

Hillary questioned after pardons

Controversy surrounds the Senator after her husband granted two pardons in his last days of office.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, buffeted by controversy, said Thursday she "did not have any involvement" in the pardons her husband granted on his way out of the White House and expressed dismay that her brother was paid lavishly to lobby for the relief of two men.

"If I had known about this, we wouldn't have been standing here today," the former first lady said of her brother, lawyer Hugh Rodham, and the \$400,000 he received from two pardon-seekers. Had she known, the Democratic senator added at a crowded news conference, "I might have been able to prevent this from happening."

Sen. Clinton spoke on a day on which President Bush said he believed Congress had a right to investigate the pardons granted by Bill Clinton, and as the head of one congressional investigating committee said he would insist on "full compliance" with a subpoena for records from the William J. Clinton Presidential Foundation.

The group, chartered to establish Clinton's presidential library, received \$450,000 in donations from Denise Rich, the

ex-wife of fugitive financier Marc Rich, who was one of Clinton's pardon recipients.

There was a fresh disclosure during the day on top of Rodham's involvement — that Sen. Clinton's campaign treasurer had been paid \$4,000 in legal fees to prepare two pardon applications that were sent to the Justice Department. William Cunningham III said he had never contacted the White House about the cases or spoken with either of the Clintons about them. Cunningham's law partner is Clinton adviser Harold Ickes, but he, too, said he never spoke to the couple about the cases.

Bush commented somewhat gingerly, telling reporters he had other issues to attend to.

Asked what advice he would offer his own relatives — who include a former president and a sitting governor — the president replied sharply, "My guidance to them is behave yourself — and they will."

Sen. Clinton is struggling with an issue that has contributed to a drop in her popularity as well as her husband's, and has overshadowed the beginning of her Senate career. Driven from her new home to her Senate office, she invited reporters to question her without so much as an introductory statement.

She declined to answer questions about the pardons themselves or whether her husband should appear voluntarily before Congress to answer questions about them.

As for herself, she said, "You know, I did not have any involvement in the pardons that were granted or not granted." As for her brother's actions, she said, "I'm just very disappointed."

She said she had heard rumors surrounding the pardon decisions, but nothing firm until Monday night, when she was informed her brother had been paid for his work on behalf of a prison commutation request of Carlos Vignali and the pardon of Almon Glenn Braswell.

"I was just heartbroken and shocked by it," she said, "and, you know, immediately said it was a terrible misjudgment and the money had to be returned." Rodham returned the money to the families of the men after the Clintons urged him to.

The former first lady responded differently to questions about her campaign treasurer.

She described Cunningham as a "fine lawyer and a fine man. ... Lawyers from all over the country were involved in these matters."

The pardon controversy is only one of the issues dogging Sen. Clinton at a time when she is bidding to establish herself as a political figure in her own right as the new Democratic senator from New York.

"It is certainly not how I would have preferred or planned to start my Senate career, and I regret deeply that there has been these kinds of matters occurring," she said.

"You know, I did not have any involvement in the pardons that were granted or not granted."

Hillary Rodham Clinton
New York senator

Apart from the pardons, the Clintons felt compelled to return furniture they moved out of the White House after questions arose about ownership. And one reporter asked Clinton whether there was any connection between furniture delivered to her Washington home during the day and Denise Rich.

"No my dear. Nothing to do — not at all," she said.

In all, Clinton issued 140 pardons and 36 commutations in the final hours of his presidency. The disclosures have since produced near universal expressions of dismay from Democrats. Former President Carter said recently the Rich pardon was disgraceful, given Denise Rich's donations, and congressional leaders have expressed opposition as well.

At the same time, the disclosures offered fresh grist for Republican-controlled congressional committees that have already held hearings on the Rich pardon.

Bosnian Serbs charged with sexual assault

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — A U.N. tribunal on Thursday established "sexual enslavement" as a crime against humanity, convicting three Bosnian Serbs who took part in the nightly gang-rapes and torture of Muslim women and girls at so-called "rape camps" during the Bosnian war.

The tribunal found Dragoljub Kunarac and Radomir Kovac guilty of sexually assaulting and torturing Muslim women and girls as young as 12 years old; forcing them to perform domestic chores and selling them into further bondage. They received 28 and 20 year sentences, respectively.

