

William Jefferson Clinton History Project

Interview with

Rose Crane  
Fayetteville, Arkansas  
25 June 2005

Interviewer: Andrew Dowdle

Andrew Dowdle: It is June 25, 2005. I am Andrew Dowdle, and I'm with Rose Crane in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Good afternoon.

Rose Crane: Hello. How are you?

AD: I'm very good. How are you? Are you doing fine?

RC: Yes.

AD: Good. I guess the first question I'd like to ask you is when and where you were born.

RC: I was born in Hot Springs, Arkansas, at St. Joseph's Hospital, on October 16, 1946.

AD: And your parents were . . . ?

RC: Larry E. and Edith M. Crane

AD: When did your family come to Hot Springs, approximately?

RC: My mother was born in the house that I was raised in. My great-grandparents purchased the house. It was the family home from 1917 forward.

AD: So it's fair to say that your family was long-time residents of Hot Springs?

RC: Absolutely.

AD: What did your parents do?

RC: My father was a civil engineer and my mother was an English teacher.

AD: What organization did your father work for?

RC: He worked for Dierks and for Weyerhaeuser. [Editor's note: both these companies were in the lumber business in Arkansas.]

AD: I guess the next question I want to ask you is where did you go to school in Hot Springs?

RC: Well, I started to Ramble [Elementary] School in 1952. I graduated from Hot Springs High School in 1963, which was actually before I should have graduated. I started in the class of 1964, but I decided I wanted to be cool and expose myself to college boys in the sense of being where they were.

AD: [Laughs]

RC: I took six solids [subjects] and summer school, and had no senior year.

AD: Where did you go to college?

RC: I went to Henderson [State University, Arkadelphia, Arkansas]. I didn't finish. I went back years later and did a non-traditional degree.

AD: Kind of going back to your schooling in Hot Springs—at that time, what was your impression about the school?

RC: Ramble School was absolutely a community—neighborhood school, in the sense that it was geographically determined that the children who lived in the area went there. It was a classic red brick schoolhouse, and it had giant old windows that the teacher had to have a pole to pull the top down to get air. There certainly was no air-conditioning. And old wooden floors and old wooden desks. All of the teachers in the school were women. The only man on site was Mr. Brown the janitor, and most of the women were old maids. Most of them had taught my

mother.

AD: Jumping forward to junior high and high school, what were those experiences like?

RC: There was one junior high in Hot Springs—our group, and in junior high—I was always with the class of 1964. I just graduated early. But there was only one junior high in Hot Springs at the time. It was an old school. We were the last folks all the way through. We're first-line Baby Boomers [reference to children born following the end of World War II]. We were the last folks all the way through.

AD: Yes.

RC: We're first-line Baby Boomers. I think probably that we were pushing the limits on every school as we went through.

[Tape Stopped]

AD: Is there anything you'd like to add about schools in Hot Springs?

RC: Well, I think they were very representative of the time. There were lots of rules that kids today would be pretty unhappy with, one of which was that girls couldn't wear pants to school. Guys couldn't wear blue jeans and [they had] to have their shirts tucked in.

AD: It's kind of interesting that you mention that, because apparently there was certainly a pretty rapid change over the next five or six years—from talking to other people who were in succeeding classes.

RC: Right. I will have to say that my mother was an English teacher at the high school, and Edith [Irons?], who was my counselor and a lovely woman—very

much a supporter of Bill Clinton and very proud of him. She's dead now. She felt that our class was a very unusual class, and that it was the breaking point to the next generation—that things did change dramatically in the way that the kids saw what was going on. Now, we did not have a good football team. We had a *terrible* football team.

AD: [Laughs]

RC: If I remember correctly, I do not believe we won *one* football game the entire time we were in high school

AD: Wow! [Laughs] For Arkansas, that's certainly a big deal. [Laughter]

[Tape Stopped]

AD: We were talking a little bit about Hot Springs when we were having lunch.

RC: And the community.

AD: The community itself. Can you tell us a little bit about what made Hot Springs different from the rest of Arkansas at that time?

RC: Well, I think it was very metropolitan because of the water—the baths. Because of the gambling and because of the horse racing, there were large numbers of people who came from other places. There was a large Jewish community—there still is. There was a Reform and Orthodox [Jewish] synagogue—temple—still there.

AD: You're saying that that's not something you would typically see in a town of 30,000 in the South?

RC: Right. And certainly not in the fifties [1950s] in the South. There were significant numbers of people who came from Chicago [Illinois]. I think probably

that was maybe a bigger influence than even I realized. We had a Kosher deli. We had Jewish kids in our class at school, and for high holy days they were gone, and we understood that. We understood that those were their holidays. We had a kid named Renee Dukuch who came in either the fourth or fifth—I think the fifth grade. They were eastern European immigrants escaping the difficulties there. We had a young man who was half Korean who was in our class and went all the way through school with us. I don't think we thought anything about it.

AD: That's certainly very different from much of the rest of Arkansas, where mostly you're talking about African Americans and whites, and we'll talk in a minute or two—segregation—that even those two communities were kept very separate.

RC: Well, in Hot Springs at that time, those two communities *were* separate. There were separate schools in Hot Springs, which was not the case in most Arkansas communities, I don't think. They had a separate business district, basically—Malvern Avenue.

AD: Right around U.S. [Highway] 70 today. I guess it was U.S. 70 then, too.  
[Laughter]

RC: And it's *still* U.S. 70.

AD: And it will probably be U.S. 70 twenty years from now.

RC: Yes, yes. That's probably true. But one of the things, Andrew, that I would like to say at this point is there are always gifts that come out of everything. One of the gifts that I've had with all of the interview kind of things that have been with people I grew up with, my friends, is the different perspectives—the different things that are remembered—the different ways that they are remembered.

Honoring all of them, even when they're in conflict—that's the perspective of the storyteller. I think it gives us all an opportunity to measure our understanding and perhaps to hold a little more loosely all of the information—that it's not black or white.

