William Jefferson Clinton History Project

Interview with

Patty Howe Criner
Little Rock, Arkansas
20 July 2005

Interviewer: Andrew Dowdle

Andrew Dowdle: It is Wednesday, July 20, 2005. I am in Little Rock, Arkansas. I am Andrew Dowdle. D-O-W-D-L-E. I'm with Patty Howe Criner. Could you please spell your name?

Patty Howe Criner: Yes, Andrew. Patty. P-A-T-T-Y. Howe. H-O-W-E. Criner. C-R-I-N-E-R.

AD: Thank you. Just a couple of questions [relative to your] basic background. When and where were you born?

PC: I was born in Hot Springs, Arkansas, in December of 1945.

AD: December of 1945. Who were your parents?

PC: My mother's name was Violet Sibley Howe, and my father's name was Joe Howe. He died very early, when I was five years old. My mother remained in Hot Springs and took over my father's business. We were in the movie business—motion-picture theaters.

AD: Oh. Where was the theater in Hot Springs?

PC: On Ouachita—the Strand Theater, and then the Sunset Drive-In Theater. That was the only drive-in movie theater in Garland County.

AD: When did your family come to Hot Springs?

PC: Actually, Andrew, you shouldn't ask me that. My Grandmother Howe, my

father's mother, moved from Huntsville and Gadsden, Alabama, to Hot Springs in the late 1920s and early 1930s because my grandmother built two movie theaters in Hot Springs—the [Old Beth?] Theater that was gone many years before I was born. But in the thirties—I've seen pictures of Grandmother in front of the movie theater about that time. My mother then married into the Howe family and moved there in probably 1940 or 1941.

AD: So your family had a long history in terms of running movie theaters in Hot Springs.

PC: Right. Yes.

AD: Where did you go to school?

PC: In the first and second grades, I went to St. John's Catholic School, which was an elementary a lot of our friends attended. My father and my grandmother were devout Catholics. My mother was a Methodist. So I went to the first and second grades at St. John's, and when my father died in 1950, immediately my mother transferred us to public school in the neighborhood, closer to where we lived.

AD: Where did you go to the public schools?

PC: To Ramble [Elementary] School. Ramble School would be third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, then Hot Springs Junior High and Hot Springs High School.

AD: When did you graduate from Hot Springs High School?

PC: I graduated in 1963.

AD: 1963.

PC: Yes.

AD: Did you leave Hot Springs after that?

PC: Yes. I left for college and attended one year at Arkansas State Teachers College in Conway. [I] then transferred to Fayetteville to the University of Arkansas, where I completed undergraduate school and graduate school, and then taught in the Fayetteville public school system. Then I taught at the university.

AD: So you were in Fayetteville until . . .

PC: I was in Fayetteville until 1971 or 1972, in that era. I moved to Little Rock—went to work for Dale Bumpers, who was the governor at that time. I went to work in the Department of Finance and Administration in the Office of Personnel Management. My position, which handled federal discretionary grants for the governor—actually, the position was moved to the governor's office. So at the end of 1972 or 1973, I went to work in the governor's office and stayed there through the remainder of the Bumpers Administration and the [David] Pryor Administration, but changed positions and handled his liaison position to higher education. Then I moved to the [laughs] governor's office with then-Governor [Bill] Clinton and taught at UALR [University of Arkansas, Little Rock] at night.

AD: Very busy! [Laughs]

PC: So there you have it! [Laughs]

AD: Busy 1970s.

PC: That's right.

AD: Just kind of going back a little bit more into—I guess it would have been the early fifties [1950s] at that point. You said that you went to first grade with Bill Clinton. Was that the first time you met him?

PC: Yes. In the Catholic school I attended, St. John's, the first grade and the second

grade classes were held in one room [with] one instructor. The first and second grades were together. We actually sat beside each other. I am a year older than President Clinton, but our classes were together. We became friends. Our classes were smaller then. I don't actually remember the number, but [let's] say there were twenty-five in one and eighteen in another—something in that category. Also, my mother and grandmother had been friends, or were acquainted with, Virginia Clinton, Bill Clinton's mother. Our families became friends, and there was a little group of us who sort of played together. The first memory I have of Bill Clinton was in elementary school. Then he, too, moved to Ramble School—the public school—because he physically moved neighborhoods. He moved from south Hot Springs to Park Avenue in Hot Springs, and our family lived right off of Park Avenue. We walked to Ramble School. So we picked up again in public school.

AD: Can you tell me a little bit about what it was like growing up in Hot Springs in the 1950s and early 1960s?

PC: Well, this will be true of anyone you talk to from Hot Springs. They will all tell you that it is one of the most unique places in the world, and I think most people are doting on their place they grow up. They have fond memories or they feel very, very connected. Hot Springs was unusual in that it was such a melting pot for people from all over the country, and where I have friends who say, "I never met anyone from New York until I was in college," [laughter] or, "I never met a Catholic until I was in high school." In Hot Springs, people from all over the world came. We had no industry. Tourism was our basis, and that *was* our

industry. People came from all over the world to visit scenic Hot Springs and to take the hot baths. The bathhouses were operating [then] at full force. It was a small town to us in that you could walk from one end of Central Avenue to the other, and you could stop at Newberry's and have a toasted pimento cheese sandwich and a milk shake. And you could go on down the street to Cress's and shop in the toy department. And you could walk up the street to the movie theaters—the Malcosw, the Strand and the Central movie theaters. You could walk to your junior high and you could walk to your high school. And you could leave campus at noon and walk across the street and have a foot-long hot dog, or you could walk down to the corner to the—I never thought I'd forget the name of that café—I can't remember—it'll come to me—and have the tallest cheeseburger and the most fries you've ever seen, and walk back to class and sit out on the wall of the high school and the junior high and visit with all of your friends—this big, stone wall. People would sit out there. The town itself was, in the 1950s, segregated. The movie theaters had entrances that were marked "whites only." Water fountains were "whites only." Anyone else had to go to the third balcony to watch the movie. That was the way of life at that time.

AD: It's kind of interesting, though—if you look at that in terms of I think most of the country's or most of the world's view of Arkansas in, again, 1957—[the Little Rock] Central High School [integration crisis]—but when you look at President Clinton, certainly I think what most people would say is [that he has] a very progressive set of policies on race relations. Did growing up in Hot Springs have any influence on that?

PC: Oh, I'm *sure* it did, but Bill Clinton has never met a stranger since the day he was born. The people who have "peopled" his life from the time he was a very young boy—he has *collected* them. He has been interested in them. He has wanted them to have a better life—everyone he meets. "Are you okay? Is today all right?" He was engaged with people in the first grade and the second grade, and on and on. So he had a lot of friends. And I think living in a community where the high school was segregated—Langston High School was the high school where all of the black people he knew went, but he had friends in every part of our community. I think living in Hot Springs—I think his church in Hot Springs—Park Place Baptist Church—and the friends of his parents influenced him as much as anything. I can think of some very colorful characters and some instances of real connections with those friends. I think he absorbed what it was like living in a segregated community, and because he was so interested in all the people he knew *and* he was interested in history, I think he absorbed like a sponge and made some very conscious decisions about how he was going to live his life. Those probably were not acted on or put into play until he went into Georgetown [University, Washington, DC] and lived in a more diverse environment.

