

William Jefferson Clinton History Project

Interview with

Dan Clinton
Hot Springs, Arkansas
14 March 2004

Interviewer: Andrew Dowdle

Andrew Dowdle: This is Andrew Dowdle with the [William Jefferson] Clinton History Project. It is March 14, 2004, and I'm with Dan Clinton. The first question I'd like to ask you, sir, is where and when were you born?

Dan Clinton: I was born in Hot Springs, Arkansas, on November 3, 1938.

AD: Who were your parents?

DC: Roy Clinton and Janet Clinton.

AD: What did they do?

DC: My father was in the feed business. My mother was a housewife when I was born. Later, they both got into the antique business together and ran an antique business for fifteen years or so.

AD: Okay. So in terms of the feed business—was that in Hot Springs, as well?

DC: That was in Hot Springs.

AD: Okay. Where did you go to school?

DC: I went to school at Hot Springs High School, and I went to school at Arkansas Tech in 1956 for two years. I graduated from the University of Arkansas [in] Fayetteville, in January of 1962.

AD: When did you move back to Hot Springs?

DC: I moved back to Hot Springs in 1967. We were in the [U.S.] Army after we graduated from college—in the army in Fort Polk, Louisiana. Then I took a job with Arkansas-Louisiana Gas Company [ARKLA] and lived in Shreveport, Louisiana, and Helena, Arkansas, with ARKLA gas working on a fertilizer plant. Then we came back to Hot Springs, and I went to work for Dierks Forest, which later became Weyerhaeuser Company. I've pretty much been in the engineering business ever since. I currently work as the president of Grimes Consulting Engineers in Little Rock.

AD: And you had mentioned “we”—is that your wife, as well?

DC: My wife, Joan and I—on the twenty-ninth of March we will have been married forty-five years.

AD: Congratulations. I would like to ask you about—what are your first memories of Bill Clinton?

DC: When I was probably from ten to twelve years old—ten to fifteen, maybe, I guess—I would see him because we would have family outings, either where he lived or at my house. Most of my father's siblings lived in Hot Springs. We would have family outings where everybody would get together.

AD: Just to get it on the record, could you say exactly what was your family relationship to Bill Clinton?

DC: My father had a younger brother—my father's dead and my uncle is dead, too—Roger Clinton, who married Virginia Clinton, and I'm not sure what year that was. She already had Bill, and they later had Roger together. And Bill changed his name to Clinton from Blythe, I think.

AD: What were your impressions of Bill Clinton?

DC: Oh, gosh! He was always probably the brightest light on the bush anytime you were around him. He was just a really sharp person and friendly. Really gregarious. All our family gatherings were pretty much fun. I mean, people got together—got along well, I'll put it that way.

AD: Okay. In terms of these first meetings—you were talking about these get-togethers—about how frequently did they happen?

DC: They would probably be like—they generally were not what you might associate with religious holidays. We were Presbyterian and the rest of them were Baptist. [Laughter] They generally were in summertime or fall, and I would imagine if I looked back—it could have been the grandparents' birthday.

AD: Okay. You mentioned that these [get-togethers] kind of revolved around major holidays and birthdays. Was there really any other contact? Did you go to school before or after he did?

DC: Well, to be honest, I'm not sure when his birthday is. It's in August, I think. I'm not sure what year.

AD: Yes.

DC: But I think I'm eight years older than he is, so if he were ten, I was eighteen and already gone.

AD: Oh. So there was a pretty considerable age gap there in terms of . . .

DC: There is a gap. That's right.

AD: So when you ended up moving back to Hot Springs, that would have been a little bit after he had left?

DC: That's correct, because I was trying to remember the other day—I think that Roger's stepfather died in 1967. I may be wrong. I think he did. It may have been 1968. I'm not sure when it was. It's on the tombstone up there. But I know that we lived in a house on Oakwood, and Bill came up and visited us one time when we were up there; I guess, when he was in college. It's a shame that I can't remember the dates better, but I know that he visited us at that house, and I think several other times he came to our other house that we lived in for so long, which was up on Stonebridge.

AD: When do you think that people in your family began to realize that this was somebody who was probably going to be a fairly prominent public person?