AD: Yes.

RC: Everybody has their own color. Everybody has their own take and their own understanding.

AD: Do you think growing up in such a diverse atmosphere had an influence on President Clinton growing up?

RC: Absolutely. Absolutely. But I think he tends, by personality—by Virginia [Clinton Kelley], by the Cassidys—to have a great tolerance. It is my opinion, having—I'll be fifty-nine in October, and we've been friends since we were nine, so that means we've been friends for half a century. Oh, my!

AD: [Laughs]

RC: He truly has no prejudicial part of him, and I'm not talking about not being prejudiced against one thing or another. He simply *is not prejudiced*. I saw that growing up. I mean, he was *always* the peacemaker. I can remember—our driveways were linearly lined up, and we would walk down our driveway and up his and down the other side to get to the grocery store, which we [visited] daily, at least, and sometimes more often—sent to the grocery store for milk and bread and all of those kinds of things. I have a fairly vivid memory of going to the grocery store, and Bill was at the back door and ended up—we walked down the rest of the way and then walked back. And he asked me what I thought about what was

on television, which was the [1957 Little Rock] Central High School [integration] crisis. He asked me what I thought about their chant. Their chant was "Two, four, six, eight. We don't want to integrate." There was a *great* deal of anger and a great deal of passion in it. He said, "You know, that's not right. That's not right. Those people deserve everything—every opportunity."

AD: This would've been when he was eleven?

RC: About, because it was 1957, and we were born in 1946.

AD: [That's] not what you'd expect from a typical eleven-year-old.

RC: Well, I don't think there was anything typical about him, most likely. I do not ever remember him starting a fuss. I never remember him being mean—not to other kids, not to *anybody*. Roger is ten years younger than we are, and I have a baby sister, [Mary Dan?]. When we went to the movies—and there were multiple movies in Hot Springs, which was probably an unusual thing, too. There was the Paramount and the Malco—the first-run movies, then there was the Strand and the Central for the B-grade movie kinds of things.

AD: Yes.

RC: We were *always* big movie-goers, but Mother and Virginia would make us take [Mary Dan?] and Roger [Clinton] after they got to be a little bit bigger, where we could take them. We'd get on the bus and go to the movie and get back on the bus and go back home. It was very easy for mothers in that day. I'm certain that's not true, but—different. But Bill was *much* more gracious about that. I would make him sit with [Mary Dan?] and Roger, and I would go sit up someplace else so I didn't have to sit with the little kids.

AD: [Laughs] Could you tell me about the first time you remember meeting Bill Clinton?

RC: Honestly, I can't remember when I didn't know him. I don't. They moved to 1011 Park Avenue when he started in the second grade at St. John's [Catholic School]. And, again, [we were] first-line Baby Boomers. They moved to Hot Springs and the class was full at the public school, and he went to the Catholic school for a year or two years. I don't remember for sure which. I guess two years. Second and third grade. So even though we weren't in school together, we were across the street from each other. I really don't have a recollection [of our first meeting]. I will tell you a story that my mother told.

AD: Okay.

RC: But I have no recollection of it. She said that the first time we sort of came together, eyeing each other from across the street and across the fence, that I wrestled him to the ground, and he said, "You're really strong for a girl."

AD: [Laughs]

RC: I don't know whether that's the truth or not, but I suspect my mother did not make it up. But I don't remember it. The generosity of spirit has been there as long as—I mean, it's just there. I've never seen, even when he was mad at somebody—I've never—he just sees value in people, regardless. And almost *always* understands where they're coming from and what would make them act the way they act.

AD: When do you think you first realized that this was somebody who was going to be an important public figure—maybe not that he was going to be president of the

United States, but that he was going to be somebody who was going to end up . . .  
.?

RC: Well, I would have, if someone had asked me early on in those early teen years what I thought Bill was going to do—I would have said rock-and-roll star.

AD: [Laughs]

RC: Because that music was *very* important to him. I can remember him racing over with a forty-five record. Remember the old [45 r.p.m. records] with the plastic [insert] in the middle of them [to allow them to be put on a standard stereo turntable]. He said, "You've just got to hear this guy." We did. We thought it was *wonderful*, and it was Elvis Presley [singing "Hound Dog"].

AD: [Laughs]

RC: He was very much an Elvis fan, and a lot of other people—he started his music on the clarinet in grade school. I would listen to him practice, and it was pretty grim for a while. We were starting from square zero. Finally, the first—I think it was one of the first tunes, but it was *the* first tune I recognized that he played, was "The Old Rugged Cross."

AD: Oh!

RC: On the clarinet.

AD: So he wasn't a child prodigy, but he was diligent and got better?

RC: Well, I think he's talented. I don't think there's any question about that.

AD: Talented. Yes.

RC: And perhaps the failure to see the greatness in the man was *me*, not the *greatness*.

AD: [Laughs]

RC: I think there are a lot of people who look back on those years with twenty/twenty hindsight, perhaps, rather than let their memory take them to where they really were. He was *very* bright. He would have been the valedictorian of our sixth grade class, except that he got a "B" in deportment for talking.

AD: [Laughs]

RC: Some little girl got to be the valedictorian. He had a lovely voice—still does. In our sixth grade Christmas pageant, Ronnie Cecil was supposed to sing "O Holy Night" and Ronnie had a cold, [so] Bill sang "O Holy Night" solo for the Christmas pageant.

AD: You mentioned President Clinton's mother. I guess you probably remember her also from that far back.

RC: Right.

AD: What type of person was she like?

RC: I loved her dearly. She was a great influence on me because I was charmed by her independence. Some of the things that I took to myself in things that you believe are true—when she wrote her book with Jim Morgan, I realized I had gotten those things from her. One of the things was you don't need to be having a bunch of kids you can't support. She certainly did support hers. Both those boys, Bill and Roger, were the light of her life. She was dynamic. She was very bright. She was very disciplined. Exceedingly well-kept in her personal grooming. You may not *agree* with what she did, but it was always done very well.

