The David and Barbara Pryor Center
for
Arkansas Oral and Visual History

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William Jefferson Clinton History Project

Chris Burrow

Interviewed by Betsey Wright

February 24, 2012

Little Rock, Arkansas

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Objective

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Transcript Methodology

The Pryor Center recognizes that we cannot reproduce the spoken word in a written document; however, we strive to produce a transcript that represents the characteristics and unique qualities of the interviewee's speech pattern, style of speech, regional dialect, and personality. We attempt to transcribe verbatim all words that are spoken, including false starts and repetitions.

The Pryor Center transcripts are prepared utilizing the *University of Arkansas Style Manual* for proper names, titles, and terms specific to the university. For all other style elements, we refer to the *Pryor Center Style Manual*, which is based primarily on *The Chicago Manual of Style 18th Edition*. We employ the following guidelines for consistency and readability:

- Em dashes separate repeated/false starts and incomplete/redirected sentences.
- Ellipses indicate the interruption of one speaker by another.
- Brackets enclose
  - italicized annotations of nonverbal sounds, such as laughter, and audible sounds, such as a doorbell ringing;
  - and standard English spelling of informal words.
- Commas are used in a conventional manner where possible to aid in readability.

Citation Information

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Betsey Wright interviewed Chris Burrow on February 24, 2012, in Little Rock, Arkansas.

[00:00:00]

Kris Katrosh: This interview is being conducted by the David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History in partnership with the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies. [*Engine sounds*] The interviewee is Chris Burrow, *B-U-R-R-O-W*, and the interviewer is Betsey Wright. The interview will be transcribed and returned to the interviewee and interviewer for their review before being published. [*Camera clicks*] The interview, transcripts, and related materials will be deposited [*camera clicks*] in the Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, and at the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Little Rock. Mr. Burrow, if you agree with this statement, please give your verbal consent now.

Chris Burrow: Yes, I do.

KK: Thank you.

Trey Marley: Okay, Betsey, anytime.

Betsey Wright: You ready?

TM: Yes.

BW: So, Chris, we're gonna start at the beginning with you. When were you born and where?

CB: I was born November 15, 1945, in Wynne, Arkansas.

BW: And were you an only child?

CB: I was an only child.

[00:00:57] BW: And what did your family do?

CB: My father was a rice and cotton farmer, and my mother was—the family had a drugstore. So.

BW: Ah, so she worked at the drugstore?

CB: She worked at the drugstore.

BW: And did you work on a farm?

CB: Very little.

[00:01:16] BW: [*Laughter*] Where did you go to school?

CB: I went to Wynne High School. I graduated in 1963. I went to Marion Military Institute in Marion, Alabama, in six—for the [19]63–[19]64 year and then the University of Arkansas, graduating in January of 1968.

BW: And how did you happen to go to the Marion Military Institute?

CB: Well, I'd just turned seventeen, and my parents didn't think I needed to go to Fayetteville at that age. So and being an only child, I didn't really know how to make up my bed or do anything, so it was a good experience for me.

[00:01:55] BW: And what did you do when you finished college?

CB: I moved to McCrory, to the farm. I tried to get in the National Guard and tried to get in—this was right in the middle of the Tet Offensive in Vietnam. I couldn't get in anything, so at that time my father was sixty-five years old, and they had agriculture deferments. And so I got that trying to find which way I was going. They did away with that, and because he was sixty-five and I was an only child, I got a hardship case, so I lived in McCrory for six years until my children were born, and then we moved back to Wynne.

[00:02:32] BW: Well when an—when did you marry, and who did you marry?

CB: I married Chris Johnston of Lake Village, Arkansas, on the 27th of August, 1967.

BW: And how many children do you have?

BW: I have two. Got a daughter, Jessica, that's forty-one, and a son, Colley, that's forty.

BW: And do you have any grandchildren?

CB: Four grandchildren. Two . . .

BW: They're . . .

CB: Two sets of twins.

BW: Two sets of twins?

CB: I've got a boy and girl that are ten years old, and twin boys that are seven years old.

BW: And where are they?

CB: They're in Benton, Arkansas.

BW: Close by.

CB: Close. Yes.

BW: That's terrific. [00:03:13] Well, when did you first hear of Bill Clinton?

CB: Actually, the first time I heard him was when I was a senior in high school, and he was a junior. And he was holdin' court at a choir convention and—a choral . . .

BW: A choir convention?

CB: . . . choral convention in Hot Springs, and I was a member of the high school chorus, so that's the first time I saw him. But actually the first time I ever met him was at the state Democratic convention when he was running for—he'd just run against John Paul Hammerschmidt.

BW: So you met him in 1974.

CB: That's right. And then I had a—I got a call . . .

BW: And you—but—so you were already very much involved in politics . . .

CB: I was, yes.

BW: . . . if you were at the Democratic convention.

CB: Yes.

[00:04:04] BW: How did you get involved in politics?

CB: My daddy was on the Democratic Central Committee for thirty-five years, and I eventually was on it myself.

BW: So you were born into . . .

CB: Yes.

BW: . . . politics, essentially.

CB: Born into politics.

BW: Yeah.

CB: So.

[00:04:15] BW: So then where did you—I mean, you obviously then got very involved in Bill Clinton's life. What transpired to . . .

CB: Well, in—when he was running for attorney general, he had never been to eastern Arkansas. And Bobby Hargraves was a student of his at the university, and he's married to my cousin, and he called me and said he had this friend of his. Course, I knew who he was. Told me he wanted me to take him around and introduce him to ever—to eastern Arkansas. I said fine. It was on a Sunday that he was supposed to come to my house. Of course, he was three hours late. And then I got a call from Patty Criner, Patty Howe Criner, whom I knew in college. She

told me that he was on the way, but he was just now leaving her house in Hot Springs at that time. So he gets to Wynne about dark, and he brings his dirty clothes in and asks Mary Chris to wash 'em.

BW: No!

CB: Yes. [*BW laughs*] First time we ever meet him. [*Laughter*]

BW: Oh, that's a great story.

CB: So.

[00:05:18] BW: So then what happened with that trip?

CB: Well, we sat around and visited, and that first night my daughter read him to sleep. But we . . .

BW: Your daughter read him to sleep?

CB: Yes. So we just kind of hit it off real good, and we had some friends over, and then the next day I had decided to take him around. [00:05:39] The first person I went to was J. H. Smith, Tom B.'s father, who was head of the Democratic Central Committee in Cross County. So his first trip outside of Wynne was to Birdeye. And then we went pretty much all over eastern Arkansas in a few days. And we went up to Blytheville, Helena, West Memphis, and Marked Tree.

[00:06:11] BW: Now, how did you know people in all of those places?

CB: Well, I knew a lot of 'em from college, and a lot of 'em from

farmin', and a lot of them from the dem—bein' active in the Democrat politics. At that time I was on the executive board of the state Democratic Party.

[00:06:31] BW: So he got elected attorney general.

CW: That's correct.

BW: And did you interact with him during that . . .

CB: Yes . . .

BW: . . . when he was?

CB: . . . I did. I was on the consumer advocacy board, something that he put me on that I was—so I was involved in the attorney general's office.

[00:06:48] BW: And then he decided to run for governor.

CB: Well, when he decided to run for governor, we were very active. In fact, our whole family was, and I worked the whole first district. And we were successful. I spoke for him at several occasions, at the rice festival and—at Weiner—and on several other occasions.

[00:07:17] BW: The—when he became governor, there—governors select people called legislative liaisons. And you are probably the only person who was a legislative liaison from his first term until his last term . . .

CB: Right.

BW: . . . as governor. You worked every single session. I think you're the only one . . .

CB: I was.

BW: . . .who survived that many sessions under Bill Clinton.

CB: I . . .

BW: So what was a legislative liaison, but more importantly, how did you get to be one?

CB: Well, this . . .

KK: Betsey? I'm sorry, let me interrupt one second. I wanna wipe this way just a little bit. I'm gonna pause tape.

[Tape stopped]

[00:07:59] BW: You became a legislative liaison for the governor. How did that happen, and what is a legislative liaison?

CB: Well, actually, my wife called me when I was—on the farm radio. I was on the way to Memphis. And said Hillary had called her to get her permission first before they asked me to be a liaison. Course, I didn't know what a liaison was. And then—but anyway, so that's who actually invited me to be a liaison was Hillary.

BW: She had a good eye [*CB laughs*] for talent, there. So what did you find out it was?