DC: Well, you know, I think that that was early on. In our family, my father had another brother who lived here named Raymond Clinton. Raymond—I think I'm right about this—Raymond had a Buick [automobile] agency in Hot Springs and one in Hope. Roger was working at the one in Hope, and that's [where] he met Virginia and Bill. He financed his [Bill Clinton's] first run for Congress, or financed a large part of it. And I think that he recognized that Bill had potential. I wasn't around Bill that much.

AD: Yes.

DC: But I knew that he went to Boys Nation, and I knew that he went to Georgetown [University, Washington, DC] and Oxford [University, England] and things like that. I knew that he was aspiring the whole time.

AD: Did your parents ever talk about him, or did Raymond ever talk about him?

DC: Well, yes, they did. Now, one of the other things—my father was a state

representative from Hot Springs, and Bill was pretty much intrigued with that, and he would come visit with my father occasionally. I would like to hope that you could get something out of my mother, because many times Bill would come up to the house and she would take him home—we'd walk to the house from school because it was about halfway—she'd take him home. He was always doing things with them. My mother and Virginia were pretty close.

AD: So when you . . .

[Telephone Rings]

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AD: We were talking about your father and his relationship with Bill Clinton. How long was your father in the state legislature?

DC: He was in it for, I think, six years. I'm pretty sure it was. He did some legislation, like, he tried to get the—in fact, he did—he got feed, seed and fertilizer exempt from taxes because in his mind—of course, being in the feed business . . .

AD: [Laughs]

DC: In his mind, if you taxed the feed that you gave the cow, it was going to get taxed as milk again, so you might as well encourage the feed and seed and fertilizer to . . .

AD: Sort of like a value-added tax. [Laughs]

DC: That's right. That would be a value-added tax.

AD: So he was in the state house of representatives?

DC: That's right, from Garland County.

AD: So you moved back to Hot Springs and kind of became aware of Bill Clinton running for office—first for Congress, then as attorney general. What was the general impression of people around here, in terms of his political career? Were people aware that this was the Bill Clinton that they had grown up with? This will, again, go into some questions about Hot Springs and how it has changed.

DC: Yes. I think the people were very supportive. But, you know, he was not from what you might call a prominent family. His mother, in her job as a nurse anesthetist—there was some real bitterness amongst physicians. She had a group of physicians who supported her, and the male doctors didn't think that she should be doing the things that she was doing. So there was a lot of animosity from some of the physicians. As a consequence, I think that that may have reflected against him, to some extent. Now, when she got out of the business and everything went, you know—that all went away, and when he became more skilled with his speaking and things like that, I think he was able to convert a lot more people. But I would say that when he graduated from high school, outside of his class and his peers, he wasn't, like, in the newspaper all the time and that sort of thing.

AD: Yes.

DC: It was almost like a gradual procession of bringing out his abilities.

AD: You mentioned that your uncle Raymond had owned the Buick dealership in town, and some other car dealerships. When did he get out of the business?

DC: He sold the business to Charlie Jordan, I would imagine, sometime in the 1980s. The birth date that is easy for me to remember—there were five children of my

grandfather—they were born in 1901, 1903, 1905, 1907 and 1909. Come here just a minute. This is a picture of A. W. and Eula Clinton with Roger and Virginia Clinton.

AD: That's a nice picture of her.

DC: That was made in 1950 because they were married in 1900, and that was at their fiftieth wedding anniversary. I wish I could tie together how long Roger and Virginia had been married when this picture was taken.

AD: Yes.

DC: I don't really know.

AD: I'm trying to remember when they were married.

DC: I wish I knew. I can't remember it.

AD: Yes.

DC: Raymond would have been—since he was born in 1907, in 1977, he would have been seventy. So he may have retired around that time, or even before.

AD: You talked a little bit about Hot Springs. Can you describe what it was like when you were growing up in Hot Springs in the 1950s and 1960s?

DC: Oh, it was great. We lived up on Quapaw, which was not far from the downtown—I could walk to the pool hall or the school. We lived on Quapaw, and it was close to our church and close to our school, and you could walk pretty much any place that you wanted to go, and I did. I walked a lot. The downtown had gambling—when I was in high school—and it ended when I was in college, maybe. They shut it down. It was illegal, but it was one of those kinds of things that people were afraid to shut down. They didn't know *how* to shut it down.

