

William Jefferson Clinton History Project

Interview with

Bill Nipper  
Hot Springs, Arkansas  
2 February 2005

Interviewer: Andrew Dowdle

Andrew Dowdle: It is Wednesday, February 2, 2005. I'm in Hot Springs talking with Bill Nipper. What we usually do to start is to ask a couple of question. First thing, your last name is [Nipper]. N-I-P-P-E-R. Correct?

Bill Nipper: Correct.

AD: Where were you born?

BN: Magnolia, Arkansas.

AD: When were you born?

BN: October 1, 1946.

AD: And who are your parents?

BN: Thomas Nipper—well, I'm Thomas W. Nipper, Jr., so he is Sr., and Christine Hardy Nipper.

AD: And you prefer to go by Bill?

BN: Bill. [Laughter] I don't even turn around if someone says, "Thomas." To me, that's Dad's name, you know?

AD: What did your parents do?

BN: Dad did several different things. I guess he spent most of the years—well, he worked at International Paper Company at one time, and he worked for Slumber J

Oil Company, then he worked at Columbia Packing House, which was a packing plant. Mom worked for the government back during World War II in the Office of [Price] Administration, I believe was the name of it.

AD: Yes.

BN: That was until the end of the war. Then, when I was born she stopped working and stayed home. I'm sure that helped my childhood. It was always fun to go home and have Mom there. It was kind of like "Leave it to Beaver," I guess—kind of that type of childhood. When I got into college, she went back to work at a real estate agency in several different offices—office work.

AD: Starting at elementary school and going up to college, where did you attend school?

BN: At Central Elementary in Magnolia, and then we moved across town. I went to a new, smaller school, Westside Elementary, that had just been built. Then I went to Magnolia Junior High School. I left there in the ninth grade and moved on to Magnolia High School. I graduated in 1964 from Magnolia High School, the same year Bill Clinton graduated from Hot Springs High School. After college at Southern Arkansas University, [Magnolia], I got a fellowship for a year of graduate study. I finished with a Master's degree in August of 1969. I came for an interview—my professor at the university gave me—I don't know why she chose me out of the eight fellows who went through this program together, but she said, "I want you to go to Hot Springs and interview with Maurice Dunn." He was acting superintendent here then. Later, he became superintendent. He was known statewide for being in education, and he was a leader at that time in the

Arkansas Education Association, and so on—before they kind of kicked administrators out and it became just the “teacher group.” [Laughter] So I was hired in August of 1969 and started teaching at Southwest Junior High. My first class—we had six periods a day, no conference period, a thirty-minute lunch, and my classes ranged from thirty-eight to forty-four [students]. Coming from graduate school and going to a junior high with about 185 kids a day . . .

AD: And no planning period in between.

BN: No planning period. And in my first homeroom, sitting in the second seat of the first row, was Roger Clinton. So that’s how I first found out who the Clintons were. I didn’t know at that point in time that his brother was Bill, or what Bill’s intentions were. [Laughs]

AD: What subject did you teach at that time?

BN: Always social studies. I taught U.S. history at the eighth-grade level, and I taught geography that year to seventh graders. That was the last two periods of the day. They’d had an activity period the year before, and they didn’t know how to redo the clock, I think, so it was not block-scheduling, but I had thirty-eight seventh graders the last two periods a day. The periods lasted an hour and fifteen minutes each. That was cruel and unusual punishment in those days, I think. [Laughter]

AD: Was Roger in your seventh-grade class or your eighth-grade class?

BN: Eighth grade.

AD: Eighth-grade class. What was Roger like as an eighth grader?