A third defendant, Zoran Vukovic, was convicted of raping and torturing a 15-year-old girl — who was about the same age as his own daughter — but acquitted him of most other charges for lack of evidence. He was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment.

The ruling marked a milestone for the recognition of women's vulnerability during war and the need for legal sanctions. It will help set legal precedent by outlining the criteria necessary to bring future cases.

Although there have been several rape convictions at both the Yugoslav tribunal and another U.N. court on the Rwandan genocide, the Foca case was the first international war crimes trial to focus on sexual crimes. And despite the well-documented rape of Asian "comfort women" by Japanese soldiers during World War II, no one had been convicted before for wartime sexual enslavement, scholars said.

"This establishes that being held in captivity in a sort of quasi brothel situation against your will is a form of enslavement," said Avril MacDonald, an expert at the T.M.C. Asser Institute of International Law in The Hague. "It's also rape as a separate crime, but now there are two crimes there."

"What the evidence shows," the judgment said, "is that the rapes were used by members of the Bosnian Serb armed forces as an instrument of terror — an instrument they were given free rein to apply whenever and against whomsoever they wished."

First Lady makes her debut

Laura Bush made her first solo appearance in public since her husband was sworn into office.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Last week a homemaker with landscaping chores, Laura Bush made a belated solo debut as first lady on Thursday, telling two dozen fidgety schoolchildren she wants to use her new job to promote her old one — teaching.

"To me there's something almost sacred about teaching," Mrs. Bush said. "One of my goals over the next four years is to encourage more people to become teachers."

In the middle of a four-day social whirlwind, the first lady lent her name and gave eight minutes of remarks to a city initiative that aims this year to lure 100 mid-career professionals into teaching.

It was Bush's first solo appearance since before her husband was sworn in on Jan. 20.

In what aides are calling her "launch," Bush will make a speech at Maryland school on Monday to lay out what she hopes to make the themes of her own tenure in the White House. A former second-grade teacher who holds a master's degree in library science, Bush is focusing on reading and teaching — in sync with the president's agenda.

"My husband is partial to teachers," she said Thursday.

Bush otherwise appeared as uncertain about her celebrity as the first-graders staring at the visitor who drew a dozen TV cameras to their school library.

Perching lightly on her seat, Bush sought out the littlest in her audience, sneaking the boys and girls small waves.

"Watching a child's eyes brighten with understanding is an experience that defies description but it's something that every teacher can understand," she said, her speech text pulled from a rich blue carton resembling a gift box.

For two weeks, Bush has been out of sight tending to the family's new ranch in central Texas. Rain dampened her outdoor-to-do list, so she planned to return to Texas soon.

"She doesn't seek out the spotlight but she doesn't shy from it, either," said spokeswoman Noelia Rodriguez. "It's just that she had a life before the White House, and she's going to continue to have a life, which means she wants to make not only the White House a home



First lady Laura Bush shakes hands with Timesha Ray, 5, a student from Patricia Roberts Harris Educational Center, at a press conference for the launching of the DC Teaching Fellows Program on Thursday in Washington, D.C. The DC Teaching Fellows Program is an effort to mobilize the city's most outstanding professional to commit to teach for two years in the D.C. public schools.

but make their ranch a home."

On Wednesday night, she and the president — both of them admitted homebodies — made their debut as Washington's premiere "A-list" couple at a three-hour dinner at the Georgetown home of Katharine Graham, former publisher of The Washington Post and the current chairman of the executive committee of The Washington Post Co.

When not making notes on a speechwriter's draft of her Monday speech, Bush has been meeting this week with White House chefs, florists and ushers to make perfect her first grand White House

dinner — a black-tie affair Sunday evening for the nation's governors and country music star Lee Ann Womack.

Before that, there was the president's luncheon at Camp David with British Prime Minister Tony Blair to attend to, plus her own tete-a-tete with Cherie Blair.

Bush is deciding every detail down to the place mats, which reflect her understated style: for the men's meal, a simple white mat with a raised white presidential seal in the center; and for her and Blair, a white mat with a lace border and no official seal.

Stem cell research raises concern

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — In a highly unusual move by some of the nation's premier scientists, 80 Nobel laureates joined forces Thursday to urge President Bush not to block federal financing of promising medical research using certain master cells called stem cells.

