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CNN Larry King Live
Interview with Dick Cheney and Lynne Cheney

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LARRY KING, HOST: Tonight on Memorial Day, Vice President Dick Cheney, and Lynne Cheney, a rare in depth interview at the U.S. Naval Observatory in Washington, they're private residence. What a way for LARRY KING LIVE to start it's 20th anniversary week. The Cheney's are next on LARRY KING LIVE.

It's a great pleasure start our 20th anniversary week at the Naval Observatory in Washington D.C., on a beautiful spring morning, with the vice president of the United States, Dick Cheney. His wife will join us later. This begins our commemorative week of 20 years at CNN. This program was taped on Friday. The vice president is on his way to Colorado. He'll address the graduation of the Air Force Academy and get a little vacation time in.

I thank you very much for joining us.

DICK CHENEY, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: It's good to be with you.

KING: We go back a ways though.

D. CHENEY: We do indeed, Larry.

I was just remembering being interviewed by you at the 1980 Republican Convention.

KING: In Detroit.

D. CHENEY: Yes.

KING: On a boat.

D. CHENEY: On a boat, that's right. And radio.

KING: That's right. That was before CNN. The hours we spent, we were together in 1988 at the Republican Convention right before you went through your heart surgery.

D. CHENEY: That's exactly right. And we sat there the night before I went in and you explained to me what the procedure was all about because you'd been through it.

KING: And then the night when the president selected you to be his running mate, you were with us that night. So we have a lot to share.

Speaking of that, how is your health?

D. CHENEY: Good. No complaints. I've been very fortunate. The technology has stayed ahead of my disease. So I'm -- I get checked every 90 days very carefully. I've got a lot of good folks that look after me. But I've been fortunate that we've been able to treat it as effectively as we have.

KING: Does your defibrillator ever go off?

D. CHENEY: It never has.

KING: Never?

D. CHENEY: I've got an implantable defibrillator, basically. And if the heart rate gets too slow, it will speed it up like a pacemaker. If it goes too fast, it will give it a shock, like (INAUDIBLE)

KING: But you've -- it's never had to work?

D. CHENEY: Never gone off. So, that's...

KING: Are the doctors surprised at that?

D. CHENEY: No, not really. It's really a safety precaution more than anything else. And, obviously, if you ever need it, you'll be glad you've got it. They tell me I won't like it much if it does go off. It's kind of like getting kicked in the chest.

KING: They have it on a airplanes now.

D. CHENEY: They do. They've got these portable paddles. It's the same concept.

KING: Well, in the that vain of health, what did you make of Bob Woodward's comment recently that you're going to be a candidate for president?

D. CHENEY: Well, he didn't clear that with me in advance.

KING: Anything to that?

D. CHENEY: Well, Larry, I have to explain to everybody, I signed on for a tour with President Bush. I thought I had left government in 1993. I'd had 25 great years. And looked at running for president myself in 1994/95 and decided not to do it. Went off to private life and enjoyed that very much. Then then-Governor Bush persuaded me to sign on as his running mate five years ago, and I've been delighted that I did that. It's been a great decision. It's been a phenomenal time to be here. I love working with him.

But I've got about a little over -- a little less than four years to go now, and I'll have done eight years. By then, I'll be 98 years -- 68-years-old in 2009, when we finish the tour, and I've got other things I'd like to go do. So I have no plans to run for any other office.

KING: So, if they ask you it's a no.

D. CHENEY: That's right.

KING: Were you surprised when you saw him write that?

D. CHENEY: No. It's -- people have a lot of fun speculating about it, and that's fine. I mean...

KING: Will you get involved...

D. CHENEY: I tell jokes about it, but I'm not a candidate. I not going to be.

KING: Will you get involved in the next campaign?

D. CHENEY: Oh, I might if the time's right and when it's appropriate, depending on who it is. If I'm asked to help as the sitting vice president, I would expect I'd support our nominee.

KING: Let me get to some items in the news, and later I want to discuss your whole career. It's been an extraordinary career, living here et cetera. What do you make of the Bolton extension? Now we go to June.

D. CHENEY: Well, it's -- we're here on a week break, in effect, coming up -- week-long break for the Senate. Then they'll come back. We've got the votes to confirm him. I'm convinced we will get him confirmed. There's been a lot of talk these last few days since they put together a sort of gang of 14 that negotiated an arrangement on the judges that somehow now we've entered a new era of bipartisan cooperation that lasted about 48-hours, and the Democrats filibuster Bolton. But I think we'll get him through. He's a good man. He'll do a great job at the United Nations. We got 57 votes yesterday. We just need three more and I think we'll get those when they come back.

KING: They're asking for some more information, and the question arises, why not give it?