AD: Yes.

PC: And I think the reflection, then, of our view and our communities and where he was living in a larger city with a more diverse environment—he very quickly put the two together and said, "This is the way I want to live my life. This is what is right for me, and this is what I think is right for the world," and the rest is history.

AD: You talked about some of the "colorful personalities," I think, is how you phrased

it.

PC: Well, you remember in the 1950s and 1960s in Hot Springs, gambling was wide open—*illegal* gambling, other than the parimutuel betting at Oaklawn Race Track.

AD: Yes.

PC: I'm sure you've read or heard the stories of Bill Clinton's mother going to the races. She *loved* the race track. She was a nurse anesthetist, and [she] would ask the physicians for whom she worked to set all the cases very early so that she could be out of the hospital by 12:30 [p.m.] or 1:00 [p.m.] so that she would not miss the first race.

AD: [Laughs]

PC: Every person would know when the last case was over. They would see Virginia washing her hands and putting on her lipstick. She was heading to the race track.

AD: [Laughs]

PC: We had a shorter racing season then than we do now, but she was there *every single day*, and knew many of the trainers and the owners and the jockeys. And they became friends. You'd see the same people. It's a circuit, and they would come through Hot Springs as they would go to other tracks around the country. They would become friends of Virginia Clinton and of her family. So Bill Clinton knew the people who were the trainers and the jockeys and the owners [of the horses] at the race track.

AD: What type of influence do you think that Virginia Clinton had on her son?

PC: Well, they were very, very close—always very, very close. She was very strong,

and I think her character, because of the way she dealt with adversity, was strong— she knew she had to take care of herself and her sons. She was absolutely clear to them on the things that she expected of them. "You tell the truth. Period." In her book [*Leading with My Heart: My Life*]—and I'm sure you've looked at that—she's very clear [about] the way she raised her boys. They worked in the summer. Bill Clinton had a job at his uncle Raymond's car dealership. He worked there every summer, or had some [other] type of job. He was engaged in all types of school activities. Virginia supported all of those. One of the things that—if you want to stop the tape . . .

AD: Sure.

[Tape Stopped]

AD: So you were talking about [how] they had very different schedules—that they might not see each other early in the morning, but there would be notes around the house.

PC: Virginia left for the hospital very, very early in the morning. I don't know exactly what time, but she would stop and have coffee at a certain place with a group of people every morning before she went to the hospital. She would leave the house, and I've actually seen notes left on the refrigerator that would say, "I sure do love you, son. Mother." And there would be a note there later in the day that he wrote back and put it on the refrigerator, to her, "I love you, too," or there would be, “I'll see you at”—whatever time. But there [were] *always* these little notes. In fact, I've kept some of them that I just thought were going to get lost, ultimately, if I didn't hold onto just a few of those little cards that would have terms of

endearment from each other. They were *very* connected, and all the time that he was away at college, he wrote his mother. He has always written *everyone*. He writes cards. He writes notes. He has kept in touch with people better than anyone I've ever known since he was a young person. He did the same thing with his mother, and she with him. They would write long letters, not just—I'd send four sentences to my mother. [Laughter] "Send money. The car is dead."

AD: Which is what a typical college-age student would do, probably.

PC: Oh, absolutely. But Bill Clinton wrote long letters, and he believed in writing letters. As long as I've known him, he carries note paper with him, and he writes notes. He'll wake up in the car—he sleeps in the car often, and he'll wake up and think of somebody that he'd seen recently or that he wanted to remember. I have notes that just said, "I just realized it was a year ago today that we were in New Hampshire," or "A year ago"—whatever. Or, "I hope you have a happy Valentine's," or, "Please check on my mother when you're in Hot Springs. I'm not going to be home until such-and such time. Please go by and see my mother." I have a *stack* of those. I didn't keep a lot of them, but I've come across some over the years, and they were just methods of connecting and remembering things. But he always would write notes. And you could read his writing then a lot better than you can these days, actually. [Laughter] I found a college paper of his the other day, and it's handwritten. I thought, "I need to give this to the library," because you could actually read every single letter [laughter] from this left-handed fellow. I think Hot Springs was a magical place to grow up because there were gamblers in and out of town. We didn't think that was a horrible thing.

People would preach in churches that those people in Hot Springs have these terrible influences, and, “Isn't it a shame about these young people growing up in Garland County?” We didn't think they knew what they were talking about. I can remember leaving a church service one time in Fayetteville because the minister was lambasting Hot Springs and "those poor people who grew up down there." I stood up and said, "I'm from Hot Springs," and I left. [Laughs] And I never went back.

AD: When did you realize that Hot Springs was different from the rest of Arkansas?

PC: Well, I don't think you ever appreciate your hometown or the peculiarities until you are away from it.

AD: Yes.

PC: I thought that it was magical that we could have the run of the whole town, and we met people in every store who operated their millinery stores [where hats are sold] and their bakeries and their restaurants. We would meet people from Chicago and New York sitting on the veranda at the Arlington Hotel, and they would have exotic stories to tell us. We would see the Southern Club and The Vapors have entertainers—I met Liberace [the world-renowned pianist] when I was twelve. He had a ring that was in the shape of a candelabra with different stones on all the points of the ring. And [I met comedienne] Phyllis Diller and [T. Lee?] Smith. Those people were there all the time. Also, you remember, my folks were in the movie [theater] business, and back then at every movie theater you had a stage in the theater where people would come and perform live. Lash LaRue actually [laughter]—you're not old enough to remember Lash LaRue. But

Lash LaRue whipped a piece of paper that was lighted. They'd light it a little more and a little more and a little more, and he'd use his bullwhip to flick the flame off of the end. [Comedian] Jack Benny came to the movie theater, bought a hot dog, and walked in to sit down and see the movie before we even realized who he was. That was our childhood. Those people were in and out of our city. We thought it was special that they were there, but we didn't necessarily think, "Oh, poor Little Rock. You don't have that," or “Poor Malvern,” or Arkadelphia or Fayetteville.

AD: Yes.

PC: Once you're away, you realize that you don't talk about [how] we all worked out on the farm, or that we played in baseball tournaments. We didn't have sports. We played in our yards. We rode bikes. We went to the Y[MCA] [Young Men's Christian Association] for dances. We visited with the people who came to Hot Springs. As you get away from that, you realize why a lot of us who grew up in Hot Springs didn't know anything about professional sports. We had no professional sports teams there. We didn't know a lot about ice skating nor how to ice skate because we didn't have an ice skating rink, we had a roller skating rink. We did have a drive-in movie theater. We didn't think that we were very put upon or sinners because we knew that people were gambling at the different gambling houses. [At that time] you had to be sixteen to go to the race track, and my mother and grandmother took me when I was fifteen. I dressed up and wore high heels, and proceeded to fall down the steps at the race track and had to have my knee bandaged by a doctor, who said, "Hmm. Hmm. And why are you at the

race track, young lady?" I said, "I'm with my mother and my grandmother. They wanted me to just see the race track for the first time," and I was all dressed up. He said, "The next time you'll learn not to wear big high heels to the race track. [Laughter] People over here wear boots and tennis shoes to the race track." I never took one of the hot baths until I was away from the city and then realized how special [it was]. We had an alligator farm. I didn't know that that was different.

