

## *Hugh O'Brian Youth Foundation Panel Discussion*

Whenever possible, personalize the questions. Pull from your experiences as a teacher, mother and First Lady to promote those things that are near and dear to you.

Be yourself, and use your personal experiences to guide your answers.

*Regarding teacher pay:*

I know the valuable role a teacher plays in the life of a student. As a teacher, I have seen those “lightbulb” moments when a student gets the point I’m making.

As a parent, I see learning taking place everyday as my children do their homework and talk about their classes.

Good teachers are an important part of the success of our children. They should be paid as professionals.

*Computers in the Classroom:*

We want to use computers as a teaching tool, not to take the place of the teacher. (Use experiences Jordan and Carmen Rae have had in using computers to make points).

*Importance of education in getting a job:*

According to a survey just released by the Mississippi Economic Council, the top business organization in the state, the top two issues on the minds of Mississippians are education and jobs.

Today's workforce must be educated to be competitive. Business leaders are looking for well-educated workers who can help their companies succeed.

*What has been your favorite part about being First Lady?*

Promoting education; visiting schools and reading to children. (Personal stories)

## **Education**

- Need to set priorities in investments.
  
- Education is number one priority.
  
- Must raise teacher pay to southeastern average.
  
- Important for Legislature to remove 5 percent condition (5 percent increase in revenue to fund raises).

- Have to be able to recruit and retain best teachers
  
- “Computers in the Classrooms”
  - Internet-accessible computer in every public school classroom (K-12) by 2002
  - Placing 6,325 computers this year
  - Mississippi will be first state in nation to do this
  - Public/private partnership raising funds for this effort

- Education is tied to economic development
  
- Report from Mississippi Economic Council
  - Business leaders and private citizens agreed on top two issues
    - Jobs and Education

- Also in MEC report was question “if you could be Governor or Legislator for a day, what would you do?”
  - Top answer for both business leaders and private citizens
    - Increase teacher pay

## **Economic Development**

- Mississippi making great progress in economic development
  
- Last year developed “Advantage Mississippi” Initiative
  - Best economic development package in nation
  
  - Already showing results

- Nissan plant
  - In top one percent of all projects in the United States last year
  - \$930 million investment
  - 4,000 new jobs
  - Suppliers coming in to do business as well



## **Public Safety**

- “Click It or Ticket” campaign
  - Encouraging seat belt use
  - Story of Governor Musgrove’s accident; seat belt saved his life
  
- Importance of keeping streets safe
  - Support lowering blood alcohol content level from .1% to .08%

- Threat of illicit drugs
  - Ecstasy harming young people
  - Threatens their future and future for Mississippi

*Questions to Governor Musgrove as part of  
FastForwardMS Chat Room:*

*Q: What was your experience leading up to Governor?*

A: I served two terms in the State Senate, chaired the Education Committee, and served one term as Lieutenant Governor.

*Q: What did you do in your campaign to help yourself be acknowledged in the communities across Mississippi?*

A: I worked and I worked and I worked. I constantly made appearances in communities across the state to tell our story of the vision for Mississippi. We also had a lot of television and radio commercials to get out our message.

*Q: How do you spend your free time away from the official office?*

A: My staff says nothing because I am always at the office. However, that is not true. This weekend I watched my daughter's softball game and went to Jubilee Jam like thousands of other Mississippians.

*Q: What do you consider the most important issue facing Mississippi schools?*

A: Raising teacher pay to the southeastern average. Our students need great teachers in every classroom. We need to keep our good teachers and encourage our young people to go into the field of teaching.

*Q: I have just received the Leadership Award for my school and I plan to pursue a career in physical therapy. What time of educational funding will be available in the future for this particular field?*

A: About three years ago, we increased funding from 24 students to 48 students. We need to make education a priority and not cut funding for higher education.

*Q: Do your children want to go into politics?*

A: I would be proud to support my children in their chosen profession. I believe all of us should be more involved in public service.

*Q: For those students who plan to attend historically black colleges or universities in Mississippi, what will be done to continue the financial funding and growth for these schools?*

A: We have a proposed settlement of the Ayers case that is pending before the federal judge. The future for our historically black universities is good. I believe you will have the opportunity to receive an excellent education at any one of our universities.

*Q: How hard is it to be the governor, and how do you think of things to do to help Mississippi?*

A: I enjoy the work of being in office. Many of the ideas come from personal experience. We also look at areas that need improvement and receive input from people across the state to improve the quality of life for everyone.

*Q: How do you make decisions, alone or with input from others?*

A: Both ways.

*Q: How do you feel when you have to go to work and your children want you at home with them?*

A: I really enjoy spending time with my family. They do not give me a hard time too often because they know it takes a lot of time. Therefore, we spend a lot of time together other than during the day when I am at work.

*Q: What is your expectation of the new Nissan plant on our state and economy?*

A: The location of the Nissan plant in Mississippi will transform our economy. It is hard to imagine the tremendous impact it will have. It will broaden our opportunities on a higher scale than we have ever known before. It will be extremely positive.

*Q: Do you think it is possible for you to speak at our 2002 graduation?*

A: Ask your superintendent.

*Q: Was there a teacher who was a positive influence on you when you were in school?*

A: Yes. There is not enough space to list all of them. My first grade teacher stands out as a person who went above and beyond the call of duty in helping me.

*Q: When you were a little kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?*

A: From the time I was eight years old, I wanted to be a lawyer. I am one of those fortunate people who got to do what I had dreamed of doing.

*Q: Why should I stay in Mississippi to pursue my career?*

A: Because Mississippi has great opportunities. We want you to contribute your talent to our state instead of some other state. Our job is to make the quality of life as good here in Mississippi as anywhere else.

*Q: As a student interested in the medical field, I look for opportunities for research. What is Mississippi doing to provide these opportunities to students while we lack the technological equipment provided at larger research institutions in other states?*

A: UMC is a leader in research and in technological capability. In fact, you would be surprised upon a visit as to how well respected our medical center is. We constantly try to keep them updated on leading research capabilities.

*Q: Why did you decide to run for governor?*

A: Because there were things that I thought I could do better in the state for our people. With the right leadership, I thought it could happen. That is what we have worked to do and we will continue to make that happen.

Governor Musgrove: Thank you for taking the opportunity to chat with me this morning. All of the reporters with me this morning thought your questions were very impressive. In fact, some of them may call on you for some good ideas. It makes all of us feel good with the depth of your thinking



and your caring attitude about our state. Have a great summer and I wish you the best. P. S., Melanie says “read a book this summer!” John Grisham says, “Buy a book!”