CB: Well, I was representing the governor and—on either supporting

his legislation and defeating legislation that we were against. And I worked the house that first session with Ron Taylor and Alan Bird. Maurice Smith and Bush Satterfield worked the senate.

BW: We need to get these names because these . . .

CB: Yeah. And we actually—other than Maurice Smith, none of us knew what we were doing. But he happened to know all the leaders in the senate and most of them in the house from his days on the highway commission.

[00:09:21] BW: So how did you go about this job? I mean, these people were all in committee meetings . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . or they were on the house floor. How on earth did you get to them?

CB: Well, actually, I knew probably twenty or twenty-five of the representatives that I was working with before the session started just over the years an knowin' 'em and—through politics. But what we would do would be cover the committee meetings in the mornings, and then after the session ended, we always had several spots to go to. The first session was either the Coachman Inn or the Flaming Arrow or Tramps.

[00:10:09] BW: And what were those places?

CB: Well, Tramps was a kind of a—was a nightclub. Flaming Arrow was a restaurant and bar, and the Coachman Inn was just a motel that the—several people had rooms there, and a lot of people stayed there and . . .

BW: And it was a place where legislators went?

CB: That's right.

BW: And so therefore, you went.

CB: So I went. That's correct.

BW: To keep talking to them . . .

CB: Keep talkin' to 'em . . .

BW: . . . about legislation.

CB: . . . and then a lot of 'em at that time lived in the Quapaw Towers, and I was over there also, so a lot of . . .

BW: That was where you had your . . .

CB: Yes.

BW: . . . apartment?

CB: That's right. So.

BW: That's where you stayed.

CB: Yeah.

[00:10:53] BW: And is that—that is . . .

CB: This is the first session.

BW: Yes.

CB: Okay, now, it was entirely different. I—everybody was just kind of feeling their way around that session.

BW: So how did that session go? How did you think about the . . .

CB: It was a long session.

BW: . . . way he was . . .

CB: And it—we pretty much got most everything we wanted, but it was—we—it—we were all kinda feelin' our way through it to see what was goin' on.

[00:11:18] BW: So did you have any judgement about how good he—a job he was doin' with the legislature, with the people, as governor?

CB: Well, they were actually skeptical of him because of his age and all, but everybody wanted to really like him. His personality and—but we kinda went pretty fast with a lot of issues. And we had—as personable as he was, we had some staff members that weren't as accessible, and two of them had been former legislators and they—anyway, it was—some of it was difficult.

[00:11:57] BW: Did you have any idea that he would lose his reelection campaign when that session was over?

CB: No idea at all. None. Even the Monroe Schwarzlose 31 percent or whatever he got—it did not send a message.

BW: Monrow Schwarzlose was . . .

CB: People were not tellin' us.

BW: . . . ran against him in the . . .

CB: Yes.

BW: . . . Democratic primary.

CB: That's right. That's right. And it was—it totally blindsided me and all of the people that I associated with.

[00:12:31] BW: Was there a point at which, closer to election day, that you knew he was in trouble?

CB: Oh, we'd read—heard that, but I just didn't see it. Just didn't see it.

BW: And so when the election results were in, it was a total blow.

CB: Total blow. Fact, I was at the election headquarters that night. I'm the one that rode in the car with the trooper and Hillary and Governor Clinton. I went to the hotel for the concession speech. I rode in the police car with them at the Camelot Inn.

[00:13:14] BW: So did you think he was through at that point?

CB: I didn't think so, but I was in shock. It took a while to just—it's just total shock.

BW: So did you see him a lot over the next year or two?

CB: Oh, yes. Yes.

BW: Or so?

CB: Yes.

BW: And in what context, and what was going on?

CB: Just starting to rebuild to win the seat back. I mean, the governorship back. And the work started—I'm not gonna say immediately, but right after the first of the year after he left, after the total—everything was over, we started working on it. In fact, my Quapaw Towers condo was used for meetings with Dr. Kumpuris and Maurice Smith and different people around to work, see what we had done, how we could make amends. So.

[00:14:14] BW: And I know that I was working on . . .

CB: That's right.

BW: . . . trying to prepare things for when he could run again, and we didn't know that it would be so soon.

CB: Yes.

BW: But it became clear that people had voted against him but not for Frank White.

CB: That's right.

BW: And that they weren't necessarily . . .

CB: They were sendin' a message, and they sent it too good. [*Laughs*]

BW: Well, they sent it too good, but . . .

CB: But . . .

BW: . . . it came out.

CB: . . . probably if that hadn't've happened, things wouldn't've turned out the way they did.

[00:14:49] BW: Well, I know that you played a critical role, then, in all of his campaigns. I mean, not just . . .

CB: Right.

BW: . . . in your own county but always throughout eastern Arkansas. And I wish you would tell some of the campaign stories that come to mind, even as we talk or stop or come back to them, the things that you remember.

CB: Well, of course, he was always runnin' late. Some things never change. And so when we would leave a town, we would have to speed. [*BW laughs*] In fact, one time we had leading us was Tommy Robinson. So and we called ahead, and the, you know, the police let us come on through. But especially one trip to Lepanto was this way. From Parkin to Lepanto—we probably made it in fifteen minutes. [*Laughter*] But . . .

[00:15:45] BW: Did he ever do the driving?

CB: Never.

BW: [*Laughs*] And why do you say it that way?

CB: I—you know, he—I wouldn't ride—I don't know that anybody'd ride with him. But he never drove.

BW: He was not a good driver.

CB: No, he was not a good driver.

BW: 'Cause he had too many other things goin' on in his mind.

CB: Yes. Well, he was working the crossword puzzle and talkin' and lookin' over the back seat and—the only time I ever rode with him—my vehicle wouldn't start at the mansion, and it was on a Sunday, and there wasn't anybody around, and he and Chelsea took me back to Quapaw. And I tried to get Chelsea to get in the front seat, and she said her mother wouldn't let her ride in the front seat. And the first thing he did is run over—ran over the curb [*BW laughs*] as soon as he turned outta the mansion. So that's my only ride with Bill Clinton, ever.

[00:16:39] BW: So you were always late, and you always had to go over . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . the speed limit . . .

CB: That's right.

BW: . . . to get any place that you were going. And you were still late.

CB: And then were still late. So.

[00:16:47] BW: And why were the—why was he late? Why—what was going on that he couldn't just move?

CB: I don't know. 'Cause he—I—you know, because it, you know—it

wasn't the fact that somebody wasn't prodding him trying to get him to go. He just . . .

BW: He never finished talking . . .

CB: No.

BW: . . . to the people he was around.

CB: That's right. Never.

BW: He never finished.

CB: Never.

BW: And he couldn't think about there were more people to go talk to.

CB: That's right. Yeah.

BW: It was these people here.

CB: So anyway.

BW: How many events did you close down with him? I mean he—once the folks had left, he went back and helped the kitchen crew.

CB: Many, many. No tellin' how many. Yes. Exactly.

[00:17:26] BW: And what was it like to go with him, like, if you were going into a café or something? What was he like? How did . . .

CB: Well, he—I mean, it's like a light bulb turned on as soon as he'd walk in the café. He had to meet everybody in there, and he was very good. Very good at it.

BW: And was it an act? Was it—did he say, "Okay, now" . . .

CB: No.

BW: . . . "it's showtime?"

CB: No.

BW: He loved it.

CB: He just loved it. He loved it.

BW: He loved meeting people.

CB: Yeah. And when you left, he was still talking about who all he had met and try to connect 'em.

[00:18:04] BW: And so did you go to a lot of par—places in eastern Arkansas you had never been before . . .

CB: Yes.

BW: . . . when you were with Bill Clinton?

CB: Yes. And I thought I'd been all over eastern Arkansas, but I hadn't.

BW: There was still more to discover.

CB: Lake View in Phillips County—I'd never been there. Met the superintendent, got to know lots of people that I thought I knew everyone, but I didn't.

[00:18:28] BW: And I think that Bill Clinton crossed a lot of racial lines with his campaigns.

CB: Yes.

BW: So did you campaign with him in the . . .

CB: I campaigned with him, and I been into numerous black churches, and that's just—in eastern Arkansas that's just was part of it. And he was the—I'm not gonna say he was the first. But he went further than any other politician had at going—at reachin' out . . .

BW: And having inclusive . . .

CB: Yes. That's right.

BW: . . . inclusive events.

CB: Yes. True.

BW: And to campaign everywhere.

CB: Yeah.

[00:19:09] BW: Well, once he got elected again in [19]82—and of course, in this campaign Maurice Smith had become a major . . .

CB: Right.

