

FNC's *Life, Liberty, & Levin*

09/26/21

8:15:54 p.m.

7 minutes and 38 seconds

MARK LEVIN: Welcome back, America. Our first guest is Peter Doocy, who is the White House correspondent for the Fox News Channel. But before we get to Peter, I have a little gift for you, a little surprise for you. Go.

[DOOCY VS. PSAKI CLIP 09/22/21]

[DOOCY VS. PSAKI CLIPS, 09/20/21]

[DOOCY VS. PSAKI CLIPS, 09/10/21]

LEVIN: Peter Doocy. I won't say, this is your life, but there's a little piece of it. I want to welcome you to the program. Tell the American people a little bit about yourself, your age, where you went to school? Why you became interested in this business and so forth.

PETER DOOCY: I'm just a 34-year-old Villanova grad. I got married a couple of months ago. My wife and I live in a D.C. suburb because it's good to get out of Washington after a long day at the office sometimes and actually, a lot of people have been watching my dad in the morning on *Fox and Friends* for almost 25 years now. I always thought he had a very cool job. But I can credit John McCain for getting into the business because when I was in college, the Chris Matthews, MSNBC *Hardball* College Tour came to campus while he was running for President, I thought it would be cool because I was interested in politics. So, I went and there was a producer from the show, polling the audience. Okay, does anybody have any questions for John McCain, and I raised my hand and it was the same day or the day after Hillary Clinton had been at a photo-op drinking shots with some voters elsewhere in Pennsylvania and so I told this producer, I would like to ask John McCain, if he wants to go for a shot with me? And they were not checking IDs, luckily. And he said, can you make that more interesting? I'll come back to you. So I thought on it, and the producer came back and said, okay, did you make your question more interesting? I said, yes, I want to ask John McCain if he thinks that Hillary Clinton is just drinking those shots, because she is trailing Obama by so much, and if he wants to go for a shot with me? And the producer said, oh, that's great. You can go second. And I asked him, he had a funny reaction. Some producers from Fox wanted a young guy to go to the conventions that year, the '08 Conventions in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and in Denver, and I went and did some Man on the Street stuff, and then just kind of kept going from there and I will note, once I got to D.C., John McCain loved — the late John McCain loved telling that story to people.

LEVIN: That's a great story. Now, let's bring this up to today. How do you get ready for one of these press conferences? Obviously, you have to see what's in the news, it seems to me that you're examining what's going on. Some things may not make sense to you based on what a cabinet secretary is saying, what the White House is saying, and in many cases, you're trying to get them to square it up. How do you approach this every day?

DOOCY: For a relatively young person, I have a ton of Joe Biden knowledge built up in my brain from being with him for the last two and a half years and what I always try to do is just think about what he is saying presently, and then how that is possibly not lining up with things that he has said in the past and that's not just in the past two and a half years that I've been with him, he has a very long career. You go through the C-SPAN archives of this person, and you've got thousands of hours of material to work with and so what I like to do is just kind of compare and contrast Joe Biden and Joe Biden. And I've been lucky enough to get his attention a number of times during events and at the end of events to ask him directly and usually, if I can get his attention, I am just trying to ask him about why something that he is saying now is different than something that he said in the past. And, to his credit, he seems like he really enjoys having an opportunity to be challenged and to defend himself.

LEVIN: Does the Press Secretary Psaki enjoy throwing to you and allowing you to ask questions? Or does she say, "okay, here it comes?"

DOOCY: I don't know what she says under her breath. But to her credit, she has called on us, knock on wood, at every single briefing that we've been in. It wasn't every day in the beginning because of COVID, we were only in there, like, three out of five. But every single briefing, she does call on us and I think that she always knows that I'm going to have a couple of fastballs in there. But I try not to throw her any curveballs. If there's something that I am going to be discussing or asking her about that might not be on the front pages, I will send her a story, a news story, like a topic, never a question in advance, but I will say, just so that, you know, this is something that I'm interested in, if there's time at the briefing. And the reason that I do that is because it doesn't do us — it doesn't do me, it doesn't do Fox any good to just spring something on her live on TV that she doesn't know about cause then she says, "Well, I'm going to have to check" or "I'm going to have to get back to you." That — that is not a helpful soundbite really, for our business, but it's not helpful information. So, I — I — I do appreciate that even when she has a heads up that there's going to be something that is a little different, she keeps pointing to me and says, "go ahead."