AD: [Laughs]

PC: We stood and threw peanuts on the backs of the alligators. We had an I.Q. [intelligence quotient] Zoo where Keller Breland taught all the animals to do tricks, and they became a very special national group of animals who could open safes and locks.

AD: Obviously, Hot Springs today is a lot different than it was forty years ago. The alligator farm is still there and the track is still there.

PC: Right. Right.

AD: But the end of most of the illegal gambling and . . .

PC: It took a lot of the color and spirit and glitter out of Hot Springs. One of the restaurants out on the lake used to serve alcohol in coffee cups and coffee mugs. I can't remember the name of the restaurant—Mirabel, I believe—years and years ago on Sundays.

AD: Is that with two R's or one R?

PC: I'm not sure.

AD: Okay.

PC: I honestly don't remember because the restaurant was not there very long. I want to say it was one R.

AD: That's what I was thinking.

PC: I think it was one R. It was out on Lake Catherine. On Sundays, and any other day—I assume they were in the ladies' room as well as the men's room—I don't even really know—there were slot machines. But I can remember being at a table where the people ordered a drink and it came in a coffee mug on Sundays. There was a lot of money in Hot Springs because of the gambling and the race track. I can remember when—I can't remember the exact year, but we ordered an Oldsmobile 88 because on the ballot was a referendum to legalize gambling in Garland County, and to limit it to either one gambling house or two gambling houses. I don't remember the specifics of the legislation. But we ordered the car, and after the election on Tuesday when it was defeated, we canceled the order on the car. Our family had *nothing* to do with gambling. We didn't run around with gamblers. We didn't . . .

AD: But with that much more additional tourism in town—yes.

PC: That much tourism—we had movie theaters then, but my mother also had a clothing store. It made that much difference just in terms of the traffic and the numbers of dollars that were turned in a community, that it affected our life [so much so] that Mother said, "We're not going to be able to afford that car now," so we canceled it.

AD: And, obviously, even though downtown is being revitalized now to some degree, it's still not what it used to be.

PC: No. But it's still a quirky place. It still has Ricky's Toy Shop on Central Avenue, and next door to it is a reptile business that—you go in there and see iguanas and snakes and things. Molly's Restaurant used to be there. I learned to eat matzo ball soup and blintzes when I was a young kid. So many people had never even met anyone who was Jewish, but this was our traffic pattern. We played at Ramble School. [We] had hardwood floors in the gym, or auditorium. The girls would sit on the floor playing jacks, and the guys would be acting silly with microphones and singing and playing music on the stage. Then you'd go back to class. Then you'd go out on the playground, and the playground had rocks all over it. It wasn't—it was just a playground with a monkey-bar set, and that was it. We didn't have particular organized sports teams. A lot of kids hung out at the Boys' Club. I think I can remember Bill Clinton and several of his friends at the Boys' Club. I think I can remember. [Laughter] I'm having to go back because *I* didn't hang out at the Boys' Club. But Hot Springs was just different. The colors of Hot Springs were different. The people were from every place. It's a seasonal place. You'd look at the population [sign], and, I don't know, I think it said 29,000 then, and it may say 39,000 now, but neither of those were accurate because there's a huge lake population that's a seasonal population.

AD: Yes.

PC: People would come in just for the races. They would come in January and leave in April. It would be the same people. They would eat at the same places and live at the same places, so there was always a roving population. And because of the lakes, people lived out on the lakes. Bill Clinton's mother fished all the time.

Early mornings, she would fish. Many mornings. In fact, I have an old fishing bucket of his mother's. Every Fourth of July they would visit their friends, Marge and [Phil?] Mitchell, out at the lake and go boat riding. Big Roger [Clinton] had a big Chris-Craft [boat], a 1953- or 1956- or 1957-something shiny, wooden Chris-Craft. The lakes have always been a draw for people, even more so now. [Laughs] You should see Hot Springs now. There are a few remnants of our childhood left, but it's becoming more and more focused on fast foods and ski boats.

AD: There's no way you could walk from one end of Central to the other at this point.

PC: No. You just wouldn't do that. You know, we would ride buses. We'd get on the city bus all the time and go from one end of town to the high school, where we went to high school and junior high. And people don't do that anymore. We'd head off walking and stop at the pancake house and have something for breakfast. The pancake house is still there. We always would watch the Christmas parade go down Central Avenue, and it was big—big floats. Miss America was always there. It was a big deal as a kid. And because we walked a lot of places and the neighborhoods were close together—[we] just knew people and they knew you. As Hillary's book [states], *It Takes a Village*—it *does.* Each of us had support—friends in all these businesses up and down Central Avenue. And so many of those people remembered Bill Clinton when he ran for office. They remembered him as a kid. They had watched him grow up. He had stopped and befriended people on the street and brought them home for Thanksgiving. I'm sure you've heard that story before, which his mother tells many, many times.

AD: Yes.

PC: Where I caught the school bus on Park Avenue to go to junior high and high school, there was an Esso [gasoline] station and [Lewis? Louis?] Barbecue made up that little corner. I would sit on the school bus there, but on Sundays my mother would have to drive to that corner and turn right to take us to church, and I'd see Bill Clinton walking down . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Beginning of Tape 1, Side 2]

PC: . . . the place and the times, and then . . .

AD: It was a place where you could really end up just kind of walking and you thought that it was natural.

PC: Well, in our walk, you'd pass Park Place Baptist Church and on the next corner would be the little Bohemian restaurant that's still there. Then you'd pass The Vapors, which was a nightclub, and a gambling house . . .

AD: That now is a church.

PC: . . . that has now been turned into [laughs] a church. You'd pass the Majestic Hotel, where people would pull up under the *porte cochère* and the doorman would come out and open the door for you. People would go into the soda fountain at the Majestic Hotel. There was a little restaurant in that hotel, and you'd look out the window and the rooming house next door had painted curtains—painted on the windows—that said "Hot Springs." People lived in those rooming houses all up and down Central Avenue. Then you'd take a right and you'd go up Whittington to the alligator farm. Now [Arkansas School for

Mathematics, Science and the Arts] is there, which Bill Clinton was instrumental in establishing.

AD: What was there before—the hospital?

PC: St. Joseph's Hospital. Yes. Where I was born. Then you'd come on around the corner, and [there were] a lot of little specialty stores. It was a cheerful time. You didn't realize—and I'm sure a lot of people were struggling financially. We just didn't focus on that or think about that because we had such full and interesting lives. You didn't stop to say, as I do now, and I guess it's a product of my age—you look at businesses and realize which ones are struggling.

AD: Yes.

PC: You look at places and think, "My, my. They've been there for *years*. Please don't close your door. You're a dime store. We don't have those now." We didn't think about that. We just trafficked up and down the street. We knew all the people. They cared about us. We cared about them. And, you know, we had a fresh and "Leave it to Beaver" [type of] upbringing, more or less.

AD: And I'm sure for most of the adults at that time, coming out of the experience of the [Great] Depression and the war [reference to World War II] that had been twenty years before, that probably did color people's thoughts in terms of the prosperity at that time.

PC: Right. At that time, we all knew that the doctors made the most money in the community. We didn't think the *gamblers* were making the most money in the community. We didn't think it was odd that there was The Black Orchid, which was also—not a gambling house, but like a bar—a piano bar—the early piano

bars. We didn't think it was *sinful* that that was there.