D. CHENEY: Well, the information that they've requested basically has been made available to the chairman and ranking member of the Intelligence Committees. But there are certain types of information that's sensitive that we protect and that goes only to a particular committee, say the Intelligence Committee, or if it's really sensitive, only to the top Republican and Democrat on the committee.

There's nothing there. This material has been reviewed, the information they're asking for. I think it's just an excuse. There's nothing being hidden from them that they don't

know or that members of the Senate aren't already aware of.

Senator Roberts, who's the chairman of the Intelligence Committee, got up on the floor the other day and explained that he'd been through all this material and that there's absolutely nothing there to be of concern. KING: Is there anything about Mr. Bolton, anything that's come out that gives you pause?

D. CHENEY: No. He's been confirmed four times previously. I've known him for a long time, both in private life, as well as public life. He's, I think, a superb public official. He's tough. But I can't think of sending somebody to the United Nations as our ambassador who's not tough. The U.N. is in some difficulty. They -- I think there are major questions on the minds of a great many Americans about the effectiveness of the organization, about the Oil- For-Food scandal, for example, we've seen, about their inability to deal with the Iraq situation for 12 years.

And I think the United Nations, and the president believes the United Nations badly needs to be reformed. We need a good, tough ambassador up there. Our great ambassadors in the past for the U.N. have been people like Pat Moynihan, a Democrat, Jean Kirkpatrick, a Republican.

KING: Adlai Stevenson was tough.

D. CHENEY: That's right.

KING: (INAUDIBLE) till hell freezes over.

D. CHENEY: That's right. And we need somebody like him. Somebody who will go up and not get captured by the international diplomatic crowd, if you will, but is there as America's representative to the U.N.

KING: But you don't want someone who's anti-U.N..

D. CHENEY: No.

KING: Who thinks there shouldn't be a U.N.?

D. CHENEY: Correct.

And John, I think, understands very well the value of the United Nations if we can get it to work right.

KING: Well, we're going to get up and move for a while, right? To Brooklyn, or something?

D. CHENEY: Well, apparently they need to, I guess, refurbish their building.

KING: Yes.

D. CHENEY: Yes, it's been there now, what, I guess -- well, we set it up 60 years ago this summer. So it's -- it needs sort of refurbished, if you will, not only from a physical standpoint, but in terms of how the institution functions, how it works. There are a number of proposals floating around for modifications of the Security Council and so forth.

KING: Amnesty International condemns the United States. How do you react?

D. CHENEY: I don't take them seriously?

KING: Not at all?

D. CHENEY: No. I -- frankly, I was offended by it. I think the fact of the matter is, the United States has done more to advance the cause of freedom, has liberated more people from tyranny over the course of the 20th century and up to the present day than any other nation in the history of the world. Think about what we did in World War I, World War II, throughout the Cold War. Just in this administration, we've liberated 50 million people from the Taliban in Afghanistan and from Saddam Hussein in Iraq, two terribly oppressive regimes that slaughtered hundreds of thousands of their own people. For Amnesty International to suggest that somehow the United States is a violator of human rights, I frankly just don't take them seriously.

KING: They specifically said, though, it was Guantanamo. They compared it to a gulag.

D. CHENEY: Not true. Guantanamo's been operated, I think, in a very sane and sound fashion by the U.S. military. Remember who's down there. These are people that were picked up off the battlefield in Afghanistan and other places in the global war on terror. These are individuals who have been actively involved as the enemy, if you will, trying to kill Americans. That we need to have a place where we can keep them. In a sense, when you're at war, you keep prisoners of war until the war is over with.

We've also been able to derive significant amounts of intelligence from them that helped us understand better the organization and the adversary we face and helped us gather the kind of information that makes it possible for us to defend the United States against further attacks. And what we're doing down there has, I think, been done perfectly appropriately. I think these people have been well treated, treated humanely and decently.

Occasionally there are allegations of mistreatment. But if you trace those back, in nearly every case, it turns out to come from somebody who had been inside and been released by to their home country and now are peddling lies about how they were treated.

KING: We're at the residence of the vice president on this week, start of week for me, 20th anniversary. Tomorrow, we'll be in Kennebunkport, Maine, with the Bushes; Wednesday night in New York with Bill Clinton. How are we doing so far? We'll be right

back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK).

KING: We're back with Vice President Dick Cheney at his residence. It's a beautiful spring morning. And again, as we said, if you just joined us, this was taped earlier for broadcast on this Memorial Day night.

Speaking of Memorial Day. Every day it seems we hear of more deaths in Iraq -- Iraqis, Americans. Does that give you pause? Did you ever say to yourself, maybe we shouldn't have?

