don't see you before, why don't you come early Wednesday at 6:00 and I'll see if a can burn a hamburger for you? Did you see the sunset? A new picture every few minutes."

And we see here a letter that's also not dated, but she writes to him, "I will be here for a short time, so shall I see you?" And she says at the end, "Ramble, ramble, must be the hour. Yes, Sir Rick warns so. See you soon, Pat."

Well, Sir Rick was a clock that President Nixon gave to Mrs. Nixon when they were courting, and here she's a little cute and playful at the end. She says, "Sir Rick has the nicest face," the clock face, "I like him so very much." It's really a great story and a side of the Nixons that the public doesn't really know too much and is really not familiar. So that's why these letters are such treasures.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: Adrienne Wilber asks on Twitter, what religion was Pat Nixon, since President Nixon was a Quaker?

BRENNAN: Well, she did convert to Quakerism, but she never really practiced any religion, and actually, neither did Richard, once they -- once he kind of outgrew his -- once he went to the military. I think he was a Quaker, but he wasn't really a practicing Quaker.

SWAIN: I'm going to just get for the record, he proposed to her on the beach in San Clemente, California, which -- is that correct, walking on the beach?

BRENNAN: I don't know that I've ever seen anything about it.

SWAIN: Oh, my biography says that, and that's only important because later it became the place of their home.

BRENNAN: Right. But I don't remember anything about where he proposed. Sorry.

SWAIN: Well, let's say it's possible record.

BRENNAN: Yeah.

SWAIN: Let's go to some of our phone calls. Next is Nick in Palm Springs, California. Hi, Nick, you're first up on our callers tonight. What's on your mind?

CALLER: Hey, good evening. This is a wonderful program, and thank you to C-SPAN for it. I have a comment, and then a question. But first, I'm a big admirer of Tim's work at the Nixon Library. It was courageous, and thank you for that.

The question really ties in some previous episodes, some previous programs. Was there -- I've heard a lot about sort of an intentional de-Kennedy-ization of the White House by the Nixons, changing the name of the garden, taking the mantle out of the first lady's bedroom that had an inscription on it, the renovation with Clement Conger. And yet you balance that with the fact that the only time Mrs. Onassis returned to the White House was on a private visit under the Nixons. What was the real story there and with other presidents and first ladies, as well? Thanks so much.

NAFTALI: Thank you, Nick. I appreciate that.

Well, it's really an interesting question, because we don't know. Julie does say in her book that it wasn't her mother's decision that the mantle be removed. The decision was made by an advisory board, because the mantle wasn't historic. It was not -- and they replaced it with a mantle designed actually in the time of Thomas Jefferson.

So that as they tried to make the -- in a sense, as they tried to follow what Jacqueline Kennedy had started, to make the White House more historical, this was the right thing to do. So that particular decision, Nick, was not made by Pat Nixon.

What's also clear from Julie's book, which I think is the closest we're ever going to get to Pat Nixon's memoir, because she didn't write one, is that Pat Nixon did carry some resentment about the 1960 election. She did feel that it had been stolen, and she did not hide her disappointment in 1960. Look at photographs of her in 1960; she's not wearing a poker face.

So there is no doubt in my mind that some of the anger, not as much, of course, that Richard Nixon had for the Kennedys she did. Nevertheless, she was a human being, and she handled the visit, Jacqueline Kennedy's -- Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis' first visit since 1963 to the White House beautifully.

She let Jackie Kennedy Onassis decide how that trip would go, how the visit would go. Jackie did not want a public visit. She was concerned about the press swarming the White House. She wanted to bring the children, she wanted this to be a quiet moment. This -- by the way, the reason for this visit was the unveiling of the official portraits of First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy and of President Kennedy.

So Pat asked, how would you like it to go? And Jackie said, "I would like a private visit." And so Pat Nixon and President Nixon organized a private visit for the Kennedys, which turned out to be a remarkable event for all concerned. Both Caroline and John, Jr., wrote letters afterwards thanking the Nixons. And Jackie herself wrote a very warm letter.

So, despite whatever anger they might have had, or she might have had about the 1960 campaign, she was a human first and realized the importance of letting President Kennedy's widow and his children come to the White House for that important unveiling.

SWAIN: Well, we have to get into politics in their life story, so we had their early marriage. And during World War II, Richard Nixon was on active duty with the Navy. And his first run for Congress was in 1946. How did he make the foray into politics?

BRENNAN: When he came back, he was still, as you said, on active-duty, and he was contacted by someone from California, and they were looking for somebody to run against Jerry Voorhis in the 12th Congressional District. And so Dick talked to Pat, and they agree that he would go back out and he would talk to these people. So he went back out, he did a presentation, they said, yes, this is a good thing, and they decided to run.

By this time, Pat was pregnant with Tricia. So they have to move, because now they're back on the East Coast. They have to go all the way back across to California, because they have to start campaigning. So they move -- so she packs everything up, eight months pregnant, drives -- gets everything moved back out to California. A month or so after they get back out there, she delivers Tricia and they're campaigning.

Now, and I think this is a very important part of this and tells something about her ambition, because she delivers the baby and, six hours later, she's up typing, doing research for his speeches. Now, granted, they didn't have a lot of money and they didn't have a lot of money for the campaign, but she

had a perfect excuse to stop campaigning, to stop participating. She had a brand-new baby that she had to drop off at her mother-in-law's to go work on this campaign, but she doesn't do it.

She makes the choice to go ahead and participate. And this, this first campaign, where they didn't know anything about what they were doing, this was their -- Richard calls it the sweetest victory. Of all of his election victories, this was the sweetest one in 1946, because they had worked so hard to get this. And this was really the beginning of what became the Pat and Dick team.

SWAIN: Soon thereafter, there was a Senate campaign and then election on the vice presidential ticket. But we always read that Pat Nixon did not like politics. So from this story where she was very much involved, where did that evolution come on?

NAFTALI: I think something happens after 1960. I just -- because in 1960, she doesn't tell -- she actually is a campaign worker. She doesn't give her name. She's Pat -- I think she gives her name as Thelma Ryan or -- you know, she's actually helping out, but she's not presenting herself as the wife of the vice president of the United States.

I think that after that very bitter defeat and that very difficult defeat, she wanted out of politics. And I think that's -- when I said that she might not have wanted to be first lady, I think she wanted to be first lady in 1960. I'm not sure if she wanted to be first lady in 1968.

SWAIN: During her years as second lady, she traveled extensively. How important was that in the kind of first lady she would become?