AD: Yes.

PC: As kids, we didn't go there. We didn't hang out there. Everyone's parents had the same view that, "Those are there. They're a part of our community," but we didn't hang out there. Only when we probably were in high school, our parents would let us go to Belvedere Country Club and listen to somebody play the piano—Forrest Tucker—sit at the piano and sing.

AD: Yes.

PC: And it was okay to go to some of those as long as you were with your parents. But what we did was go to band concerts and participate in the thespian group and perform in some of the plays. Bill Clinton was *very* involved in the music department.

AD: What was Hot Springs High [School] like—again, looking back from, I guess, what you know now about other school systems across the state?

PC: It's pretty—the building, to me—Central High here in Little Rock is absolutely stunning. [It is] one of the prettiest high school buildings I've ever seen, but every time I'm in Hot Springs and drive by Hot Springs High School, I realize what a handsome structure, and what a friendly place that represents to me. I loved the wide halls. I loved the pretty hardwood floors. I loved that you could be up on the third floor and look all the way down and see your friends gathered around the stairs coming up, and you could holler down at them. We had a very strong woman principal, who was stern.

AD: Johnnie Mae Mackey?

PC: Johnnie Mae Mackey. Johnnie Mae Mackey believed in being stern, but she believed that when it was time for a basketball game, or something there at the high school, she should lead the cheers. I can vividly see her in her orthopedic black shoes and her hair pulled back in a bun and a very stout, tall woman, leading her hullabaloo—"Connect, connect!" cheer.

AD: [Laughs]

PC: We had good teachers. We had a lot of extracurricular activities. The music department was quite large in the state and had most of the choral concerts. The band state conventions were held in Hot Springs. The drama department was very active and did three or four shows a year and a big senior play every year. It was a friendly high school. You know, I think of Bill Clinton—people ask me all the time, "What do you remember about Bill Clinton? Did you know he was going to be president then?" Well, of course, I didn't know he was going to be president then. But reflecting back, he was so well liked by the athletes, as well as the drama students, as well as the student government people, as well as the teachers, as well as the people who ran the cafeteria. You know, generally, people fall in one clique or another.

AD: Cliques. Yes.

PC: You're a cheerleader or you're not. You're an athlete or you're not. And Bill Clinton was just a good old guy that people liked. He made good grades. He was smart. Teachers appreciated how well he did in classes. He was involved in the community and civic organizations, but was a *regular* person—was a genuinely nice, friendly person who I think every person you will interview will say, "Well,

he was my really good friend. He was my really good friend." And that's really true. He was friends with people in the class above him and the class behind him. They all befriended each other. One of his dates would be somebody from his own class, Mary Jo Nelson, who is Mary Jo Rogers now. And he would play in a band with somebody who played from the class behind in the band or a class ahead. He was just a special person in that he always seemed to really have an interest in you and your family and your school work and your activities—what you were doing. He was *genuinely* interested and was just a nice guy. We all knew he was smart, but I don't think anybody ever thought he was going to be president of the United States.

AD: You mentioned Roger [Clinton], his stepfather, a couple of times. What was he like?

PC: Colorful. He laughed a lot. His best friend was Van Lyle, who had the Coca-Cola Bottling Company across the street from the car dealership. Van Lyle and Roger Clinton loved to have a good time, and they had a pretty good time. They dressed like swells and laughed a lot, and probably partied a lot as well. I mean, I wouldn't be partying with—there's such a difference in age there.

AD: [Laughs]

PC: But, you know, he was always a "dandy."

AD: A lot has been written about the relationship between Roger Clinton and Virginia Clinton. Did you have any guess at all at that time in terms of the domestic troubles that were present? Was there anything that you can remember back when you think, "Oh, that was something that was odd?"

PC: Well, I *did* know a lot about their relationship, but a lot of that has come over the years from discussions with Virginia.

AD: Yes.

PC: And not particularly—I was around Roger, Sr., a lot because my mother was around Virginia and Roger a lot.

AD: Yes.

PC: I have pictures of them on the lake and we were with them. Most of what I know of their relationship [is from] personal discussions that I've had with Virginia over the years.

AD: But at that time, there wasn't anything when you were teenager that you thought, "Oh, this is kind of odd."

PC: Well, I'm trying to answer you honestly. No. On a day-to-day basis, I would say I didn't notice anything particular that I would go home and say, "Mother, do you think it's odd that Roger was not at the school play?"

AD: Right.

PC: I didn't focus on that—where other families in the community [laughs] that I can think of that it was *very* obvious there was something going on at their home that was maybe not totally stable.

AD: Yes.

PC: I don't think there was anything particularly noticeable.

AD: Noticeable.

PC: I was aware when sometimes Roger Clinton left and was gone for a while and would come back, but nothing particular.

AD: Kind of jumping forward—so you left Hot Springs to go to college. Did you hear from Bill Clinton from time to time when you had gone off to college and he had also left the following year?

PC: Yes. We kept in touch. We have always kept in touch. He did a better job than I did because I can remember times when he would call and say, "Why don't you answer my letters? Why don't you answer my cards?"

AD: [Laughs]

PC: He would send cards from school. When he was abroad, he would send cards. When he was in town, we would see each other at Thanksgiving and at Christmas and in the summer. And [we'd] just do kid things—drive around in cars with the windows down—Bill Clinton singing [Elvis Presley's song] "Love Me Tender."

AD: [Laughs]

PC: He was quite an Elvis fan, and he could sing all the songs. We would see each other on holidays and in the summer, and then he would always keep up by either calling or writing. We talked a lot, and when he found out that he had been awarded a Rhodes Scholar[ship]—I was at his mother's house that afternoon. We were all totally thrilled. I actually would see—Bill Clinton came to Fayetteville for something when I was teaching [there] to see some friends of his. We kind of caught [up] on what he was doing. But we did not see each other on a regular basis until he decided to come home and run for Congress in 1974. In the latter part of 1973 at Christmas, or something, he told me he was thinking about it, and he wanted to know if I would help. So I immediately went to Dale Bumpers and asked for a leave of absence. And, at that time, for some reason [laughs] nobody

ever questioned that. I took a leave of absence for ten months and moved to Fayetteville and worked in the congressional race. Consequently, I would see Bill Clinton regularly. We have stayed in touch since then.

AD: Could you talk a little bit about that first congressional race? At the beginning, did you think that he had a chance to win? You had actually lived in Fayetteville for a while, so you were very familiar, I guess, with that area.

