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Arkansas Memories Project

Interview with

Diane Divers Blair
Fayetteville, Arkansas
4 May 2000

Interviewer: Roy Reed

Roy Reed: This is Diane Blair and Roy Reed and it is May the fourth of two-thousand and just to be sure that we are clear, we have your permission to transcribe this for the archives at the University of Arkansas.

Diane Blair: Absolutely.

RR: For scholars and whoever. Thank you very much. I want you to pretend for a moment that you are not Diane Blair, but you are a magazine writer and you have decided to write a profile of Diane Blair for the *New Yorker*. What is the first paragraph? Who are you in other words?

DB: Well, it takes me a long time because my experience is taking a long time at the first paragraph means then you can write everything else. So, it would take me a long time to think of the first paragraph.

RR: But, if you just wanted to plunge in and say, "All right, tell me who you are."

DB: Well, in some ways I think the theme or the storyline might be that here is a woman who was dragged kicking and screaming to Arkansas and found, much to her surprise, that she could not possibly have built a better life anywhere else.

RR: That is good. How did you happen to come to Arkansas?

DB: My first marriage. After I graduated from college, I moved back to Washington, D.C. which was my home.

RR: And the college was?

DB: Cornell University. And held a number of different jobs and met a young man from Arkansas who was then in the JAG corp of the Army. I met Hugh Kincaid and we fell in love and married. By that time, he had left the Army and was working in the Justice Department, and then he decided that he wanted to come home and hang out a shingle and start a law practice. So of course, "whither thou goest", I went with him. But, I literally left a trail of tears from Washington to Fayetteville. Washington was the smallest town that I had ever lived in. I was born in Washington and then we moved to Cleveland, then Chicago and then back to Washington and I had spent a lot of time in New York City and the idea of moving to Nowhere, USA was just...it is not how I envisioned my life. My mother also wept. She had great plans for her girls. I ended up in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and at that time, my sister was living in Weeping Water, Nebraska. Mom would not even tell people where we lived. She would say that they are living out in the Midwest.

RR: What sort of plans do you think your mother had for you?

DB: Well, although she had come to Washington from Denver, she and my father had built their life in Washington. Both were New Deal lawyers and had grown up in a very engaged, sophisticated atmosphere where people were doing public policy and public service. I mean, they were middle class, but they were...they moved among the high and mighty and they loved Washington intensely as did I. I think just somehow they always thought that I would end up there.

RR: You say New Deal lawyers, what exactly is that?

DB: It is a wonderful story...In the Depression, of course, nobody could find work. My father, who is from Cincinnati, was made counsel for Ohio with the Public Works Administration and Mom was counsel for Colorado and that is where they met. Their first date was when they went over together on a lunch hour to get sworn in to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court, and it was the day of the Schechter decision.

RR: Schechter?

DB: Yeah, S-c-h-e-c-h-t-e-r. It was when the National Recovery Act was declared unconstitutional. That is when the anti-Roosevelt court was throwing out his New Deal legislation. So anyway...

RR: The NRA?

DB: Yeah.

RR: What were their names?

DB: Dad was William Keeveny Divers and Mom was Minna Rosenbaum Divers.

RR: Okay.

DB: It is a wonderful American story. Dad was the only son of devout Irish Catholics in Cincinnati and Mom was born in Poland, a Jew, brought over here as a young child and when they got married...they got married three times. They fell in love and got married by a justice of the peace: but then, to make it legitimate in the eyes of mom's family, they went out to Denver and got married by a rabbi; and then to make it legitimate for Dad's family they went to Cincinnati and got

married by a priest. And I must say, it was the happiest marriage I ever knew.

RR: Anyway, you kicking and screaming came to Fayetteville and you have been here now how long?

DB: That was in 1963.

RR: And what is here, what did you get involved in?

DB: Well, it was..you know, I got busy, first setting up our first little house, I did those things. I did a lot of things with and for Hugh's family, his mother was an invalid, I would spend some time of every day with her. They were eager to include us in their group and it was just people who I had nothing in common with. They played bridge and literally gave tea parties and talked an awful lot about shopping and I really felt like a fish out of water. Now, at the very beginning, when Hugh just started out, he had no secretary, so when he thought a client might be coming in, I would run from our little house, near City Park, downtown. We only had one car. And I would be sitting at the desk, like the secretary. And I did in fact do some of the secretarial work at first until he kind of got things going. So, there were all of those just kind of ordinary family things. I also almost immediately began doing graduate work at the University. There was nothing here that was comparable to the work I had done in Washington. At the time we left Washington, I had been a legislative secretary to Senator Stuart Symington and women were called secretaries then, but I did his speech writing, I did a lot of policy issue analysis for him. Capitol Hill is a very exciting place to be. One of my complete shocks upon moving here was that nobody was interested in