AD: [Laughs]

RC: And very consistently. She respected children. She was the first adult who

allowed me to call her by her first name.

AD: So she was very proud of her son as he was growing—both of her sons.

RC: Absolutely. Both of them. I can remember we had a grade school music teacher who had had a laryngectomy, which is an interesting concept all on its own, and she could only speak in a whisper. Whatever little boy she chose for the day or for the hour moved her microphone and speaker from classroom to classroom. She had a little xylophone that she peened for us to tone to. That's probably one of the reasons we were a pretty good little chorus because we weren't following her, we were actually following the true tones. But I can remember at some point—and these are just snatches of memory—a program that we had done. I was walking out to get in the car, and Virginia was coming out of the auditorium to get in her car. She had big tears running down on her face. I said, "What's the matter? What's the matter?" She said, "It's just so beautiful." She was *always* there for all of us.

AD: Apparently, the value of a very supportive mother and a very supportive adult in other children's lives . . .

RC: Yes. And "can do." There was no excuse. [Laughs] There just simply was *not* an excuse. There weren't many excuses at my house, either. I mean, if you said you didn't know how to do something, my mother's first response was, "Well, you will never learn any younger." [Laughter] Bill got up and—I have a thousand visions in my mind [of him] with his suit on and his Bible in his hand walking to the Park Place Baptist Church by himself on a Sunday morning.

AD: So religion was very much at an early age a very important part of his life.

RC: Absolutely. Absolutely. And, of his own impetus. He got up and went by himself.

AD: Are there any other stories in terms of childhood or adolescence that we're missing here? I know there are probably a thousand stories.

RC: We played a million games of basketball—shooting baskets. Most people played "Pig" or "Horse." We played "Hippopotamus" so the game would go on longer.

AD: [Laughs]

RC: We played kickball in the neighborhood with the bases—and baseball. I had a great-aunt who lived with us, and she was the administrative assistant to the commanding officer of the Army and Navy Hospital in Hot Springs. Her name was [Dannie?] Cobb, and she was Aunt Dan to all of us. She would load us up in the car after supper—most nights in the summer—and take us to a public swimming pool that was spring-fed that was as cold as ice. It was called Snow Springs.

AD: Oh, yes. I've seen that. Yes.

RC: I think probably that we swam until we turned blue. I mean, it *really* was cold. Then we'd get treats and come home. Many, many—most of the time, Bill was in the car. It was just whoever was around and however many kids you could get in the car.

AD: In a lot of ways, it sounds like a very . . .

RC: Idyllic.

AD: . . . idyllic—yes, that's what I was thinking—childhood.

RC: Well, in the midst of it, as you know, Roger [Sr.] was doing his thing, and in this

time period, my father's mother was dying of cancer and had been moved into the library at their home so that she could be taken care of. Those are not the day-to-day things I remember. I remember playing. I remember we put a big show together, and all the mothers had to come. Bill had a blonde German Shepherd named Suzy, and I don't remember whether Suzy had been trained as a M.P.'s [military police] dog—and it was the end of the war—they didn't need them, and she was turned out—or whether she had been trained as a seeing-eye dog and didn't make the cut. But she was *very* well trained—[a] *very* well-trained dog, and a beautiful dog. We all knew the rule—Suzy was fine if she was in the middle of all of us until she thought Bill was in harm's way. Then she growled, and absolutely everybody knew that at the point Suzy growled, everything stopped because we certainly didn't want to get in the way of Suzy.

AD: [Laughs]

RC: When we would do the show, we would decorate Suzy with flowers, and we would have the dog act [laughs]—Suzy the trained dog.

AD: Very patient dog. [Laughs]

RC: She was, really. Really. We would decorate the swings and the trapeze set in the back yard. Everybody would do their routine—whatever their routine was.

AD: Yes.

RC: And the mothers had to come and had to *pay* to come.

AD: [Laughs]

RC: I was probably more the instigator of that, truly. That's more like what I—I think children's play gives you a good idea of what's going to happen when they grow

up.

AD: So you mentioned again, the things that we know now that were happening inside that household—did you have any idea?

RC: Absolutely not. Interesting that sometimes—we were great game-players. We played Monopoly, we played Gin Rummy—oh, until the cows came home. We played Clue, and we played Chinese Checkers. We spent an inordinate amount of time one summer learning to shuffle cards back into themselves. Someone had shown Bill how to do that, and we took it as a skill. And it's a skill we both still have. [Laughs] It's a lifetime skill. But occasionally Virginia would come in just all of a sudden [and say,] "It's time for you to go home." I thought, as a child, "What did I *do*?" I certainly didn't question it—I never knew what I did. Only as an adult, looking back on it, and did I understand that Roger [Sr.] had come in, and she wasn't sure what the situation was . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Beginning of Tape 1, Side 2]

AD: You mentioned that he [Roger, Sr.] would come in and that there was kind of an uncertainty on her part in terms of what his reaction would be.

RC: Well, and she didn't know—if she was aware that he was drunk.

AD: Yes.

RC: She kind of cleared everything out before anything happened. At that point in time, at my house the [one] room air-conditioner was in the living room. In the hot summertime, if you wanted to find my parents, they were in there [laughter] with the doors closed to keep the cool [air] in. And at Bill's house, the air-

conditioner was in Roger and Virginia's bedroom.

AD: Yes.

RC: So they would be in there with the door closed.

AD: A lot has been written about Hot Springs in terms of the gambling tradition that was about ready to end—1965 was when that ended. What effect did that have in terms of children growing up or just family life in general in the fifties [1950s] and sixties [1960s]? Was this something that people were just kind of generally aware of? Was it something they saw in their everyday lives, or was it something that you may have known that it was there, but really wouldn't see very frequently? I guess it [varies] from family to family.

RC: I think you saw—I mean, it just simply was *there*. The thing that you have to realize is that we grew up with people whose mothers worked there, whose fathers were croupiers. They had homes. They had dinners that you went to. They went to church. You didn't see it—or I didn't—as a child. Some people's daddies worked at the art galleries.