"It would be tragic to waste this opportunity to pursue the work that could potentially alleviate human suffer-

ing," the scientists, including DNA co-discoverer James Watson, wrote Bush.

Stem cells are building blocks for all human tissue. Scientists say research with them could lead to revolutionary therapies for diseases from Alzheimer's to diabetes. They can be derived from aborted fetuses, fertility clinics' discarded embryos or adults. Embryonic stem cells generate the most excitement because they appear the most flexible.

Anti-abortion groups oppose fetal

and embryonic stem cell research, and Bush has signaled he may block federal money to pay for it.

Federally funded scientists can't touch human embryos, but privately funded scientists have multiplied embryonic stem cells in laboratories. The National Institute of Health is prepared to award this spring federal grants for studies with lab-grown stem cells.

"It is important to understand that the cells being used in this research were destined to be discarded in any case," the Nobel laureates wrote Thursday.

Bush has asked Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson to review the NIH policy. Thompson spokesman Bill Hall said officials had not seen the letter, but the stem cell review was under way without a decision deadline.

World/Nation

The Associated Press

California

State lifts power alerts after weeks of blackout concerns

SAN FRANCISCO — California lifted all power alerts Thursday for the first time in nearly six weeks, thanks to the availability of more imported electricity and the return to service of plants that had been down for repairs.

California had been under a power alert of one level or another since Jan. 13 because of dwindling reserves of electricity. For one 32-day stretch that ended over the weekend, the state was at Stage 3, the highest level of alert, when reserves are so low that blackouts are possible.

The state started the day Thursday at Stage 1, the lowest level. That was lifted when reserves reached a comfortable level.

The crisis eased over the past few days after several power plants that were down for repairs came back on line.

The California Department of Water Resources, which has been buying power for the state's nearly bankrupt utilities, has also been able to buy more energy in advance, said Terry Winter, chief executive of the Independent System Operator, keeper of the state's power grid.

Massachusetts

Reebok introduces a new version of its pump shoes

BOSTON — The pump is back.

Canton-based shoemaker Reebok said this week it was bringing back the inflating shoes that took the footwear industry by storm a decade ago. The new versions — "The Pump Scheme" — go on sale this weekend at Venator Group stores, including Foot Locker and Champs Sports.

They feature the same air-bladder technology, but weigh less and have a sleek new look. They'll cost about \$100.

The first pumps were hawked by then-emerging basketball star Shaquille O'Neil, and hit their high-water mark when Boston Celtic Dee Brown stooped to pump his Reeboks before a dunk that helped him win the 1991 NBA Slam Dunk contest.

Now, Reebok, whose endorsers include Allen Iverson and Venus Williams, is trying to recreate the magic with a new advertising blitz.

Pennsylvania

Man could be prosecuted for death of unborn baby

PITTSBURGH — A lower court overstepped its bounds when it ruled a man could be prosecuted on vehicular homicide charges in the death of a fetus in a drunken driving crash, the state Supreme Court ruled.

The Supreme Court said Tuesday the state's 1997 unborn child law allowed prosecution only in murder, voluntary manslaughter and aggravated assault cases.

"In the (Superior Court's) view 'the time had come' for the criminal justice system to expand its interpretation of the term 'person' to encompass unborn children," the Supreme Court said. "We are unable to accept this reasoning."

The ruling ends a vehicular homicide case in Westmoreland County against Jeffrey Robert Booth, 27, who is accused of killing a fetus in a drunken driving collision four years ago.

Japan

Earthquake results in no injuries, delayed travel

TOKYO — A magnitude-5.3 earthquake rattled central Japan Friday morning, prompting authorities to halt some train travel. There were no immediate reports of injury or damage.

The earthquake struck at 7:32 a.m. and was centered in the western part of Shizuoka prefecture, about 150 miles southwest of Tokyo, the Meteorological Agency said.

Railway authorities temporarily halted trains on the high-speed Shinkansen line in Shizuoka prefecture to check the tracks for damage, said police spokesman Susumu Noyama.

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Weather

TODAY	TOMORROW	SUNDAY
Rain and snow high 37, low 33	Rain high, 40, low 34	Snow showers high 45, low 20