government and politics. I had grown up in a family where, literally, our dinner table conversation every night was government and politics. That is what I studied in college, you know that was my primary interest, and then I moved into surroundings where days would pass and nobody would even mention anything in the newspaper. It was kind of tough. One of the things...a couple of things I think began turning things around...one simply through being at the university, I began meeting university people and quickly befriended a number of people at the university, who then I would lunch with, become friends with and just kind of keeping me busy doing papers and stuff like that. I mean certainly being a grad student helped a great deal, although, I must tell you that when I presented myself to the then chairman of the political science department, Ralph Jones, and told him that I would like to become a candidate for a master's degree in political science, his first question was not. "What were my credentials?" or anything of the sort. He said, "Do you have your husband's permission?"

RR: This was in 1963?

DB: I think it was in 1964.

RR: Mid sixties. I gather that you were not expecting that kind of response. If you were at one of the universities in the Washington area, if you were taking a graduate course there--?

DB: Exactly. So again, it was kind of a strange experience, but that kind of gave me another home and I did within that first year meet some women who did share my love for politics and reading. They remain my best friends to this day. Ellen

Shipley, Kay Trumbo, and Rita McCree, now Davis. M-c-C-r-e-e, I believe.

RR: Now Rita Davis.

DB: Uh huh. And we would, once I started having babies, we would gather at each other's houses with little ones and talk about books and talk about politics. That was kind of a cushion here. And then in a relatively short time, I became involved in politics. So, that became again what turned out to be...I mean the University became my home and then politics became a very serious avocation.

RR: What was the first political engagement?

DB: I think my first political engagement was when Hugh decided to run for city attorney and the long-time city attorney was Bass Trumbo and he suddenly announced that he would not be seeking reelection. Hugh ran me down at the IGA and asked if we could afford the filing fee, I think it was something like one hundred and twenty-five dollars and I said, "Not if I buy these groceries". So, we put the groceries back on the shelf and then had enough in the bank account for the filing fee.

RR: That is wonderful. Now then, that was your first political involvement.

DB: Yes, and then again we had no money and Hugh was busy trying to make a living, so basically we did door to door stuff around town. And I would just start out in the morning...I got the city directory and figured out where the highest concentrations of people were...I don't think for that one we could get voter registration lists. I don't even know if there was such a thing then. Anyway, I would just go over here with significant clusters of people that looked to me like

they would be voters--not the student areas, etc.--and did a lot of door to door stuff. He was elected city attorney and then in 1970 he was elected to the state legislature and again I went door to door. Because he represented all of Washington County, I did door to door in Springdale, Prairie Grove, Cane Hill, Lincoln, and actually I loved it. I mean it was exhausting and by that time I had two babies, so I'd either get a babysitter or take a baby with me in the stroller or something, but except for the dogs which were kind of scary sometimes, the people were almost uniformly wonderful and so that was...but I have to say by then, and I can't remember the date, but by that time, I had become myself a member of the Washington County Democratic Central Committee.

RR: Ok, we are talking the late sixties by this time?

DB: It would have been the late sixties.

RR: During the Governor Winthrop Rockefeller...

DB: Right. It was really kind of a funny thing. I had studied for years that the real heart and soul of politics is at the grassroots level...these wonderful county Democratic committees, which is where it all starts and builds up and so I was interested in what all that is about and I went to...I saw in the paper that they were having their "annual" meeting...this is how busy and active they were and ...people were just astonished, like "What was I doing there?" and I told them that I was just interested and I was a Democrat and I just wanted to see what was going on and "Not much" is the answer...it was basically a matter of setting the

filing fees, because the filing fees is how they paid for the primary, so they had to set these filing fees. But there was certainly no hint of a discussion about policy or campaigning or anything like that, so I thought it must be at the next echelon that something more significant is taking place. I would have to...this was in I guess the early 1970s, because they talked about sending people to a district committee which was kind of representatives of each county to the Congressional district committee and I thought maybe that is where the action is, so when they asked for nominations, I nudged the person next to me and said to nominate me. They did. I mean there was never a contest, so I went to that meeting and it was even worse than the county committee meetings. Then I did the same kind of nudge, nudge, "nominate me", and got myself elected to the Democratic State Committee. And went to several of those meetings. This was in the 1970s, and finally I think my third meeting I felt like I was no longer the new kid on the block and I kind of said and I think maybe the one that I remember is Ben Allen, maybe he was chairman or something. He was never chairman, but he was the one that I remember talking to, and I said, "Ben", I had gotten to know him because he was in the state Senate at the time. I said, "You know, political parties are supposed to be about electing candidates and getting your party in power," and he just found all of that fascinating. So I kind of gave him my little American National Government 101 lecture on what political parties are all about and he said, "You know, I think the whole state committee ought to hear that", so at a subsequent state committee meeting, I remember giving a lecture on the real

responsibilities of the state party committee and by that time, you know, Rockefeller had surprised everybody by holding office, so they were a little bit interested in hearing about...at least...recruiting good candidates and raising money for them and developing campaign themes and stuff. But, I must say that they still primarily wanted to talk about the Razorbacks and talk about crops and talk about the kinfolk, so I decided that that also was not where the real power was. And when I read these stories, you know, huge machines and their power to corrupt the whole state and everything and I thought...Good grief, I would like to sentence these writers to go back and attend some of the long meetings I have sat through and you just tell me where the power is.