AD: [Laughs]

DC: So there were a number of gambling places, but they were not prevalent. And, like, right now, the [horse] races are going on. Well, when you came through town—you may have come from the west . . .

AD: No, actually, I came right down past it on U.S. [Highway] 7 going south.

DC: Yes. Well, you know, in the old days—in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s—the place would have been packed. You would have had a hard time getting through there. All the taxi cabs were taken because people came and stayed. It was a different atmosphere—a lot more transients that you met, as opposed to now.

AD: Yes. One of the things everyone talks about [is] how cosmopolitan Hot Springs was for a medium-size Arkansas town.

DC: If I were to interject that Bill's—part of all of our upbringings have been helped, but when you get to really use it, you know, it points out even more—we had a large, and still do, Greek community. We have a large Jewish community. We have a large Serbian community. And they've always been here, and they've always influenced all of our lives because you saw this other—now, my wife is from Arkadelphia. Well, I'm not sure if there are any Greeks who live in Arkadelphia, or at that time. But people came here. In fact, A. W. Clinton came here, I want to say, in around 1918, maybe, or something like that, or 1920, because his wife had ill health. People would come here to take the baths. There's such a preponderance of doctors. My God, there's, like, one doctor for every thousand people, or even more than that—one for every five hundred, maybe. So that, to me, would help formulate anybody's life, and particularly, if

you were an observant person like Bill Clinton and could see that—gosh, the Jewish community gets along with the Catholic community, and the Greek community gets along with everything—you know, it was a reflection of bigger cities, but it was really cosmopolitan.

AD: Was there a significant African-American population at the time?

DC: Sure. Sure. And all of us had help in those days. Raymond lived—the piece of property where the library is going —to build a retreat—they bought it to build a retreat on it—that was Raymond’s house.

AD: Yes.

DC: I would say he had one or two [African-Americans for] domestic help—plus the fact he had at least two or three—because in high school I would work at the agency washing cars with them, and things like that.

AD: Yes.

DC: A lot of times I worked at his house, too. But he would have African-Americans who worked at his Buick agency, and they were always called on to either drive my grandmother around or, you know, they were always around.

AD: Yes.

DC: They were around all the time.

AD: What do you think the attitude was like compared to other parts of the South at that time?

DC: You know, I’ve got an idea that almost all the South was somewhat alike, and that may show my ignorance. But they were closer to families than they would be now.

AD: Yes.

DC: They just lived—they were there all the time. They were just people that you—Raymond had one man named Enos—a large black man. Well, the black lady who lived with him worked for us. She was always—she was either really happy about Enos or really down on him. You heard that, and it was a part of your life, too.

AD: Yes. You mentioned that you graduated from high school here. What were the school systems like?

DC: The school systems were segregated. And even though there are some large school districts now—out west of Lake Hamilton, there are a lot of districts—it existed in those days, but I didn't know anybody who went there. Lakeside is another large school district. They still have remained pretty much white. Hot Springs integrated with what was called Langston [High School]—with the black school.

AD: From your impressions in the 1950s and 1960s, what was the academic quality of the schools that you went to?

DC: Just from personal experience, I had [classes] like high school algebra, trigonometry, and things like that. When I got to Arkansas Tech and had to take *college* algebra, I was competing against folks from small, small school districts who had never even heard of algebra, much less could spell it.

AD: [Laughs]

DC: So it was kind of a cake walk because the classes were dumbed down to them. Now, Fayetteville was more—but I think that the academia from—like, from

Bill's standpoint, Hot Springs was a great place for him to get his start.

AD: That's one of the things that I've heard from other people—that it had a very nurturing environment, but there was also a wide variety of courses, and that it was very vigorous.

DC: When I was in grade school, Roger gave me a soprano saxophone that he played. Roger was quite a musician. He was a real musician. He could sit down and play almost anything. And when I graduated to an alto sax, I gave the soprano sax back, and I think Bill used it. I'm not sure. I know they had it, and I think Bill used it to start with, too. But Bill and I had the same teachers, even though—a man named Virgil Spurlin, who was one of our early band teachers. He taught me, and later taught Bill, too.

