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Concord, N. H. 4/3/02

Thank you.

Money is not
Democracy

I am just home from the West and the South, and I am so happy to be here in New Hampshire, to speak with my very own people, who do not ask me if I come from England, because of my accent. I explain to them that we all talk this way in New Hampshire, and they wag their head in amazement.

Austin Texas Florida

First I want to scorch the rumor that I ran away from a nursing home. Or that I heard my son and his wife planning to put me away in a nursing home.

have even

My son did say to me recently: "Mother, dear, I know you want to keep your own house as long as you can, and that you would never want to come and live with me, next door, so I was wondering which of the three nursing homes in the area would you choose, if you had to choose?"

"The one we can't afford!"

"Oh. Well I was talking to Officer Sweeney the other

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day and he tells me you've begun to drive your car right down the middle of the road, and he was wondering if it wasn't about time for you to give up your car?"

"Officer Sweeney must be blind. I do not drive in the middle of the road. If I gave up my car it would mean someone would have to drive me to the store every morning for my paper. Then at least twice a week to Peterborough for groceries, Then I need to go every Monday to my Scrabble game, and to the church on Sunday, and to my appointments with the doctor and the dentist and the beauty parlor and to Manchester whenever I take a plane. Think about it, would you not have to be that someone?"

He blanched and changed the subject. When I told him I wanted to walk across America to find out why 50% of the people that could vote were not voting he said: "Are you crazy?"

I said: "I have learned a poor man today has to sell his votes to run for office, or he has to be a multimillionaire. I have 16 great-grandchildren that I want brought up in a Democracy, not a Fascist state, which this country is fast becoming."

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He said, "You are 89 years old, living on social security, in a little town of 1400. Whatever makes you think you can accomplish anything. You are a little old woman. Let's face it, Mom. You are a little old woman. You live on Social Security!"

"I will walk as a Pilgrim, like Peace Pilgrim, long ago. Like Jesus Christ did. I will walk until given shelter, fast until given food. People will take care of me. I will wear a backpack with a sleeping bag and trail mix, just to be safe."

Your children become your parents, you know, when you get to be 80. But he is a good soul and said if I would follow a regime he would set up for me he would consider letting me go. He thought he could make it so tough I'd give up. He should have known me better, after living all those years as my son.

In December of 1998 I went to him to say I can walk ten miles a day, six days a week,. I have slept on the ground in my sleeping bag with no ground cover or tent, for a month. That wasn't easy, when you're my age and get a least three nature calls in one night. I've lived on trailmix for a week, thumbed 250 miles in a day, and I am leaving.

He really thought he had me when he said I had to do the thumbing. "Why?" I asked.

"You won't have any money, and if you get up some morning and say this isn't fun any more, I expect you to go on the other side of the road and start using your thumb."

I mostly got picked up by young people who had thumbed themselves. I would immediately start talking Campaign Finance Reform and they would immediately find a place to let me out as soon as possible. And of course, in the end, my son became my greatest support and helper, once I got on the road. I could never have finished the trek without his steadfast support, together with all those people who wind~~ed~~ed me and dined me and took such good care of me.

I am here to tell you what the situation is in this country today and how you can help to change it. I am offering a word of advice, not because I think any of you will outlive me. But because, as things are going with the current White House, it looks like we're all going to go together, and any day now.

Indeed, any time the leader of a powerful country such

as ours, points to other people and says, 'evil ones,' you know he's deep in a hall of mirrors and we're in for a few million deaths, including many of us.

Some of you are going to be around to pick up the pieces. You will have to work very hard to win back the soul of the U. S. Constitution from those who would fearfully put it over their heads in the first little rain and let its ink run away to nothing.

You will have to wrestle democracy away from an imperial presidency, and from a corporate-military-industrial complex the likes of which dear old Ike only half imagined.

You will have to replace the special-interest funding of elections with clean money public funding.

You will have to replace winner-take-all elections with proportional representation-elections, so that all parties, including Greens and Reforms, can sit at the table of power in this country and in the world.

You will have to take down the prisons and build up the schools. You will have to dismantle a health care system that lets only the rich live and replace it with a system worthy of a civilized society.

As reformers, we seldom win by making a frontal attack. No, we work and we work at a reform and never get too far with it. And while we are hitting our heads against the wall, we tinker with the idea and it gets better and better and more and more people understand what we are getting at. But we never win. The other side loses. Just when we are about to pack up our banners, along comes an Enron or a Watergate. In the states and in the nation, we only win by being ready, by being on the spot with a good, workable alternative, when the unsustainable systems fall, as they always do.

So don't worry if you think the federal government isn't ready for clean money financing or proportional representation or instant runoff-voting or single payer health care, or, God forbid, simple human justice and a mature concern for the global environment.

More Enrons are coming than you will be able to count. I see them lining up like wobbling biplanes on approach. Go do your reform work. Represent the good issues, regardless of their chances of victory by today's measures. The measures will change tomorrow.

Our rivers are drying up. The seas are rising. The

north and south poles are melting. Unsustainably corrupt politics on a global scale has reaped the whirlwind for all of us. We can only save this earth and this democracy by working hard and developing our skills of timing and our courage to act with great leadership and with great wisdom and expertise when opportunities present themselves. Be an expert in these matters.

Now the McCain/Feingold bill has passed in the Senate and President Bush signed it into law last week. It passed, not because we walked and talked and protested and lobbied and did it all so hard—thousands of us—and for so many years, but because we did all that and were right on the sidewalks of Capitol Hill with the McCain Feingold and the Shay's Meehan bills in the hopper when Enron came to town.

I am an old woman of 92 years, and I have seen one third of our country's history. I have seen the days when to say we were a Democracy, a government of the people, by the people and for the people was really true. I have also seen, in recent years, that the main criteria for winning an election has become the amount of money you have or can raise rather than your visions and ideas.

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Now a change has occurred. History has been made. A law has been enacted that has taken a whole generation to develop. A generation of hard work by many people and many organizations. With the help of this grassroots effort the McCain Feingold, Shay's Meehan bill has become a law. It signals a change in a direction away from the big money corruption of our elections.

On behalf of the tens of thousands of people I have met over the last four years, who have said they pray for the day when their government again responds to their concerns, their needs, their values, rather than only the concerns and needs of wealthy special interests, I think those whose personal courage and political force of will has started us on a journey out of this dark time.

I sense that we are entering a time when great political and personal courage will be necessary, fighting against dark forces that have long been lurking behind the curtain, as Mr. Eisenhower warned us many years ago. Those dark forces may have emerged in what will become the greatest historic battle for America's soul.

This battle today between big money and the position