RR: The folks from the *Wall Street Journal* or the *New York Times*.

DB: Yeah.

RR: At that time we were still with the Faubus years. When these Democratic committees did not have a whole lot to do.

DB: That's right. He did everything that could be done, so far as he was concerned.

RR: And it would depend on the legislature...A few people like Max Howell and Mutt Jones were the Democratic party. When did the change come, the idea of the party as a living institution?

DB: Well, I would have to go back and think about that. We finally got...I think Herbie Branscum was the first chairman that I remember who actually took it seriously. We had some better people as chairs, we had people who were more

forward thinking and realized that we had to present a more progressive image but

in so far as really trying to make the state party a functioning organization, the one that comes to my mind that really did the most the first is Herbie Branscum.

RR: That would have been during the administration of Bumpers...Pryor?

DB: No, I don't think it was...it could have been early Clinton.

RR: Even that late?

DB: Even that late.

RR: So, simply having a good progressive governor in office doesn't guarantee...

DB: No, because...No, absolutely not. It helped change the image of the state party, but it...again it is still true in Arkansas. The only real organizations are personal organizations to a large extent. The parties are just beginning to have day in day outfunctions where they actually develop mailing lists and recruit and do joint fund raisers and try to prep their candidates and send them off to candidate school.

We're getting there, but up until recently, both the Arkansas Republican and Democratic parties were ranked among the weakest in the United States.

RR: You have been pretty deeply involved in politics, both as a student and as an activist, and in that connection you met and I suspect have had considerable influence with a pretty large number of people who have become well known. I know for example that you are a friend of David Pryor and Dale Bumpers. It's well known beyond the borders of Arkansas that you are friends with Bill and Hillary Clinton. Talk a little bit about some of these people if you would....who have been important in your life. Not necessarily in a public way, but private too.

They're your friends, tell me a little bit about them.

DB: They are all my friends and I still think that at the time when we had Clinton as governor and Bumpers and Pryor as our U.S. Senators, we had the best "troika", bar none, in the United States and I would go to meetings of political science associations and they would say, "How do you do it, you have got these two fabulous senators and this wonderful governor full of ideas and we are supposed to be a progressive state." Then they would start naming the lunkheads they were stuck with, so I think we were really blessed for awhile. The caliber and quality of our leaders and let me see what I can tell you. Let me just tell you how I met each of them and then kind of how the friendship grew. I think the first time that I met with David Pryor and I met him was when he was living in Fayetteville, going to law school, and he and Barbara had a little house down near City Park. I remember eating dinner at their house one night and I can't remember which of the babies it was...was banging on the highchair with a pork chop bone. But anyway, they were just wonderful, delightful people and I loved them immediately. We started talking politics and have basically continued the conversation ever since and I have certainly worked in David Pryor campaigns, in his Senate race against McClellan...I mean I did whatever I could in that...I mean just as far as knocking on doors, making phone calls, passing out literature, and did a little speech writing for him over the years and just think to this day that he may be one of the most thoroughly decent individuals I have ever met in my life and he gives the lie to anybody that says that politics and goodness are mutually

contradictory. He is just a wonderful human being. But anyway I met him through my former husband, who had known him and known his family.

RR: I certainly agree with that. I was sitting here thinking about how long I have known him and Barbara...

DB: He has never disappointed me...well, I shouldn't say that. His governorship was in some ways a caretaker administration. You knows Bumpers had gotten all of this great stuff going, but I can understand and explain that and I have written about it. I mean there wasn't much money to do things with, but he wasn't quite as earthshaking as I had hoped he would be as governor, but I never lost any respect for him. I mean, he was certainly a good governor. He just wasn't one of the all time greats.

RR: He came into his proper place when he went into the Senate.

DB: Exactly, yeah. And I think that he is such a bridge builder and he could get people talking together and working together and of course that is a skill that is handy as governor, but I don't think he was ever in the slightest bit interested in running the administration...the bureaucracy, of course, I don't think that Dale Bumpers was, either. So, there you have it. I think a lot of people use the governorship as a stepping stone and they care what happens in state government and they want to keep certain policies active and implemented, but they aren't deeply interested in, "how are we going to better structure the Division of Human Services, so that it deals more efficiently with particular kinds of cases." There aren't many people who are really interested with that.