BN: As an eighth grader, Roger was pretty quiet and everything—kind of reserved. I don’t guess I would say he was necessarily shy, but he was relatively quiet. I

found myself being surprised later when he got into high school that he formed a band and was actually going to be the lead singer. I had never seen him really as a person to be kind of like the front person or anything. He did create the band. I had taught the other students there, and I guess one of the first gigs, as you would say, that they did—they came back and played for all of the junior high dances. That gave Roger and his new [band], Dealer's Choice—a place to go and a little bit of money, and he played all of our junior high dances. It gave our kids live music. And they were really good. Dealer's Choice went a long way. They played in nightclubs later around Hot Springs when he got older. The one thing I always remember and really appreciated about Virginia [Clinton], Roger and Bill's mom, is that she was so proud of both of her sons. On the nights that Roger played with Dealer's Choice at the gymnasium in Southwest Junior High School here in Hot Springs, no matter when it was or whatever—it was a Friday night, but she and her friends would come to the gym and pay a visit to Roger and his band. They weren't the type to sit in the seats. They would try to get more kids out there dancing, and they would all go out there and dance. And they would stay probably for thirty minutes to an hour.

AD: So it wasn't just that she was coming as a courtesy to her son, it was that she was . . .

BN: She was coming for enjoyment. [Laughs]

AD: Yes. And that's really interesting because obviously we've not talked as much about Roger as his brother, but everybody talks about, again, since the questions are [about] Bill and how proud she was of Bill—she really didn't play favorites,

then.

BN: Right. Not at all. And I think that probably became apparent also in the presidential campaign. Roger was always included. He was always there, and she always supported as much as she could in the ways that she thought were right. She would support him as much as possible. And later—I mentioned that he was playing in some of the nightclubs around Hot Springs, and I would go to some of those at times to hear him play and sing—and there was Virginia, she and her friends—they would be there, too. So she supported him in every way possible, I think.

AD: Can you remember the first time you met Bill Clinton?

BN: I'm not sure that it was the first time. Like I said, I was teaching civics at that time to ninth graders. [Laughs] I had moved up somewhat. And Clinton, then, was attorney general, and he was coming back to his old high school building, which was then Central Junior High. The high school had moved out here to Emery Street, where we are today. I took some of my students, and I had—this will date the whole thing [laughs] because I had this extremely heavy reel-to-reel video recorder, a huge tripod, and a camera that looked like it would have come out of a television studio.

AD: I remember the type very well. Yes. [Laughter]

BN: It had the big rollers and everything. So I had some students, a group that went with me, and we took all of this equipment and set it up in the auditorium at Central, which was the auditorium of his high school when he was going there. Some of our students from Southwest and all the civics students at Central—he

came down from Little Rock as attorney general to speak to the students. I videotaped the whole thing and took it back to play to my classes, and so on. And he was a very young Bill Clinton, with a shock of black hair—longer hair—and he was the state attorney general, and it was very exciting to the kids to get to meet a public official like that. He spoke, and there was a question-and-answer session. He was really good with the kids because even when he was president, he was so good with teaching people and speaking on different levels. He could speak on anyone's level, and can to this day. But in the question-and-answer period, a kid in the audience asked a question, "Are you going to run for president?" Now, this was back in about 1976. He said, "Well, I've got two problems with that right now. Number one, I'm not known by the American people. There would be far less than 1% of the American people who would even know who I am or know the name, Bill Clinton. That's one thing. And the other thing is I don't meet the qualifications in the Constitution because I'm not yet thirty-five years old. [Laughter] So I can't run. But in answer to your question, at some point, if the time is right and the factors come together, I probably would, or I might like to." It was something like that. I kept that interview on that old reel-to-reel tape. I don't know if it has self destructed today, but it's still around somewhere. We just got rid, years later, unfortunately, of the recorder and everything. So if I had access, I might [be able to] check some of those tapes and find that old interview. That would be interesting today, I think.

AD: I know that at some stage, if you were ever willing to part with it, I'm sure the Special Collections people at our library [at the University of Arkansas,

Fayetteville] would be fascinated by that. That would be something that would be, at least for them, very valuable.

BN: Right. Well, I would like for it to be found and protected [laughs] if it could be. I will do some searching for it.

AD: So again, I guess, kind of a more general type of question—what was the school system at Hot Springs like when you moved in? What were your first impressions?