PC: Well, actually, when I looked at the materials that he had written—and, of course, we didn't have computers then, so everything was handwritten—I believed his message so strongly that—I had no idea that the congressman for that area had actually voted against programs or voted for others that hurt that area. I kept looking at them, and his message of accountability was so strong, and he was such a good speaker. The first time I heard him speak at an event, I thought, "This is possible. This is absolutely possible." It was a fascinating campaign in that Bill Clinton was only known in Hot Springs, and in Fayetteville he had quite a number of friends, but he was basically—no one else in the third congressional district had heard of Bill Clinton. He had no money, and he was running against an entrenched congressman who had been in office for quite a number of years. The good news was that Hot Springs and Garland County were in the third congressional district at that time. It has since been moved to the fourth congressional district. That campaign began [when] just a few friends sitting around decided what had to happen to begin—there were twenty-one counties in the third congressional district—to begin a structure and introduce Bill Clinton to the people in those twenty-one counties. Virginia Clinton said, "Well, we need

money to open the headquarters." So she went out to her storeroom and came in and handed me a fishing bucket, and she said, "The Democratic State Convention is being held in Hot Springs over the weekend. Take this bucket and stand in the lobby and beat that bucket and get as many donations as you can. We'll use that money to pay for the phones to be hooked up and the electricity [to be turned] on [in] the little building that we've secured for the Hot Springs headquarters." And we had some makeshift bumper stickers made up. We were not very far along in this race, but we were working at it. That's how we raised the money for the first—to open the headquarters, which was much [of a] surprise to people. When Bill Clinton ran for president, they assumed that he grew up with a silver spoon in his mouth and certainly came from money, or how could he possibly be running for president and how could he have been governor? But we started with very little money, very little staff—just a few people who could take off from work or worked part-time—opened a headquarters in Fayetteville, and then Bill Clinton began to travel all twenty-one counties [from] early in the morning until late at night, meeting every single human being. And we actually think he shook hands with all the voters in every one of the counties.

AD: [Laughs]

PC: We almost won that race. We lost by about 5%. It was a fun race because we were idealistic. We were absolutely committed and dedicated to this race. Each time we'd listen to Bill Clinton—each time we sat down and he'd talk about issues that were important to him in the district, you *knew* that you were supporting the right candidate. You didn't even *think* about the other candidate. You *knew* that

he truly had thought this out. He truly had a plan. He truly was researching issues. He had lived in Washington [D.C.] and he had worked on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, so he knew. And he graduated [with a degree] in international relations. He knew how Congress worked, and he knew what should happen in our district. But it was tough because Sebastian County, the most Republican county in the state at that time—Benton County running a close second—they were not going to hear of a long-haired—he had very unruly, curly hair, and at that time it was long. They were not going to hear of this young fellow trying to take on a congressman whom they thought delivered roses door to door to them every week because he used the franking privilege to send cards and letters.

AD: Yes.

PC: So his name recognition was absolute. In Sebastian County, people would slam the doors on you when you'd walk up and say, "I'd like to introduce to you—or have you read the materials about my friend, Bill Clinton? I've gone all through school with him. I know this fellow." They'd slam the door on you. But, little by little, people started paying attention, and he always said that if he could carry Sebastian County, he'd dance in the streets.

AD: [Laughs]

PC: One year, when he was governor, he *did* carry Sebastian County, and he and Hillary danced in the streets of downtown Fort Smith. [Laughter] It was a time that people worked—you can't imagine the amount of hours, and they were paid almost nothing. We did our own polls. We had people help us design them, but

we would actually make the phone calls because we couldn't pay big polling companies to find out what issues were important to that district. There's story after story after story. I don't even know where to begin. I was telling somebody the other day—they said, "Well, you didn't have computers then, and you didn't own an airplane. How did you do all this?" I said, "Well, Bill Clinton had a lot of friends, and one of them was—[Stuart McConkey?] was a doctor in Hot Springs who must have weighed 300 pounds, and he had a single-engine airplane. He would take Bill Clinton on a few stops around the state, and when Bill Clinton would walk out to get on the plane, [Stuart McConkey?], the pilot, would have climbed in and the whole plane would have tipped over. One wing would have touched the tarmac.

AD: [Laughs]

PC: Bill Clinton would get in to somewhat stabilize it, and then they would shut the door, and it looked like you had to go wind up the front propeller [laughter] to send them on their way. He'd land at night in airports that would be closed, and you'd have to line up cars and turn their [head]lights on to [laughter] make a runway—a safe landing. We would use each other's cars and we would borrow cars from people. Finally, we got to the point that we could borrow a van from a car dealership or they would donate it as an in-kind contribution. Then we could take three or four people on the trip. But it was basically Bill Clinton and a driver working all twenty-one counties. Friends of his would take him. They'd say, "We *know* this county." They'd put him in, and they'd take him and introduce him to all their friends. Then we'd find someone else to take him to another county.

That's how I met Vic Nixon and his wife, Freddie. Vic was the pastor who married Bill [and Hillary Rodham] Clinton in their little house on California Avenue [in Fayetteville], which came after the 1974 race.

AD: Right.

PC: We picked up all these characters along the way, and they've been a part of our family and friends forever, and helped in the presidential race. Some of them were in New Hampshire with me in 1992.

AD: After he lost the congressional race, what did you think was going to happen—that he was going to continue his political career?

PC: Well, I thought it was devastating the next morning. My job ended up being in Fort Smith, and the ballots didn't come in until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning—the write-in ballots from south Sebastian County. We were up all night long, hoping that we would win, and we didn't. It was devastating. We were exhausted. We had come so close, and we couldn't believe where we started and how close we were. Truly, Sebastian County—if it had come in, we would have won.

AD: Yes.

PC: So—I don't remember if there were two or three days in between—a few of us went back to Fayetteville to close down the headquarters and to see that we kept track of the names of people, and we started writing thank you notes. There was a real cloud over the headquarters. I mean, we were all sad about the loss. We were very pleased when we found out that Bill Clinton was going to stay in Fayetteville and teach at the law school [at the University of Arkansas] because he would still be around and we could still maintain a connection. I came back to

Little Rock to my job after the race. Then the following year—I spent a lot of time with his mother from that time up until the time—and a lot of time with Hillary and a lot of time with Bill Clinton, right before they married. I really didn't know what the next step [would be], but having seen how well he did and having watched him at the labor convention and having watched him at a women's luncheon at a kids' Little League [baseball] game, I knew that there would be more politics on the horizon. I didn't know what, but I knew—he had just an innate, natural ability to connect with people in a very short period of time and to *remember* those connections—remember not just their names, but the issues—remember where they met—remember who was having a hard time. But it was totally natural to him. He didn't sit down and make notes and put them in his pocket. He would just *connect* with people. I knew that I had not seen a political candidate like that who was so at ease and *loved* what he was doing—absolutely *loved* what he was doing. And it's whipping—I mean, the food is terrible. You don't have a lot of money. It's hot when you're campaigning. He *loved* it, and I knew that it would be very difficult for him to stay just in the classroom. He needed the connections with the people out in the political field, and I knew he would go back into it. I just didn't know where or when.

AD: Did you have the opportunity to work on either the 1976 attorney general or the 1978 gubernatorial campaigns in a similar capacity? Were you able to take off time [from work]?

PC: In 1976, I was working for [then-governor] David Pryor, and [I] worked just on weekends as a volunteer. In 1978, I took off and worked, but I was not traveling.

In 1978, I actually worked two campaigns. I worked the Senate campaign for David Pryor and traveled the district, taking the materials for Bill Clinton—they shared headquarters in many places around the state.

AD: Yes.

PC: I was teaching at UALR, so I would come in at night—I'm remembering back—and teach my night classes, spend the night in Little Rock, go to the Clinton headquarters the next morning, and the Pryor headquarters and pick up materials, and distribute them in the third district going back to Fort Smith, where I was working, again, in the Senate race in 1978.

AD: Wow. [Laughs] It sounds like a busy few months.