RR: Did you happen to work in Pryor's campaign when he ran against McClellan?

DB: I did, I just said that I did.

RR: I'm sorry, I misunderstood you.

DB: Yes, I did.

RR: Tell me a little bit about that? What kind of work you did.

DB: That's what I said...and I was not in any way a key player, I was just a volunteer, I put out yard signs, I passed out literature, I went door to door, I made phone calls, those kinds of things, but I was not a major player at all in that.

RR: Kind of worked with....

DB: Well, yeah. Of course, we didn't win it for him, but anyway. Dale Bumpers I met in 1970. There is a woman in town who is his cousin, Betty Thomas. And Betty called me and said, "Diane, I don't know anything about politics, but you do and I have got a cousin that I dearly love, but he is talking crazy. He says he is going to run for governor. He doesn't have a chance, and he is going to be in town this afternoon, and I want you to come over here and talk some sense into him." And so, I put a child on each hip and walked over to Betty's house--she lived about three or four blocks away, and met Dale. I came home that night and told my husband that I had just met the next governor of Arkansas. I mean he was just of a caliber that was so head and shoulders above any single person that I had yet encountered in the political realm in Arkansas that it just blew me away; and it was love at first sight and so I became a Dale Bumpers supporter and ended up working in all but one of his campaigns. Again, I never was a state chair or

anything like that. I always...

RR: Did you do any fundraising?

DB: I have done everything for everyone, except fundraising. I have made fundraising calls when I had to, but it is the part of politics that I just hate the most, which many people do. And I did it but I never liked it...I remember going around the university people and we'd give little fundraisers...you know at the Smokehouse or something and ask them to contribute fifteen or twenty dollars. It is like pulling teeth. So, I have done it, I have put together fundraisers, I've dialed for dollars, but I hated it. Again, with Dale, I did some writing, and we would just talk about issues. He would call every once in awhile and talk about things. But one of my least pleasant recollections is 1974. Because I opposed him in that race and I hated the war in Vietnam so much. The news this last couple of weeks has dwelt on that, and brought back such powerful memories. The kids used to say...I'd be fixing dinner every night and had this television set over where I could see it in the kitchen and I'd be fixing dinner and I would just be weeping. And the kids would say, "Turn it off, Mommy, turn it off." You know, they just couldn't stand it. And I couldn't stand it either, but I was so indebted to Fulbright for being the first voice with that kind of stature and authority to challenge the war that I really felt like I owed him, trying to keep him in the Senate. And I climbed onto his ...you know they have these big campaign committees and I remember calling Dale and telling him that I was going to do it and he said, "Diane, someone's going to beat him this year. Wouldn't you rather it be me than

somebody else?" And I said, "Well you know, that is true", but I was feeling like I had a moral obligation. Dale forgave me very quickly for that. It took him a longer time to forgive Jim who became my ...my now husband, who became Fulbright's campaign manager at the end. He took on that job before they had shown him polls showing that Fulbright couldn't possibly win. It was kind of a mean trick.

RR: Actually spent some time....couldn't understand??

DB:absolutely did.

RR: Did not split your family, though...Were you and Jim married at that time?

DB: Let me see...that was...you know, it is terrible. I cannot now remember. I was divorced maybe in 1974 from Hugh, but I didn't marry Jim until 1980, so I guess I didn't have a family to have it split up then. But, I remember that Hugh supported Fulbright too, of course he was a hometown boy. And Hugh had carried a lot of legislation for Dale in the state legislature. They had been close friends and allies, but it was just one of those things where it really was choosing between...I felt like I was choosing between my father and my brother.

RR: I wasn't even living in Arkansas at the time, but I felt the same...I knew them both.

DB: And then, you know, the other of the big three is Bill Clinton. And I met him in 1972 when I was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention, the infamous convention in Miami. Because I was teaching American National Government and had to know all of this stuff, I was acutely aware of the fact that the rules for

delegate selection had been totally, dramatically changed. It used to be a small group of the inner circle would get together and say, "Well, Bud, it's your turn to go this year, you've contributed, you're a good ole boy and you get to go." And the delegations that Arkansas sent were all white, all male, staunch contributors. But in 1972 you had to run. And furthermore there was going to be a certain allocation that was proportionate to the population as far as women and people of color, etc. were concerned. So, I discussed this with my classes and thought...heck, this is the best chance I've ever got of being elected because I know enough to go file. So, I filed as by the way did several of my students who got elected from their counties to the state convention.

RR: Really?

DB: Yes. Because they were the only ones who filed. So, they....filled in kind of around the edges. So anyway I was the delegate.