BN: Well, other than what I've said earlier, I really enjoyed it here. Obviously, because I'm still here. [Laughs] I've done many different things over the years, inside and outside the classroom. I've been the director of a federal project. In fact, when Clinton became governor, I became one of two teacher center directors. So we had a teacher center, one of sixty in the nation, here in Hot Springs. But the school system itself was very crowded. As I mentioned, the class sizes before—well, they divided the two junior highs because they were so overcrowded. At one time—when Clinton went to school at the old building downtown, they had the junior high in the annex building, and then they had the high school in the main building.

AD: Yes.

BN: They were just growing by leaps and bounds. In those days, the Hot Springs City School System had, I think, over 4,500 students.

AD: Wow!

BN: So they split the two junior highs and built a new one in 1959, which is now our middle school over here in west Hot Springs, and they divided the students. And

in the middle of the year, I believe it was, coming back after Christmas, half the student population at the junior high turned up at the new building, called Southwest. I guess it was about that same time that Virginia had moved from the Park Avenue house, which she had moved into, I think, when she came from Hope, and moved over to Scully Street off 7<sup>th</sup> Street, not too far away from this new junior high. So that's why Roger went to the new junior high there. The new school was built for 750 students, and we had 837 students in the building [laughs]. I guess that was either the first or second year I was there. Then there was an equal number at the Central Junior High, and then they poured into this building. This building, in those days, had over 1,500 students in grades ten through twelve. So with outlying districts taking a lot of the students—and growing—with people moving out and building houses and so on in suburbia, our district has lost some population from where it was in those days. But impressions then—a really good teaching staff, numerous students, some problems like any school has, and I didn't realize at the time, but I think desegregation had really come in Southwest and Central in those days, just basically a year or two before I got there. So there were still some “getting along” factors between blacks and whites in those days—but actually very little. You know, kids are kids. We had some problems. I remember teachers were expected in those days to take care of their own discipline. Coming in from graduate school, it was not that you had very many other people to depend on. You were turned loose in the classroom with all of those kids—forty-four in one period, you know, and you pretty much did what you had to do to keep order in



there. And I was twenty-one going on twenty-two at the time, and some of the elder teachers would stop me when I was running to the office for something, thinking I was a ninth grader. [Laughter] It was interesting. Some of my eighth-grade students in those days were taller than I was. [Laughs]

AD: You mentioned that desegregation had just started in the Hot Springs School System. What were racial attitudes and race relations like at that time? The kind of model I think most people are familiar with or the incident, obviously, is [Little Rock] Central High School in terms of desegregation in 1957.

TN: Yes.

AD: So that was obviously very different than what happened here, it sounds like.

TN: Oh, it was very different. We really had—the problems we had in those days were more problems—they weren't racial problems, they were more problems—[laughs] you know, two guys getting in a fight or so on—the typical school problems. I don't really remember any incidents in the classroom or anything like that that were black/white issues. So the kids, as far as I could tell, really got along and there were no real problems there.

AD: Speaking of changes, about the time you moved to Hot Springs, a lot of the “older culture” was kind of dying out in the sense of the reputation of Hot Springs as being kind of a free-wheeling gambling town about the time you moved here.

BN: Well, gambling went out—it actually passed the legislature, and Governor [Winthrop] Rockefeller, for some reason, decided to veto it. I remember not living here in 1964—I remember John Chancellor from NBC News standing in front of the new Royale Vista Hotel on Central Avenue, not far from the race