LEVIN: And yet conversely, your questions aren't like some of your colleagues who say, you know, the President is having a hell of a day. You know, I understand he's doing this. He's been successful in that. And then they put a question mark at the end of it. Your questions and the way you ask them are very, very respectful, in my view, and I think the American people agree with me, even though they can be very elucidating. You've managed to accomplish that at a very young age where people like — and you need not comment on this — Jim Acosta and so forth, to this day, are incapable of it. We'll be right back.

(....)

8:28:15 p.m.

5 minutes and 16 seconds

LEVIN: Welcome back. Peter Doocy, many times when I watch these press conferences, including the back and forth with you and the Press Secretary, you're left at the end of the press

conference with questions really unanswered. And my question to you is, do you ever feel after one of these press conferences that really you haven't gotten the answers that you need? That in fact, the answer should be rather simple? Like, what are the numbers for this or for that? And that sometimes, they're just blowing smoke.

DOOCY: I wouldn't say necessarily blowing smoke, but there have been some times where I'll go back and listen to an answer and either realize that I am going to have to follow up on this the next day, or the next chance that I have to be in a briefing, or just that, this is all we're going to get from this White House. They do a lot of planning. You know, I put a ton of thought, sometimes hours a day into the questions and the research before a briefing, I know that they are doing the same thing and so, if we are getting very limited information, someone from the White House has decided, this is all we're going to give them. And no matter how many times that you ask or how many different ways that you ask, sometimes that's just going to be it. But my experience with those kinds of answers has been very limited. I do find that they take enough questions and they answer them with enough depth that we do have more of an understanding what they are trying to do after — after a briefing.

LEVIN: Are you frustrated after the President makes a statement or gives a speech, he turns around and walks out? I mean, it is one thing to question the Press Secretary, but she is a go-between. Does it not frustrate you — I mean, President Trump, the media had full access to him, other Presidents much more access. But Biden doesn't seem the same. I could just tell you as a viewer, as a citizen, it's very frustrating to me.

DOOCY: Sometimes he'll walk away without calling on anybody for a question and that is not necessarily helpful for putting together a script for Bret Baier's show by six o'clock. But I have found, at least in a majority of the events that I've been in with him that he is somebody who will kind of linger around the microphone and just listen to see what the question is going to be and I have been on the record as talking about how for more than a year, when they would give the President or the former Vice President or President-elect whatever stage we were at, when they would give them a list of people to call on, the staff would give him a list, but we were never on it. But he continuously would just linger around, listen to see, okay, what's that tall, blonde guy in the back barking at me about today? And he, more often than not does give us at least a quick answer and so yes, sometimes he walks away. We want more, but I don't think that we're going to get any President every single time.

LEVIN: No, but it would be nice if we got him a few more times. I mean, I think it's pretty obvious to the public that he probably has a higher percentage of walkouts, back turning, than most other Presidents. How do your colleagues treat you after a press conference? Do any of them come up and say "good job" or any of them come up and say anything?

DOOCY: If anybody amongst the Press Corps has a problem with me or the way that I am doing things, they haven't told me, they haven't said it to me, and I — I have a polite relationship with everybody else that they rotate in through the front row. And there is a lot of standing and sitting around because Joe Biden himself has said he is always late, and the photographers and other reporters and I have a pretty good relationship, at least the way that I see it.

LEVIN: And yet, the press did come together and did object to some of the ways in which Biden and his people have treated the press, including when the Prime Minister of Great Britain was there, and he took some questions and Biden kind of blew off questions to him and then left. That was kind of weird, don't you think?

DOOCY: It was interesting because when Jen Psaki was asked about that, she blamed Boris Johnson. She said he decided to take questions. He did not alert us to that ahead of time. But really the reason that the press pool that day filed a formal complaint with her, it wasn't because Boris Johnson was calling on reporters, it was because as soon as the U.S. press tried to ask Joe Biden something, the Biden staff raised their voices to get everybody out in a way that made it impossible, especially with a mask to understand what he was saying if he was saying anything constructive and so that was the issue, but the official response from the White House is that they're going to blame Boris.

LEVIN: Well, at least, they didn't blame Trump. Peter Doocy, I want to thank you very much. Keep up the good work and you have a wonderful family as well. And you really are, even at a young age, you're demonstrating to so many people what journalism is all about. God bless you, my friend.

DOOCY: That means a lot. Thank you, Mark.