

CBS Mornings

05/29/26

8:00:08 a.m. [TEASE]

10 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Jill Biden Opens Up]

GAYLE KING: Former First Lady Jill Biden opens up to *CBS Sunday Morning* about her husband's health while in office and how that one debate performance may have changed politics.

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8:00:53 a.m.

5 minutes and 26 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Jill Biden Talks Husband's Health in Office]

KING: We're going to get right to it and begin this hour with a CBS News interview with former first lady Jill Biden. She talked with *CBS Sunday Morning's* Rita Braver about the end of former President Biden's reelection campaign and the concerns that many people had about his health before his withdrawal.

RITA BRAVER [TO BIDEN] Did you ever see signs he was falling into cognitive decline?

JILL BIDEN: No.

BRAVER [TO BIDEN]: No?

BIDEN: No.

BRAVER [TO BIDEN]: Truly?

BIDEN: No.

BRAVER [TO BIDEN]: I mean, people were saying he wasn't the same Joe Biden.

BIDEN: I don't think that's true. He was the essence of the same Joe Biden. But, yeah, he was slowing down. He was getting older. I mean, we all observed that. You know, it's a very intense job. I think it ages you quickly.

KING: Let's talk about all this with Chris Whipple. He's contributing writer at *Vanity Fair* magazine. He wrote the book called *Uncharted: How Trump Beat Biden, Harris, and the Odds in the Wildest Campaign in History*. Chris Whipple, it's nice to see you again. Thank you so much for joining us this morning.

CHRIS WHIPPLE: Good to be with you.

KING: I want to get your reaction right away to what you're hearing Jill Biden say about her husband's health at that time.

WHIPPLE: Yeah, you know, Gayle, I really think that we should cut Jill Biden some slack on this, and I'll tell you why. It's a fact that Joe Biden never should have run for reelection. He was too old or would have been too old at the age of 86 to perform the duties of the presidency. She should have known that. She's complicit in that decision, which was a tragedy for the Bidens and the Democratic Party, arguably the country. But there is no compelling evidence that Joe Biden was unable to perform the duties of the presidency behind closed doors. And I take Jill Biden at her word that she never saw a moment like that disastrous moment in the debate before or after. You know, I was pretty tough on Biden in my book *Uncharted*. Ron Klein told me all about how disengaged he was at Camp David in the prep session, but nobody around Biden ever saw an episode like that moment in the debate.

KING: You take her word even after the debate, when she said you did so well, you answered all the questions, when clearly that did not appear to be the case with all of us who had been watching, and that she had never seen that – that after?

WHIPPLE: No.

KING: You take her word at that?

WHIPPLE: No, I'm not giving her a pass, Gayle, on everything. And obviously that was completely wrong. When she said, gee, you did great, you answered every question. I chalk that up to a First Lady trying to be supportive in the moment. But no, I don't give her a pass on that. And I don't give her a pass on, as I say, being complicit in what was an historically tragic decision to run for reelection. But there is this article of faith out there that Joe Biden was Woodrow Wilson incapacitated in a corner while a cabal of aides was [sic] running the country by autopen and it's nonsense. You know, I like Jake Tapper and Alex Thompson. I think they're great reporters, but I think they were wrong on this. I talked to so many aides who were in the room with Biden to the very end. And literally on the morning that he abdicated when he negotiated a complex multi-nation prisoner swap from his beach house in Rebo – Rehoboth. So, I just think that the, you know, this is sort of a myth that Biden was incapacitated.

VLADIMIR DUTHIERS: And yet, Chris, a lot of people will say, Jill Biden saying to Rita Braver now, that she hasn't seen a moment like that since that debate, may strain credibility. And what does it say also about the people around Joe Biden in the Democratic Party, who allowed him to continue on his errand – his – his tilting at a windmill to run for the presidency, even though –

WHIPPLE: Well, yeah, two – two separate – two separate issues. I mean, on the – on the second issue, there's no question about, as I wrote in my book, *Uncharted*, that Biden's advisors, a lot of them were trapped in this fog of delusion and denial. They thought he could run for

reelection, and he thought he could win. He couldn't. He was incapable of – of an effective campaign or being President for another four years. That's a different issue from whether anything like this had happened before or after the debate. I watched that debate, and I thought he was having a stroke. It's perfectly plausible to me that Jill Biden put so too, because she hadn't seen a moment like that before or after. And everybody I've talked to, including as close as aides, say, long after this debate, they were in endless meetings on policy presided over by Biden – meetings in which Donald Trump would have certainly fallen asleep, but he was functioning. So, historians have to deal with the fact that this moment in that debate is still a mystery.

KING: Alright.

WHIPPLE: We don't know what happened.

KING: All right, Chris Whipple, we thank you so much for your time this morning.

WHIPPLE: Great to be with you.

KING: Rita Braver's interview with the former First Lady – Jill Biden – will air this weekend on *CBS Sunday Morning*.