track, and saying, “What are large hotels like this going to do with casino gambling going out?” And that was 1964, because every once in a while, when it got too hot for Governor [Orval] Faubus, I think, he would send in the state police. It would splash in the newspapers about, you know—they tear up all the machines, and then the state’s population settles down. And then on Monday morning, gambling would open again in Hot Springs with brand new machines. [Laughter] That had gone on, but finally in 1967 it was closed down. Of course, I came here in the fall of 1969. The casinos were gone, but the areas like the Vapors, and when the races went on, and so on—all of Hollywood was here. I remember living in Magnolia getting the television stations from Shreveport, Louisiana—at 10:30 at night, when the news went off in Shreveport, they would switch to the beautiful Vapors Nightclub in downtown Hot Springs, Arkansas. And you would hear Hollywood stars of the highest caliber—see them on television there, singing their songs and doing their acts. So I got in on being able to see a lot of the celebrities when they came here even in the 1960s, and that lasted well into the 1970s and early 1980s before the Vapors finally closed. So there was still some excitement, but I could see how especially Virginia was attracted to that. And then later I knew and met a lot of her friends. They were all really an interesting generation. Tom Brokaw calls it all “the greatest generation,” and I think in so many ways they were. But they enjoyed their fun, too.

AD: Having grown up in Magnolia, you’ve got a very good contrast. Was Hot Springs really that different from the rest of Arkansas?

BN: Oh, Hot Springs was really that different. You know, the term “cosmopolitan” comes to mind because Hot Springs was totally different than any other place in Arkansas. We had more immigrants. We had more ethnic groups than probably any other place in the state in those days. And it was truly the American spa. People had come here by train from the East Coast and West Coast for years to take the baths and so on. What many people don’t know is that some of the largest hotels in America were located here in those days. There were five very large hotels similar now to the Arlington today, which is one of the few of the larger ones left. Because of fire and—mainly fire, and then just being torn away, many of those have been demolished, and so on. I had some friends of that age group talking about the large hotel that was built across from the Army/Navy Hospital, which is the Arkansas Rehabilitation Center today. It had a walk on the fourth or fifth floor going across the street that you could walk across from the hotel roof to the Army/Navy Hospital. A lot of the soldiers from World War II would be sent to recuperate and so on there at the Army/Navy Hospital. When they got better they would come over, and they would have roof dances on the top of the hotel. It’s just a gigantic hotel, and a lot of the women would say that when they were young, their mothers would just forbid them to go to the hotel and meet all those servicemen. But, of course, they would go right down there and dance the night away. [Laughter] There were some good stories there. Hot Springs was always different, I think, from any other place. It got the reputation as “Sin City” because of the gambling and things that went [on] here, kind of like a New Orleans, maybe, with the bright lights. [Laughs]

AD: You talked a little bit about Virginia as someone who was very fun-loving. Can you elaborate a little bit more about her personality?

BN: Yes. Virginia was a person, I think, who just really enjoyed her friends, really enjoyed the bright lights and the good times. She was a hard worker as a nurse anesthetist. She cared for her family. She was strong, *strong* for her family. Even during the presidential campaign in 1992, we always had—one of our congressmen here in the 4<sup>th</sup> District would have a party at the Arlington Ballroom or convention center on the night before the races. Well, of course, Virginia was always there. [Laughs] She was there, not hiding her face or anything—when some of the charges against Clinton had come out right during the New Hampshire Primary. So that timing was horrible for any presidential candidate running for office to have charges made by—I think it was Gennifer Flowers at that time. Instead of staying home or mourning over the whole thing, and so on, Virginia was there at the party and was the life of the party, like always, and was just declaring that she was still going to spend the night in the White House because this was not going to get him off track, that he would come through. She had every confidence in the world. And, you know what? She was right. [Laughter] But she enjoyed her friends. She had a birthday club, and they would go out and eat usually—I think at least monthly. The Sawmill Depot, which was a very historic restaurant here in the old train station downtown—it's the Transportation Hub now—but that was [one of] the favorite places. You could go in there, and many times you'd see Virginia having lunch with her friends, and so on. And to this day I think the friends still get together and have lunch. But she

was so loved by everybody because Virginia was kind of like her son, Bill—could be on different levels with different people. It was interesting—when she died and they had the funeral in probably the only place they could, the Hot Springs Convention Center. The White House asked if I could get some students together here from the high school to act as ushers to seat people at the service, and I did. We went down and helped with the flags, putting things in, and getting trained somewhat on where to seat the people and the dignitaries and all that. But it was interesting—the pastor that day told the stories, and it was a very uplifting experience—all the stories of the race track and just the people that she knew. And it was a cross-section of Hot Springs, if not the country, because she didn't know just the ones who sat in the boxes at Oaklawn Race Track, she knew the ladies who ran the restrooms. She knew the cooks. She knew the people behind the scenes, and they were there at the service just like Barbra Streisand was there, just like the president and vice-president were there. You had just a whole gamut of people who she loved and adored, and it didn't matter about your position in life. If you were a friend, you were a friend. And you were a friend *forever*. So she was very loyal.