BRENNAN: I think the travel was for her -- I mean, I would actually disagree with Tim a little bit, because I would put -- I think there were things of politics that she hated. And I don't think she realized in 1946 what those would be. I don't think she realized how much of her life she would have to give up, how much privacy she would have to give up.

And I would put it back to the Checkers speech, the fund crisis, where the first time she realizes how much she's going to have to give up in terms of her privacy and how much she's going to have to let other people in.

But when she becomes second lady and they get to go and visit all of these places, and she sees not just the world that she'd always hoped to see, but she sees how she can touch people, and she can do things and make a difference in people's lives, and for her, that was -- that almost balanced out all of the parts of politics that she hated, because she loved exploring the world. And she got to do a tremendous amount of it as second lady. And I think that that did help later on, as she planned to be first.

NAFTALI: Do you think she changed, though? What effect do you think the 1960 experience had on her?

BRENNAN: I think -- I think it was devastating. I think that the things that she disliked from the fund crisis and all those things earlier, I think you're right, I think all you have to do is look at that picture of her from the concession speech in 1960 and it's written all over her face. It just sucked the life out of her, because I don't think she saw herself as a volunteer. She was a part of the campaign. Whenever she talked about the campaign in 1960, it was, "We're running for election."

And when the American people rejected them, I think she really saw it as a rejection of them. And I think it was -- she couldn't recover from that the same way that he could.

SWAIN: Scotty N. Asks on Twitter, what was Mrs. Nixon's relationship with Mrs. Eisenhower like? Your view?

BRENNAN: They were -- they had a little rough patch in the beginning, and then they became very good friends. They were from different generations, but they were both women who believed in family, who were devoted to children. They were women who believed in efficiency in running a household.

And Mrs. Eisenhower really took to Pat. Pat got to go into the family quarters of the White House before Dick did. She was there like three times before he was. And Mamie saw her as a friend. In the height of the Watergate crisis, when things were horrible for Pat, Mamie wrote Pat a note that said "On the QT, just come up here. We don't have to talk about anything. It will just be you and I. We can bring Julie, as well. Nobody will know, and you can get away from everything." So they had a very nice relationship.

SWAIN: Back to calls. Keith in Greenville, Illinois. Hi, Keith, you're on.

CALLER: Hello, thank you for this program. It's really been interesting to see how our first ladies reacted to their place in history. My question is, throughout all the turmoil of President Nixon, did she ever grow to resent him and, even furthermore, regret marrying him?

BRENNAN: Well, how can anybody know inside somebody else's marriage? And if you are married -- I think that there are probably times when she did regret marrying him, because how can you not? If you're married, there are times, well, I think, that you regret some of your decisions.

Did she resent him for making some of the decisions he made? I think that she did. I think that she -- I think she resented it and, at the same time, she couldn't let herself completely resent it, and so she had to find somebody else to blame. So she blamed Haldeman and Ehrlichman. She blamed the press. She blamed everybody for going after him, because it was one of those things that she could say anything she wanted to about him and she could be as angry as she wanted to with him, but nobody else should say anything. Nobody else should make any comments about him. So as Tim said, she was a human being. How could she not be angry at times?

SWAIN: Dave is in Linthicum Heights, Maryland. Hi, Dave, your question?

CALLER: Yes. I want to thank you for having this wonderful program about our first ladies.

SWAIN: Thank you.

DAVE (ph): I just wanted to share with you that, as a volunteer or part-time worker at the White House from 1971 to 1986, Pat Nixon being the first first lady that I had had the opportunity to work for, that she had this tradition of taking personal friends and visitors on tour of the private quarters. And when they would get to the Lincoln Bedroom, she would have her guests sit upon the Lincoln bed and make three wishes. And I was wondering if either one of your two guests had ever heard this during their research.

NAFTALI: Yes. And I also heard one of the things she did was that she -- I mean, to the horror of curators, she wanted those who were blind and visiting the White House to be able to touch things. And, you know, if you've gone to a museum, curators don't want you to touch anything.

Now, she had this ability to think outside of herself and to try to make people feel welcome. She recognized that the White House could be a formal and somewhat forbidding place, and she thought, well, how can I make it less forbidding?

SWAIN: So just to establish their political history, after the devastating loss in 1960, Richard Nixon makes a bid for the California governorship, and it's unsuccessful in 1962, and that's the famous line when he gives his press conference afterwards, which was...

NAFTALI: "You won't have Richard Nixon to kick around anymore."

SWAIN: And what happened to them in the years after that?

NAFTALI: Well, what happens to them is that Richard Nixon goes back to being a lawyer, but he never stops thinking about returning to politics. And it's very hard. One of the -- Mary was mentioning this about getting inside the head of a person or getting inside of a marriage. It's especially difficult to understand the inner workings of a family, of a presidential family. And we really -- we don't know. There are sort of bits and pieces which give us a sense of the debate within the family.

But the sense that I have is that Pat Nixon was much less interested in a return to the White House than her husband was. And her husband was plotting a return, not for '64, necessarily, but for later. And he was traveling abroad, he was meeting with foreign leaders in an effort to keep his name up and out there. And then -- and most importantly, in 1966, he takes advantage of the -- of a midterm election to go out and collect chits. He starts campaigning for people around the country, and they win, and they remember the fact that Richard Nixon campaigned on their behalf.

So he is preparing for 1968. The extent to which Pat Nixon was looking forward to 1968, I have my doubts. But he certainly was. And this is where I think the partnership may have changed.

BRENNAN: Actually...

SWAIN: What did she do during those years?

BRENNAN: During the years, she -- they moved back to New York, and her girls are getting older, and she takes them to museums, she tries to get involved in some charity work. Tricia has her debut. She takes...

SWAIN: So she's a mom?

BRENNAN: Yes. So she is a mom, but I think it's also a time in which, in some ways, she's a little lost, because she tells one of her friends, after you've been in politics, it's hard to just do charity work, it's hard to go back to something else. And so she keeps trying to find things to do.

And you can tell that there's strains in the marriage. Helene, her friend Helene Drown writes to her and makes suggestions of how she and Dick can reconnect. And Pat says, well, he's gone, I don't really have the time to do this.

And so I think that she's not a stupid woman. She knows that he's planning to go back to the White House. She knows what he's planning. But she's lost in terms of trying to figure out what to do. I mean, this is a woman whose children are growing up, and she is somebody who's always had work to do.

And so she goes back and works in his office. There are times when she goes back and she'll answer phones as "Ms. Ryan," because she tells Helene, "It makes the time go by," because she doesn't have something else to do. So I do think that there is a sense of her trying to figure out what she's going to do at this point.