AD: Yes.

DC: I think I got out of the band in the tenth grade. It wasn't too cool to be in the band then. [Laughter]

AD: Were there any teachers who really kind of stood out, then, who would have been still teaching when Bill was going to school?

DC: There were a number of them. I'm sure he had them. There was a Miss Houseley, an English teacher who was there forever. There was a Miss Abernathy there. I'm trying to think of the man's name. I'm having a hard time remembering, but most of them would later recall their association with Bill, and they were my teachers, too, at the same time. Irons—Henry Irons. That's his name. He was one of Bill's favorite teachers.

AD: What did he teach?

DC: Thanks for asking. [Laughter] You know, I want to say he may have taught civics. He may have. He may have taught civics.

AD: Again, I guess, just a little bit for background—typically, what type of civics and government courses were there at Hot Springs?

DC: Most of the civics that we had probably concentrated on Arkansas laws.

AD: Yes.

DC: There would be some national laws, but they mostly concentrated on Arkansas history—the way Arkansas government worked. I don't know that I learned a lot about that. I know more now.

AD: To kind of jump forward about twenty years [laughs], when Bill Clinton came back to Arkansas to teach at the University [of Arkansas, Fayetteville], what was the family's reaction? Did anybody mention anything to you about him coming back?

DC: No, we just knew it.

AD: Yes.

DC: I think everybody was really pleased when he did. Most of us thought Hillary was a little bit of an outsider, but that's neither here nor there. [Laughs]

AD: I'll jump forward, I guess, to my next question. What were the impressions of Hillary Rodham Clinton when people met her here?

DC: Well, you know, I think everybody thought that she was kind of distant or aloof. But we didn't get to see them very much, so it wasn't like we could adequately judge her. I think the only thing that got most people—and I was around folks who did the same because it wasn't that big of a deal to me—but the fact that

when they got married, she wouldn't take his name. That was something you just didn't do. I mean, [I] know folks do it for one reason or another, but the fact that she didn't for a long time . . .

AD: Was anybody surprised when he ran for Congress in 1974?

DC: Yes. I think that they really were. I think they really were. I think they may have thought that was a stretch. I'm not sure, outside of my Uncle Raymond, I don't know of other people who would have been supportive. You know, he worked for a while for [J. William] Fulbright, so Fulbright would have wanted one of his folks to beat a Republican in northwest Arkansas.

AD: Did anybody seem surprised when he lost?

DC: Yes, because once you got caught up in it, then it was, "Well, he could do this." And, of course, [John Paul] Hammerschmidt called him everything in the world. [Laughter]

AD: Was there any type of discussion after he lost about what he was going to be doing? Was it just kind of assumed that he was going to go back and teach law, or that . . .?

DC: I think that's what everybody thought. Yes. You know, it got to where it was rare that we would ever see him. My younger brother—I don't know if he's on your list or not, David ["Bo" Clinton]?

AD: Yes.

DC: Bo and his wife would have—pretty much—like—Thanksgiving get-togethers and that sort of thing, and Bill and Hillary would come to them in later years. In fact, Bill came to Bo's, I think, two Novembers ago. I had been to Jordan to work

on an airport at Aqaba, Jordan, and told Bill about it. He said, “Oh, yes, Abdullah has been trying to get me to work on a project to put water from the Red Sea back to the Dead Sea. The only reason I’d consider it is that Aqaba is such a nice place.” [Laughter] And it is a nice place. But that was really interesting. I wish I’d had a tape recorder during his visit then because the 2002 elections were coming up, and he knew everything that was going to happen. As it turned out, it didn’t.

AD: Did he think the Democrats were going to take back the House, or what was he expecting?

DC: Well, you know, it seems like one of the things that just struck me—the lady in Missouri whose husband had died in the plane crash . . .

AD: Oh, Senator Mel Carnahan. Yes.

DC: Carnahan. Right. He said that she was getting older and her heart wasn’t in it, and she probably wouldn’t win. But he thought that the guy was going to beat—there was a Democrat who was going to beat Jeb Bush in Florida for governor.