PC: It was busy. [Laughs] I thought I was making enough money to pay gasoline and to pay my rent [laughs], and I was spending it all on the road buying new tires and whatever.

AD: Yes.

PC: I worked in the governor's office that first term. I did not work for the governor again until 1992, when he announced for president and I moved to New Hampshire.

AD: Were you surprised when Frank White won in 1980?

PC: I didn't sense it until maybe two or three weeks before the election. I sensed that something was not right, and people involved in the campaign kept saying, "There's something—this 'Cubans and Car Tags' issue—it's really stirring up people in east Arkansas." Because they were never exposed to the issues to begin with, they didn't understand that the car tags [issue] was going to be a perpetual

fund to take care of the highway and road programs in each county. The county judges were all for it because it was going to help their counties, but they didn't want to come out for it because they didn't want to come out for *any* taxation or any kind of change to their car tag program. Right before [the election], I sensed something. When it actually happened, I was as dumbfounded as anyone, and as sad and taken aback. And it didn't really hit for three or four days because I didn't even think of it in terms of "you're not going to have a job." I couldn't believe that all the good that we had done—all the things that people didn't even know anything about—Bill Clinton, in his first year in office, was able to get 8,000 people off the welfare rolls and get them back into jobs. People never knew that. He could look at a budget, and if you said, "All right, I need a million dollars out of here for a capital improvement," he would know [how] that amount withdrawn would affect the entire pie of every budget. He knew it *immediately*. He had such a grasp, but he tried to do too many different things. And, in hindsight—I mean, it was sad when we lost, and I was very, very disappointed—but, in hindsight, I can now see why. And I run into people still who say, "Well, we were just sending him a *message* [by not voting for him for governor]. We had no idea he was really going to *lose*!"

AD: [Laughs]

PC: "We were just trying to say, 'Hey, hey, hey! Don't get too big for your britches. Don't try to do too many things. Try to explain the things . . .'"

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[Beginning of Tape 2, Side 1]

AD: People you were talking to thought [he was] just too ambitious.

PC: I am absolutely convinced that many, many people on both sides of the aisle—Democrats and Republicans—were very sad when they woke up and Bill Clinton had lost because they loved his energy. They knew him. They appreciated his camaraderie. I think there were a lot of people who really thought he was trying to do too much. And I think, in hindsight, the criticism of a very young, youthful staff—I can remember a picture in the newspaper of three fellows, all with moustaches or beards, and young faces. The business community wanted to say, "Now, wait a minute. Wait a minute. Who are these people who are making all these decisions without including us? We don't have one of our 'Old Guard' members on his staff." If you look at the accomplishments of the first two years in office, it's phenomenal, but nobody would *remember* that because Frank White ran a race on two issues. If you talk about just two issues, people will *get* that. And it was the things that divide us again. It was the creating [of] fear in people. I mean, I would listen to some of those commercials and think, "Oh, my gosh! People are going to think that Bill Clinton is trying to bring every person who was let out of a Cuban prison to live in Arkansas," and they never understood that the president of the United States said, "There are two places that these people can go. One of them is in Pennsylvania, and it's snowing. And the other is in Arkansas, where you have Fort Chaffee available, and the weather is more temperate." So there you have it. I do think that people were trying to say, "Wait a minute. We would like a little more input here. We don't want you to be too big for your britches."

AD: Were you surprised that Bill Clinton ran again for governor or, at that time, did you think that there was a possibility that he would leave public life?

PC: Oh, no. I knew he'd run again. I knew he would because I think he was as surprised as the rest of us, I'm sure, at the loss. And hurt by it and confused by it because his heart and intentions *always* are to take care of the people who elected him and to work hard for his state, so I'm sure he woke up and said, "Wait a minute. I was just trying to do *good* things for you and you didn't like what I was doing. What is this? I've got to stop and look at what we did and how we did it." I think [he was] very retrospective. [He] spent two years there really talking to people and really listening and learning. He has always handled adversity well. That's [what has] built his character.

AD: So you weren't surprised when he won in 1982, then?

PC: No. I thought it was going to be a landslide, and I don't actually remember the numbers now, but it was substantial. I can remember that night, we were all very, very pleased—very pleased—because we knew—I mean, he had learned a lot, but, also, Bill Clinton—we *wanted* him to be the governor of our state. He was capable, he was honest, he was smart. Now, you recognize [laughter] that I'm slightly biased here. You understand.

AD: Yes.

PC: I've been befriending and working for this fellow all my life. As nice as Frank White was, and jovial, and had a million funny stories—we had a hard time, those of us who had worked in the campaign, believing that all the things that we had worked on were just going to be forgotten. So we were very glad when Bill

Clinton ran again.

AD: Fast-forwarding ahead about ten years or so—when did you first realize that he was going to run for president of the United States?

PC: I had been hearing rumors in the late 1980s that people around the country were saying, "We hear Bill Clinton may be a candidate," and then he didn't run. I don't even remember when I personally learned—I think it was [around] August of 1991, or right before then—sometime [around then] because I was actually sent to New Hampshire before he announced [by] about three weeks. I was not working in the governor's office then. I had left the political arena and had gone to work in real estate, so I was not in on meetings and wouldn't know when any of those decisions were made. When I found out, it was basically when I was asked to go to work for the 1992 campaign.

AD: What were your initial reactions? Were you doing this primarily as a favor, or did you think that he had a good chance of winning at that time?

PC: Well, I was so excited that he was going to run, it never occurred to me that he was not going to win, but the more we worked in New Hampshire, the more I knew that we could win. I mean, I knew it could happen, and they had never heard of him before. As I watched the campaign progress, and the more notables who began to pay attention to him and the media attention that he began to get, I knew. I thought he was going to win. It never occurred to me not to work as hard as I could. I'm sure there were a lot of people who thought, "Oh! Come on!" In fact, I now remember some family members [laughs] of his—distant cousins, who thought, "Bill Clinton is going to be the president? I don't think you can get

elected president [when you're] from Arkansas." And I'm sure there were a lot of skeptics, but you could see it happening. You could see the interest in his candidacy around the country. And, you remember, he had been president of the National Governors Association. He had roommates in every part of the country. He had Rhodes Scholar connections. He had been very involved in the DLC—the Democratic Leadership Council. All those connections gave [him] little constituencies around the country that he was able to pull together and to motivate to have a ripple effect in their communities. They just went to work, and there was a lot of hard work. But I thought he was going to be elected.

AD: So, again, people in New Hampshire were warming to him despite the fact that there were a number of scandals—or a number of things that came out—I guess that probably would have been in January of 1992.

PC: Well, actually, in New Hampshire you do retail politics. It's like a cottage industry.

AD: Yes.

PC: New Hampshire is very small. It's smaller than Arkansas. It's [around] a million and a half people, or was at that time. Bill Clinton came to the state—probably his first trip after he announced—and began meeting every person in every coffee shop. And my job with others was to help get groups together for him to meet. He was very far along before we ever had any sort of questions about—"Why did he not go into the military?"—before we ever had [the scandal relative to] Gennifer Flowers. He and his staff had built a really good base of political leaders, and some who were not political leaders, but who wanted to be involved

in the campaign—environmentalists, business people, teachers, educators—who liked Bill Clinton and had met him along the way.