BW: . . . part of the strategy group, the fund-raising group, and we all went into the governor's office, and again, we were into doing legislation. How did you f—at the legislative session and you were, again, a legislative liaison. How were things different? Or were they?

CB: They were different, and we had a different cast. The staff was quite a bit different than the first term—his first term as

governor. They were more—I don't—down to earth. I mean they were more personable. They just seemed to interact with the legislators a whole lot easier, and it was just an entirely different situation. Plus we'd all learned something. And plus we knew—and we knew a lot of the players, and I think they were truly glad to have us back, too, so.

[00:20:26] BW: One of the rules that he set down was, "Any legislator who wants to see me gets in. Then. We are" . . .

CB: And they all wanted in.

BW: "We're not gonna let them" . . .

CB: That's right.

BW: . . . "go around saying that" . . .

CB: That's right.

BW: . . . "they couldn't get in to see me."

CB: Very, very accessible. Probably as much so as anybody ever.

[00:20:47] BW: It was—well, we did the first session in [19]83. And then we had a special session on education. And I wish you would just talk your memories through about what that was like.

CB: Well, I got a call. I was—it was in harvest, and I was in a—at a Mack truck dealership in Memphis when Hillary called me. They got word—they called the truck dealership. So . . .

BW: You couldn't go anywhere you couldn't be . . .

CB: That's right.

BW: . . . found.

CB: That's right. They found me. [*BW laughs*] And she said that she wanted me to be a part of the education session, and we were going—didn't think it would last but about a week and we—it was the right thing to do. And it lasted about a month or longer. Five weeks. I can't remember. But it's probably one of the tougher sessions—the toughest one that I've ever worked.

[00:21:48] BW: And why was that?

CB: It reached out—I got calls from teachers, every teacher I knew. I couldn’t even go in at night. They were all callin' me. It just really pushed a button, somehow, that I don't think they quite—we got the word out why we were callin' this session. I'm not sure. I never knew, but it was a lot of repercussions that took a long time to get over.

[00:22:19] BW: We had done a campaign for the new standards, and that . . .

CB: That's right.

BW: . . . these would require more taxes, but you would get all these new benefits, and the schools would be better. And the people of the state were prepared to pay a tax . . .

CB: Right.

BW: . . . for it. But we had a couple of very angry constituencies. We had the teachers over the teacher test . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . that you mentioned. Plus in eastern Arkansas, you must have known some small-school superintendents and principals who didn't want to believe that they were gonna have to meet these standards because . . .

CB: That's right. Absolutely.

BW: . . . that meant they would have to raise millages.

CB: That's why I think in eastern Arkansas it was a little bit tougher on us than, probably, the rest of the state. South Arkansas might've been the same way. Yeah.

[00:23:12] BW: It was—one of the misconceptions about the session was, of course, that we had a lot more than teacher testing on the . . .

CB: Right.

BW: . . . agenda, and people know that we raised the sales tax, but they don't know how hard we tried to raise the corporate income tax and the severance tax. And do you remember any of the battle of trying to get those through?

CB: Vaguely. I remember there was a battle. But I cannot remember the issues. And the severance tax—I remember a

little bit more about it.

[00:23:55] BW: Do you—I mean, teacher testing was hard . . .

CB: Yes. Yes.

BW: . . . for the legislators too.

CB: Right.

BW: It wasn't just . . .

CB: Yes.

BW: . . . the governor who was being . . .

CB: Oh, absolutely.

BW: . . . besieged by it. And I know that there was a feeling that unless we got it through, we couldn't—there was no point in doing the tax . . .

CB: Right.

BW: . . . that the commitment was that we would improve the schools. And so we were holding things back to get the tax voted on. And then we could move with the other legislation. [00:24:29] When it was over, what did you do?

CB: Well, honestly, I had to kind of—back in Wynne, I had to just lay low because I had—I couldn't go anywhere. The teachers when—at the country club to the grocery store, everywhere I went when I'd run into teachers, I'd get buttonholed. And the superintendent was as bad—was probably the worst one.

[*Unclear words*] test.

BW: Well, and course, this—people called it teacher testing, but the superintendents and the principals . . .

CB: That's right.

BW: . . . all had to take the test . . .

CB: Yes.

BW: . . . also.

CB: Right.

BW: And they felt insulted.

CB: Yeah. Exactly.

BW: Even though they were gonna get . . .

CB: That's right. They . . .

BW: . . . the benefits from it.

CB: . . . felt really insulted by it, and this is the part that—yeah . . .

[00:25:10] BW: Did you ever feel it calming down?

CB: No. Not for a while. It took 'em, you know . . .

BW: Because there was a major effort . . .

CB: Yes. Yeah.

BW: . . . to repeal it in the next regular session . . .

CB: That's right.

BW: . . . in 1985.

CB: That's true.

BW: And that also required your . . .

CB: So that just festered for two years.

[00:25:30] BW: And [19]85 was when we had the big economic development package, the huge, huge transformational change in the way state government dealt with economic development with the establishment of ADFA, etc., and there was still this background thing going on from teacher testing, from all these school districts raising millages.

CB: Right.

BW: And did you encounter problems, bruises, among the house members that you were dealing with again?

CB: Yes. But it, you know, it—at first but it—we gradually worked through most of the problems.

BW: And by this time, were the after-hours interactions you had to have still the same? Every night you had to go to those same places?

CB: Well, they—we had some new places by this time. The Coachman Inn, which had started out—Charlie Mitchell was the lobbyist for the railroads. And what used to be corn bread and buttermilk at the Coachman Inn, now they had a—Little Rock inn or one of the hotels downtown had Choo Choo Room. Choo Choo because of railroads. And Charlie and his son, Mike, were

the lobbyists at that location. And of course, we still had the Flamin' Arrow. And then we had another one that was the Electric Racetrack, which was Joe Bell and Cecil Alexander. It was at the Capitol Square Apartments. So every afternoon, you had two or three locations to go to. And Jim Pledger usually covered the Choo Choo Room, and Bill Clark and I were at the Electric Racetrack and the Flaming Arrow later because we both had condos at the Quapaw Towers. But that's where you got most of your work done. That's . . .

BW: That's where you found out . . .

CB: That's right. And if you could find—there were larger groups, and you could talk to 'em, instead of individually, you could talk to 'em several at a time, and that's where most of the work was conducted.

[00:27:44] BW: So how late at night did you go—keep—picking up intelligence from the legislators?

CB: Oh, gosh. Sometimes till ten, eleven o'clock at night.

BW: And then the next morning?

CB: We had a seven o'clock meeting, and we had to go over everything and go over our votes and go over the bills that we were pushing and the bills that we were trying to defeat. So we'd do that at seven o'clock every morning.

BW: So you just didn't—you just around the clock is . . .

CB: Around the clock.

BW: . . . what you were doing.

CB: Yeah. You had to have a lot of energy. [*Laughs*]

[00:28:22] BW: And you would go to the house. And did you just stay there at the committee meetings or what happened? How did you—what was a day like?

CB: After the seven o'clock meeting was over, we started going to the committee meetings and attending several different ones, depending on what bills we had. And then a—the Rules Committee met at—during the noon, at the lunch hour. So the day it met, if you had anything there you couldn't go to lunch because they were notorious not to ever have a quorum. And it met up in the—above the house chamber. And Buddy Turner was the Rules Committee chairman, and if they wanted anything to die, that's where it went to. So if we had a bill that was there, we just really had to work extra hard to get it out.

[00:29:17] BW: How quick did you catch on to all of these nuances of the way . . .

CB: It took a while. It took a while, and then I was very fortunate to have Jim Shaver, who was a elder statesman of the house, was from my hometown and was a family friend of mine. And he

helped me quite a bit in the house. And course, Clarence Bell, my senator, was the same way in the senate, so I had a lot of help. Yeah.

BW: 'Cause it wasn't the way you were taught . . .

CB: No. That's right.

BW: . . . it was in the schools. Yeah.

CB: No. It was not.

BW: There was a lot of behind the scenes . . .

CB: Lot of behind the scenes.

BW: . . . stuff to know.

CB: And in fact, most of the sessions—course, I was—worked primarily in the house. Little later on I did a few things in the senate, but it was entirely different. The senate and the house.

[00:30:05] BW: How do you th—how would you compare them? How was the senate different?

CB: Well, at that time, so few people controlled it, and then you never knew what was gonna happen. And in the house, it was—the leadership was spread around.

BW: Yeah.

CB: So it was . . .

BW: And it was so many more.