AD: Oh, yes.

DC: But it was interesting listening to him talk about this with such a matter-of-fact knowledge, and I’m sure he has a lot of fun speculating on politics now and then.

Do you want something to drink?

AD: Oh, that would be great.

[Tape Stopped]

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Beginning of Tape 1, Side 2]

AD: You mentioned something about an incident with a ram and Bill Clinton.

DC: That's right, and I can't tell you the age, but I could not have been but about fifteen, so let's say he was anywhere from seven to nine, something like that.

Roger and Virginia lived on Wildcat Road.

[Telephone Rings]

[Tape Stopped]

AD: We were talking about the ram story. You figured he was probably five or so?

DC: No, I'd say he was probably seven to nine.

AD: Seven to nine. All right.

DC: Where they lived on Wildcat Road was sort of a farm area, I mean [a] farm itself.

They had the house on one side of the road, and the barn and the animals were on the other side of the road. We were having a family get-together and the grandparents and everybody were there. And I remember the men were amusing themselves trying to shoot walnuts out of a tree with a .22 [rifle]. I don't know why they wanted to do that. [Laughter] But all of a sudden we heard Bill yell, and this ram—he had gotten into the pen with the ram and the sheep. My grandfather ran across the road—I guess all of us did—my grandfather ran across the road and got the ram off of Bill, and then wanted to go get the gun and kill the ram. His sons prevailed, and they didn't kill it. Now, that's my version.

[Laughter] But that was a typical family get-together. I don't remember the exact time, but they lived, maybe, five minutes from the hospital where Virginia worked if you drove fast enough. But it was way in the country, and they had an outdoor bell—that was the first time I had ever heard of a phone with an outdoor

bell so that if Virginia was outside and there was an emergency at the hospital, she could hear the phone any place.

AD: We talked a little bit about his run for Congress. When he decided to run again, for attorney general, were people a little surprised?

DC: No. I think everybody pretty much expected him—by then, he demonstrated that he had the experience to be an elected official.

AD: Yes.

DC: Even if he was young, he still had—he was pretty genuine, and anybody who engages him conversation knows that he almost mesmerizes you with his ability—if you've got a subject, he knows all about it, and he knows how to get things done, or fixed, or whatever.

AD: When he ran for governor the first time, what were people's reactions in the family? Was this something they expected?

DC: I think they expected it. They sure did. I think they expected it. We were not people of means so that you could support him with any more than your vote or your assistance with other folks, you know?

AD: Yes.

DC: We just couldn't do that at that time. But it was amazing to me, I guess, that there *were* a lot of people who did believe in him and gave him money for his campaigns.

AD: When he lost, were people surprised?

DC: I think people were surprised. I think they were really surprised. They like to lay it off on the license plate issue, but that's so lame. If five dollars is going to break

you on your license plate, or some number, then that's wrong. But the inference was that he'd raise taxes, and that seems to cost anybody who tries to, you know?

AD: What did the family speculate was going to happen to him after he lost?

DC: I really thought he'd go back to teaching. I thought he'd go back into teaching, and, I guess, everybody else did, too. You just never thought of him as going down and working for a men's store selling suits or something like that. He always—you knew bigger things were going to happen to him.

AD: So when he ran again, were people in your family surprised, or did they kind of expect it?

DC: No, I think everybody expected it. And the poor old boy who beat him was such not as accomplished. The story has it that somebody dared him to run, and that's what happened.

AD: [Laughs] So when did you get some idea that Bill Clinton was planning to run for president? When did it dawn on you that this was serious?

DC: You know, we had a—where my brother lived at the time on Edgehill in Little Rock, just below his house lived a guy who had been a contemporary of mine with ARKLA. He was Sheffield Nelson. Bill was up at Bo's house at a Thanksgiving deal—I don't know how the conversation went around—we were looking down at Sheffield's house, and I said, "Do you want to go down there and tell Sheffield 'Hi'?" Because Sheffield had become a staunch Republican and an anti-Bill person. Like most of them that I'd see, it was just strictly jealousy, I think, as much as anything else. But he [Bill] said, "Well, I hope I'm going to do bigger and better things than that guy [Nelson] ever would," or something like

that.