AD: Yes.

RC: Some of them worked in the gambling—the Southern Club or The Vapors. Some were doctors. Some were dentists. You know, it was part of the fabric of the community.

AD: Yes. I guess one of the things we talked a little bit about during lunch was the fact that, again, with Hot Springs High School—the old high school closed and it's now much further out of downtown—with kind of the decline of the gambling establishments and other things—even though there is some tourism that is

revitalized there at this point. If somebody goes to Hot Springs now and is downtown, do they really get a good picture of what it's like?

RC: Of what it *was* like when we grew up?

AD: Yes, thirty or forty-five years ago.

RC: No. No. I think there are several things. After the Korean War, one of the major rehab[ilitation] centers in the country for the soldiers who came from the Korean War was the Army and Navy Hospital. So you had all of those people in different states of repair who were up and down. You had major hotels along Central Avenue [that] had bunches of people there. There was enough walking traffic on Central Avenue, and you really probably should try to get ahold of these pictures. There was a place called Stonesifer's, and the photographer stood on the street. If you walked past Stonesifer's, they would take your picture.

AD: Yes.

RC: You could take your little stub in and go back the next day, and you would have a postcard of you walking down the street in Hot Springs. It was that much of a touristy kind of thing.

AD: Yes.

RC: And all of us, growing up—there are *lots* of pictures of everybody walking along.

AD: [Laughs]

RC: Every once in a while you'd go get one developed. That doesn't exist anymore, or I don't think it does. It's just very different. You don't have the hotel—the bathhouses aren't open. The bathhouses were *all* open when we were growing up. Some of them in our later years of growing up [were] in some disrepair, but they

were still open. And you would see the bath attendants in their—I mean, just starched, white, white, white, bleached uniforms that they wore to be bath attendants. You'd see them on the buses coming home in the afternoon because they got through about the time school got out. We rode the city bus to and from high school.

AD: I guess it must be something in terms of—obviously, there is some tourist traffic that comes in, but probably not as much national and international traffic.

RC: Right. Right.

AD: It's more people from Arkansas and the surrounding region.

RC: And Texas.

AD: And Texas. Yes.

RC: Hot Springs is a destination point for Arkansas still, but most of the people come from Texas or are coming through from one place in Arkansas to another to visit family, and they stop off.

AD: Yes.

RC: The lakes were developed after World War II, and people do come and stay there, but that doesn't assist the downtown much.

AD: Yes. It's a much more spread-out community. Again, going down Central, I don't think I realized until probably about a month ago that St. Joseph's *had* been downtown or . . .

RC: Well, it was at the start of downtown.

AD: Yes, it was at the start of downtown, as opposed to now. It's about where [Highway] 270 is. Yes, I guess that *is* the bypass for town.

RC: What, the *now* St. Joseph's?

AD: Yes. Exactly.

RC: See, when you say St. Joseph's, to me, I think of the original building.

AD: The original one. Yes. But, see, I hadn't realized that it had moved, I think.

RC: Oh, it moved a *great deal*. The original one was up at the intersection of Whittington Park and Central Avenue . . .

AD: Right.

RC: . . . and is now the Math and Science School [the Arkansas School for Mathematics, Science & the Arts]. The fountain was a cast-iron fountain when we were growing up, not what exists now.

AD: Yes.

RC: It was a great, cast-iron fountain that then had a pool around it. And you could drive all the way around the fountain. It had colored light bulbs in the bottom of it that would make the water look different colors. It was a great thing, and I didn't do it, and I don't know if Bill did or not, but *many* kids did it—they would drive around the outside part of the pool and put detergent in it—late, late, late at night or early, early, early in the morning—and by the next morning, there were suds. "Oh, somebody soaped the fountain again!" [Laughter] All very harmless things. Bottom line, we were pretty good kids, not just *us*, but the whole . . .

AD: The pranks were really *pranks*.

RC: Pranks. Right. Right. It may have greatly disturbed the street department to have soap suds to clean up, but it wasn't life-threatening.

AD: [Laughs] Right.

RC: Nobody was *really* harmed by it. And Hot Springs at that point was kind of the center of conventions.

AD: Yes.

RC: The band conventions, the medical society conventions—all of the different conventions came to Hot Springs. I think that had an influence, certainly, on the community, but on all of us as well.

AD: We've been talking a little bit about the things that had caused Hot Springs to change. Did we touch on everything? I'm trying to remember.

RC: Well, tourism was the bread and butter of the city.

AD: Yes.

RC: This is interesting. Hot Springs was a *tiny city*, while Little Rock was a big town, and there's a very big difference there. I think that that *could* sum up the difference in probably all of us who grew up there. Other kids would say it's "Sin City."

AD: That's what I was going to ask also. Did you have any awareness growing up of the reputation that Hot Springs in a lot of the rest of Arkansas?

RC: No! [Laughter] No, in a word!

AD: There are some people who will end up—you talk about going out of town and going to Boys' State or something like that, and finally kind of getting a realization that, "Oh, well, people view us a lot differently in some parts of the state."

RC: Well, after you got bigger you realized that.

AD: Yes.

RC: But when you were growing up there—I don't think I had a good view that it was seen in that way.

AD: Yes.

RC: I certainly don't think I saw it in that way.

AD: Just kind of jumping a little bit forward—you graduated a year early and left to go to Arkadelphia—did you live in Arkadelphia?

RC: No, I drove back and forth.

AD: You drove back and forth. You did commute. Okay.

RC: When Roger and Virginia divorced, they moved from 1011 Park Avenue to [213] Scully Street.

AD: So that also ended up putting a little bit of physical distance [between you]. Yes.

RC: Right. Carolyn [Yeldell] Staley lived next door [to Bill] in that period of time.

AD: Yes.

RC: And in front of the Scully Street house was this massive—or it seemed massive as a kid—it was several—maybe a square block—it was a peony farm. It was just beautiful.