RR: Here is that Arkansas machine that worked...the Diane Blair machine...now it is coming out.

DB: Diane Blair read the rules, you know, that was my key to power. And Jim also did, so he was a delegate that year too. And the way that I had met Jim I guess at a couple of lawyers' parties, but the first major encounter I had with him that I remember was that you elected people at the county level and they elected people at the state level. The county group was meeting out at the Holiday Inn in a big room out there, and I remember walking in and looking around and thinking this group doesn't know what it is doing. I think maybe if I give it some organization

and structure, I can assure that I get myself elected. So, I started walking up from the back of the room to the front of the room, just to kind of offer myself as a guide to this new project and up from the other side of the back of the room came this tall guy walking and it was Jim Blair and he had the very same ideas, so we kind of ran the meeting and got ourselves elected as delegates to the convention in 1972. At the state convention he nominated me to be vice-chairman of the delegation, so Dale as Governor is chairman of the delegation and I am the vice-chair of the Arkansas delegation for the 1972 convention. Anyway Clinton was a delegate tracker for McGovern and his states were Texas and Arkansas. So, he was making a swing through Arkansas checking on delegates and came to see me at my office which was down in Memorial Hall, where Political Science was then. And he came in my little kind of partitioned office. I had colleagues on either side, one was from...they were both kind of part-time teaching public administration, one was from Africa and one was from India. And they both ate onions for lunch everyday. Onion sandwiches....I mean all I can remember really about Memorial Hall is teaching in this big ballroom where tiles were falling down on our heads and the onion sandwiches, that I unfortunately smelled that they had for lunch. Anyway, Bill came in and introduced himself and we decided to walk over to the Union to get away from the onions and we ate lunch. We started the conversation in 1972 that has been going on now for nearly thirty years.

RR: This was before he joined the faculty here?

DB: Yeah, but I think he already knew he was coming, but I wouldn't swear by that.

What I most vividly remember about the conversation, other than being overwhelmed with his just fabulous grasp of American politics and how much he had read and how much he knew...the insights he had in the whole political concept. I rarely encountered that kind of insight among political scientists. It was just really impressive.

RR: Did that make you think about Washington and how it was there when you were growing up?

DB: I guess it did....but what I really remember about the conversation...I wrote a little essay about the Clintons. It's a true story that I was in the middle of a sentence and he just stopped me...and he said you are reminding me so much of the woman I love. And I said tell me about her...and he talked for the next thirty minutes about Hillary. And how brilliant she was..the smartest person he had ever known...the most gifted, the most insightful...the most this...the most that...Fabulous at putting together arguments and fabulous at public policy. He just went on and on and on...he was just smitten. And I asked him why, if he was so in love with her he didn't marry her and bring her back to Arkansas. That's why I think by that time if he didn't have a job here, he knew he was coming back to Arkansas. I mean it was clear to me that he was going to build a political base and run, it was obvious. And he said...I would love to do that, but this woman is so good, she could easily have a brilliant political career of her own. She could be a governor, she could be United States Senator...I don't think he said president,

but he did say governor and senator and he said if she comes back here with me, it's going to be my state and my homebase and it really will.

[Tape interrupted by telephone]

RR: We were just talking about how you met the Clintons and luck would have it that Hillary...that phone call was Hillary. You say she calls quite frequently.

DB: She calls almost every day and it is one of the things that really has been doing me more good than chemo just knowing that I'm on her mind. And she always has some funny little vignette from the campaign trail or she can vent to me and say things to me that she couldn't say to anybody else in the world. It's, I mean, I will say this on the record, I've not said it before, but I have been thinking recently that Hillary doesn't have a sister and I think maybe in some ways that is kind of what we have become. And she does care about me and checks in.

RR: How did you meet her? Now you are talking about Bill being in love and smitten...

DB: Well, Bill was very anxious that I be one of the people who Hillary first met when he talked her into coming down here...and he had told her about me and said that we would be friends and I wish I could remember as vividly about her as I do about him...this is the moment and this is how it went and I really don't. I think it was in a crowd somewhere...probably the first time, maybe at his Congressional campaign headquarters and of course, I loved her immediately because she so definitely was not going with the flow of how most women dressed and looked then, I loved that. But, very shortly after she moved here, we just started seeing

more of each other ...we were both on campus and even though she was teaching in the law school and I was in political science, we would not so much meet for lunch, but what we would sometimes do is go get a frozen yogurt cone or something and walk around campus during the lunch hour and share teacher talk...students and talk about what was going on at the university and what was going on around the world. And again, we started a conversation in 1974 that has gone on all through these years. Although, in her case, it is interesting...we have been friends for a period of time, we have almost grown closer since she went to Washington. And I have thought about that...and I of course, I was up in Washington a lot during the first few months of the Clinton administration because I was a guest scholar at the Brookings Institution and I was not formally living at the White House, but I would frequently, when I was up there for maybe ten days, and then come home for a week or four or five days and go back, and Hillary would say when I was leaving..."Come stay with us," and I...they had a lot of room there, but beyond that it was a really tough time for them. A huge new house and all of these persons waiting on you, most of whom you knew were intimate with the Bushes...it was a very odd sensation. And things were not going well for the president in his early days and she was having a heck of a time figuring out what her role should be. She knew she was going to be the traditional first lady and do all of the social stuff, but she was more interested in the policy side and there wasn't an appropriate role model and we talked a lot about that, but...