SWAIN: The Nixon White House lasted January 20, 1969, through August 9, 1974, when Mr. Nixon resigned, but there were years full of a number of policy accomplishments and some heartache, the largest of which, of course, was the continuation of the Vietnam War.

Other things to note during his presidency, the state visit to China, the Russia visit, in which it resulted in the SALT I Treaty, the moon landing in 1969, the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency. Then later on, as the administration continued, the resignation of Vice President Spiro Agnew under controversy, then the discovery of the Watergate break-in, and ultimately, Richard Nixon's resignation.

We're going to focus on the first lady during all of those years. So let me start -- we said at the outset that she chose an issue, and her issue was volunteerism. How much did that -- how much choice did she have in that selection? And did it affect a worldview?

NAFTALI: She was actually not really -- didn't want to have to choose an issue. She didn't like that fact. In fact, it bothered her when in the first few months of the administration, she kept being asked what -- well, you know, what is your focus? And she said -- she said, "People." I mean, she said -- she didn't want there to be one. Yes, volunteerism would be what she'd be best known for in that first year. She'd made trips around the country to show her support for -- for I guess they were called Vests volunteerism -- Vest Pockets of Altruism.

But the thing about it was that she didn't want to be programmed. And what she felt was -- and this wasn't a criticism of Lady Bird Johnson. Lady Bird Johnson was known for the beautification program. Pat Nixon did not like the fact that it was assumed that she would be programmed to do one thing.

And they came to her. Apparently, the White House -- you know, the west side, the West Wing came to her with all kinds of ideas of things she might want to do. And she just disliked the idea that this is what she had to do as first lady.

BRENNAN: Well, and volunteerism worked for her, in the sense that if she had to have something, she had, in a sense, volunteered her whole life. So that worked. It worked with the Nixon administration, in terms of what they wanted to do.

But I agree with Tim that she didn't want to pick one topic. She would rather go out and see people and see what they were doing. And even when they did -- we do have this volunteerism -- she tells people, "I don't want local officials, I don't want the heads -- the CEOs and the heads of these corporations coming. I want to go see the volunteers, and I want to see the people they're helping, and I want to talk to them." So she was very much involved with the people, not with the big shots.

SWAIN: But the selection of the issue struck me, when I read about it, that it supported the image of a conservative president, and that's the private sector rather than the public sector addressing societal ills. Is that what it was all about?

BRENNAN: I think that that was a big part of the West Wing's choice of these topics and also of making sure that the volunteer places that she went to see were correctly done, that they were not something that was going to be too radical, they weren't going to get her into some place where she shouldn't be, where she should have to discuss anything.

So I do think -- I think that first term, she's really trying to find herself as first lady, and she doesn't have the -- well, some of the tools yet to stand up to the West wing.

NAFTALI: The tensions -- if I -- the tensions between the East Wing and the West Wing are really important, because as President Nixon begins to separate more and more his personal life from his

political life, Pat Nixon is getting -- is actually seeing the effect, because the Haldeman team, H.R. Haldeman, Bob Haldeman, chief of staff to President Nixon, the Haldeman team doesn't particularly enjoy working with Pat Nixon, does not take advantage of her many skills.

In fact, when she goes to Africa in 1972 and does such a wonderful job of representing our country in January of 1972, and gets rave reviews, there's a note that the president gets about how well Pat did, and it's given to Pat Nixon, and she writes to her friend, Helene Drown, "Well, they finally figured out what I can do."

SWAIN: Let's take a call from Beth is Folsom, California. Hi, Beth, you're on the air.

BETH (ph): Hi. This is a wonderful program. I want to say that -- to the question about where President Nixon proposed to Mrs. Nixon, it was in Dana Point, on a cliff in Dana Point.

And then, also, my question is -- which they've sort of brought up, but how Mrs. Nixon, when she was in the White House, that she added to the antiques and brought in so much of American culture on what Jacqueline Kennedy had started, and also her personal diplomacy, as Dr. Naftali just brought about, in Africa and then also when she went to Peru. Thank you very much, and I have enjoyed the program.

SWAIN: Those are all questions that we're going to tell in our story, so let us do that as the next few minutes unfold.

Staying with volunteerism, we have a clip of Pat Nixon herself talking about her volunteerism and her travels. Let's listen to that.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

PAT NIXON: It is a great joy for me to be here with you at this meeting and to receive this award. However, I would like to say that I am receiving it in the name of all the volunteers who are working throughout this land and throughout this world.

As you know, I have been in most of the countries of the world and all over the United States. And I have met these good people who give of their hearts and hands to assist others. And there is no more noble way to spend part of a life.

I do thank all of you who are here in administrative positions and as volunteers. And I do thank all of the people in this United States who are so kind and generous. I'm proud of them, and I'm proud to thank them here today.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: In that clip, Mrs. Nixon is talking about her travels. And our caller wanted to know about it. We said at the outset that she is the most traveled first lady up to that point. Was traveling something she chose to do? Or did the White House send her on the road, or a combination thereof?

BRENNAN: She loved traveling. And I think that it's important that, when she traveled as first lady, that was when she felt the most useful. It got her away from the control of the West Wing, and it reconnected her to the days when they were the second couple and she and Dick were a team, and they could go out and do things.

When she went out both as first lady and when she was the second lady and did her travels, she insisted that she was not going to go do formal receptions and teas. She wanted to go out and see what

the people were doing. She wanted to go to women's homes. She wanted to go to orphanages and to schools and to hospitals.

She didn't want to do -- she didn't want bouquets of roses. She wanted to go out and shake people's hands. She sometimes got in trouble for that from her security detail, but that's what she wanted to do. She was most interested in seeing what the people were doing.

NAFTALI: Her first foreign trip is very important. Her first foreign trip, which is to Peru, happens at the request of President Nixon. It's not that President Nixon is forcing her out of the White House. It's that -- and then Julie writes about this.

The demonstrations following the Kent State massacre traumatized the Nixon family. Pat decided to bring the family back from Camp David so that Richard Nixon wouldn't be alone in the White House. But it's clear that that period, late May -- from early May through June of 1970 were very difficult for the Nixon family, and especially for Pat Nixon.

And the president thought it would be -- because she was concerned, she had heard about the earthquake in Peru, 50,000 died, 800,000 people were left homeless. She was watching what was happening, and I suspect that the president realized that to restart her, he needed to gave her something where she felt she was doing something good. And she cared about what was happening in Peru.