AD: Yes.

DC: And I probably would not have correlated that, but that's when first started thinking about it.

AD: What was the extended family's general attitude when he decided to run in—I guess that would have been 1991 when he decided to run for 1992.

DC: Well, I think that everybody wanted to help him. Like I say, there are some family members who have the money who could become Friends of Bill, and those were the folks who traveled the country for him, and that sort of thing. I couldn't do it. My family couldn't do it, but I know that some of—my grandmother was a Cornwell, and some of the Cornwells had the money or found the money to do that. So there were a lot of people who were really ready to support him. I mean, I've always supported him, except that in the kind of work that I did, and in those days and until recently, I was always an employee and limited to how much time I could take off to do things. Now, one time when he was running for governor—Joan and I used to live in Helena. Two of our children lived there, and when we moved back here in 1967, our youngest child, Jay, who was born there—but Bill was going to go to Helena, and one of my mutual friends who was with his campaign said, "Look, you know a lot of people in Helena. Why don't you come with us and go and meet folks?" And I did. I traveled with his entourage and met some of the people I had known there. It wasn't more than two or three years after I had moved from Helena that I think—whenever that was. I can't remember exactly. It could have been ten years. But

just as a support—I wasn't a professional hand-shaker or that sort of thing. The thing I remember about it was that I decided to go back home, and it was late. I mean, I stayed around and listened to speeches and that sort of thing. I woke up at about 5:00 in the morning under an interstate overpass at Brinkley. Somehow or another I had made it there. [Laughter] I may have been sleep-driving or whatever, but I wanted to help every time he ran for any office, and was not either capable of, or didn't have the money to do it.

AD: After he was elected again—what, again, was the—? This is going to sound like a dumb question, but what was the general attitude of the extended family? Was a lot of it—travel to Washington [DC], relatively speaking, or what was—? Like I said, it sounds like a stupid question, but what were people's attitudes?

DC: You mean the . . .?

AD: After he was elected president—yes, in terms of your family.

DC: It was an unusual eight years as far as I'm concerned. I probably thought that we would go to Washington more than we did, but it's a matter of money. And, for one thing, you're not part of the government. You don't have a place there, you know?

AD: Yes.

DC: Joan and I went to the first [inaugural] ball. We didn't go to the second ball. And during the first [inauguration], we stayed in a—ten of us stayed in a little place over in Georgetown. We drove all the way up there and turned around and drove back, and, yet, you really never saw him. I mean, you got to go to some of the parties. He may have come by the Arkansas party, but there would be just, like, a

long line of folks. And in those days—ten years or more—the security was not what it is now. He could do that sort of thing. But later on, Joan made an ornament for one of the White House Christmas trees one year, and we went and stayed in the White House and got to see the Christmas tree, and this sort of thing. That was fun.

AD: You mentioned, I think, before that some of the relatives, like, the Cornwells, had visited a little bit more frequently or . . . ?

DC: I think they did. But, you know, like I say, you can imagine anything, but we really didn't have open access to the Governor's Mansion when he was the governor.

AD: Yes.

DC: It wasn't like we just showed up on the doorstep every so often.

AD: [Laughs]

DC: We always had a Christmas party at the Governor's Mansion that everybody looked forward to. In the early days, I was into ceramics. I made a tile plaque for the Governor's Mansion that said "Clinton-1800 Center Street." And every time they'd have Christmas, TV people would be there and they'd have carolers or whatever. They'd pan up to the sign. I don't know whatever happened to the sign. I never made one for when he got to be president. But we always had a Christmas party that was fun, you know. And there was always a Christmas party that we were invited to in Washington that was pretty much the family and close friends—it was the first Sunday in December—the cabinet members and people like that. I mean, it was a fun trip to visit and just [to] meet those folks, but it was

expensive. To take all my family—it would cost me \$5,000 to do something like that. I kind of wish now that I had done more, but it wasn't like there was just an open invitation to go.

AD: [Laughs]

DC: I wanted to show you something.

AD: Okay.

DC: This is a picture of the [whole slew].