AD: It sounds like your relationship with the family has been very close over the years, or fairly close.

BN: Yes, fairly close. A lot of times—well, I knew Virginia through other friends—through Roger and so on—and a lot of times, when Bill made it to national politics—of course, I was in some of the campaigning, too—they would have a need somewhere at headquarters or something like that. When he was speaking at

some of the conventions or just when he was running for governor, but especially when he was on the national news, I would go by her house over here on Skully Street and watch the news with her. Even in the later days—probably the last year—I went out to her lake house. Again, we would watch the news together. “The McNeill-Lehrer Report” was one of her favorites on PBS [Public Broadcasting System]. We would watch that, and, of course, at that point in time, he was already in the White House, so she had her boxes of pictures taken by the photographer at the White House. She would let me go through some of them, and she would give me a few. But then she would say, “I *know* you, and you’ll want every single one of them, and I won’t get them back, will I?” [Laughter] But she’d give me a few. If she gave me one I was supposed to return, and somehow I didn’t return it soon enough, she’d give me a call. [Laughter]

AD: You had mentioned that you spent a little bit of time campaigning. Were you part of the Arkansas Travelers or . . . ?

BN: Not to go to New Hampshire—I wish I could have—but I did campaign as much as I could, and I volunteered some over at the Clinton headquarters in the old *Arkansas Gazette* building. I loved the fact that his headquarters was in the old *Arkansas Gazette* building because that was my favorite newspaper, and the timing was horrible that it went down in about 1991-1992—that time period. I wish that it could have been around. It was interesting—one of my tasks over there—it seemed like Christmas every day because one of my tasks there—a candidate running for president gets all kinds of gifts people all around the country and the world. One of the tasks is they had to be opened and logged, so it

was a lot of fun to open packages and write down what they were and things like that. And they were taken and stored, I think, at the governor's mansion or in some warehouse. I'm sure a lot of those items are probably stored in the [William J. Clinton] Presidential Library collection now. It was always fun—Virginia and some of her friends and another lady that you may want to talk with, Nancy Crawford, were really close to Virginia. They have some of the wildest stories about being out in rural Arkansas and trying to campaign even in a yard that had signs for Bill's opponent, and then going there and getting caught by dogs [laughter] and having to run back to the car to make a quick getaway. They have some wild and crazy stories like that.

AD: I'll have to remember to—I don't think I've talked to—no, she's not on our interview list, but she sounds like someone we'd like to add onto . . .

BN: Oh, she would be *excellent*.

AD: Something that kind of relates to that—what were people's attitudes in Hot Springs toward Bill Clinton when he came back to Arkansas and was starting to run? This is going back to the 1970s, when he was running for attorney general and then for the governor's office? Was this a native son that people were readopting?

BN: I think so. The fact that he went off to school and everything—I never heard any criticism about that. Of course, he came back and was a law professor [at the University of Arkansas] in Fayetteville before he decided to make the run. Of course, he ran for congress and came very close to unseating a Republican incumbent. I've often wondered what would have happened if he had gone into

the House of Representatives at such a young age—would [he] have made his road to the presidency through the House and the Senate, or would he have come back to be governor—or would he have even ended up as president if he had won that election? I think losing that probably helped Bill’s strength for his run later, and probably, as horrible as it was to him and me and Virginia and so many other people, the fact that he lost after one two-year term as governor—I mean, he was . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Beginning of Tape 1, Side 2]

BN: . . . as you would be after one term as governor and so on. And then I think, though, in the long run, the fight back—he became the first governor to ever come back and win after having been defeated.