D. CHENEY: No. I'm absolutely convinced we did the right thing in Iraq. Obviously we wanted to get it over with as quickly as possible. We regret every loss of an American in combat any place in the world. One of the difficult things about the job the president has, for example, is he has to make those decisions about when to send young Americans in harm's way. And it was necessary to do in Afghanistan and it was also necessary to do in Iraq.

But we're making major progress there. I mean we've got a new government stood up now. They had elections, free elections, really for the first time in centuries in January of this year. They're going to be writing a constitution this summer. That will lead to elections under that constitution. Later this year, there'll be a brand new government in place, duly elected under a newly written constitution by the end of the year.

At the same time, we're training Iraqis to take over the security requirements in Iraq.

KING: When do we leave?

D. CHENEY: We'll leave as soon as the task is over with. We haven't set a deadline or a date. It depends upon conditions. We have to achieve our objectives, complete the mission. And the two main requirements are, the Iraqis in a position to be able to govern themselves, and they're well on their way to doing that, and the other is able to defend themselves, and they're well on their way to doing that. They just announced that in the last day or two here, there've been stories about a major movement of some 40,000 Iraqi troops into Baghdad to focus specifically on the problem there.

KING: You expect it in your administration?

D. CHENEY: I do.

KING: To be removed. It's not going to be -- it's not going to be a 10-year event?

D. CHENEY: No. I think we may well have some kind of presence there over a period of time. But I think the level of activity that we see today, from a military standpoint, I think will clearly decline. I think they're in the last throes, if you will, of the insurgency. We've

had reporting in recent days, Larry, about Zarqawi, who's sort of the lead terrorist, outside terrorist, al Qaeda, head of al Qaeda for Iraq, may well have been seriously injured. We don't know. We can't confirm that. We've had reporting to that effect.

So I think we're making major progress. And, unfortunately, as I say, it does involve sending young Americans in harm's way. But America will be safer in the long run when Iraq and Afghanistan as well are no longer safe havens for terrorists or places where people can gather and plan and organize attacks against the United States.

KING: Have we ever been close to getting bin Laden?

D. CHENEY: Uh...

KING: You can tell us.

D. CHENEY: Well, we've had him on the run, I believe. We've -- clearly, we've dealt a major blow to the al Qaeda organization. We've just recently, for example, working with Pakistan, captured a man named Abu Faraj al-Libbi. He's the number-three man in the organization. He'd replaced Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who we captured a couple of years ago. We've captured or killed literally hundreds or perhaps thousands of the al Qaeda organization. I can't say that we've ever been close to bin Laden.

KING: The Israeli/Palestine situation. It's still -- apparently close, then it separates apart. Bill Clinton -- who will be with us Wednesday -- said that it's the worst. This is the hardest thing to deal with he has ever seen. Do you share that view?

D. CHENEY: It's certainly one of the most complex problems. And then the -- to Bill Clinton's credit, he spent a lot of time trying to solve this problem when he was president. He had Yasser Arafat, who was in the White House more than any other foreign leader. He really worked hard at trying to put something together, and in the end it didn't work, I think primarily because Arafat refused to say yes.

But I think we're back on track now in the sense that we've got Prime Minister Sharon in Israel has decided to withdrawal from Gaza and this summer they will take all of their people out of Gaza. Israel will no longer occupy the Gaza Strip. And then that territory will be turned back to the Palestinians. We've got a new democratically elected president of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, who's been here just this last week to visit with the president and who represents the best hope, I think, from the standpoint of being able to stand up a viable entity on the Palestinian side, somebody that could be an effective interlocutor force and then can do a good job for the Palestinians people.

KING: So you're actually optimistic?

D. CHENEY: I'm more optimistic than I've been at any time in the last four years. That doesn't mean it's going to be easy. It doesn't mean it will happen overnight. But I think there's some movement here. I think we've got people of good will on both sides. And if

we can get it right in Gaza, that is if the Palestinians can stand up an organization that can successfully run Gaza, and care for the needs of the Palestinian people, and also deal with the security threat to Israel, then I think we'll be able to make progress to get back on the path to the road map and the peace process that had some prospects for success.

You don't want to be pollyannish about it. President Clinton's right, this is a very, very tough nugget. These issues go back for generations.

KING: Centuries.

D. CHENEY: Absolutely. And -- but it's very important to try to get it right. It is a major source of unrest in the Middle East. And if we can get it resolved, that will be a significant event.

KING: And Sharon has a delicate balance, doesn't he? He has his right and his left.

D. CHENEY: Israel's a strong democracy. It's a very contentious issue. His government is split over the issue. He's provided, I think, remarkable leadership. He's been very strong, determined, decisive leader in going forward with this withdrawal. And, of course, he's been over to visit with us too just recently. We'll -- we're trying to support both parties in terms of encouraging them to do what needs to be done to make progress. And as I say, I think we're farther along now than we have been for a long time.