RR: Could you share any advice that you gave her without giving away secrets...on how to manage this.

DB: Let me come back to that in a minute, I'll have to think about that....a little bit maybe. I think the thing that most at least in my mind justified staying with them as much as I did, was that Chelsea was having a really tough time adjusting and there were so many times when either one or the other parent had to be gone or couldn't be there for something and Hillary could call me at Brookings and say "Chelsea has got to go to the doctor," or something like that and, "her appointment is at 4:00 and I am not sure I am going to make it, would you mind going over there and just..." I mean the Secret Service was there and somebody was taking her, but it was like a substitute mother. So, I was kind of a constant presence from the past there, and I think it was during that time when they were already kind of under such siege that Hillary and I grew closer because there were things that she felt she could talk about to me that she wasn't quite sure who else she could freely discuss...

RR: We are talking about 1993 and 1994?

DB: 1993. Yeah, the spring of...January through May of 1993.

RR: The opening days...

DB: I was there a lot of the time and it was a tough time for them. I don't know...I mean mostly what I did with Hillary was just explore all the different options. I know there were some people who strongly recommended that she actually have a title that would in some way...Richard Neustadt for example...I had met him...I

had gone to a seminar up at the Kennedy School and sat next to him at dinner and he was fascinated with Hillary and her predicament. He is married to the woman who was the leader of the Labor party in England or something, a prominent political figure, and he was very sensitive to and sympathetic to what women do when they have a husband but they still want to be a person and I remember he wrote a memo on the subject...whether she should actually take the title of counselor, and I took that to her. His bottom line was just...she was going to have to muddle through it and figure it out for herself which of course is what happened. It is going to be really interesting to see what happens after her, because she has...

RR: You mean the next first lady?

DB: The next first lady.

RR: Yeah, she has opened new grounds.

DB: Yes, she has definitely broken new grounds.

RR: On your own were you offered an appointment of some kind?

DB: I was offered definitely. I mean, the president said, "You have earned a very significant appointment, what would you like to be, what would you like to do?" They even ran a few possibilities by me. And I told them that I very much wanted to have some voice but that I did not want a full time job. My second marriage is a wonderful marriage and I did not want to leave Jim and go live in Washington. The more I saw of it, up close, the happier I was with that decision. I wanted something where I felt I was having an impact, so they said, "You give us a list,"

and basically I said my first choice would be the Corporation for Public Broadcasting Board. Because I had been on the Arkansas Educational Television Commission for years and passionately believe in public broadcasting and I felt that that was something I had some experience in and could represent the president well on the board and do some good and so I was the first person that he appointed.

RR: What were some of the other possibilities that they quoted that they thought that you might be interested in?

DB: Protocol.

RR: That would be a lot of fun.

DB: Well, yeah, but it just did not seem like a good ...I really did not want a full time job, so....

RR: Let me see if I can find a way...When you first began to talk on moving to Arkansas and how it was then...give me a little estimate on how it has changed if it has. And what is it like now for a young woman? Would a young woman who had grown up in Washington face the same problems and dilemmas that you did if she moved here in the year 2000?

DB: Well, I've been thinking about that a lot because my son Bill who is thinking about moving back to Fayetteville when the Clinton administration is over...he is now the director of the comprehensive school reform project in the Department of Education where all of these ideas are improving the nation's schools. That is kind of his baby, but he has got that homing instinct, he wants to come back

home. And his wife Missy who is a native of Little Rock and a graduate of the university will be coming with him and she has had some exciting very wonderful jobs in Washington and so I've been thinking a lot about...will it be...

RR: You have been working on a book. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

DB: Well, it was a start and stop affair. First of all, I should say, before the cancer hit, I had gotten about four chapters through a substantial revision of *Arkansas Politics* and I just had to put it aside. I mean, I just had to put it aside. I can't focus on that right now and I will have to see. I have let the editor know what has happened and you know, if there's some kind of miraculous cure then I'll go back to that, because it is showing its age. And although a lot of what has happened are not necessarily things that please me, reality must be presented and so there is that, but I think the book you were inquiring about had to do with the Clinton campaign.