AD: At that time period, kind of looking at Virginia [Clinton] Kelley in terms of her professional life, she was doing very well.

RC: She *did* do very well, but she fought long and hard. Buddy [Clue?], who was the anesthesiologist, who is Mauria [Aspell's] uncle . . .

AD: Yes, Mauria.

RC: She can give you *all* that stuff.

AD: She mentioned that. [Laughs] Yes.

- RC: Yes. I think it was incredible what she—I mean, she was ahead of her time.
- AD: It is really interesting because that's really not what you would have thought would have been—I guess, probably, the outcome—if you look twenty or twenty-five years earlier, you have the woman who has just been widowed. She has a son. Going from there to there just seems like an incredible accomplishment. I guess a lot of it is, again, being at the right place at the right time, but that's also . . .
- RC: Well, and having—I think she felt very committed. She loved her work. She was *very* good at what she did. She was very charismatic in her own way, and independent. A lot of my recollections are colored by not just me, but the time in my life that—I mean, we were *kids*. We didn't know everything. It was my understanding at the time that Virginia really, basically, stood up to the situation, and they sort of divided the territory—that Buddy [Clue?] would be at St. Joe's [Joseph's] and she would go to Ouachita [Memorial Hospital]. She did all her stuff at Ouachita, and they left her alone for a very long time.
- AD: You had mentioned, again, things, such as President Clinton's tolerance—things that he got from his mother. Are there other things, such as the charisma and other characteristics that you can kind of look [at] and say that those are things he directly got from his mother?
- RC: Well, I don't think she was the *only* influence on him, but she was a great influence on him.
- AD: Right.
- RC: And he loved her dearly. But he's always been his own person—*always*. I mean,

to my recollection.

AD: Yes.

RC: Virginia smoked. She smoked Pall Malls for years and years and years, up until Chelsea [Clinton] asked her to quit. She was kind of a party girl, I guess, in a sense.

AD: Yes.

RC: But, oh, she had the most wonderful laugh, and always [had] something good to say. And [she was] generous.

AD: Going back to what we had been talking about a few minutes before, that when you had gone to college and he had gone to Georgetown [University, Washington, D. C.], what happened to that tie—that friendship that you had?

RC: Usually, we'd pick back up, not with a “constantness,” but there was never a point in time that, either through my family or through his—the families stayed connected in keeping up with one another

AD: Right.

RC: You know, usually, some time over Christmas [break], Bill would show up at the door and had come to visit not *me*—the family.

AD: Yes.

RC: We'd all go someplace. It was always easy, and it was more and is more like family.

AD: Yes.

RC: That's a good way to describe it.

AD: One of the things that you mentioned when we were talking before the interview

started was that President Clinton has, for a number of years, kept this friendship going.

RC: Absolutely.

AD: Is that just true with you, or is that true with a lot of people from . . . ?

RC: Oh, I think it's true with lots and lots and lots and lots of people. [Laughs]  
Mauria, David Leopoulos, Mauria's husband and I played cards in the [Clinton] Library residence last Monday night. We played "Hearts," and it was just like we were sixteen years old in the sense that it had all the banter and all the having the good time and talking. The things we talk about now are a little bigger and a little broader than they were when we were young, but it's that same deep commitment in having known people. You know, Bruce [Lindsey] is still there. David Edwards is still close. Carolyn is, and people who have gone in and out of—who's around. Depending on who's around.

AD: Yes.

RC: I don't think he ever—I would be very, very surprised if you were able to find someone who said that they had been a friend of Bill Clinton's, but that he had gotten too big and didn't have anything to do with them.

AD: [Laughs]

RC: Two years ago, he was the star fund-raiser for Jimmie Lou Fisher's campaign for governor.

AD: Yes.

RC: Calvin Shackelford, who is probably close to ninety years old—he's been a bartender for years and years and years—and I happened to be standing out in the

plaza, and Calvin was over [there], and Bill came out the door. There wasn't anybody else out there. I mean, there wasn't a crowd that he couldn't get through is what I'm trying to say. And the look on both of their faces—they came together and gave each other an *enormous* hug. Calvin hadn't seen him in probably—since he went to Washington [D.C.], it was the first time he'd seen him. But it was all there, and it was obvious in both of their faces how glad they were to see one another. That's all the time. All the time. He remembers absolutely everybody.

AD: Yes. Were you surprised that he came back to Arkansas after he went to Georgetown, then Oxford [University, United Kingdom], then Yale [University, New Haven, Connecticut]?

RC: No. Not at all. His take, to me, was, "If the best and the brightest of Arkansas always leave, nothing will ever change in Arkansas. We have to go back and commit ourselves to that change," which is *exactly* what he did.

AD: When did you first realize that he was going to be running for Congress in 1974?

RC: When he came to the lunch table and asked my mother and father and my grandmother if they thought it was a good idea, and what would they do?  
[Laughter]

AD: What was your reaction? Did you think it was a good idea at the time?

RC: I thought it was a swell idea.

AD: You mentioned that you ended up participating in that campaign.

RC: I did participate in that campaign. I was there on the day he announced. I was the co-chairman with [Bobby Hargraves] for Garland and Johnson Counties in that race. We almost won.

AD: What was the reaction of people of Hot Springs when he ended up coming back and started running for—Congress in the beginning—the attorney general's race—and then governor?

RC: Just like everything else, Andrew—about fifty/fifty—that delicate balance. There was a group that was not for [him] and there was a big group that *was* for him, and they always had a headquarters over there for all of his races. Virginia didn't court people not being supportive of him very well.

AD: I'm going to kind of jump ahead.

RC: Okay.

AD: Usually I talk about this a little bit further [into the interview], but we talked about this during lunch and you had brought this up. Despite the fact that there are many people who have very strong, long-lasting friendships with President Clinton, there's also—I guess it's not a surprising amount at this point, but if you look at it—there's a large amount of animosity among some people. [How] do you explain that? You talked about the third, third, third division, and that it existed even back before the presidential races.

