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### **An East-ENDER Who's a Real Friend of Bill**

By **DIANE KETCHAM**

WHILE President Clinton was playing golf last Saturday [August 1<sup>st</sup>] in the Hamptons, everyone was wondering where Mrs. Clinton was. "She was at my house," said Liz Robbins, a woman with bountiful brown hair and a bountiful smile. "She had lunch with a handful of old pals."

And Saturday night, after appearing before more than 1,000 people at a fund-raiser at the home of Alec Baldwin and Kim Basinger, the President and First Lady went out to dinner with a few friends. Not filled with the hors d'oeuvres served at the Baldwin-Basinger bash, the Clintons and friends went out to dinner at the Turtle Crossing restaurant. [Friends included] the Baldwins; the Steven Spielbergs; Chevy Chase; Janey Buffett (wife of Jimmy) and -- there she was again -- Liz Robbins and her husband, Doug Johnson, a correspondent for WABC-TV.

"The Clintons are friends," Ms. Robbins of East Hampton, said. "Hillary was at our wedding."

Whenever a group of powerful people gather in the Hamptons or Washington, Ms. Robbins is usually present. But few outside the powerful know who she is. "I really don't like to promote myself," said the woman whom friends call Lizzie.

Ms. Robbins is a Washington lobbyist. But with a difference. "This is not just a lobbyist," said Robert Zimmerman of Great Neck and Southampton, a Democrat who attended the Baldwin fund-raiser. "This is a very fine person. I have been on some committees with her. There are people who are near politicians for the power. She is there for the good causes."

Ms. Robbins was the co-chairwoman of the Baldwin party, where those who paid \$5,000 were allowed in the house, those who paid \$1,000 were allowed in a tent and those who paid \$250 were in a field. The legacy of the Clintons is a cause that she strongly believes in. But Democrats are not her only friends. "You couldn't be working with Congress as long as I have," she said "and be too partisan."

Ms. Robbins has been a lobbyist for 21 years. For three years, she has been a mother. "I am one of the world's oldest new moms," she said. "I've always wanted to have children. But I wanted to feel secure with myself. Having a family is not something you just lapse into."

Nor was marriage. She and Mr. Johnson have been together, on and off, for more than 25 years. They have been married for three. "It all came together at once," she said. "The papers were going through for Robin [their adopted daughter] and Hillary lobbied us to get married."

The Clintons stayed in the Hamptons with Ms. Robbins twice in the 1980's. She considers the East End her home. A native of Westchester, she attended Wheaton College in Massachusetts. "I majored in philosophy," she said "I was told it would sharpen your ability to think."

Her first forays into a career included stints in advertising in New York and interning in Congress. She chose Washington. "I knew I wanted to solve problems in public service, not toothpaste," she said. "I liked mental push-ups."

She worked on Congressional committees, then for governments on the brink of bankruptcy. "I began working for New York and Michigan," she said. "I didn't realize I was opening a firm. I just thought I had two jobs. Then San Francisco went broke, and they offered me a job, too. All my clients were broke. If I couldn't buy it on an American Express card, we didn't have it in the office."

Foster-care legislation and intellectual-property issues became specialties. Her circle of friends expanded as did her clients. The tax issues she now handles help pay for the nonprofit issues she still loves.

Although she travels with the power brokers, she says her husband is the star in their household. "He's been on television for 27 years," she said. "It's his face people recognize."

The joy in her life now, she said "is my family. And seeing my friends laugh." Even if those friends just happen to be the President and First Lady.

*Meanwhile...* While all eyes were on the Hamptons, passing by it via the ocean was Rick Shalvoy, who was rowing around Long Island to raise money for cancer research. His row was to take him right past Steven Spielberg's house, where the President was staying. As he approached it, the Secret Service roared out in a Coast Guard boat...Mr. Shalvoy was allowed to pass [through the Security Zone] escorted by the Coast Guard. [However,] his support boat was [ordered to motor around the 3-mile zone]...