KING: We'll be right back with the vice president of the United States, Dick Cheney. Dan Rather will be with us on Thursday. Might ask about him, right after this.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: We're back with Vice President Dick Cheney. As I mentioned, Dan Rather's with us on Thursday night. I'll hook it as one question -- Rather-"Newsweek"-sources-always had it. What do you make of it?

D. CHENEY: You mean the problems...

KING: Yes. What do you do with it? How do you deal with it? You're an elected official. You've also been a private official. You're a government -- you're a media person. You get someone you trust. That someone tells you something. What? What's an informed source?

D. CHENEY: Well, an informed source, of course, is a device that allows the press to get access to important information sometimes, and report it. And lots of times, it needs to be reported. But there's a -- clearly needs to be professional standards applied here, adhered to, if you will, practiced by news organizations. They have to be careful not to be taken in or not to go with a major story on a very weak source or fail to check it out or get verification of it. And we've seen examples of that, that people make mistakes from time to time. Public officials do. News organizations do as well too. But I think there's a

special obligation on major news organizations, when they're dealing with what can sometimes be life-and-death matters, to get it right.

KING: Do you see it as deliberate?

D. CHENEY: I -- you know, I can't say that in terms of passing judgment on the motives of the people involved. I think, after the fact, when it's discovered, they obviously regret it. I think sometimes the pressures of the business, the competitive pressures, are enormous. You get a story and you want to go with it before somebody else beats you to the punch, so sometimes it doesn't get checked as thoroughly.

My sense of it is that the business has changed over the years, that they're used to be more careful checking of sources 30-years-ago when I was working in the White House than is true today. But the business was different then. There weren't any cable news networks. There were only three broadcast networks. There were a couple of major newspapers you had to worry about. There were deadlines, and, you know, after 6:00 at night, you'd made the deadlines for the major newspapers, and the new shows were over with, and there was sort of a lid went on, and people had time to come back and check stories before they went. Now, I think part of it's driven just by the sheer competitive pressures of the business. People want to go so hard to get the story out, that they don't check as carefully as they should.

KING: Have you, on the administration side, double-checked this Koran story?

D. CHENEY: Yes, we have.

KING: Because there were stories now in the Washington Post that there was some...

D. CHENEY: Well, the main story, remember, was an allegation that somebody had flushed a Koran down the toilet. That was totally bogus. And there's been an extensive investigation now. They've checked every allegation about mistreatment of the Koran. They found that nearly all of those reports were not true, and especially the one that -- about the Koran having been flushed down the toilet. I'm told they went back to the guy who was the original source of that report, and he said, well, he didn't really see it. He'd heard about it from somebody else.

The fact of the matter is it's I think basically been a bum rap. I think our guys have dealt with the Koran with respect in nearly every case. I think a lot of these stories have been promulgated by our adversaries, that is, people who were held at Guantanamo, stories they peddled after they left Guantanamo or after they got out in order to try to discredit the United States.

KING: But you can't control the actions of everyone.

D. CHENEY: You can't.

KING: If there's some sergeant somewhere who's doing something right now, you know, what can you do?

D. CHENEY: Occasionally that happens. I can remember when I became secretary of Defense, asking Bill Crowe one day, who was then the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, about the stories -- occasionally stories would show up in the press, you know, something going on in the military I didn't know anything about. I said, "What's going on, Bill." He said, "Look, Mr. Secretary," he said, "you know, this is a huge organization. We've got 3- or 4 million people involved." He said, "Imagine the worst possible thing you can think of," and he said, "you can be absolutely certain some place, somebody's doing it." And it was good advice and counsel.

But I think here, it's important to recognize that we really have been very careful in terms of treating these people with respect. And somebody -- one of the fascinating stories that happened just this week on this Koran story was Hamid Karzai was here, president of Afghanistan. Talked about the riots they had had in Jalalabad, supposedly in response to the story that appeared in "Newsweek" about flushing the Koran down the toilet. And the rioters had burned down a cultural center in Jalalabad and in the course of doing that, according to President Karzai, destroyed 400 Korans -- all over a report that one had been flushed down the toilet at Guantanamo, that was a false report.

So, we've got to keep things in perspective.

KING: Are ever -- are you concerned of enrollment being down in the recruitment in the military?

D. CHENEY: Well, we've got to work at it, obviously, and we are. I'm a great believer in the all-volunteer force.

KING: No draft.

D. CHENEY: I don't believe in the draft except under extraordinary circumstances, and we clearly haven't reached that. And the services generally are doing well. The Army's been having a bit of a problem. Of course, they're the ones most intimately involved in operations in Iraq at this stage, so we've got to go out and redouble our efforts in terms of recruiting, especially since we want to keep our standards high.