CB: Yeah. That's right.

BW: So many more people.

CB: So . . .

[00:30:25] BW: Who are some of the other liaisons that you can remember that you worked with over the years?

CB: Well, of course, Bobby Roberts worked a session. And then Paul Willmuth. And . . .

BW: Weldon Chesser.

CB: Yeah, Weldon, of course, Weldon, and Weldon worked several sessions.

BW: Percy did some, didn't he?

CB: Pardon?

BW: Percy Malone.

CB: Yeah. Percy Malone did. And . . .

BW: Perry Mikles worked . . .

CB: Perry Mikles, yeah.

BW: . . . at least one.

CB: Yep. He worked several sessions. But . . .

[00:31:02] BW: Hal Hunnicutt worked a session or two.

CB: Hal Hunnicutt. I first met Hal Hunnicutt when he was Governor Clinton's driver.

BW: No kidding?

CB: Yeah, he was drivin' in the summer of the campaign. Yeah.

BW: I did not even know that.

CB: Oh yeah.

BW: Oh.

CB: Yeah, he did.

BW: Wow. How did they know each other?

CB: I dunno.

BW: It was I guess maybe from that Third Congressional District race . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . that he made . . .

CB: Right.

BW: . . . or something. Hmm. [00:31:28] Milas Hale worked the senate . . .

CB: He did.

BW: . . . a session or two for us. Or for us or for Max Howell.

CB: Yeah.

BW: I was never quite sure for whom he was working.

[00:31:38] CB: There was one session that you sent me out. I mean, it was my trip of "nos." I don't know. It was a special session we were having, and everywhere I'd go—I started out in Newport and went to Heber Springs, Magnolia, Texarkana. It was something that ended up we had the session, and we got it

out, but it was one they were really a little bit hesitant about. Do you remember what that—which one that was?

BW: I don't. I don't remember.

CB: When we were trying to run a poll to decide whether to call the session. But yeah.

BW: Yeah. Wow. We put a few of you people on the road a lot.

CB: Yeah. A lot.

BW: A lot of times.

CB: Yeah. And . . .

[00:32:23] BW: I member one time I called you and said, "You've gotta get some tapes to the radio stations" . . .

CB: That's right.

BW: . . . and—in eastern Ark" . . .

CB: But it's—this is something that, once I got into it, you know, I loved it. And that's why I was agreeing to work every session. Somethin' that I really liked to do.

BW: When did the . . .

TM: Right here. Just dab right there just a little bit. Thank you.

[00:32:50] BW: Another hangout for legislators, I seem to remember, was The Chicken House.

CB: Yes. Chicken House.

BW: What was that?

CB: That was at the Poultry Federation, and Jim Pledger also would do that one. We went over there occasionally. Bill Clark and I kinda ran as a team, and he, Jim, knew most—from the area he was from—was a chicken area, and so that's why he would cover that.

BW: Yeah.

CB: Yeah.

[00:33:25] BW: The nightlife of legislators then was different from what it is now.

CB: Absolutely.

BW: And why is that?

CB: Don't—well, I don't know, but it's—the makeup of the legislature's different. And these—they come in there now, and they don't know each other as well as they did back when I was doin' this. So it was easier to deal with 'em. I can't—I don't know what they do right now 'cause I've not gone out there, but I just know it's different from back then.

BW: I've heard that most of the socializing is done at noon.

CB: Yes. Right.

BW: And there's not near as much drinking. And that a lot of it has to do with term limits.

CB: Sure. Absolutely.

BW: Where you don't have the institutional memories . . .

CB: Yes.

BW: . . . and the gurus that—who were . . .

CB: No, I would say it's 100 percent because of term limits.

BW: Changed it completely. [00:34:34] Well, another way it changed, of course, was the ethics legislation. And I wish you would talk a little bit about the session where we tried to get lobbyist disclosure . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . put into law.

CB: That was a difficult session also, especially in the senate. There was a columnist wrote about one of the senator's deceased father that got the senate all kinda worked up pretty good, and it was really difficult to do anything with the senate. The house wasn't near—it was much easier. I'm sure you know what I . . .

BW: Did we pass the house? Did we get it passed in the house?

CB: Well, it was just—it was . . .

BW: The senate is where it died. I know that.

CB: That's right. But it—I don't think it ever passed them. But the house knew the senate wasn't gonna pass it.

[00:35:29] BW: What was going on to stop it?

CB: Well, there was a lot of—it ended up bitter in the senate. Real

bitter. And it divided a lot of the senate powers that be at that time.

BW: Was it because the lobbyists didn't want it or because the senators didn't want it?

CB: Senators didn't want it.

BW: They didn't wanna have to disclose . . .

CB: That's right.

BW: . . . what they called their cups of coffee.

CB: That's right.

BW: Right. [00:36:00] And the governor made it clear that we would take it to the people on an . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . initiated act if they didn't pass it. Do you think they believed it?

CB: I don't think so.

BW: They thought it was just idle talk.

CB: Yeah.

BW: And of course, then, what we ultimately got petitions signed for—and you had to go all over eastern Arkansas getting that organized.

CB: Yeah.

BW: What we got on the ballot was much tougher than what . . .

CB: Yeah. What they . . .

BW: . . . we were asking them to vote for.

CB: Absolutely.

BW: And it passed.

CB: Yeah.

BW: And so therefore, what was the next session like?

CB: [*Laughs*] Well, it's—it didn't start off good. It was a . . .

BW: In some ways it was the least successful . . .

CB: Yeah. That's right.

BW: . . . of all of Clinton's sessions.

CB: All of 'em. Yes.

BW: Because the anger.

CB: The anger. Right.

BW: He paid a real price.

CB: Right.

BW: For—it was good for the state to have lobbyist disclosure, and it's gradually even gotten strengthened from that time, but it was horrible . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . right afterwards.

[00:37:08] CB: And like I said, it was still much tougher in the senate than the house.

BW: Right.

CB: Yeah.

BW: Well . . .

CB: It was a—there was a bitterness that some senators never got over. Yeah.

BW: It was amazing.

CB: Yeah.

[00:37:24] BW: Well, we went through some real major decisions on Bill Clinton's part. One was the year when people were saying it was time for him to run for the senate seat that Dale Bumpers was in.

CB: Right.

BW: And did you think he would do that or not do it?

CB: Well . . .

BW: And what did you counsel him?

CB: I didn't think he would. And I talked to him about it, and I, of course, didn't know until I went to the press conference whether he was going to or not going to. So and that press conference was at the Governor's Mansion. [00:38:05] And then another time was maybe runnin' for higher—something else, and it was at the Excelsior.

BW: That was in 1988.

CB: Yeah.

BW: Or in [19]87 . . .

CB: Right.

BW: . . . when everybody thought he was working up to running for president.

CB: Yeah. That's right.

BW: And were—did you know that he was not going to run?

CB: Yes.

BW: Had you counseled him?

CB: Well, I had, but I thought it was—I didn't think he was gonna run.

[00:38:33] BW: Did you want him to then?

CB: No.

BW: No?

CB: No. To be honest, I didn't want him to in—when he did. I just thought, like everybody else, you know, the Gulf War had just ended, and Bush was immensely popular. But I was wrong.

BW: You didn't see it the way that . . .

CB: Yeah, that's right.

BW: . . . his eyes saw it. [00:38:53] Well, in 1988 there was this—he gave a speech at the Democratic National Convention to nominate Michael Dukakis, and it was an unmitigated disaster.

CB: Absolutely.

BW: And were you surprised by that?

CB: I sure was. And my wife and I and Maurice Smith picked him up at the airport the next morning.

BW: And . . .

CB: And he—I mean, we went to Shug's, the barbecue place, and ate, and 'course, everybody in there was . . .

BW: Stunned.

CB: Yes.

BW: Shocked.

CB: Shocked. And . . .

BW: But—and he thought—what did he think?

CB: Well, he said that he was doing what he was told to by the Dukakis people and so . . .

BW: He didn't know why it had gone so wrong.

CB: Right. He didn't know.

BW: To this day, I'm not sure why it went so wrong . . .

CB: Well . . .

BW: . . . either, and I was there.

CB: Yeah.

[00:39:49] BW: But thank goodness for Harry Thomason coming up with the idea of putting him on Johnny Carson.

CB: With the hourglass.

BW: And it almost completely turned it around for him.

CB: Sure did.

BW: I mean, you talk about a guy who had a lot of deep holes to dig out of, and he always did. He always did.