And Peru was a very interesting choice, because the United States was not close to Peru. There was a revolutionary government in Peru, which had criticized the United States, and to send Pat of all places to Peru involved a little bit of a political risk.

But she did it. But this was Richard Nixon's choice. She said yes, and it proved to be wonderful for her and very good for U.S.-Peruvian relations. She ended up getting an award from the government of Peru. And the Peruvian government, which had not had much say that was very good about the United States, actually thanked the United States for what Pat Nixon helped to do.

SWAIN: It's also worth noting that she traveled to Vietnam.

BRENNAN: Yes. She's the first first lady to travel into a combat zone, because she insisted on visiting soldiers in the hospital, on visiting the troops. She, again, was not someone who wanted generals to give her an update. She wanted to go and talk to the soldiers. It didn't matter that it was a combat zone. She needed to go and talk to the boys themselves and to be able to calm them down, because her son-in-law, both of her sons-in-law had been in the military. And she felt very close to all of these young men.

NAFTALI: The trip to Peru was her first solo trip, but she did go. She did accompany the president in 1969, and that's when she went to South Vietnam. They -- she actually spent time in a hospital meeting with troops, with wounded soldiers, and that was her choice.

SWAIN: Our next video is about Pat Nixon's travel. Let's watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JIM BYRON: Mrs. Nixon was one of the most widely traveled first ladies in our country's history. This is her diplomatic passport that was used during her time as second lady. And you can see here the photos of Vice President and Mrs. Nixon, the passport is full of stamps relating to the different nations that they visited, 53 in total from 1953 to 1961.

Mrs. Nixon really wanted to go out into the field and see the people. She wanted to work with them, see what she could do to help. She wanted to go to hospitals and orphanages. When she went to Panama, she even visited a leper colony.

These tags were used by Mrs. Nixon on her second-to-last trip as first lady. She and the president visited Austria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Israel, and Jordan. It was the first time that a president and first lady had ever been to Israel. These tags were on Mrs. Nixon's personal luggage.

Let's go into the museum and see some of the items that are on display related to Mrs. Nixon's travels as first lady.

OLIVIA ANASTASIADIS: Here in the museum, we have a lot of samples of gifts that were given to Mrs. Nixon during her foreign travels. This is one of the oldest pieces in the collection. It was a gift to Mrs. Nixon from Golda Meir in November 1969. It's a carnelian necklace. It's 12th through 11th century B.C.

Mrs. Nixon also received a very fine example of a Belgian-laced table cloth given to her in February of 1969 by His Excellency King Baudouin of the Belgian Kingdom.

So there's also a beautiful pin watch. This is made out of gold. It's made out of rubies and diamonds. This was given to Mrs. Nixon by the prime minister of Italy, Emilio Colombo, back in September of 1970.

During the president's historic trip to China, Mrs. Nixon accompanied him in '72. And her extensive travels took her to the Beijing Zoo, then known as the Peking Zoo. And she really enjoyed visiting and learning about the pandas that they had there on display.

So that evening, as Mrs. Nixon and the president were meeting with their host, Chou En-lai noticed how Mrs. Nixon was looking at a package of cigarettes. The cigarettes have pandas on them. And the package, she was admiring that. And he said, "Well, I understand you also admired the pandas at the zoo." She says, "Yes, aren't they darling?" And he says, "Well, we will make sure that you have pandas to go home with." So, as part of this gift, there were two pandas sent, Hsing-Hsing and Ling-Ling. One of them was transported in this particular crate.

And, of course, when the president heard that Mrs. Nixon was interested in going on a foreign trip with him, well, he obviously said, "Hey, put her on." And so it was important for her to uphold and support her husband. Just her being there would bring so much goodwill. And it was always evident at the end of the trips, where news reports would come out, you know, they would talk about the president this way, but they would always say what a wonderful job Pat Nixon did.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: Two of the most important trips of the Nixon administration that the Nixons went as a couple were the trip to China, as described to that video, appropriately as a historic trip, and also a trip to the Soviet Union, which we said at the outset resulted in two important treaties between the two nations. The China trip, what was her role, as the president was opening these doors with the Chinese government?

BRENNAN: Since the press was allowed to go, since the Chinese government allowed the press to follow them, and since the president was in these closed-doors meetings, what the American public saw of China was what they saw through Pat. So she was the one taking them around. The Chinese public that she met, she was the representative of the Americans that they met, and she introduced America to China.

So she was supposed to do the sight-seeing. In fact I think at one point, he even said, "Well, we need somebody to do the sight-seeing." But for her, this was an amazing trip. She got to go and meet people. They would come up and try to quote Mao to her. And she would say, "Oh, yes, I've read that book," and then she would go on to something else, because that wasn't what she wanted to do. And she would go talk to the people as much as she could. There were some limitations.

SWAIN: Abigail in Rochester Hills, Michigan, you're on the air.

CALLER: Hi.

SWAIN: Hi, Abigail.

CALLER: Okay. So I just want to say that I've really enjoyed this show.

SWAIN: Thank you.

CALLER: I've watched almost every episode so far. And my question was that -- did meeting Mr. Reagan, you know, make -- Mrs. Reagan -- Nixon, sorry, not Reagan, Nixon -- you know, make her a Republican? Would she, if she married someone else, be a Democrat? Or did she make that decision on her own? Thank you.

SWAIN: Well, that's interesting. Abigail, before you go, if you've watched every program -- first of all, how old are you?

CALLER: I'm 12.

SWAIN: You're 12? And do you have a favorite first lady since you've watched them all?

CALLER: Favorite? I don't know. Maybe Lou Hoover.

SWAIN: Lou Hoover.

NAFTALI: Ah.

SWAIN: Well, thanks very much for calling in, and we hope you make it with us all the way to the end. It's great to have you in the audience. We were talking about Lou Hoover before...

BRENNAN: Yes, I know.

SWAIN: ... the program.

NAFTALI: Very discerning 12-year-old.

SWAIN: Yes. So the answer to the question, would she have been a Republican if she married someone else? Was that her -- was she political?

BRENNAN: Well, I have to say that was a very good question.

NAFTALI: Yeah, it was.

BRENNAN: And she was an independent before, in terms of where her political standings were before they got married. Would she has been something else? I don't think so. I think, in terms of the way that her kind of conservative moral values and her -- especially her economic point of view, she probably would've been a Republican, anyway.