AD: It's kind of fortunate, I guess, that New Hampshire ended up falling so early in the process as opposed to a bigger state just because . . .

PC: Because of the style of the politics and the way you could meet the people. At the State Democratic Convention, where, for the first time, all of the Democratic operatives were under one roof at an armory in Manchester, New Hampshire—and most of the people had made decisions of who they were for. You would see a group with their [Senator Tom] Harkin buttons on and another smaller group with [Senator] Jerry Brown and some for [Senator] Bob Kerrey. They were pretty much lining up, but not many of them knew Bill Clinton. [Former Senator] Paul Tsongas was from their state, essentially.

AD: Yes.

PC: It was a bedroom community from Massachusetts to New Hampshire. And he was the favorite son because they knew him. So when I worked in that armory, and all those people had their buttons on and had already made their decisions, then Bill Clinton walked to the stage, and in the shortest amount of time—this is the same thing he did in 1974 in the River Valley Rally, where everybody spoke—even people running for dog-catcher—in a two-minute speech, he had people standing on their feet cheering—standing on chairs. That's the shortest speech he has ever given, because people laugh about how Bill Clinton's speeches are long. In New Hampshire, he gave a speech that—at the end of the speech, people from every different camp were standing in line wanting to take their

buttons off and get a Bill Clinton button. That was a pivotal moment in the campaign. I had never seen anything like the demonstration by the Tsongas campaign because they brought busloads of students from a lot of the colleges in Massachusetts, and I didn't know that. I thought those people were from New Hampshire, who were parading through with green and white balloons and signs and very classy literature and very vocal and huge demonstrations outside. The advance person for Tsongas came over to me and said, "You are handling the Clinton campaign." I said, "Well, right now, until a director is hired." And he said, "You look surprised. I've been watching you. You look surprised at our very vocal demonstrations." I said, "I've never seen anything like it, frankly." [Laughs] And he just patted me on the back and said, "You all will be there soon. We've been here for over a year, and I brought all these people from the colleges and bused them up here."

AD: [Laughs]

PC: So I felt a little better in that it was a completely advanced—it was a performance, and it was very effective. To me, it was scary [laughs] and staggering, but because this fellow—and we became friends during the campaign. We would just see each other at different rallies and wave—and it did happen for Bill Clinton in New Hampshire. The demonstrations *were* as visible as those for Paul Tsongas, but it took a lot of work to get to that point. The good news was that state *was* early, and it was—actually, they voted in February, where they now vote in January.

AD: Yes.

PC: I worked in a race up there recently, and it is very tough when you realize that you have such a short time before the election. But we had until February 20, or something like that, so beginning in September until February, you could meet every person in the state and you could find out what—they wanted an answer on *every single issue,* and their issues would be things that you've never heard of. They're very politically active. They don't believe in taxes, and they're environmentalists. They wanted to know how [he was] going to vote on every single bill that was before Congress at the time. We provided them specific answers on every single issue. And that's hard to fight when you have somebody who is a Bill Clinton, who's a natural politician, and who is as smart as he is and could discuss those issues and knew about them. He'd stay up half the night researching them because that's the way he operates. I can remember when he was going to be governor of the state, he wanted to know *every single thing* about the death penalty. I was going to his mother's house, and in the den the sofa was covered with books about the death penalty. On the floor they were stacked up, for and against. Is the Death Penalty a Deterrent? Pros and cons. And I said, "What are you doing?" And he was reading *every one of them* because he wanted to understand both issues and know about it. That was an issue that came up again in New Hampshire. We had somebody leave the campaign, a young fellow, because Bill Clinton had to come home as governor and carry out the law that was the law in our state at the time. And that was a *very* tough time on Bill Clinton, but his campaign stayed together because people knew—they were meeting him. He was in their homes. He would sit down and discuss issues. He had been in

every coffee shop in Manchester and Portsmouth and Keene, and, you know, he had never missed a one. You've read that he stopped at every Dunkin Donut [shop].

AD: Yes.

PC: And it's *true*. I've never seen as many Dunkin Donuts in a state. [Laughter] But it was the same way he ran his 1974 campaign. He started from scratch in 1974, when no one knew him. He did the very same thing in New Hampshire in 1992. The states were similar sizes. There were similar tourism industries. The towns were similar sizes, so he could go and work an entire town, and go to the next one and go to the next one and go to the next one, and meet *all* the leaders in the state. He had a very energetic group of people who helped him in New Hampshire.

AD: So despite the geographic disadvantage that he had to Paul Tsongas, if you take that out of the equation, it really is the perfect state.

PC: Right. Right. And for him to win—the night of the election, the actual numbers came in and Paul Tsongas was slightly ahead, but it was a win for us because all the other candidates, then—it gave us name recognition. People said, "Now, wait a minute. He did well on the straw poll in Florida and he *won* New Hampshire that was a real primary. It was not a caucus, it was a primary. Okay. Well, we're going to have to start paying attention," and then it happened nationwide as a result. So New Hampshire was *really* important. He fought off a lot of the scandals and the dirty trick campaigns that were happening—it was easier to do from New Hampshire because those people felt like they'd stuck with him and labeled him "the comeback kid," and they feel as connected to Bill Clinton as

Arkansas. All through the years of his presidency, he would constantly go back to New Hampshire, and he would have New Hampshire friends come to the White House. The two anchors of Arkansas and New Hampshire have been like home places for him. Bill Clinton could be elected hands down in New Hampshire today. They *love* him. I've been there recently, and people say, "We just need Bill Clinton back! If we just had Bill Clinton back!" [PC speaks with a desperate-sounding tone of voice]. [Laughs] "If we could change the law so he could run for president again."

AD: What did you do during the rest of the campaign, after New Hampshire?

PC: A lot of different things. [Laughs] I went to Colorado and helped close down their campaign after they voted to get all the figures and books and everything together to box up and bring back to Little Rock to the main headquarters. And closed down the staff and made sure that every person was paid, and that whatever factions were not getting along with whatever factions—that we mended that before we left the state. [I] connected with a lot of his political people around the state to let them know that we were closing the main headquarters in Denver [Colorado], and here's where all the files would be and all the records would be and all the thank you notes would be, and that kind of thing. We closed down Denver, then went to—I was in Mississippi [and] Tennessee working at several different headquarters, but then I finally came back to Little Rock and helped pull information from the 1974 campaign so that we would have it because I had all the records and whatever, and was one of the few people who had been there in the whole 1974 race. So I just was available for questions and continuity in

helping in the research department. Then I worked in the debates and went to the three presidential debates in East Lansing [Michigan], St. Louis [Missouri], and Richmond [Virginia], and basically worked with the people who came from the other states to speak for Bill Clinton. I would meet with the governors and help them find where they were to be—just doing advance work, primarily.

AD: It sounds like a busy—I guess it would be fifteen or sixteen months.

PC: I don't know. It was the longest fifteen or sixteen months [laughter] of my life. Fortunately, I have a very supportive and caring husband [laughter] who allowed me to live such a bizarre life during that time.

AD: What was it like to have a childhood friend of yours elected president of the United States? It's not an experience that most people have.