CB: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

[00:40:13] BW: So aside from his decision not to run in [19]87, I mean, had you ever thought that this guy really could be president of the United States?

CB: It crossed my mind several times. But I . . .

BW: And why?

CB: You know, I—his—just because I would hear it in other places that, you know—and I said, "If they're really thinkin' that he could possibly do this"—and this was outside of the state. That, you know, maybe he has. But it's hard to really think that somebody that's been out on your farm, up on your tractors, slept at your house, could ever be president of the United States. So.

[00:40:53] BW: Did you ever go with him to any of these out-of-state events that he went to?

CB: No, I did not. But I represented him at several that he had me go to that they were talkin' about him at that time.

BW: Well, it was always amazing how many contacts . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: He collected connections, and they were genuine friends and people he liked, and he milked them for ideas constantly. It never ended.

CB: Yeah.

BW: Well, were you surprised when he decided to run for governor again in 1990?

CB: Yes.

BW: And did you think he should?

CB: Yes. But I didn't think he was gonna do it.

[00:41:41] BW: And why did you think he wasn't going to do it?

CB: I thought that it was something else that—I didn't think it was a challenge anymore, but I was wrong. But I thought that it was something that he had gotten burned out a little bit, but he hadn't.

BW: And interestingly enough, the 1991 legislative session was one of his best.

CB: Yeah.

BW: One of the most successful, and you know, and there had been this concern that he might . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . not be serious about carrying on, and yet he didn't—he wasn't short on ideas and things he . . .

CB: No.

BW: . . . wanted to get going in Arkansas.

CB: Absolutely not. Somehow between when I thought I had noticed a burnout—he got energized. I don't know what caused it but . . .

BW: But he did.

CB: But he did.

[00:42:45] BW: He had said—because a lot of folks said, "Oh, he's gonna run for something else. He's not gonna do a full, four-year term." And he promised that he would, that he was gonna see the term through if they let him have it again. And then [*laughs*] things changed, and he saw an opportunity to run for the White House. And so did you . . .

CB: He saw a vulnerability that most people didn't see.

BW: Because he understood the relationship between the economy . . .

CB: That's right.

BW: . . . and people.

CB: That's right.

BW: And it wasn't good.

CB: Nope.

[00:43:23] BW: Now, by this time, you—I mean, you were still working legislative sessions for him, but you had also taken, essentially, a cabinet position.

CB: Right. State Building Services.

BW: You were the director of State Building Services. And I mean, it was like having his brother in a major place because whenever the s—the Mansion was always in bad shape . . .

CB: Always.

BW: . . . and needed all kinds of infrastructure needs, and suddenly we had a member of the family taking care of the family home and seeing to it. And that was . . .

CB: It had been neglected for so long. Yeah.

BW: And there were all these other things in state government with building leases and questions and constant assault that we were under that it was political.

CB: Oh.

BW: And everybody had connections.

CB: Yeah.

BW: That's Arkansas.

CB: That's true. But we were able to use some of the state employees to do a lot of the work out there around the Mansion,

where in the past it was out—brought outsiders in or bidded out and—but there wasn't any money to do these things. So we did what we could within some budgets that the state billing services had.

[00:44:42] BW: Well, when it became clear that he was going to break this promise he had made to the people of Arkansas, he did go and talk to some groups around the state . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . about it. Did you go with him to some . . .

CB: No, I did not.

BW: . . . of those meetings?

CB: I did not.

BW: Was that because you were in the state . . .

CB: Probably.

BW: . . . job at that time.

CB: That's right. I always assumed that's why.

BW: Yeah.

CB: He never failed to ask me on anything else, but that was one that I—it co—it was a visible situation that, you know, I probably didn't need to be involved with.

BW: Well, yeah—it—people were being pretty careful . . .

CB: Yeah. Right.

BW: . . . at that point. [00:45:26] The—I want you to talk about some of the informal moments you have. I think—Bill Clinton—I—during legislative sessions, I used to say, "He thinks he is a legislative liaison. He forgets he is the governor."

CB: Governor. Right.

BW: Because it seemed like he was always running up and down the halls with you guys.

CB: He was. [*Laughs*]

BW: And what was he doing?

CB: Well, he wanted to be doing what we were doing, just as you say. He'd rather be in there sitting down buttonholin' 'em one on one than having to kinda look over their shoulder. In fact, one of the beer-tax sessions, we couldn't get the last vote. We kept working' on it and workin' on it, and I finally had a person talked into doin' it. And I kept waiting for him to show up at the committee meeting, and he never showed up. So I was told that he was bringing another legislator, his roommate. So I hid out behind the back steps. And when he pulled up, I saw him, and I reached in, got the keys out, and opened the door and escorted him into the committee room. [00:46:45] Well, the governor saw me bringing him in, and he was out in the hall. And he said, "Chris, you can't do that. You know, you gotta turn him loose."

I said, "How bad do you want that beer tax?" So he turned around and walked off down the hall, and we went in the committee meeting, and he held his hand up, and we got the beer tax. We got it to where the chairman of the committee could vote, and he cast . . .

BW: The breaking vote.

CB: Right.

[00:47:11] BW: Was that the only time you had to engage in extraordinary measures to get people to fulfill their commitments on votes?

CB: Oh, no. No, there's several other times [*unclear*], yeah.

BW: Are there any other stories you can tell?

CB: Well, you know, we can—we had a—the weight-distance session was a really another one that was kinda flared up a few times. And that's when the head of the Poultry Federation and one of our liaisons kinda had a . . .

BW: Almost . . .

CB: . . . lifted him off the floor. That's where he picked up the name Rocky.

BW: A physical . . .

CB: Yes.

BW: . . . alteration.

CB: That's right.

BW: It was all—altercation.

CB: Altercation.

BW: Yeah.

CB: Altercation.

BW: It was . . .

[00:47:53] CB: So we had—there was a lot of activity around that, you know—but it's—most all of it . . .

BW: And a lot . . .

CB: . . . was in fun, but that one wasn't fun.

BW: No. And what happened in that—with that bill.

CB: Well, I mean, it [*laughs*]—that bill really divided a lot of people. Farmers, chicken people. It . . .

BW: Everybody paid a price.

CB: Everybody paid a price on that. They sure did.

[00:48:28] BW: Well, when you worked in the first session, were you surprised at the issues then that Frank White used against him with car tags and Cubans and . . .

CB: No.

BW: . . . that they had become—you weren't surprised?

CB: No, I didn't at first when we did it. But that summer back home. Oh yeah. The used cars and the big cars were paying, older cars

but they were big, paid more for their tags than a lot of the newer cars.

BW: And you started hearing . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . grousing.

CB: Lot of little rumblings about that.

BW: So you—somethin' . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: Somethin' was not . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . understood or going right.

[00:49:08] CB: And at the same time, Jimmy Carter was not quite as popular as he had been, and he sent the Cubans . . .

BW: Cubans.

CB: . . . in to Fort Chaffee, and so that was another reason to—it festered up, so.

BW: And did people hold that against Clinton, really?

CB: Well, they—for a lack of anybody else to blame it on, yes. Yeah.

[00:49:31] BW: Jimmy Carter really did lie to Bill Clinton . . .

CB: That's right.

BW: . . . about all that, didn't he?

CB: That's true. Yeah.

BW: And it was interesting because the law enforcement people in Fort Smith were grateful to him because he did everything they asked . . .

CB: That's right. Yeah.

BW: . . . to keep—to get things back under control and peaceful again. Wow. It was an amazing situation. [00:49:53] Okay. I wanna talk—I want you to talk about just down time, social time, when you all were just hanging out, whether it was at your apartment at Quapaw or out at the Governor's Mansion, or at War Memorial Stadium.

CB: Well, it was, you know—he was big into athletics. Razorback basketball, Razorback football. And I went to quite a few basketball games with him. We'd fly a university plane or whomever would be going up there, we'd catch a ride with. And of course, he was really vocal. He forgot that he was governor when he would be there. He'd be on the officials and—like he was just a average person in the stands.

[00:50:39] BW: But he was a crazed . . .

CB: He was . . .

BW: . . . average person in the stands.

CB: Oh. He was.

BW: He was outta control.

CB: Yeah. He—if you had a back—if it was way it is now, he's be on YouTube because he'd be jumpin' up, and they'd be—you know. So. [*Laughs*]

BW: He really was emotional about . . .

CB: Very emotional.

BW: And did you ever just sit in a room with him and in front of a television.

CB: Oh, yes.

BW: And he was—was he the same way?

CB: Scream at the television, and he'd, you know, he'd just—I don't know that I've ever seen anybody act quite like him.