SWAIN: Well, coming out of the China trip was a popular addition to the National Zoo that is still the most popular exhibit today, and that's the pandas. We have a clip about the pandas here that also includes a phone call from the president that we want to listen to and then have you comment on.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

PAT NIXON: I noticed Dr. Ripley is wearing a panda tie, and I have my panda pin, I'll have you know. And I think pandemonium is going to break out right here at the zoo.

Hi.

RICHARD NIXON: Just checking to see how the panda thing went? I've been in a meeting, and so I -- I was a little bit...

PAT NIXON: Oh, they were just darling.

RICHARD NIXON: Yeah, did they...

PAT NIXON: Everybody raved about them.

RICHARD NIXON: How did it work? Were you able to get up to them? Do you pet them or anything like that? Or they don't allow that? Or how does it work?

PAT NIXON: No, their glass cage...

RICHARD NIXON: Glass, uh-huh. But did they get a good picture of it, I hope or...

PAT NIXON: Well, there were an awfully lot of people there. Boy, it was well-covered.

RICHARD NIXON: Good, good. But a lot of interest. And how did -- the people seem to enjoy -- I just -- did they get a good -- I bet even the press was pleased, huh?

PAT NIXON: Yeah, I think so, yeah. They all -- they're comic little things, you know?

RICHARD NIXON: Yeah? Yeah?

PAT NIXON: They stand up and...

RICHARD NIXON: Do they, really?

PAT NIXON: Oh, yeah. They had a structure inside the cage, sort of wood, you know, and one of them climbed up there and sat up there and chewed his toes. He had cinnamon toes. It was a scream. I hope they got it.

RICHARD NIXON: Isn't that great? Isn't that great?

PAT NIXON: But they were so many, I'm just not sure how it will...

RICHARD NIXON: Oh, well, they'll come back and get them, and I'll -- that will be great.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: That was obviously one of the audio recordings of the White House conversations from the president's office. And we get a little glimpse of their relationship. What did we learn there?

NAFTALI: That they didn't talk on the phone very often. That's -- I'm just thinking of how Pat Nixon would've petted a panda bear. But, you know, there's a little bit of controversy over whether, in fact, she had asked for the pandas.

I heard, you know, one of President Nixon's aides told me that it was a misunderstanding, that Pat Nixon smoked -- that wasn't a misunderstanding -- she didn't like to show people that she smoked, but she smoked a lot. And, indeed, as Olivia Anastasiadis, the supervisory curator at the Nixon Library, very fine curator, said, there were pandas on the Chinese cigarette packs. But it's not clear whether Mrs. Nixon was just motioning towards the panda because she wanted a cigarette or because she really liked pandas and wanted them for the United States.

So it's not clear whether Chou En-lai actually knew what she was asking for, but the outcome was wonderful for the United States and for, of course, the National Zoo. And as we see from this particular conversation, it actually added a little bit of levity to the Nixon household.

SWAIN: Karen is in Greenfield, California. You're on the air.

CALLER: Yes, hello?

SWAIN: Hi.

CALLER: Yes, thank you for accepting my call. I have really enjoyed your show for these past nine months. This is my third time calling. And the question I have is -- you said that Mrs. Nixon disliked politics. Even after her husband's defeat in 1960 and '62, do you think she could have been more insistent on her husband not running for public office? Or did she like just privately accept that her husband wanted this top executive job in the United States government? That is my question. Thank you.

BRENNAN: Could she have been more insistent? Well, I don't know that in her personality if she could have been more insistent. Could she have threatened to divorce him in 1962 and 1963? I don't think that that would have been something that really would've entered her mind. And I think that she knew to stop him from going on that she would have to do something that drastic.

He had written a list in 1954 of reasons to drop out of politics. And the top reason was that it would make his wife happy. But from 1954, even though he promised and wrote this list in real life, and his wife did not like politics, he couldn't stop himself. I think that it was something that was very much a part of him.

And I think that even though she disliked all of this, I don't know that there really -- that she would have been able to do that. That would have been asking her to be something that she wasn't.

SWAIN: So this series is called "Influence and Image." I want to talk a little bit about influence. Pat Nixon became involved to some degree in issues typically thought of as woman's issues. For example, she supported the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution.

She spoke out about more women getting elected to public office, regardless of what party they belong to. She apparently urged the president, somewhat strongly, to appoint a woman to the Supreme Court. And we know that she had opinions that she expressed somewhat publicly about abortion, calling it a private decision for a woman.

How much influence did she have on the president's thinking on any of these issues? And was it controversial that the public knew her opinions about these things?

NAFTALI: Well, the Nixon administration made a big effort with regard to hiring more women into the federal service. Barbara Franklin was the point person for this, and it was a real initiative on the part of the Nixon Administration.

Did this come from Pat Nixon? We don't know. We know that Julie played a role, working with Barbara Franklin. There's no doubt that Pat Nixon was supportive, but I don't know. Perhaps you've found evidence that she was the one who was pushing this.

We do know that she was very disappointed in October of 1971 when President Nixon had two open seats on the Supreme Court, she really hoped that one of them would go to a woman. When that didn't happen, she let President Nixon know at a private family dinner that Julie writes about. I mean, she really let him know that she was not happy.

BRENNAN: And then didn't speak to him for a while, which was kind of her way of letting him stew on things and getting back at him, and -- because she was very -- she thought she had a promise from him that he was going to appoint a woman. She was very upset about that.

NAFTALI: You know, for those of you who've been watching the series, just watched a discussion about Lady Bird Johnson. And you had Lady Bird -- I'm sure saw evidence of Lady Bird Johnson watching her husband give a speech and critiquing it and telling him how he could do a better job.

That was not what Pat Nixon did. She was not that kind -- she was not a political adviser for Richard Nixon. She had views, and Richard Nixon knew them, but he did not involve her in the policy process. And the evidence of that is if you look at the tapes or listen to the tapes.

By law, the U.S. government cannot release tapes of President Nixon and Pat Nixon talking about family matters that -- I mean, it actually was a court decision. But whenever President Nixon and Pat Nixon are talking about governmental matters, such as the pandas, the U.S. government is permitted to -- that material belongs to the American people, and U.S. government can open it.

There's very little on the tapes of the two of them talking, because there's very little of the two of them talking about substantive policy issues. That's just not the role that Pat Nixon played. She's quite different from Lady Bird Johnson and even different from Jackie Kennedy, because Jackie herself participated a little bit in policy discussions with the president.