RR: Yes, that's right, the 1992 campaign, that you worked in.

DB: Right. I was one of the first people at the fledgling Clinton for President in 1992 campaign. I was not in the paint store where there were only about four people, but when they moved to the abandoned Phone Company building, I was there and I was a volunteer and I took leave from the University and went to the campaign in January and would try to come home most of the weekends to Fayetteville, but I couldn't always manage to make it and basically I was there from beginning to end and it is amazing now when I look back at how primitive our conditions were.

When I got to the campaign...nobody was answering the questionnaires that

every interest group in the world sends out, these elaborate questionnaires trying to pin you down on every issue imaginable. It's one thing if you've been in the Senate. You have a voting record...you just check the voting record and there you have it. A lot of these were things that Clinton had never dealt with as a governor, certainly international policy and arms and all of that kind of stuff. And we didn't have time to pin him down on everything, so I kind of was trying to be creative and think what he would say if he had time to say it. We would always clear it with him...a lot of it was just trying to say the same thing that everybody else was saying on education....but say it more persuasively and everything, so, man, I got in there and there was a stack of unanswered questionnaires and people were screaming about wanting them and that was the first thing that I did, but in order to....I took my little laptop computer with me and the thing..you could barely see the screen, I mean it was quite unsophisticated and I didn't have a desk, so I'd set it on my lap with this little computer and these questionnaires and the phone was ringing..you know, typing out these responses. Then in order to print them out, I would have to go to the office next door, because there was only one printer, and it sat on George Stephanopolis' desk and I would have to crawl under George's legs, literally, and unplug his...making sure he was ok and plug my thing in and print stuff, then crawl back out from under his desk...anyway, that was a memorable experience.

A few weeks before the campaign was over, somebody was in my office

visiting and I think in fact, it was somebody from abroad, it was either from England or one of the Scandinavian countries...as people really began paying interest in Bill Clinton, we would have these tours coming through all of the time of international correspondents and one of them said, "You know, Bill Clinton has literally reinvented the way one runs for president and I hope all of this is being adequately captured for history", and I thought....Good Grief....Nobody's doing it. And so I sat down within five minutes and wrote a memo to the president, I think I sent it via Bruce Lindsay, who I knew was always with him. And said, "Somebody needs to capture this for the future". And I would like the Clintons permission to--as the campaign enters this closing week, once I've done the work that I absolutely have to...but, by that time, things were looking pretty good--interview as many people as possible about what they did in the campaign and what they thought about the campaign and we will have that for posterity. Immediately I got a response back, yes, and then a memo went out to everybody that I was doing this and to cooperate with me. So, I have never interviewed anyone before, I mean, I did not have any kind of preparation for what I was doing. The political scientist in me told me that I needed to have an interview schedule so that we could compare what the people in communications had to say in response to a certain question compared to the people in political operations or something. So, I developed, and I had only spent a day doing it, probably should have spent more time, a list of questions that I then asked of everyone. They would include things like "What were you doing before you joined the

campaign?," "What were your first responsibilities?," "How did you come to do what you are doing now?," I mean there was tremendous, sharp upward growth in responsibilities. "When did you first truly believe that he would get the nomination?," "When did you first begin to think that he was going to win the presidency?," "What for you was the low part of the campaign, the high point of the campaign and questions like that. Then I had some ballpark questions at the end where people could really elaborate on what is it that you want to make sure that history gets right about the Clinton campaign?

RR: Are these on cassette tapes?

DB: Uh huh. And then, I ran around that old *Gazette* building...

RR: Not the Phone building, but the *Gazette* building?

DB: The *Gazette* building where we were. And just captured everybody that I could capture, but it was just in the nature of the beast that I started too late to get everyone and some people were out in the field by then...a lot of them were...and so, after the election, I did not, they wanted me to stay for the transition and I said goodbye. It has been fun, but I would like to go get a life again and I came home, but I did go down to Little Rock and I would stay two or three days at a time and finish up people who were at the transition but I had never been able to...I remember doing Harold Ickes and a few people who were at the transition. There were still, however, some left and then this fabulous offer came from Brookings to come be a guest scholar and I had this project then in mind, you know, developing this because I envisioned some kind of book, but the first thing that I