But I think -- I think we're doing very well at it. The reenlistment rates are very good. Retention's very good of the more senior people, people reenlisting. And you just have to get after it when you reach one of these periods of time when things drop of for one reason or another.

KING: What's your role? You know, you've been called "the other president," so many things. What specific duties are assigned to you?

D. CHENEY: Well, I spend a lot of time on national security matters. I begin every day

with -- in the Oval Office with the president going through the normal intelligence brief, provided by the CIA, now the new national director of intelligence.

KING: Did that today?

D. CHENEY: Did that this morning. And we do it six days a week. I spend, I would guess, 30 to 40 percent of my time in the national security area -- foreign policy, defense, intelligence and so forth. That's about the same amount of time, I would guess, he spends on those subjects. And it's an area where I've worked in the past, and the president asked me to spend a fair amount of time when I signed on.

I do quite a bit of work on the Hill on the big issues.

KING: Lobbying.

D. CHENEY: Lobbying, solving problems. My real job is as the president of the Senate. If you look at the Constitution, that's the one job I'm described as having. My payroll, my salary actually comes from the Senate. And a lot of people don't...

KING: The U.S. Senate pays you?

D. CHENEY: The U.S. Senate pays me. And a lot of people don't realize it wasn't until the Eisenhower administration, you know, 150 years after the founding of the republic, that the vice president even had an office in the executive branch. You always had -- your office was on Capitol Hill. And I have offices on Capitol Hill today, both in the Senate and the House, although I spend most of my time downtown.

KING: So it's the power that's perceived?

D. CHENEY: It's perceived. And what I'm able to do is to represent the administration up there. And I don't work a lot of issues, but when the big ones come along, lots of times I'll be asked to get involved. We'll get a deadlock between the House and the Senate on -- well, right now on the highway bill, for example. So I'll get involved in that. And two years ago, it was the big tax bill where we had fundamental differences that I was asked -- in that case, the leadership asked me to come up and mediate the conflict and put together the bill. So...

KING: We'll be right back with more of the vice president, and then Lynne will join us. Don't go away.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: We're back with Vice President Dick Cheney. Couple more issues, then Lynne will join us, and other things to talk about, plus his extraordinary career.

North Korea -- where's that going?

D. CHENEY: North Korea is a major problem. They claim that they have developed nuclear weapons.

KING: They tested them?

D. CHENEY: They haven't tested them, although there's speculation that they might at some point, obviously. We've been working with the Chinese, the Japanese, the South Koreans and the Russians to persuade the North Koreans to give up their aspirations for nuclear weapons, to get them to understand that they're not going to have normal relationships with the outside world, in terms of commerce, industry and trade, if they become a nuclear power. To date, you know, those talks have not produced much. We're continuing to work it very hard.

KING: You're worried about it?

D. CHENEY: I am concerned about it, partly because Kim Jong Il, who's the leader of North Korea, is -- I would describe as one of the world's more irresponsible leaders. He runs a police state. He's got one of the most heavily militarized societies in the world. The vast bulk of his population live in abject poverty and stages of malnutrition. He doesn't take care of his people at all. And he obviously wants to throw his weight around and become a nuclear power.

China can have a huge impact here, because they've got more extensive economic relationships with the North than anybody else, and a very long border with North Korea. The Chinese need to understand that it's incumbent upon them to be major players here.

KING: Do they?

D. CHENEY: I like to think so. We've certainly had a number of conversations with them about it. The fact is that if North Korea deploys nuclear weapons, it'll force other nations in the region to reconsider their positions, whether or not they need to go develop a deterrent, for example. So that in turn would raise questions about a number of the countries in that part of Asia, as to whether or not they would feel a requirement that they had to take military steps to protect themselves from a potential North Korean attack.

KING: What do we do if they do test?

D. CHENEY: Well, another step if the six-way talks don't work, obviously, would be to go to the U.N. Security Council and seek the applications of economic sanctions that would really close down the North Korean economy.

KING: Do you fear any possible attack there?

D. CHENEY: I -- it'd be extremely foolish for him to launch an attack against anybody. Fact of the matter is, South Korea is very well armed. They've got a very modern, good-

sized military. The United States, obviously we've got forces deployed in South Korea. And we're committed to come to the defense of South Korea should they be attacked. I don't think there's any way North Korea can win a conflict.

The danger here is that, being as irresponsible as he has sometimes been in the past, he could serve to destabilize the region, force others to defend themselves by equipping themselves with these kinds of deadly weapons, and that's not in anybody's interest.

KING: Is it difficult, Mr. Vice President, on those occasions when you disagree with the president? No one agrees with anyone 100 percent.