AD: Oh, that's very nice.

DC: They're going to turn it—it has turned into a Clinton deal of some sort now. This is a picture when he was governor. He and Hillary drove over to one of our friends' house where we were all at. This is my brother, Bo. This is me. This is Bo's wife. This is my older brother, Roy. And who is that right there? That's Liz. That's my sister, Liz.

AD: Okay.

DC: There's Hillary. There's Butch, Roy's wife. There's Bill, and there's my wife.

AD: Oh.

DC: Liz was not married at the time. That's a neat picture, isn't it?

AD: That is. That's a very nice picture.

DC: But they just got in the car—he was governor—and got into the car and drove over to this guy's house where we were having the party and didn't think anything about it. This other stuff—a picture I want to show you, just as a background—this was our wedding in the church in Arkadelphia where we were married, and this was in March of 1959. Now, Bill came to the wedding, and in

the wedding receiving book you've got signatures of Vince Foster and Billy Clinton. Both of them signed our wedding book.

AD: [Laughs] That's interesting.

DC: Isn't it? That was really kind of neat, you know, forty-five years ago that they—Bill—Vince—of course, Bill had lived in Hope, and he and Vince Foster were close.

AD: A lot has been written on the relationship between Roger Clinton and Bill Clinton. Obviously, in terms of any relationship like that, it's going to be a complex relationship. Is there any insight that you have?

DC: I think, myself, my side of the family pretty much defends Roger, to a certain extent. And my mother will tell you—I wish she could, but two years ago she had a stroke—she'll tell you that Virginia and Roger would get into some knock-down drag-out [fights]. And Virginia got Roger as much as he got her. Now, I don't know that Roger mistreated Bill, or anything else like that. I know that as he was dying, Bill did an awful lot for him, and Bill had a lot of people help Roger whenever he passed away.

AD: Yes.

DC: But, you know, I never—you would think that if it was really bad, Virginia, little Roger, and Bill would have left. But they didn't. I never saw them together that much, if you want to know the truth, other than at the family get-togethers. He [Bill] became—and you're going to find this out, I think—it wasn't of his doing, but he distanced himself, pretty much, from a lot of us, when he got to moving off to Oxford.

AD: Yes.

DC: And working for Fulbright and that sort of world. It wasn't easy to come back and have small talk with the family. And I think he was a real student of politics.

AD: Is there anything else that comes to mind in terms of—we've talked a little bit about how Hot Springs and how the school and the family ended up shaping a young Bill Clinton. Is there anything that I really haven't touched on, or that we haven't touched on?

DC: Well, you know, like I said earlier, we—Roy and Janet and Raymond and his family—we were all Presbyterians. Bill and Roger and Virginia and the grandparents were all Baptists. So there is another connection that I'm not aware of, but it could have had a good deal to do with shaping him into himself. Sunday School and things like that that he would have gone to could have influenced him a lot. But because it wasn't our church, there's a whole other day that you just didn't see him—you know, he wasn't around. I had a great incident happen one time. My mother and dad and Roger and Virginia used to play dominos a lot up at our house. On one occasion, I took Bill and my younger brother to a movie. I told the collective adults, "We'll probably sit through it twice." That was because there was no air conditioning at home. The only air conditioning would be in a movie place, you know?

AD: [Laughs]

DC: And Virginia, just being sharp-witted as you ever saw, she said, "You know, the only time I ever wanted to anything twice was before I did it once." [Laughter] I have reminded Bill of that. Bill said, "That's *my* mother. That's exactly what she

would have said.”

AD: Yes. Well, is there anything else that you’d like to add that we’ve not touched on?

DC: No, but I may think of something as I get—I think that this is great that you’re doing this, and I think you’ll find that Bill was probably not totally influenced by anybody. I think he just had an awful lot of ability and was able to sense when folks could help him or when school could help him, and he took advantage of that sort of thing. I guess he was never shy a day in his life. That’s probably an attribute, too, because he has always been outgoing and gregarious—able to talk to anybody.

AD: Well, I’d like to thank you for opening up your home, and thank you for your time and insights.

DC: Sure. You’re welcome.

[End of Interview]

[Edited by Rebecca Willhite]