RC: Presidential. Yes. This is my opinion, and as my mother always said, "You're entitled to your opinion regardless of how ignorant it may be."

AD: [Laughs]

RC: But in watching and being a part of it, and watching people, it seems to me that there were two parts of this hatred and anger that's just *so* deep and emotional. And I think it's over-determined. I think there are some guys [laughs]—some white guys who are really jealous of him for different reasons, and most of it is

probably is his personal charisma. His following and his presidency and governorship and all—his following—that's the right word—is based on *personal*—him—not on doctrine or policy.

AD: Yes.

RC: I think there are some people who sense that and resent it. I think Cliff Jackson, who was in the Institute of Politics and Government with me, thought that he was going to come to Arkansas as a Rhodes Scholar, and that Bill Clinton would be someplace else. Here came Bill, who, when he walked on the stage, took up all of the oxygen in the room.

AD: [Laughs]

RC: So the Cliff Jacksons and the Sheffield Nelsons, who—I think he believed that he was going to be governor. I think he set out as a Jaycee to build a foundation to be governor of the state of Arkansas. And it wasn't so much Bill as it was simply [that] his *being* had denied their dreams.

AD: I guess being governor that long during—because I think probably a lot of people during the seventies [1970s] rightly viewed that as a jumping-off point for larger office, and that . . .

RC: When he was governor?

AD: Yes.

RC: I think there were a lot of people who thought that he, by that time, would position himself—that if the opportunity came up that he would run for president.

AD: Yes. But I guess I kind of interrupted you. You were talking about some other factors as well.

RC: I think that some people just don't like his politics, but they perceive—they understand how immensely popular he is. And if they don't just keep their foot on his neck all the time trying to tear him up, then it becomes a tsunami of popularity. I think there was a great deal of it that was rooted in that.

AD: In his first congressional race, [he] ends up running a close campaign, but losing.

RC: It was a *very* close campaign. It was awarded—the DCCC [Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee] said it was the best-organized congressional campaign that year in the country. I think that star would go to Patty Criner.

AD: That ended up being a jumping-off point for the [campaign for] attorney general two years later.

RC: Right. And there were three people in the race, initially—Clarence Cash, who was a prosecuting attorney, and George Jernigan, who was an attorney and Democratic Committee man, and Bill Clinton. It ended up that Clarence Cash and Bill fought it out.

AD: What were some of the—were you active in that campaign as well?

RC: Not really.

AD: Okay. I was going to ask why you thought that he was able to win that race against those two competitors—probably because . . .

RC: Because he was infinitely better prepared to win any race than they were—I mean, he is, in my opinion, probably the best politician of the twentieth century, and probably the best political strategist in the Democratic Party today.

AD: So 1978 comes along, and he runs for governor. Were you surprised that he had moved up the political ladder so quickly?

RC: No. No.

AD: I've talked to a number of people, and they've said that, particularly, that was because they had thought—that being in the same generation, you never considered your own generation young.

RC: That's right. We thought we could do *anything*. We were thirty-two years old.

AD: I guess, looking across Arkansas, there were a lot of young politicians at that time.

RC: Absolutely. Absolutely. An interesting thing that I think had nothing to do with Bill, and, yet, was part of what went on—the Ford Foundation created four grants across the United States in places that established the Institute of Politics and Government, and it was to teach grassroots politics to a broader spectrum of people *and* upgrade the process in an effort to educate larger numbers of people on how elections were supposed to work—to clean elections up. Arkansas was one of those places, and there was a significant number of people who were in his administration who were around him who—some of them even went all the way to Washington, to the White House—who were beneficiaries of the Institute of Politics and Government through their classes there. I think that gives you a cadre of people who really *can* be helpful, and they were all about our age.

AD: Looking back at when he announced for governor, were you involved in that campaign?

RC: A little bit. I was involved in all of them a little bit, but it was never a *major* portion after the first time. I was a pretty heavy volunteer in the first presidential campaign [1992], and an Arkansas Traveler, but, no, I wasn't part of the strategy

of the campaign.

AD: Were you surprised that he lost [to Frank White] in 1980?

RC: Well, I was on the cabinet then. I was precluded from being a part of that campaign.

AD: Right.

RC: I was hatched in that campaign.

AD: Yes.

RC: I think maybe the word would be devastated, to me, because there were so many people who tried so hard and who had some ideas that were really good, including—I mean, his for the leadership of it. And I learned clearly, and perhaps he did, too, that you cannot move a body of people too fast.

AD: Yes.

RC: You have to go where they are and move them a step at a time.

AD: Were you surprised that he ran again in 1982?

RC: Yes. I had a conversation with him in the office—the of-counsel office—and I said, "Why do you want to do this?" He said, "Well, you know, it's the only way I can do what I want to do." I said, "Well, why don't you just make a lot of money like Mr. Witt?" And he laughed. Money has *never* been a motivator for him—ever, ever, ever.

AD: You had mentioned a little of your own government service here, and public service in Arkansas. Can you talk a little bit about that in terms of your time in the cabinet?

RC: I was appointed by [Governor Clinton] as director of the Department of Natural

and Cultural Heritage, which is now the Department of Heritage. I was appointed on January 11, 1979, the first group of appointments that he made. I was the second woman in the state of Arkansas who had ever been appointed to a cabinet [position].

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[Beginning of Tape 2, Side 1]

RC: Senator [David] Pryor, when he was governor, had appointed Ann Bartley as my predecessor at the Department of Natural and Cultural Heritage, and she was the first woman . . .

AD: Could you do me a favor and spell that last name?

RC: B-A-R-T-L-E-Y.

AD: Oh, so it's like it sounds.

RC: Yes. She was Jeanette Rockefeller's—Winthrop Rockefeller's wife—child by a previous marriage. [She was] very committed to the arts and to natural and cultural heritage, so it was an interesting place for her. She went on to the Washington [D.C.] office when Bill was elected.