D. CHENEY: Right.

KING: Is that hard -- is that the hardest part of the job?

D. CHENEY: Not really. He makes the decisions. There's no question about who's the boss. I get to offer up my views and my opinions.

KING: Do you win some, lose some? D. CHENEY: Yeah, basically, I do. And others -- he's got other people that he's got great confidence in. In the international arena, people like Steve Hadley, Condi Rice, Don Rumsfeld; domestically, people like Karl Rove, Andy Card. And we don't always all agree on anything. Once in a while we do, but he'll get a variety of opinions, and he'll decide what he wants to do.

KING: I don't mean this as a hyphenated thing, but I move now to an issue. I'm not saying you disagree with him. What is your read on stem cell research?

D. CHENEY: Well, I think there's a lot of misinformation out there about the administration's position on stem cell research. This is the first president to authorize the expenditure of federal money on stem cell research. We have nearly doubled in the last four years the amount of money that's being expended, federal money, for this purpose. We're up now I think this year to over \$560 million being spent for this purpose.

What the president did do was say we won't use federal funds for the destruction of embryos in order to create stem cell lines. We're funding lines that already existed, and we're also funding adult stem cells as well as stem cells from cords, umbilical cords.

But we have not banned research on stem cells. There's a lot of that going on funded by private sources or at the state level.

KING: California with 3 billion.

D. CHENEY: California has put 3 billion into it. But we do believe that when you get into the area of destroying an embryo in order to create stem cell lines, that that raises serious ethical questions.

KING: But that would make in vitro questionable, wouldn't it?

D. CHENEY: No, it doesn't make in vitro questionable. It's what you do with the embryos that are left over from that process, and whether or not -- I think there are a lot of Americans who have legitimate concerns about having their tax dollars go for what they believe is the destruction of life, because you destroy those embryos. And that's a legitimate ethical question. The president has strong feelings about it. He's been very direct about it. He spent a lot of time on this decision before he made it.

KING: Are your feelings strong too?

D. CHENEY: I do. I basically agree with the policy. I support it.

KING: You're going to speak at the Air Force Academy.

D. CHENEY: I am.

KING: You last spoke there in 2001 before 9/11.

D. CHENEY: That's right.

KING: You're going to bring that up?

D. CHENEY: I expect I will. I haven't seen the text yet. I'm supposed to get it this afternoon. I've got speechwriters working on the speech. But it's -- when you go to one of the academies, these are remarkable young men and women, the very best that America has to offer, and especially as they're graduating after four years at the Air Force Academy, West Point, Annapolis. They're embarking upon a career of military service, and putting themselves in harm's way for the rest of us. And the patriotism and the pride, the commitment that they feel and they represent is something to behold. I love doing those service academy commencements. They're really remarkable events.

KING: But you can't make them just like wave-the-flag things, right?

D. CHENEY: No, no.

KING: These are serious, bright people.

D. CHENEY: These are serious people, and they've been spending, say, the last four years of their lives thinking about these issues and getting ready, if necessary, to defend the nation. And that's remarkable in itself. And they deserve a lot of credit and thanks for that. But they also have as good an understanding as anybody of what's at stake in the line of work they've chosen.

KING: I imagine 9/11 might come up.

D. CHENEY: I expect it might.

KING: Lynne Cheney joins us right after this. Don't go away.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: We're back, and we're joined now by Lynne Cheney. Lynne is the author of many books. It shows -- says you got another one out now, or coming?

LYNNE CHENEY, WIFE OF VICE PRESIDENT DICK D. CHENEY: I'm working on two, so they'll be coming out over the next month or the next year.

KING: What's it like living in this house?

L. CHENEY: It's a great treat, and what a special privilege. It's just so beautiful. The land around the house is just so gorgeous and green this time of year. We're very fortunate.

KING: Do you feel like renters?

D. CHENEY: Sure. I mean, it's a temporary arrangement, but we've been here now over four years. Part of the beauty of it is, it's almost in downtown Washington, but the whole complex is about 75 acres. There are 12 head of deer on the place. It's like living in the -- you know, it's somewhat isolated. There's a great deal of privacy for being right off Massachusetts Avenue and Embassy Row. It's an amazing place.

KING: How many presidents have you served?

D. CHENEY: Nixon, Ford.

L. CHENEY: Reagan? Do you count Reagan?

D. CHENEY: Reagan, I was in the Congress for eight years. And then 41, and now -- so I guess five -- four that I worked for, and five that I was associated with.

KING: What's that been like for you?

L. CHENEY: Well, it's been a great adventure. I read a lot of history. I think about history a lot. And it's been a front-row seat on history. What an amazing thing to be able to -- you know, to witness our pulling out of Vietnam when Dick was in the Ford administration. The Berlin Wall coming down when Dick was in the Bush administration as secretary of defense.