had to do was pull it all together and do some analysis. The offer literally came out of the blue. Thomas Mann was the director of governmental affairs at Brookings. Thomas Mann, M-a-n-n. Tom Mann, he is one of those pundits that you see all the time on the television news. Norm Orustein is at AEI and Tom is at Brookings. Tom is no longer director of governmental affairs...he just stepped down recently. I have known Tom for years and Sheilah was a friend of mine at Cornell, his wife, Sheilah. Anyway, this occurred to Tom that maybe I might be working on a project and it was just ideal for me. Again I requested leave from the university, but in view of the fact that it was Brookings and this was prestigious, they agreed. While I was there, I had hired a woman to transcribe, I had had the woman all along doing transcriptions, so I came to Washington with this whole ream of manuscripts, but then I also had interviews to finish up...and by that time there were people who were in their Washington offices or had gone back to the offices they came from like Dick Barnett who helped with the debate coaching and stuff like that. Anyway, so I finished up the interviews and started writing up the analysis and I spent a lot of time on it, I was really proud of it, because I had a schedule that I could go back to and kind of analyze it. Some of what I found was surprising. I asked, "What do you think is the single biggest factor in Clintons victory?" And a lot of people just said "Bill Clinton, I mean, he's a genius. He invented the campaign, it was his vision, his passion, his political tactics...this that and the other." Some people say that Bill and Hillary, which I thought was kind of interesting. Some people said our brilliant message

operation. That was kind of fun.

But, when the Clintons came to us that summer up at the lakehouse, that was the first vacation they had had since he was elected president. I had waiting for him...in these big bound volumes...and I will show them to you on the way out, because they have one copy and I have the other copy. All of the interviews transcribed, plus, a thirty page introduction from me about what all that was said about his campaign, and I really thought that there were ways of quickly turning it into a book. At that time it would have been very appealing...it would have had an audience because it was an astonishing campaign. But by that time, Roy, they were already under siege. And there were things in it that--I mean, campaigns are not pretty. I mean, there are parts of this that you just...and people talk to me very candidly because they trusted me. And I think both of them were a little bit gunshy and they had grown defensive enough already that they wanted to read the whole thing before anybody else read it. And they lugged off this big copy with them and I just knew what was going to happen and basically they said, let's wait. And so it is all there and I figure I will turn it over to the library...they will have a copy.

RR: Is there any prospect of publication after they leave office?

DB: Maybe. And they can do it as far as I....

RR: Is that what you would like to see done?

DB: I think it should be done, although, and I have not even talked to Bill about it again in a year...

RR: Would the Clintons consider having the University Press publish that?

DB: I don't know. I don't know and I could mention that to them as a possibility, but let me tell you what I thought would be utterly fascinating since it hasn't been done before this. And what I would like to do...if I had the time given to me....I would like to go back and re-interview everybody. First of all, whether they joined the Clinton administration, I know a number of them did. And on balance, looking back, what were some of their thoughts. It would not be as extensive a thing, in fact, I'll tell you, Roy, that one of the things that happened with my illness is I have letters from all over and one of the things that thrills me more than anything else is that we had....when Betsy Wright came into the campaign to run the research department, I was in charge of the Arkansas record...defending the Arkansas records. Every law that had been enacted while he was governor, every executive order that he had ever signed. The whole public record which was my responsibility and he was being attacked brutally on it because Arkansas ranked so low on everything. And they're going to do the same thing to George W. when he runs. You know, "if he's so hot, how come Texas has the highest illiteracy rate," or whatever...I can see it all coming, because I've been there and done that. But in order to do that and everything else, we had the research department, which consisted of Betsy and me and six or seven of the brightest young people I have ever met in my life....these kids drove, hitchhiked, bicycled in from Minnesota, California, Connecticut, because they really wanted to take

their country back from the Republicans. It was idealistic. They were so brilliant, they had to spend twenty hours per day scanning things....so that we could key word them, so that if Bush made an attack on prison sentences, we could key in prison sentences and pull up exactly connotations, this that and the other.

RR: In the computer?

DB: Yes. And we started calling this group the boxboys, even though one of them was a woman. They were the boxboys. And since this illness, I have heard from every single one of the boxboys.

RR: Really?

DB: And one of them, Adam Samaha, had cerebral palsy, severely crippled, so bright and so wonderful. He went on to Harvard Law School. Graduated number one in the class. Clerked on the Supreme Court and now is a professor at the University of Minnesota Law School. I could go through the list; another kid that has finished his Ph. D in political science. And they were astonishing. And there are a lot of people in there who I would be interested in whether looking back they thought it was worth their effort and energy. What were their major satisfactions? Their major disappointments? What would they do differently? Whatever, I just think it would make a fascinating study.

RR: With eight years hindsight especially.

DB: So, I am going to discuss it with the president and see if he would be interested in it. I don't think now that I will be able to do it. But somebody should. And I am

about worn out, Roy. Was there anything else you had to get in?

RR: Nothing else that has to be. I was going to ask you about the famous debate with Phyllis Schafly, but we can do that another time.

DB: Ok, let's do that another time.

RR: While I am gathering my stuff up.

DB: There is supposed to be this brilliant Texas lawyer who argued Roe v. Wade for the Supreme Court, I can't think of her name right now and at the last minute she canceled, so I got called into the breach.

[Phone rang...end of interview.]