[00:51:15] BW: I remember once in the [19]82 campaign. Some tape recording came—'cause we were recording him all the time.

CB: Yeah.

BW: We were trying to record every speech, every press conference, everything. And so a tape recording came back in to the headquarters that I thought was just one that somebody had had on the road, and I put it on to play it. And it was Bill Clinton watching a football game, and Hillary and Chelsea had decided that he needed to hear what he sounded like. [*Laughter*]

CB: So they taped it?

BW: They had recording—it was shocking. I believe I burned the

tape so that it didn't exist anymore. It was shocking 'cause I had never heard him like that. It was something.

CB: Well, I had. [*Laughter*] Many times.

[00:52:05] BW: Well, did you ever play cards with him?

CB: No. I've been there when he's played. Yeah.

BW: And he was the same way . . .

CB: Right. Same way.

BW: . . . about playin' cards.

CB: Yeah.

BW: He just—anything he was into he was passionate about.

CB: That's right. Anything. Yeah.

BW: So did you ever watch him—I mean, did you go hunting with him? Did he go out on the farm with you?

CB: Yeah, he went out on the farm. He—fact he shot several commercials out on the farm. And I've taken him out to see farmers. And it's a—he really got into it. I mean, you know, he got up on one of my combines one day, and you can't cut rice early in the morning because the dew's on the ground. Well, we had this crew here, and it was—there was still dew on the ground. So I said, "You can probably drive that combine about a hundred feet. So you'll have—before it chokes up." So they got it on there and got the film, and he drove it out through there.

So he did . . .

[00:53:00] BW: Well, now, were you nervous about him driving the combine?

CB: No. [*Laughter*]

BW: You didn't think he was gonna crash it.

CB: I just, you know—but he [*BW laughs*] did well.

BW: He did okay with . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . the combine.

CB: So.

[00:53:12] BW: Was—what—any other stories about being on the campaign trail or traveling with him? We used you a lot . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . to drive him around and travel with him.

CB: I—an awful lot. Course, I been to out-of-state football games with him, and he's, you know, been to the locker room, Razorback locker room, after an Arkansas/SMU game. And he talked to all the players. I mean, he's just . . .

BW: He was a fan.

CB: He was a fan. He was a real fan.

BW: Yeah.

CB: So but the—travelin' with him was really pretty fun.

[00:53:57] BW: Why—how was it fun?

CB: Well, you just—he would get emotional when something—when he'd find out an issue or find out somebody that was [*unclear*], he was just really good to listen to that—to see how he could think about that so quick and could get on depth into it.

BW: Well, what did he do when some constituent would come up to him and tell him about some problem they were having with a state agency or with a child or something like that? What did he do?

CB: Well, he would write it all down or see that we did and that there was a follow-up to it and—yeah.

BW: So you left there with little pieces . . .

CB: Right.

BW: . . . of paper and . . .

CB: Just little paper notes everywhere.

BW: . . . things for follow-up.

CB: Yes.

[00:54:45] BW: And did you have to remember to put the tape recorder on the podium everywhere you went?

CB: [*Laughs*] Just about. Yeah.

BW: And how often did you forget?

CB: I did.

BW: You did sometimes.

CB: Yeah.

BW: You certainly did.

CB: Yeah.

BW: And I was always upset with you. [*Laughter*] Did you have trouble getting him to end a day, to just stop and go to bed?

CB: No. Did I have trouble? Oh yeah, absolutely. Yeah.

BW: 'Cause he didn't go . . .

CB: No.

BW: He didn't sleep . . .

CB: No. You know . . .

BW: . . . like the rest of us.

CB: And then especially if you were travelin', you didn't want him—you were scared that he's gonna—after you went to bed, he'd be up doin' no tellin' what. But . . .

BW: I've never . . .

CB: Yeah.

[00:55:28] BW: If there were people up, he was gonna find 'em . . .

CB: Yeah. He would find 'em.

BW: . . . and talk to 'em.

CB: Yeah. So. In fact, one time in Wynne, he got up, and you know, he didn't—usually he didn't get up early. Well, for some reason,

he got up early, and I'd already gone to farm. But he had gone, and he woke my mother up to fix him some coffee. And he was just out—he was jogging at that time around Wynne. Yeah.

BW: I—that must have been a real eye opener . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . for the citizens of Wynne.

CB: Yeah, I lookin' up and here . . .

BW: Double take. [*Laughter*]

CB: It—they—he and his short shorts.

BW: Yeah. I think Hillary finally convinced him that that wasn't presentable.

CB: Well [*laughs*], Jim Pledger and I bought him some long blue jeans, and first thing he did is he took 'em and had 'em hemmed up. [*BW laughs*] So . . .

[00:56:22] BW: He was not a fashion maven, was he?

CB: No. No.

BW: He didn't much care what he looked like.

CB: No, he—I've been—had Mr. Wicks go out to the Mansion because he didn't have time to—take ti—he didn't take time to be fitted for a new suit. So.

BW: Well, and he couldn't have . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . picked one out for himself, anyway.

CB: No, huh-uh.

BW: He had the lousiest taste in ties.

CB: He's gotten a lot better. I don't know who's pickin' 'em out now, but he's gotten better.

BW: He is much better now.

CB: Yeah.

[00:56:54] BW: Well, when you went places, if you went into a coffee shop and you had lunch or something ha—did he always pay?

CB: Never paid. [*BW laughs*] Never had any money.

BW: Why didn't he . . .

CB: I don't know.

BW: . . . ever have any money?

CB: I—he never had any money.

BW: So it cost you a lot of money to work . . .

CB: Oh, yeah.

BW: . . . for Bill Clinton, didn't it?

CB: Well, usually he didn't—he wasn't real expensive date. [*BW laughs*] But anyway, you know. But he never had any money.

BW: He really didn't. And the people who traveled with him or who were with him . . .

CB: Whoever was with him had to pay for him, no matter what he—

what you got.

BW: And they would forget—I mean, going into the black churches where they'd pass the plate and expect . . .

CB: Yeah, he . . .

BW: . . . him to put money in.

CB: Well, yeah, and he wouldn't have any.

BW: So the—you all had to . . .

CB: Yeah, we had to slip it to him.

BW: . . . slip him the money. [*BW laughs*]

CB: Yeah.

[00:57:46] BW: And there was no reimbursing for that.

CB: No, he would just—you know, that just [*laughs*] . . .

BW: That was your contribution. Keep him going. I remember bailing Zeke out of the pound when Zeke would get loose and picked up by the humane officers or whatever they were.

CB: Yeah.

BW: 'Cause they didn't have any money. He didn't have any money. Never carried it. And I'm not sure . . .

CB: I don't . . .

BW: . . . he does now.

CB: Probably doesn't.

BW: But he does have aides with him . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . who have . . .

CB: Somebody's got him.

BW: . . . credit cards or something.

CB: Yeah.

BW: You know. Take care of it. [00:58:19] Well, let's talk about the [19]92 campaign and what it was like from your perspective and what was going on.

CB: Well, I was a member of the Arkansas Travelers and . . .

BW: Where did you go?

CB: I went to Georgia, and I went a couple of other places not with the Travelers, but when he was gonna be there, I just happened to be along. One of them, of all places, was Orange County.

BW: California.

CB: Yeah. So but Georgia—I worked—I spent about eight or nine days. We worked the whole s—we worked Atlanta south, and we split up into groups. And it . . .

BW: And that was . . .

CB: I—my job was to go into every county courthouse all down through there and talk to the courthouse people.

[00:59:14] BW: And what was that experience like?

CB: Great. It was great.

BW: You loved it, huh?

CB: Loved it. And we were really—this was the first—ended up bein' the first primary he won. But we were really receptive. I don't know if it was 'cause Georgia was still semi in the South then. I don't know. But all the courthouse people were just—they couldn't get enough of us. It was . . .

BW: Did they wanna hear more . . .

CB: Yes.

BW: . . . about him?

CB: Yeah. Sure did.

BW: And what kinds of things did you tell them?

CB: Well, just all the experiences that I had from knowing him for as long as I'd known him and just—and working for him. So it was a positive experience.

[00:59:56] BW: What was election day like in 1992 for you? Where were you . . .

CB: I was here.

BW: . . . what were you doing?

CB: I was here in Little Rock, right down in the middle of all of it. Fact I was at the—I think I was at Buddy Benefield's penthouse building downtown and then immediately tried to get down to the Old State House.

BW: Old State House.

CB: Got down there but, you know, it's kind of a—it was just wild.