AD: How long did you serve in that capacity?

RC: A little over two years in the administration. The cabinet appointment serves at the will of the governor.

AD: Yes.

RC: When Frank White was elected, he selected Tom Dillard.

AD: What were the priorities for your department when you were in that position?

RC: It was a relatively new department. It comprised historic preservation, the arts

council, the Old State House Museum, territorial restoration, natural and scenic rivers, and the natural heritage project, Trapnell Hall. That's it.

AD: That's a very ambitious agenda.

RC: Well, all of that comprised the department, so we were working on all of those things. Probably one of the major things—the Old State House had been secured through the good work and very good intent of [the] women of Arkansas through their different organizations, like the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Daughters of the Confederacy and the Daughters of 1812—the daughters of everything. But they had not restored the Old State House authentically, and in order to make it the museum that it is today, we had to bring control of the Old State House back to the agency that was then active that did have the professional expertise to do what has been done now, which is wonderful. That had to happen. That was a major thing, and the women were not happy about it.

AD: Could you talk a little bit about the working relationship you had with the governor? What type of chief executive was he?

RC: He was wonderful to work for. He sets out his vision. At the first cabinet meeting that we had, and this was his first term as governor, he said, "What I want to see happen is that when we leave here, Arkansas is *better* than she would have been had we not been here." That was the assignment to everyone. He asked me in my department to "Please make a department out of those fiefdoms," and they *were* pretty much fiefdoms. And they weren't really pleased about being brought together.

AD: So that was a really bureaucratic in-fighting challenge. Yes. You left that

position in 1981. What did you do after that?

RC: I started Crane and Associates, which must have been the right thing to do because I'm still doing it.

AD: [Laughs] Tell me a little bit about that.

RC: Crane and Associates is a firm that works with individuals and organizations to assess where you are, where you want to be, and create the vehicle to get you there. [Laughter]

AD: That sounds exciting. That sounds interesting.

RC: Well, I am not a maintainer, I'm a *creator*. And when I get it created and fixed, I want somebody *else* to maintain it.

AD: [Laughs]

RC: So this gives me the best of all worlds. I do some political stuff, but, by and large, museums are where my heart is.

AD: During that period of time, did you still maintain a close friendship with President Clinton—I guess, Governor Clinton at that time?

RC: He *was* Governor Clinton at that time. Not close, like seeing each other . . .

AD: Right.

RC: I was working. They were doing their thing. I got married in 1985. Bill came to the wedding. In fact, the photographer who took the wedding pictures took lots more pictures of Bill Clinton than he did of me and the groom.

AD: [Laughs]

RC: I think probably the place where we came back to closer contact was in 1991 and 1992—in the presidential [race].

AD: Let's jump ahead to that, then. When did you first realize that he was going to run for president?

RC: Right before he announced. [Laughter] Well, once before, he had really looked at it and determined not to do it.

AD: Yes.

RC: I wasn't completely sure whether or not he would do it this time, but I was pleased that he did. I traveled with the [Arkansas] Travelers in several different states. I was there in California when he went over the top to be the nominee, and I was *so* proud of him. I did not go to the [Democratic] National Convention. I stayed in Little Rock, and we had put together house parties all over the state, called "Make Your Mark on History."

AD: Yes.

RC: All these people were having house parties to raise money, but the hook on it was that they were to do it the night he did the acceptance speech, and to write a note to him on these pieces of paper that we had provided to them, and they would all then be sent in along with the money they had raised. [From] that, we would create a leather-bound volume that would be given to him. They could say what they wanted to say to him the night that he accepted the nomination. It was pretty exciting.

AD: Going back half a step, you had talked about being one of the Arkansas Travelers.

RC: Yes.

AD: Generally speaking, what was the reaction of people when you had talked to them about Bill Clinton's campaign, and that you were from Arkansas?

RC: Well, I don't remember in any conversation I had—and, boy, were there a lot of them—anyone being anything but really kind of interested. I think most people were a little bit taken aback that we would—in malls and different places—reach out and say, "Hi, I'm Rose Crane from Little Rock, Arkansas. I hope you'll consider voting for my governor," and start a conversation with them, and that we knew him, and that we had paid our own way, and that we thought it was that important for America that they know who he was. But part of that, Andrew, came out of the loss to Frank White because we didn't believe that any of that kind of silly stuff—we thought we were above it. We didn't know you had to answer it on every front.

AD: Yes.

RC: There were a whole lot of people who had experienced that loss to Frank White, which, [in] my mind, never should have happened, except that [laughs] the only good thing I ever saw out of it was that we would be able to have a cadre of people who had experienced that, who were willing to go wherever it took and do whatever it took—cold, hot, sunlight to sundown, seven days a week, in cramped quarters. There were eleven of us in a van that went all the way across South Dakota. We were basically middle-aged people—talking to everybody. [We] spent eleven days—it was an interesting bonding experience. When we went to Bakersfield, California, there were a hundred of us in that group. There were several vans of us. You may not know—Bakersfield is the center of the universe for raisins. They gave [every one of us] a ten-pound assortment of raisins.

[Laughter]

AD: It would take a while to get through ten pounds of raisins. [Laughter]

RC: I know! But everybody had ten pounds of raisins. Some of them were just raisins, and some of them were chocolate covered.

AD: Oh.

RC: There was an assortment of things. We had *lots* of raisins—it was like the first rattle out of the box on this trip. So we had all these raisins in vans all over California. And those are funny stories—and [everyone had] a willingness to get in there and do. That is because, in my opinion, he truly *does* care about people. He *truly* does want to lift all folks. He *truly* does see value in *every* soul. And the people around the world are discovering that now.

AD: I guess going back a few more months before that—what was your initial reaction when you heard he was running for president?

RC: Great.

AD: It wasn't that you thought, "Well, is he likely to win?" Was it a positive reaction?