SWAIN: Regina Crumkey asked, did Pat start any fashion trends or White House traditions? We have a video about Pat Nixon's personal style while she was in the White House. Let's watch that next.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

OLIVIA ANASTASIADIS: Mrs. Nixon, wasn't a real clotheshorse, per se, but she loved looking trimmed and clean. She loved spare design. She loved wearing the clothes designed for her by Adele Simpson. She would also wear things off the rack by Geoffrey Beene.

This coat Mrs. Nixon wore when they went to the February 1972 trip to China. It was cold. And you don't see that here, but the coat is lined with fur, completely lined inside, so that would keep her warm.

We're fortunate to have an inaugural gown here at the library. Usually the first lady's tradition is to give her inaugural gown to the Smithsonian Institution, where they display the first lady's gowns. For those who just had the one term, you know, that's where the gown goes.

But if you have a second term, that presidential library will keep that second gown. And Mrs. Nixon wore this at the 1973 inaugural, this beautiful beaded dress and aquamarine -- aquamarine or turquoise were her favorite tones. She loved this color. And this was designed by Adele Simpson.

One kind of quirky thing that Mrs. Nixon always asked for when her gowns would be designed, an after-dinner dress or, you know, a gown, she'd asked to have pockets put in, because people would slip notes to her, so this way she could, like, give them to her husband after the event.

Here what we have on display is her mother of the bride dress, which was designed by Priscilla of Boston, a very famous wedding gown-maker, which incidentally, she also designed both Mrs. Nixon's daughters' wedding gowns.

So you see here Tricia Nixon Cox's gown. And behind her is a photograph of a gazebo that was made on the occasion of her wedding at the Rose Garden at the White House. And that gazebo is on display here in the grounds at the Nixon Library.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: So I wanted to show this video, because it struck me that Pat Nixon's clothing was often a political issue. And you mentioned the Checkers speech, were Richard Nixon talked about her Republican cloth coat. So, fashion as politics. Would you comment a little bit on that?

BRENNAN: Well, you know, in 1960, somebody asked -- because they were making a big deal about Jackie's wardrobe and how much money Jackie might have spent on her wardrobe -- and somebody said, do you want to -- maybe you and Mrs. Nixon should debate. And Pat said, "Well, I would be happy to debate Mrs. Kennedy, but I don't want to talk about clothing, because I don't think that's a very important issue in these days."

I do think that clothing makes a statement. And one of the other first things that Pat did was she appeared in a magazine -- I think it was McCall's or Ladies' Home Journal, in a pantsuit in 1972, in the summer of 1972, I think it was. And this was a very big deal, because she never wore pants. Dick didn't like pants. And so she never appeared in public in slacks.

And so that fact that she would appear in this magazine in a pantsuit, I think, is making a political statement. I think that by the time you get to '72, you do have a Pat Nixon who was coming into her own. I mean, she had gone to Africa, she had gone to China, she had gone to the Soviet Union, she had done all of these things, and here she is in pants. I think that is clothing as politics.

SWAIN: And I'd like to ask you about social events in the White House and their significance. That video referenced the White House wedding of Tricia to Ed Cox. How important an event was that? And how did it strike politically, given the president's standing in the polls at that time?

NAFTALI: Well, it was probably Pat Nixon's happiest day in the White House. I don't think there's any doubt. And it's sort of -- it's an inflexion point, because right after that, you have the Pentagon papers controversy and the plumbers and things start to get out of hand. And so that moment in the summer of 1971 is a very sweet moment for the family.

SWAIN: One other event, because it has not been matched to this day, the largest event ever thrown at the White House was the Nixon's tribute to the Vietnam prisoners of war. Can you talk about the significance of that? In fact, the library just celebrated the anniversary of it this year.

NAFTALI: Well, I think that part of the story of Pat Nixon in the White House is a story of the pressures on the family because of the country's reaction to the president's Vietnam policy.

Whatever you think about the president's Vietnam policy, I think it's hard to dispute the fact that the country's reaction had a very, very strong effect on the Nixon family. And Pat in particular was affected by it. One of the reasons why the president encouraged her to leave on these solo trips was to pick up her morale.

And after the successful conclusion of the negotiations, which took place -- which resulted in an agreement in January of 1973 to end the American participation in the war in Southeast Asia, the White House very much wanted to celebrate this achievement and to put a positive final note to what had been such a difficult war for this country.

And that was this event, because the president had made the argument that he had been thinking always about getting the POWs out. And so their coming to the White House was a symbol of his achievement. Actually, the story is more complicated, the war could have ended sooner, but that's a different story, and that's for a different hour of C-SPAN.

But the fact is that, for Pat Nixon, as for the other members of the family, seeing the POWs was a source of pride and happiness and accomplishment. So I don't doubt that that evening was very special for all of them.

SWAIN: And on her stewardship of the White House, a question that a caller asked, what did she do of note during her years in the White House to the institution of the White House, the building itself?

BRENNAN: She actually worked very hard behind the scenes. She worked with Clem Conger -- if that's how you say his last name -- as a curator, and they worked very hard to restore the White House tokind of pick up where Jackie had left off and continue to get period pieces.

She could be very persuasive in convincing various institutions and museums to return pieces to the White House, to loan pieces to the White House. They went out and sought out people to donate the money to be able to get the proper pieces to fill the room.

She had always been very interested in decorating. She had decorated a number of their homes. So this was something that was very important to her and not something that was widely known. They didn't publicize this. It was kind of like she was doing it for a while before anybody realized that she was doing it.

And then, when Jackie comes, Jackie says, oh, this is all wonderful. And she really tried to give the credit to other people, rather than giving -- than taking it herself.

NAFTALI: When Pat Nixon came to the White House, one-third of the furnishings were antiques. When she left the White House, two-thirds of them were antiques. But -- some viewers might not know this -- Dolley Madison is famous for saving the canvas of George Washington in 1814. Well, she actually saved two canvasses. The other one was a portrait of herself. And Pat Nixon brought it back to the White House.

SWAIN: Bill is in Chillicothe, Ohio, and on the air. Hi, Bill.

CALLER: Hi. I was President Nixon's butler at Camp David. Of course, he had Manolo, who would always come with him. But I was at the House with the Nixons all the time at Camp David.

SWAIN: So what would you like people to know about the first lady?

NAFTALI: And please do an oral history with the Nixon Library.

CALLER: I want to get to the library, and I haven't been. We sent stockings of Mrs. Nixon. They somehow were misplaced, but she had sent them to the library at the time. My sisters had made them.

I was there during the panda years, also. I know she brought me back the tie. I think she brought it back for David, and it was out of style, so she had given it to me.

SWAIN: So what would you like the audience to know about Mrs. Nixon, since you had a chance to see her in a way that few people did?