KING: Touched all the bases, huh?

L. CHENEY: Yeah. You know, Desert Storm. That was an amazing time in our country's history. And then the war on terror, and the absolute amazing fact of what this country

does, which is not, you know, just advance freedom for our own citizens, but advance freedom around the world. Fifty million people have been liberated in Afghanistan and Iraq. That's an amazing thing.

KING: What's been the downside for the marriage?

L. CHENEY: Well, I don't know. You know, this is a nice arrangement. Dick does work here a lot, so I get to see to see him...

D. CHENEY: (INAUDIBLE) the office.

L. CHENEY: ... get to see him more. I think there have been times in the past, you know, when he's been gone.

KING: He travels a lot.

L. CHENEY: Just gone a lot. And that's always hard on any marriage. But, you know, I spend time with military wives. The wives of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the chairmen of the various armed forces. These are women who have, you know, held families together in a way that is amazing to think of.

KING: Did you enjoy private life as much? It was much more financially rewarding.

D. CHENEY: I enjoyed private life. It was more financially rewarding. But, you know, it's very special to serve in a senior position in the government, to get to be vice president of the United States, to have the sense that you were part of that process that sort of defines our civilization by which we select our leaders; to do it twice, two national campaigns, and to win one very, very close, obviously, in 2000. And it's a -- it's just a remarkable experience. I wouldn't trade that public service for anything.

KING: He says absolutely not for anything after this.

Do you agree?

L. CHENEY: Well, you know, one of the things that he's talking about, we have spent time in private life. And I do think that there's a sense, when you're in public life, when you're in politics, to think there's nothing else. Well, we know there's something else. We had those five very nice years in Texas and enjoyed that greatly. So I look forward to that.

KING: Would you like to be first lady?

L. CHENEY: Oh, my goodness, I think we couldn't...

KING: I mean, if he said, you know, let's do it.

L. CHENEY: ... we couldn't have a better first lady than Mrs. Bush is now. Isn't she amazing?

KING: Well, but she can't be again.

L. CHENEY: Well, who knows, you know.

KING: I'm trying to see if there's a possibility...

L. CHENEY: When I think of, you know, people are thinking...

KING: He says no, but you've got all the clout.

L. CHENEY: ... of Mrs. Clinton running for president. I think Mrs. Bush ought to run for president. If we want to have a Bush dynasty, let's get Laura Bush. Has she been wonderful in these...

KING: What do you make of that?

L. CHENEY: ... last five years.

KING: Mrs. Bush versus Mrs. Clinton.

D. CHENEY: It's a great idea.

KING: Biggest turnout in American history, right?

D. CHENEY: And I think I know who would win too.

KING: Are you concerned about his health? He seems to be doing very well.

L. CHENEY: You know, we have just been so fortunate. I heard Dick say earlier that we live in an amazing time where the technology to take care of people's health has advanced so quickly. So, you know, I learned a long time ago that the best thing to do, and you know this as well as we do, is to accept what your situation is, to deal with it in as prudent a manner as you know how to and as your good doctors know how to, and then live a full and exciting life.

KING: We've dealt with the same doctors as George Washington Hospital. They...

L. CHENEY: Oh, is that right? They're very good.

KING: But are you concerned when you hear a cough or you see anything? Are you a concerned...

L. CHENEY: No, but I do nag a lot.

D. CHENEY: Yes.

KING: You do? "Don't eat that."

L. CHENEY: Now I think that it's probably good for wives to, you know, keep track of their spouses' health, good for husbands to keep track of their spouses' health too. So it's more like, will you be home in time to exercise? That's my big question.

KING: We'll be right back with the Cheneys after this. Don't go away.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK).

KING: We're back with the Cheneys at their residence. All right, Liz works for the State Department, right?

L. CHENEY: That's right.

KING: Mary's writing a book.

L. CHENEY: That's correct. Very proud of the two young women.

KING: A really tell-all kind of a theme? Is she going to get into...

L. CHENEY: Well, the parts of the book that I've seen -- you know, when you're a writer, it's always good to have an appreciative audience. So Mary has let me see some of what she's written, because she knew it would make me laugh. And she's just a very good writer, who has, you know, a fine eye for the absurdity of everyday life and of everyday political life in particular. So it will be a very good book.

KING: So many more parents in America have had to deal with what is now considered an almost everyday occurrence, of people having different opinions or sexual proclivities than other people. Was it hard for you?

D. CHENEY: When it first came up, sure. It's not anything you expect as a parent. But Mary was a remarkable young woman.

KING: Boy, is she?