RC: What I knew very well at that point and had known for some time was—and not only is he probably *the* best intuitive strategist—standing right next to him is Hillary, and they are a *formidable* pair on so many levels. [They] are *so* complementary to each other in what they do. You know, if anybody had a shot at it, he did.

AD: When did it dawn on you that he was likely to win? Were you certain from the start? I guess at some point there's—during the campaign, you . . .

RC: I have a very dear friend who has E.S.P. [extra-sensory perception]—whether you believe in it or not, I absolutely believe in *her*. Right before his birthday in

August, she said to me, "You will soon have pictures and letters—treasures from the president."

AD: And you figured that probably wasn't Ross Perot. [Laughs]

RC: You're right. I knew that it wasn't going to be Ross Perot. It wasn't going to be— I mean, I had *nothing*. My only horse in the race that I had anything from was Bill Clinton. I think that year on his birthday card I wrote what had been said. One of the things I have framed in my office is—it was on computer, and everybody knew that—birthday greetings to everybody. But my birthday is the sixteenth of October, and, as you well know, that was two weeks before the election.

AD: Yes.

RC: There was a little handwritten note on it, in addition to the computer letter. And I thought, "What an incredible thing that he managed to get that out at that time," and I had it framed for that very reason.

AD: Jumping ahead a little bit, what is it like—end of 1992, early 1993—what is it like to have a childhood friend of yours elected to be president of the United States? That's not an experience that most Americans can relate to.

RC: I know. I had a hard time when he was first elected governor, and I grew to accept that. It was really awesome. I went to the first inaugural [and was] involved in all that stuff. It wasn't very real. It was all that hubbub and everything.

AD: Yes.

RC: I guess in March I was in D.C., and I went to the White House to see him.

He walked into the Oval Office, and I started crying because I guess that's when it really hit me. It was *incredibly awesome*.

AD: I think at this point we've talked about a lot of ground. Is there anything that we've not touched on?

RC: Probably lots of things, but I think the thing that I would like to say is that I don't know that I've ever known—anywhere, anytime—anyone with a more generous spirit—anyone who ever tried harder to help all the people around him. And [he] *always* tries to see the best in everybody. Never, ever, *ever* [have I] heard him say bad things about anybody. We were playing cards a couple of years ago—and we played cards maybe five or six times a year, maybe a little more often sometimes and less often others, depending on his schedule—but he had read David Brock's book, *Blinded By The Right*, and he said, "I started out thinking I was going to be really angry. By the time I got it read and by the time I got to the end of it, I felt sorry for him."

AD: He showed a great amount of empathy for somebody who had obviously written a lot of negative things.

RC: Yes. But that's the way he is. And I'm the radical out there throwing—[laughter]. I said not too long ago that—and I'm saying these things unedited, in my opinion—but what I said was that, "In my opinion, Dick Morris was a smarmy scumbag." And he said, "And those are the *good* things you can say about him."

AD: [Laughs]

RC: And that's as close to being derogatory about somebody as I have *ever* heard him say.

AD: [Laughs] Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

RC: Oh, probably a million things after I think about it.

AD: I know that there's a ton of things.

RC: I've forgotten what all I've said.

AD: Well, we can certainly add things later on.

RC: Do you feel like I've left something out?

AD: No, no. It's just that we've gone over so much ground, I always want to make sure that we're getting everything, not just the talking points that I'm looking at.

RC: One example, growing up—it's not something that just started, and it's not something that's political, and I think this is a good example of it—when we were kids, we would dance to the records. Mary [Dan?] was seven years younger than we are, so that's a lot of size difference at that age. And Bill would get down on his knees to dance with Mary [Dan?]. I mean, just kids in the living room dancing.

AD: Yes.

RC: That's the kind of thoughtfulness that has just *always* been there—the kind of empathy and the kind of generosity. And it's not unprincipled. It's *exceedingly* principled.

AD: Yes, because at that age you're not really getting anything tentatively from . . .

RC: That's right. That's exactly right. That's just you. That's just being who you are.

AD: And I guess that's actually one of the things I think we had talked about that I had neglected to bring up in the interview segment, that in terms of those people who have had animosity here—the "Slick Willy" label—the thought that all of this is

vague. The "I can feel your pain" quote that's used. Obviously, you don't see that as being accurate.

RC: I don't see that as being accurate at all, and I think it more closely describes [laughs] the people who are saying it than the person they're saying it *about*—that they can't imagine someone with that kind of generosity of spirit. I have never seen him—he *does* get angry. I've seen him angry. In most instances, it would be anger over someone else having been slighted—some injustice that had happened, or someone who tried to "big dog" it and make somebody else feel small. I just have never seen a mean or small part of him. I've never seen it in all these many years. And I love Hillary, too. She is absolutely delightful. They adore each other, and I have seen it since they were very, very young—the first time he ever brought her to Arkansas.

AD: Can you tell us about the first time that you met Senator Clinton?

RC: I was at Scully Street. Virginia was there, and I think Patty Criner. I'm not sure. There was somebody else, and I think it was probably Patty. Bill came in with Hillary, and she was very gracious and very lovely. One of the first things she said to me was, "Rose, tell me about Bill Clinton. You know him better than I do." And I said, "No, not in that way." But she was dynamic, she was interesting, she was different. I think probably a lot, maybe—a lot of the positioning between she and Virginia—they were in many, many ways alike. There were two *very* strong personalities. She is very, very bright. She beat him on the Arkansas Bar exam. I don't know that I know a couple who are so complementary of one another, and, by that, I mean they do fill in each other and they have different

skills and different strengths that blend *very* well together.

AD: Yes.

RC: And they *really do* like each other.

AD: Is there anything else?

RC: If you keep saying that, I'll keep saying something [laughter] because there is always something that will come up. Why don't we see what we have, and then if we need to do something, we can come back and do something else. [Laughs]

AD: Okay. That sounds like a great idea. Well, thank you for your time.

RC: Thank you.

AD: I really appreciate you spending this time with me and sharing your memories.

RC: Thank you very much.

[End of Interview]

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