CALLER: I often talked to her at breakfast. She would get up a little before the president, and she was always so kind and so nice, and so -- and treated me with such respect that I loved the whole family.

SWAIN: And what were their final years, as the pressure increased on the presidency -- were you working for them at that point? And what did you see?

CALLER: I only worked until '73, so I left a few months before he did. I was in during the -- it was my Navy years. And I left at '73, so I wasn't in at the end. But it was a little harder on them towards the end, yeah.

NAFTALI: Do you remember, sir, how they felt during the Christmas bombings, the last Christmas that you were there at Camp David?

CALLER: They stayed at -- I believe that was the year they stayed at camp.

NAFTALI: Yes.

CALLER: Instead -- they were going to go to California, and instead they stayed there at the camp. And it was a family time for them, and they stayed together, and I think they enjoyed that weekend together.

NAFTALI: Thank you very much.

SWAIN: Thank you so much for your call. It really added a little bit more to our understanding with your personal experience with them.

Before I leave this part, as the administration faced more and more challenges as Watergate continued to bear down, ultimately leading to the president's resignation, what was Mrs. Nixon's role vis-a-vis the president, vis-a-vis her family and the public?

And I also want to add to that. I've got several people who have seen the image of her as a drinker during this period. You write about it in the book. So would you add that to the story you're about to tell us?

BRENNAN: Okay, this was a very trying time. And I think it's important to remember that, as Tim had mentioned before, that the president didn't discuss policy. So when Mrs. Nixon told people that she only knew what she read in the papers, that was all she knew.

She's also someone who trusts her husband and who didn't trust Haldeman and Ehrlichman and the men surrounding him, so it's very easy for her to believe that these men are setting him up.

But she keeps getting all these questions. And the questions become increasingly hostile and increasingly persistent so that she can't avoid them. So here she is, at the height of finally figuring out what she wants to do as first lady, and now she can't avoid these questions about Watergate.

She becomes in many ways the rock. She has to -- she continues to do her schedule. She continues to go ahead and maintain the -- they'd go and visit people, go and do the set -- go out and go to teas, go to the meetings, because she has to.

And the people -- I think that, in terms of the drinking, that I think is -- was she drinking more? She was someone who liked to have a drink after dinner. Almost everyone of that generation did. People knew she drank Jack Daniels. It was kind of common knowledge around there. Did she drink more? Probably. I mean, who wouldn't? Was there any evidence that she was an alcoholic? No.

I mean, she would continue to have this schedule. There are press all over the place. If she was an alcoholic, they would've jumped all over that. This wasn't a time when they're going to hide something like that. So I think that there's very little evidence that she was an alcoholic, that she was a drunk, or anything like that.

NAFTALI: It's clear that the president lied to her about a number of things. And this is an important part of the story, because she is absolutely loyal to Richard Nixon. She's suffering for him. And he tells her that he had nothing to do with the enemy's list, when it was his idea. He tells her that Lyndon Johnson had bugged his campaign plane in the '68 campaign. That wasn't true, and he knew it wasn't true.

He filled her mind with things that made what she was reading in the newspaper make no sense at all to her. And in the end, he didn't even have the courage to tell her he was going to resign. He had Julie -- the first time he thought he would resign, August 2nd, he had Julie tell his wife, and then the whole family persuaded him not to resign. But when he finally made the decision to resign, he had Rose Mary Woods tell Mrs. Nixon.

SWAIN: And who was that?

NAFTALI: That was his secretary. He didn't even tell her. The other -- the one regret she had from that period, which I found really interesting -- and this is, again, is evidence that she was affected by Watergate but had no role whatsoever in managing it -- the president didn't tell her that there was a taping system.

The president also didn't involve her in the decision of what to do about the tapes, when it became clear that this was going to be a major issue when the taping system was about to be revealed to the public.

She felt that he had made a huge error, that he should've destroyed them. And by the way, he could have, because at that time in the United States, those tapes were private property that belonged to the president. Now, once they were subpoenaed, it'd be a different issue, but they hadn't been subpoenaed yet. She wanted to get rid of them, but he never asked her. She was not part of this at all; she just suffered from it.

SWAIN: Judy in Hermitage, Pennsylvania, you're on the air as we talk about Pat Nixon.

CALLER: Thank you so much for this series. You've done incredible hard work to get it on the air. And I do appreciate it. My question is, what is Pat's biggest unfulfilled dream and her biggest regret in or out of the White House? Thanks so much.

SWAIN: Mary?

BRENNAN: Hmm, it's a very good question. Her biggest unfulfilled dream...

NAFTALI: A movie actress? Film starlet?

BRENNAN: No, I don't think she wanted to be a movie actress. I think that, that if you look at where -- I think that being the foreign ambassador, the goodwill ambassador that she was, that she was coming into in '72 and that period, I think that if she could have continued to do that, I think that she would have loved for her husband to have completed his term, for her to have been able to continue to go out into the world and to meet people, and for him to have been able to end his presidency on a high note.

Because I think that you're right. I think that, for her, the two of them were so connected that she was not going to be able to be president, but she could experience all of that, and she could see -- she thought he was doing good work, and she knew she was doing good work. So I think that her regret would have been that they had to leave under such circumstances. And they didn't get to fulfill that.

SWAIN: We have 10 minutes left. And in that time, I'd like to understand their post-White House years. They returned first to San Clemente for five years and then to New York and New Jersey. The years were filled with some serious medical problems for both them. What was their life like?

NAFTALI: It's really interesting that her -- we could do a show about best friends of the first family. Helene Drown was very important. And in the first term, in the first presidential term, some of Pat Nixon's family and friends were worried about her. She seemed frail.

She seemed not to find her way, as Mary was saying. She was a rock during the last few months of the administration, at least that's how she's been described. She continued to be very strong when the president nearly died.

Richard Nixon almost dies a few months after leaving office. He gets phlebitis, which is -- it's an inflammation of the veins. He actually goes into cardiac arrest because of the reaction to -- I believe he has an infection. This happens in Long Beach, California.

SWAIN: Hospitalized for 23 weeks, right?

BRENNAN: No, 23 days.

NAFTALI: Twenty-three days.

SWAIN: Oh, okay. My goodness, I read that and I thought that's such long time.

NAFTALI: But he nearly dies. And she is very strong for the family.

SWAIN: Was he also suffering from depression during the period?

NAFTALI: Well, you know, the problem, again, with the president...

SWAIN: How do we know, huh?