BW: And how did you feel?

CB: I—well, I just couldn't believe it. I just couldn't believe it.

BW: It was an astonishing victory . . .

CB: Yeah. Yeah.

BW: . . . wasn't it?

CB: Yeah. I had the last few days, I really believed that he was gonna—it was gonna happen. But until it did, you didn't know.

BW: So . . .

TM: Betsey, 'scuse me. We're gonna need to change tapes.

BW: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[01:00:48] BW: We were talking about—well, we had just gotten through the election . . .

CB: Right.

BW: . . . as president.

CB: Well, with the—that's where we.

BW: Okay. So then what happened after that? I mean, here they were gonna move out of the mansion, so obviously you were gonna have to be involved in a transition to a new governor, and then he was gonna come back—well, actually, in early [19]91—

in early [19]92 . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . he had another special session.

CB: Right.

BW: And so you had to go help work on that special session when he went back on the campaign trail.

CB: Yeah. In fact, he was in and out that session.

BW: Yeah.

CB: Yeah.

[01:01:36] BW: But nonetheless, he had been elected, he was the president-elect, and he was doing a transition. And what happened to you doing a transition as a major appointee with some responsibility to a new governor moving into the mansion?

CB: Well, it helped that he and I were fraternity brothers.

BW: He and you.

CB: You didn't know that. Jim Guy Tucker.

BW: I did not know that.

CB: Okay, so we knew each other. But of course, he also knew that I had wh—who I had been loyal to, and I, course, I . . .

BW: Even when they ran against each other.

CB: That—right. Right. And then even when David Pryor and he had run against each other, so I was a little bit nervous about that

even though we were pretty good friends. But there again, Bobby Hargraves came into play because he and Jim Guy were really close because Jim Guy dated his sister, Chi Chi, for a long time. So that helped me transition a lot easier.

[01:02:38] BW: So when Governor Clinton came back to make his farewell address to the legislature . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . and to resign from office, were you . . .

CB: I was there.

BW: . . . present?

CB: I was there.

BW: And what was that like with the legislators?

CB: Here is this guy that we've all known and loved and worked with is now president of the United States. Elect. And it just was a—awe inspiring. It was just somethin' that was—you just couldn't believe it. So it was sad and really—it was sad and glad. You know, so it—anyway, it was emotional.

[01:03:30] BW: And it was for him, too.

CB: Yeah.

BW: Very emotional.

CB: Yeah.

BW: And there had been tough times, bad times, and good times with

everybody who was there.

CB: With everybody. Yeah.

BW: And at—that's what it made it . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . add up to . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . such emotion. And someone as close as you had been . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . for so many years was really amazing.

CB: Yeah.

[01:03:55] BW: One of the things that I have not focused on is Bill's family. And ho—when did you encounter his mother, his step-father, his brother—interactions with them over the years?

CB: Over the years—my father-in-law was an ophthalmologist in Hot Springs, and Bill's mother was his anesthetist, so I had known her, and she had known our family, and I had known—I didn't know Roger until, course, later, with Bill, and in fact I had hired Roger to play his—Roger and his band to play several parties in eastern Arkansas when he was a student at Hendrix. And when Chelsea was a baby, she came to—I—she came to Wynne, and I fed her, and Hillary went off somewhere. Somebody brought her to Wynne because I had brought Hillary the night before. I

forgotten that—who brought her [Susan Maddox] but—so that was a—when we were campaigning for governor the next time. And

Dick Kelley . . .

BW: And you had this little, bitty girl.

CB: Yes. Yeah. Well, I had . . .

BW: You had little, bitty . . .

CB: I had little—I had children at that time, too. But you know, and I would see Bill's mother at the racetrack. I knew where she sat all the time. I would go find her. Sit up there with her. She was quite a character.

[01:05:37] BW: Well, when Bill was—didn't have anything in his schedule and he just wanted to lay back with friends, I think that his most favorite place was to go to Quapaw and see you . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . and Bill Clark and Maurice.

CB: Maurice. Right.

BW: And what kinds of things did you all . . .

CB: Well, we would . . .

BW: . . . talk about?

CB: We talked about everything. Everything. And we usually made a pot of homemade soup or chili, and we talked about

legislators. We talked about what all was happening just—he wasn't—it wasn't just strictly—it—sports was probably more than anything else.

BW: I mean, you all . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . were his guys. You were his guys.

CB: So. And we were all right there together, so he could come—we were one stop.

[01:06:37] BW: Did he come talk to you when Roger was arrested?

CB: No.

BW: Did—so he didn't let down with you all.

CB: No.

BW: I mean, he was just so heartbroken . . .

CB: He was.

BW: . . . over the whole situation.

CB: No. That's one that I did not—you know. Yeah.

BW: It was . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . one of his dark, dark . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . moments in time. [01:07:01] Well, you mentioned the racetrack, and another part of being a legislative liaison for Bill

Clinton was racing passes.

CB: Racin' passes.

BW: What were they because they don't exist . . .

CB: I have . . .

BW: . . . anymore, so explain these things.

CB: I don't know—I never really knew anything about 'em until his first term. And it became an obsession. There were some legislators, I mean, that's all they could think about. They couldn't—they wouldn't vote, couldn't vote, wouldn't do anything till they got their passes taken care of. And they—it wasn't all of 'em, but I mean, it was a big part of 'em. 'Specially the ones that lived close to the racetrack.

BW: And they got passes from the track.

CB: They got passes from the track. They'd get 'em from us. They'd get 'em from other legislat—they—wherever they could get 'em.

[01:07:53] BW: So is it true that they would actually trade votes for getting more passes?

CB: Well, yeah. I'm sure. I mean, it just was unbelievable. Yeah.

BW: It was insane.

CB: It was insane.

BW: And a pass helped somebody not pay a one-dollar . . .

CB: That's right. Yeah.

BW: . . . entrance fee where they could go lose [*CB laughs*] a lot more than that . . .

CB: Absolutely.

BW: . . . at the track.

CB: And it didn't change. Nu—it—ever session it was the same way.

BW: I hated racing passes.

CB: Yeah. Yeah. I . . .

BW: I hated them. [*Engine noise*]

CB: It . . .

TM: I'm sorry. We got a noise.

[Tape stopped]

[01:08:29] BW: Okay, we were talking about the role of racing passes in the legislature. And I don't know exactly how far we had gotten.

CB: Well, all I know is that every session—it never changed. If anything, it became just an obsession. We couldn't get anything passed, we couldn't talk to anybody to get their vote on anything until we satisfied this request for racing passes. And it's just unfathomable how they would put so much issue on that.

BW: And part of that was because their constituents . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . were demanding them.

CB: Yeah.

BW: And they wanted more . . .

CB: Right.

BW: . . . than they got. But I will tell you that there was somebody who was more demanding and worse than legislators, and that was the governor's mother when it came to . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . racing passes.

CB: I bet. [*BW laughs*] Yeah.

BW: She couldn't get enough of them, either.

CB: No, I'm sure she couldn't.

BW: I just automatically . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . always set out aside one hundred for Virginia, and then I had another one hundred in reserve because I knew she would be back.

CB: Yeah.

BW: So and it was . . .

CB: And that was not enough.

BW: No. [*Laughter*] No, that wasn't enough. So it was tough. [01:09:45] And we, you know, we did save back a lot to send just to letters and requests that people had for them, and we

tried very much to do most of 'em to people who were very close to Hot Springs who really would be going every day, and it would save them money, whereas somebody who lived in Fayetteville wasn't gonna go to the track every day and need them.

CB: Right.

[01:10:06] BW: But going to the track was also a major legislative activity. Did you go down . . .

CB: Oh, yeah.

BW: . . . with legislators to the track?

CB: Yeah, the le—I sure did. Yeah.

BW: And what—did you go to—what was the room? There was a . . .

CB: I would . . .

BW: . . . restaurant.

CB: That would—I went to the Jockey Club.

BW: Jockey Club.

CB: Right.

BW: Is that where all the legislators . . .

CB: That's where they all went.

BW: And that was just a very fancy, nice party at the track.

CB: That's right. Yeah.

BW: Did they place bets at the Jockey Club?

CB: Yeah.

BW: They did?

CB: Yeah.

BW: Wow. [01:10:42] Well, we were talking about the governor thinking he really wanted to be a legislative liaison . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . doing what you all were doing. He did actually spend a lot of time at committee meetings. And was he buttonholing votes and . . .

CB: Yes.

BW: . . . finding out why—what was holding legislators up? And did you watch a lot of those sessions?