D. CHENEY: And I was tremendously impressed with how she handled it, because it was difficult for her too. But, you know, we love her very much. She's an integral part of our family. Very proud of the work she did in both of our campaigns. And the book is very much a political story sort of...

KING: (INAUDIBLE).

D. CHENEY: Travels...

L. CHENEY: "Travels with my Father."

D. CHENEY: OK. I wasn't sure I was supposed to give it away.

L. CHENEY: Oh, maybe we weren't.

D. CHENEY: Talking about...

KING: Oh, we know something here.

D. CHENEY: Especially the 2000 campaign, the 2004 campaign, some of my congressional races.

KING: I'm sure she deals with her own life.

D. CHENEY: She will. But it's going to be a good book.

KING: What are the Cheneys going to do in 2009?

L. CHENEY: Oh, I have no idea. I'm sort of focused on next year right now. I'm busy writing. As I said, I'm working on two books. One is...

KING: Would you come back to -- what are you writing? What are you writing about?

L. CHENEY: Well, one book I'm writing, you will love this. This is for a more general audience. I decided in this second term that, you know, I should go back to being a professional writer. Keep up doing the children's books. That's a great second lady project. But my more general audience project is a timeline of history, of American history, because I've discovered people don't know what happened when or what came first. And it's also a wonderful way to talk about this country's expansion of freedom not only in our own borders, but, you know, for the world. How many people are free because this country...

KING: That's a great idea. Of course there's a new book out, "1776," by David McCullough.

L. CHENEY: Yes.

KING: And people say, boy, that's about the end of the war. The war went on for six more years.

L. CHENEY: And it was a -- it was a tough year. KING: The beginning of the war.

L. CHENEY: Yes, that's exactly right. And one of the things I think so important about

this study of history, and David McCullough knows how to do this so well, is indicating that, you know, we didn't know how it was going to turn out.

KING: We know now.

L. CHENEY: That's right. But at the time, Washington didn't know, and it was a chancy thing. And how fortunate we are to live in freedom, how fortunate we are that things turned out as they did.

KING: Would you come back to media? You worked for CNN.

L. CHENEY: Are you offering me a job, Larry?

KING: Yes. I speak for the network. Do you want to come back?

L. CHENEY: Oh, I love that. You know, I think I'm a writer. That's what I find most satisfactory.

KING: Would you mind if she went back to media?

D. CHENEY: I've never given her advice on her career. Lynne does her own thing.

KING: Really. So if she said to you, I'm going to CNN, I'm going to be a political observer.

D. CHENEY: I'd say, great.

L. CHENEY: Why do I have to wait until 2009?

D. CHENEY: I think (INAUDIBLE) idea. No rush.

KING: What do you want to do? You want to just retire? Really?

D. CHENEY: I don't think I'll ever just retire but...

KING: Would you go back to private industry?

D. CHENEY: Oh, I don't know, at that stage. I've, you know, I've done that. And I think there -- I've got books I want to read. A lot of rivers I'd like to fish.

KING: Write?

D. CHENEY: I don't know, I might write something. I haven't given it any thought. I've never written a book.

KING: Lynne will help.

D. CHENEY: Well, Lynne and I did one together once, but she really wrote it -- about the Congress many, many years ago. But I, you know, I look forward to the change of pace and spending time with the family.

L. CHENEY: But, you know, one of the things I think our life tells you is that you never know what's around the corner. If, you know, you just work at what you're doing and do that to your fullest, and then, you don't know what's around the corner. You don't know what that next life will be like. We certainly never have.

KING: Are you hinting that you'd like him to run again?

L. CHENEY: No, I'm saying...

KING: Are you hinting that if that occurred, that occurred?

L. CHENEY: No, what I'm saying is that when Dick was at the Defense Department, who knew he would end up, you know, running a major American corporation? When we were in Texas, and he was at Halliburton, who knew he would become vice president? So, you know, I don't spend a lot of time thinking about...

KING: Anybody who predicts anything is a little nuts in a world of 9/11s, right?

L. CHENEY: Yes, that's true.

KING: What's your proudest achievement, before we leave?

D. CHENEY: I suppose that I married her.

L. CHENEY: Oh, now that's really nice, isn't it?

KING: Thank you, Cheneys.

D. CHENEY: All right, Larry.

KING: Thanks for kicking off our anniversary week.

L. CHENEY: It's great to be with you.

KING: Thank you.

Tomorrow night, the Bushes from Kennebunkport. Wednesday night, Bill Clinton. Thursday night, Dan Rather. Friday night, Barbara Walters interviews me on 20 years of CNN. And Mark Geragos' first appearance since the trial. He'll be with us next Monday.

Thanks for joining us. Stay tuned for "NEWSNIGHT."

From the vice president's house in Northwest Washington, good night.