NAFTALI: You know, the thing about it is, it's very hard to know about the medical condition about presidential families unless they let you know. In the end, the Eisenhowers actually opened up a lot of medical records about General Eisenhower, President Eisenhower.

We just don't know whether he was suffering from depression. There's no doubt that there were people around him who feared that he was suicidal. I mean, we've got, you know, accounts of people around him who thought he was suicidal.

What's important here, though, is that she found the resources within herself, despite this sort of national tragedy, to pull herself and the family together during his health crisis. And the real tragedy is that she then has her own health crisis.

SWAIN: She has a stroke.

NAFTALI: Yeah.

SWAIN: And can we know if this is tied to her smoking, or hard to tell?

NAFTALI: Well, what about the stress? Can you imagine, what is the effect on her body...

BRENNAN: High blood pressure, yes. Smoking for years...

NAFTALI: We don't have her -- her health records are not open, so...

SWAIN: But how serious was the stroke?

NAFTALI: It was very serious.

BRENNAN: Yes. I mean, she couldn't move her left side, her speech was slurred. She worked very hard to regain her strength and to be able to move her left arm. Was it Maureen Drown -- one -- somebody came up, saw her working very hard on one of those machines to build up your arm strength, because she was determined to come back, that she was not going to let this get her. But it was very serious.

SWAIN: And during this period of time, the president began to try to plot his return to acceptance in society, worked on his memoirs, and I'm wondering about her role in supporting all of that.

NAFTALI: I'm not sure if -- well, she really retires. And she has grandchildren now. And so she's, you know, very happy and proud grandparent.

She's not really -- she doesn't make many public appearances at all. And some of -- one in particular -- I think was her last public appearance -- was at the opening of the Reagan Library. And she's very frail. And some people comment on the fact that Richard Nixon actually leaves her, forgets -- almost forgets she's there, and she's having a hard time walking and breathing because of her sort of health problems at that point.

SWAIN: And when was the work on the Nixon Library done during this time period?

NAFTALI: Well, the Nixon Library, the first -- the private library, which is different from the federal library -- the federal government took it over in 2007 and made it -- well, because it's a federal library, it's nonpartisan.

The original library, the only private presidential library at that point was opened in 1991. And she was alive to see it open. She predeceases her husband. She dies the year before he does, and so she's buried at the library.

There's no -- I never found any evidence that she participated in shaping the museum, but I do believe that the rose garden that the library has, a beautiful rose garden, reflects her interests. And the area that is devoted at least now to the first lady has a big glass window so that you can see the garden.

She was very interested in opening the gardens of the White House to the public. She was the first to do that. So it makes a lot of sense that the visitor to the Nixon Library sees the rose garden, Pat's rose garden.

SWAIN: So how involved were the two daughters, Tricia Nixon Cox, who's now 67, Julie Nixon Eisenhower, who's now 65, in the preservation of their parents' legacy?

NAFTALI: Well, as you heard, the family owns the materials -- all of Pat Nixon's private materials are owned by the family, and they decide periodically to release materials.

You know, unfortunately, Mary did not get to see, as she should have, all the correspondence when she was writing her important book. But at least in 2012, some of the correspondence that had been withheld by the family was opened as a part of the celebration of Pat's 100th birthday.

SWAIN: How did she die?

BRENNAN: Well, she had another stroke, and she had emphysema and lung cancer from years of smoking.

SWAIN: And people have referenced they still remember to this day during her funeral service that video of the president as he attended the ceremony and really wept over her grave. Can you talk about what we can take away from that, watching as outsiders?

BRENNAN: I think that what you have is a man who loves his wife and who perhaps in some ways did not realize how much -- how central she was to holding him up, to propping him up. I think she was that way for her daughters, but certainly for him.

And I think that it goes back to their original relationship and the love that we saw there in the beginning. And I think she was a woman of tremendous strength who could not have been plastic. She had to be steel.

NAFTALI: I would hope for the sake of Richard Nixon that some of that was guilt, too, that he finally was coming to terms with what he had done and the strains that he had put on this fine woman.

SWAIN: Our final video is of her burial and her legacy. Let's watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JIM BYRON: This is the Pat Nixon Amphitheater at the Nixon Library. It's a very special place, because it was here, June 26, 1993, that Mrs. Nixon's funeral was held. Her casket was placed right up here, underneath the lovely tent with flowers. The Nixon family sat right over here. And on the other side were Presidents Reagan and Ford and their first ladies.

This is the Pat Nixon Rose Garden at the Nixon Library and was a very special place for both of the Nixons, in particular because Mrs. Nixon was instrumental in designing it for the grand opening of the Nixon Library in 1990. She loved gardening, had a special affinity for roses. Mrs. Nixon was instrumental in opening up the White House for garden tours in the spring, which is a tradition that is continued to this day.

This is the Pat Nixon Rose, which was developed in 1972 by a French designer when Mrs. Nixon was first lady. It is the only rose that will continually grow at the White House.

This is the final resting place of both President and Mrs. Nixon, only steps away from the president's humble 1910s farmhouse.

There's a great story behind the epitaph on Mrs. Nixon's memorial site, which she chose herself. It dates back to the trip to Peru that she took in 1970 as the ambassador of goodwill. She wanted to meet the people that were affected by this devastating earthquake that rocked Peru. She wanted to see the devastation; she wanted to find out what she could do to help.

And one of the reporters said to her, "Mrs. Nixon, what good will any of this do if the people who you're speaking to can't understand what you're saying?" And she replied, "Even when people can't speak your language, they can tell if you have love in your heart."

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: And as we close out here in our 90-minute biography of Patricia Nixon, Gary Robinson asks on Twitter, and it's a good way to end up, what would Pat Nixon say is her greatest contribution to the role of first lady?

NAFTALI: Dignity under strain. And she was dignified and proud throughout her period in office.

BRENNAN: Making sure that people understood that the White House was their house and that everyone should have a voice and that everyone should be able to come and everyone was welcome.

SWAIN: As we close out here, we want to say thank you to our partners at the White House Historical Association for their help in telling the stories of the First Ladies.

We've also been making available on our website the compendium of biographies of the first ladies. And it looks like this. It's available at cost, if you're interested. We still have many more first ladies to go, as our series continues. We hope you'll read along with us and learn more about this interesting aspect on American history.

And our special thanks to our guests tonight, Mary Brennan, whose book, "Pat Nixon: Embattled First Lady," is available, and to Tim Naftali, presidential historian, for helping to tell her story.

NAFTALI: Thank you very much.

BRENNAN: Thank you.

END