CB: Watched a lot of it, and he would mainly stand in the hall and ask us to go in and get different legislators out just like they would ask to go up and see him. And . . .

BW: Well, you brought a lot of 'em . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . up to the governor's office.

CB: Oh. As many of 'em as we could get up there 'cause they all wanted to come. And . . .

BW: And he was very persuasive.

CB: Yes, he was.

BW: Sometimes he had to make a trade.

CB: Yeah. Right.

[01:11:28] BW: Do you member any kinds of things he traded?

CB: Oh yeah. I remember some.

BW: But you can't talk about them.

CB: Yeah, well, I—most of 'em I can't talk about but, you know, jobs and this and that and different things, you know.

BW: A lot of 'em had personal requests.

CB: Personal. That's true.

BW: It wasn't just legislative . . .

CB: That's true.

BW: . . . that they . . .

CB: Most of 'em were. A big part of 'em were personal requests.

[01:11:53] BW: So did you ever get tired? It seemed like you were just running up and down the halls and the steps all the time.

CB: Well, I never knew I was tired. I mean, we just had to do it, and you had to, you know—I'm just—must've had a lot of adrenalin that I was usin' up that I didn't know I had. But pretty much every issue and every legislator that he talked to—usually one of us had to be sitting in there with him. He rarely ever met with anybody without somebody sitting in there.

BW: And the reason was . . .

CB: Well, the reason was he was so good at sayin' no, they thought

he'd said yes. But you know, to make sure that he didn't—what it—what really went on.

BW: He was so empathetic.

CB: Yeah.

BW: He could understand where they were coming from.

CB: Right.

BW: And they mistook that . . .

CB: They p . . .

BW: . . . for thinking that he had come over to their . . .

CB: That he agreed.

BW: . . . way of thinking.

CB: Right.

BW: It was amazing to me.

CB: Yeah. Yeah.

BW: Which was also . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . why we had to record . . .

CB: And it . . .

BW: . . . every speech and every press statement.

CB: And it was not just a few. It was many people.

BW: Constant.

CB: Right.

BW: Constant.

CB: Yeah.

[01:13:03] BW: What regrets do you have about those days?

CB: Not many. I wouldn't—if I could say that I would do anything any different, I don't think so. Because I grew into it, and I really liked it, and I was pretty good at it.

BW: You were very good at it.

CB: So I, you know. And I had been—after he left office, I'd been approached to do some of that, but I just couldn't do it from the other side. I just . . .

BW: You didn't wanna be a . . .

CB: No.

BW: . . . lobbyist outside of the . . .

CB: I didn't wanna be.

BW: . . . governor's office.

CB: Did not wanna be.

BW: Well, and clearly they had seen your . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . effectiveness. [01:13:51] What—can you think of two or three things that were your proudest moments? The things that you were the most pleased with having pulled together?

CB: Oh, Betsey, I do—it's been a long time ago. I'd have to think,

but gosh. It w—when you—every vote that was contested or one that you had to work on, it was adrenalin when you got it. And when you'd go get that roll call and take it down there, and it was just a—that's what I got out of it.

BW: That was the reward.

CB: Yes. That was my reward.

BW: And he never did anything that was just easy.

CB: No. Nothing was easy. Nothin'.

BW: It was always hard. [*CB laughs*] Vote by vote by vote. And whether he . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . was running for reelection or whether it was legislation . . .

CB: We usually always got it done, but it, you know, it—a lot of times it took several votes.

BW: It was tough.

CB: Yeah.

[01:14:48] BW: So once he went off to the White House, give us a quick summary of what you then did after he had become president.

CB: Well, I continued to run State Building Services. And I was involved in the legislative sessions but not nearly like I was with Bill Clinton.

BW: How long were you there? How long did you stay in State Building Services?

CB: I stayed at State Building Services till January 1 of [19]97.

BW: So it was quite a while.

CB: I stayed—even stayed—I stayed all of Jim Guy Tucker's term and six months under Governor Huckabee. I even looked after—still looked after the Governor's Mansion. And then it finally—he finally figured me out, and he no longer needed my services.

[01:15:37] BW: And then what did you do?

CB: Then I went to the University of Arkansas system for four years as vice president of construction. And mainly over—that was at the time they were expanding into junior colleges. I spent very little time at Fayetteville. Most all of it was at the med center, UAPB, or the junior colleges for four years.

BW: And during those time—that time did you visit with President and Mrs. Clinton in DC?

CB: I did. I spent the night in the Lincoln Bedroom on two occasions. May of [19]93 and May of [19]98.

[01:16:19] BW: And what memories do you have of your interactions with him during that time?

CB: Well, the first time, he hadn't been in office that long. And I mean, he was still in . . .

BW: Finding out how to . . .

CB: . . . finding his way around.

BW: Yeah.

CB: And we were out on the Truman Balcony, and Hillary came out and said, "You know, the Secret Service really doesn't like you standin' out here." And I looked up, and we were standin', and we—I—we were both about the same size at that time. So that kinda unnerved me a little bit, and we came back in the house. But course, he wanted to know what was goin' on, what he had left, and what all was happenin'. So that's what I filled him in. And then the next time I was there in—Mary Chris and I had dinner in the living quarters with Hillary and the president. And the next time I was there, he took us—he knew what was—where everything was, so he took us on a tour. I mean, we're still tourin' at almost two o'clock in the mornin'. I mean, every room, every picture, every thing, you know, till it's, "When are we gonna go to bed?" [*Laughter*]

BW: You were dropping.

CB: Yeah. I was droppin'. [*BW laughs*] So it's—anyway. So . . .

BW: But few people get a tour like that.

CB: Yeah. Well, that's true. That's true. So. [01:17:40] Oh, and then after that tour, we had—I'd noticed something on the wall

about Main Street, Little Rock, 1925. And it had our family's dry goods, Burrow Hardware—burr—Beale-Burrow. And I pointed it out to him. About a week later in the McCrory Post Office—course, everybody's seein' this big package that came from the White House. He took it off the wall and sent it to me.

BW: Oh, my.

CB: So. Yeah.

BW: Oh, it gives me goosebumps.

CB: Yeah.

BW: Oh, that's a terrific story.

CB: So that's just—I mean, you know, you've seen so many sides of him—he this and that, but he is really—he's got a feel for a lot of things and—that a lot of people don't know.

[01:18:25] BW: So you're still connected to him. What are you doing now?

CB: Well, I am with the Clinton Foundation, and I have been since the very first page was turned at the Presidential Library. I was quality control [*laughs*] checkin' it while it was being built. Of a lot of things that I did while I was at Building Services. So I was—while it was under construction, I was just there daily. And then ever since it's been open, I'm still there.

BW: You've been there every day, too.

CB: I've been there every day, so.

BW: And so you—do you get to see him most of the time when he comes back?

CB: Usually I—we used to see him quite a bit. But when Hillary ran for president, then it—his trips became fewer. And the last—I didn't see him this last trip in because I had a knee-replacement surgery when the—during the Christmas party, you know. But I look forward to seein' him his next trip in.

BW: Yeah.

CB: So.

BW: Well, that's terrific.

CB: I'll have to tell him about this.

[01:19:32] BW: Tell me, is there anything else that you can think of that we should record for history?

CB: Oh, gosh, I'm . . .

BW: From people who . . .

CB: I'm sure there is, but I can't—you know, it's been a long time.

BW: It has been . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . a long time but you've remembered a lot of things with sitting here. I . . .

CB: Yeah. I wish I could remember more.

BW: Well, I appreciate your doing this because . . .

CB: Oh.

BW: . . . the whole . . .

CB: I loved—I'm . . .

BW: The political culture . . .

CB: Yes.

BW: . . . of those times is gone.

CB: It's gone. It's just—and you—as you said, term limits changed the . . .

BW: The way it's done.

CB: The way it's done. For lifetime. So.

BW: It certainly has.

CB: Anyway.

BW: And thank goodness there's no more racing passes.

CB: Well, I—absolutely.

[01:20:15] BW: Yeah. Thank you . . .

CB: Yeah.

BW: . . . for doing this.

CB: You're welcome. I . . .

BW: You've done such a . . .

CB: I—yeah.

BW: . . . service to the state of Arkansas, not just to Bill Clinton.

CB: I, you know, I wish I could—there was somethin' else I could do, but it's . . .

BW: Well, I appreciate your doin' this.

CB: Okay. All right.

BW: Great.

CB: You're welcome.

[End of interview 01:20:28]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center Staff]