AD: Were you surprised that he ran again?

BN: No. No, not at all. And he pretty much did it from the standpoint that many politicians don’t—he apologized. He said, “We believe in everybody having a second chance. I will have my door open, and I will listen to the people.” They gave him another chance. I think that, again, maybe gave him the strength that he needed to run for the presidency. I think there was something about Virginia and Bill both—when their backs were to the wall and they were down at the lowest, they fought their way back. That’s when they became the strongest. I think we saw that a lot of times—maybe through the impeachment and things like that. He became strong. So he won his way back into the governor’s office. Once he was there, coming back in 1982, he served all the way up to the time that he ran [for]



and won the presidency.

AD: So when did you hear that he was going to run for president, or when did it dawn on you that he was going to run for president?

BN: Oh, I always kind of thought it was just a matter of time. That's something else that makes me remember a conversation from the old Southwest Junior High in the teachers' lounge. At that point in time, it was probably my first year, and I didn't even know then who Bill Clinton was. But in conversations there, there were older teachers discussing the brightest male student and the brightest student who ever came through the Hot Springs Schools. And in their opinion, Bill Clinton was the brightest ever of the male students. One counselor said—and I always remember the quote—again, I wasn't even sure, and he wasn't even in politics at that point, but she said, "And I'll tell you one thing, if he ever decides he wants to be president of the United States, he will be president of the United States." [Laughter] I kind of tucked that away somewhere. So I guess once I knew when he became attorney general—and we had some other young good office holders then, like Jim Guy Tucker and so on—of course, they were always competitors and adversaries in some ways, I guess.

AD: Yes

BN: But I just kind of thought that there would be a time. And also I knew some of the people who had gone to school with him and had always heard—not only this story I just told, but the fact that some of his classmates had signed his yearbook in 1964, "See you in the White House." And it was interesting that thirty years after signing at that book, they had their Hot Springs High School Trojan reunion

here in the summer in this new high school building—I came to that. Also, in October [of] that year—and it was exactly thirty years after they had signed the yearbook—they had it at the White House. So that was kind of interesting. So I guess I always thought that he would run at some point. He was talented and gifted—an intellectual who, again, could explain things to people and make everything easy to understand. And he never met a stranger. You know, my dad has a story that he tells—in Magnolia, when he was running for—I’m not sure if it was congress or attorney general—he was at a service station, and his vehicle was being worked on. One of their friends from Magnolia, Mack Dotson, I believe it was, who was a friend of the Clintons—I think they were about the same age—he brought him around because he was campaigning and everything. He wanted to shake their hands. The guys in the service station said, “You don’t want to shake *this* hand. I’ve got grease all over me.” He said that he didn’t care, and they shook hands and introduced and talked for a little bit. About two months later, I think it was, my dad was not even in Magnolia—he was in, I think, in Stamps, down in southwest Arkansas, and ran into him again campaigning. He [Clinton] walked to him [my dad] and called him by name. And Dad said, “There was no reason that he would ever remember *my* name. I was just there at a service station that day. We did have a conversation. But he remembered the *name*.” Of course, Clinton was known for being able to do things like that. That was kind of a favorite story with my dad. [Laughter]

AD: When did you realize that he was going to win, that somebody who was an acquaintance with—somebody you knew was going to end up being president of

the United States?

BN: Actually, I always thought, even before—see, I thought he would run in 1988. I was in San Francisco at a meeting and picked up a paper in California, and it was talking about [how] the governor of Arkansas had backed out of the presidential campaign for 1988. To me, that was perfect timing because there was no incumbent president. To him, he's always known so much about politics and everything that probably came on the tail end of the [Ronald] Reagan [laughs] revolution or would reap whatever had been sown, which was huge deficits and things like that. So he waited until 1992. I always thought that when he got on the national level that he could hold his own with anybody, so I was not surprised about that. And I just always thought that he really would win if he went for it. I really thought that he was very much like John F. Kennedy, his mentor, and mine, too. Growing up in the same time period, even though he was in Hot Springs and I was in Magnolia—but I went through the same feelings and all of that about President Kennedy. So I thought that Clinton was very much like Kennedy and would be very good, as he was, with the media—being able to answer all kinds of questions with a satellite feed, and being right out in front of people and, again, making them understand his points. So I was not surprised.

AD: Did you ever have a chance to go to Washington? Well, you talked a little bit about this before . . .

BN: Actually, the first trip after he was in the White House that I had a chance to go was with some of Virginia's friends. They were planning a trip to go in June or July—June, I believe it was—in the summer of 1993. They were going to do

some volunteer work and everything, so we went along. Clyde Covington and I went along with them. I also had another dream come true because when I was in college—of course, then I was a history and political science major—I had always wanted to go to a nominating convention, and I was able to go to New York with the Arkansas delegation in 1992. Of course, that was just a fantastic week, and a dream come true. So, then, to be able to go to the White House—I had been there taking my students on the student tours many times—but to be able to go with a president who was from home [laughs] that I knew, and to be able to do things that I never dreamed I'd be able to do was really just unbelievable. So we went the first summer with Virginia's friends, and, therefore, doors were opened and we got to do a lot of things with them. I found out while I was there—I made contacts and found out that I could volunteer every other summer. Clyde and I both went back, and may have been the only ones from Arkansas to work all eight summers there. We'd usually go around July 4. We would spend a week or up to two weeks working and going in every morning, and having different jobs. One year we ended up opening David [Dirkens?] mail when he became the Republican renegade that Republicans didn't like—because how dare he go work for a Democratic president, you know? So we ended up doing a lot of different tasks and having a really good experience. And to be a teacher of government and then to be able to come home and have those types of experiences—I had worked in the Senate with David Pryor when he was our senator, just a summer intern-type thing. I worked in the Department of Education when I was the teacher center director here in Washington. So it was

some fantastic experiences.

AD: Sounds like some great opportunities.

BN: Yes.

AD: I'm trying to think if there's anything else—I'm sure there will be things we'll both think about after we're finished. Are there any other stories or any other things you can think about? We've covered a lot of ground, I know.

BN: Well, there was one, and it was when I was the teacher center director. Some of the friends here at the high school had taken tours of Europe for, I think, sixteen years in a row—in the summer they took kids there. One year they had a tour guide from England that they just really liked and they kept in contact. They found out that he was coming to this country on, I believe, what was known as a Hartnett Fellowship. I believe that was the name of it. He was going to be at Stanford [University]. So we had a trip planned to California, and we met up with him out there. My superintendent went along, and Miss Lowry, who was the one I was speaking of who had gone to Europe as student council sponsor and teacher and so on. So we met up with him, and when he came back from Stanford, he drove and came through Arkansas and stayed here. It turned out that while he was here, I had a Monday morning presentation to do for the State Department of Education about the teacher center, so I took him along with me. When we were through there, we went on up to the Capitol building. Of course, Clinton was governor then, and Paul Parrish, the guy from England, was on the same type of fellowship over here that Clinton was at Oxford.

AD: Oh, wow!

BN: So that was similar to Clinton's Rhodes Scholarship. They got to meet, and Paul got his picture made with the new governor and everything. I haven't talked to Paul in these later years, but I sent him the photograph after he returned to England. I often wondered, if he didn't realize it then, which he couldn't have, that he was having his picture made with a future president. [Laughter] So I thought that was kind of unique that they were on the same type of fellowship. They got to meet. I'm sure there are other stories, also, that I'll think of.

AD: You can always add them in when we revise the transcript.

BN: All right.

AD: Well, I'd like to thank you for your time, Mr. Nipper.

BN: Absolutely.

AD: And for the interview.

BN: Thank you. It's been a pleasure.

[End of Interview]

[Transcribed by Cheri Pearce]

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