PC: Well, actually, it never occurred to me to be stunned or astonished or awed or anything *during* the campaign because we were working and working. And catching airplanes and trains and rides, and trying to find houses to stay in, and you never thought about it. But at the [National] Democratic Convention, where he received the nomination, it was *choking*! I mean, even thinking about it now makes me choke because I was standing in a skybox looking down at this sea of humanity from every state, and they all had Bill Clinton shirts on or hats on or tags on, and *every person—every person in this room*—I mean *every*—I would look in every corner. They were all *for* my friend, Bill Clinton. They all knew him. All those people. They were all going to cast their ballots for Bill Clinton.

AD: Which is a real move from that New Hampshire you were talking about earlier.

PC: That was a moment that was—I was *stunned* and speechless and flabbergasted.

And it was *extremely* emotional because I kept thinking—I was standing by myself in this huge group of people, and most of them I didn't know. I was standing there thinking, "Can you believe that tonight the person I went to the first and second grade with is going to walk up on that stage and he is going to receive the nomination for *president of the United States*? And all these people from all these states are voting for him, and they all know him, and they all think he should be president, too." That was just—talk about *magical*! All the hotel lobbies I would walk through all up and down the streets of New York, people were supporting Bill Clinton. I kept going, "It's *my* Bill Clinton. It's my *friend*, Bill Clinton." [Laughter] And I kept thinking, "He really *is* going to be the president of the United States." That was moving, and probably more moving to me than the inauguration, which was an experience that—I wish everyone had a childhood friend [laughter] who put their hand on the Bible and raised their hand. It's very touching. But the night of the nomination, when I really realized that it was going to happen—and you realized all the work that *you* had been involved in for so many years, and that all these other people had done similar work—we had come together as a country. We had come together for a candidate and an agenda that made so much sense because Bill Clinton—I don't think there's a prejudiced bone in his body. He was bringing people together. He was bringing people who had never worked together, together. That was a really special thing, so you *knew* we were at a moment in time that some really good things were going to happen because we were going to discuss all the things that all of us cared about, rather than all the things that divided us. It was really going to happen. So that was a

really, really good time. The first time I met him in the White House, he looked like the president. I mean, he *was* the president. He became the president. He was taller. He was no longer—you know, when he was a kid, he was Billy Clinton. You may have heard that before.

AD: Yes.

PC: He grew up. We all called him Billy Clinton, and it was really hard to switch to Bill Clinton. I had to switch to Attorney General and to Governor Clinton, and refer to him that way, and the first time I saw him physically in the White House, walking down the hall, he was no longer Billy Clinton, he was President Clinton. And he has been President Clinton to me ever since.

AD: Obviously, there are a lot of people who have very strong positive feelings for President Clinton, but there are some people who have a huge amount of animosity toward him. How do you end up justifying to yourself the views of those people in terms of looking at that? What do you think is the source of that dislike? There's a group of people out there who have a very visceral dislike of him.

PC: Well, they're misguided, A. [Laughter] And, B, they've never met Bill Clinton. And, C, if you put them in the room with Bill Clinton and let them visit with him about what it is that they don't like about him, in no time they would say, "Oh, my gosh! I don't even know why I behaved that way." I think every political figure or every famous figure—every person that we'd see in the newspapers or on the television or whatever—I think about a 25% of people just don't like him for whatever reason.

AD: Yes.

PC: They'll just say, "We just don't like that guy." And you'll say, "Well, why is it?" "Well, I don't know. I just don't like him." And that's it. If you keep hammering away, [they'll say,] "Well, he's left-handed," or, "I don't like the way he combs his hair," or, "His nose is too big," or, "His features are too long," or, "He married that woman from Chicago," or, "His mother was married several times," or, "His wife's skirts are too long," or, "He didn't grow up wealthy," or, "He never worked in a business. He never was a banker." If you pin them down, they may be able to articulate personally why they don't like him.

AD: Yes.

PC: Just assume that 25% of the people don't like you because they don't like you, and part of it is something they don't like in themselves, or that they're jealous that you have done well and you are young, or they just assume that "you are too young to know anything and that you have never had to suffer, so you don't know anything about my life." If any of those people meets Bill Clinton or [is] in a small enough group that they can really answer questions and visit with him, they will find out that he knows more about them and their lives than they knew. They will find out that he has voted, cared, drafted legislation, spent a lifetime trying to help those people. They would find that out if they knew it. But I think one of the reasons for this hatred—and, you know, he is polarizing because the people who don't like him, a lot of them are well-funded. A lot of them are behind the scenes well-funded, and orchestrate very carefully—if you have radio programs telling you every day that the guy has horns and a long tail, and you have

television commercials telling you that this is a bad guy, and then you have people going into the pulpits in very fundamentalist churches telling you, "This is a bad guy." If all of that is happening at the same time, it becomes a powerful force, and the people who hate Bill Clinton have often orchestrated a force that they continue to stir up. I think some of it is the whole race issue. I think there are many people who really—they don't like the fact that Bill Clinton opens his arms to be inclusive. They don't like the fact that Bill Clinton wanted his cabinet to look like America. They don't like that because they don't live lives like that. They're not inclusive, and they're very biased and they just don't understand his friendship with so many different factions in our country. So there are a lot of reasons for this animosity. Some of it is carefully orchestrated. Some of it is people's own personal bias.

[End of Tape 2, Side 1]

[Beginning of Tape 2, Side 2]

PC: . . . toward a small from a large state and the fact that Bill Clinton was not a Texan or a New Yorker or a Californian.

AD: And I guess especially a small Southern state probably exacerbates that.

PC: Right. Absolutely. Absolutely. I think that there were so many people who tried to say, "Democrats only stand for X and X," and they try to polarize and build up hatred just on the hot-button issues, rather than to look or care about the common good. So all of those things have probably built up another percentage of people who for some reason or another have animosity toward Bill Clinton. If you look at his travels around the world, though, the way the people in Ireland—look at the

reception he gets all over the planet. It's very, very positive. They think he's one of the smartest, brightest, most fascinating political figures they have ever seen. That response has always been there—all the time he ran for office, all the time he was in office, and now. He could be elected in any of those countries. If you are traveling and tell people that you are from Arkansas and you know Bill Clinton, they think you are really important [laughs] because they adore Bill Clinton. It's coming around in this country. I think history will be very kind, and I think people will recognize we were not in a war. We did not have any missiles pointed at us. We balanced the budget and left a huge surplus, and focused on educating our folks, and tried to deal and wrestle with the big, old grizzly bear of health care. You know, it may not have happened, but he was willing to take it on. I think there will be a lot of good things that will be reflected. I think people are surprised when they find out how many things he actually accomplished in those years that affected the way they live every single day. I just think that the people who don't like him are misinformed or misguided. Period.

AD: I'm trying to think if there's anything else that we need to touch on. We've gone over a lot of ground. Are there any stories, or is there anything that you'd like to add that we've not discussed?

PC: I don't know. Bill Clinton is such a big subject. You could talk about Bill Clinton for years to come. I think it is admirable that this human being who cared so much about his family—adored his mother, adored his brother, Roger—has been so loyal to all of his friends for a lifetime. Friends who, you know [laughs], there's no reason for him to remember and care about—he has a lot on his plate. I

mean, he's trying to take care of the tsunami relief and AIDS [Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome] in the world. But he has always been very loyal. He creates a lot of loyalty among his friends. I've worked in races where the political candidate—I looked around for his childhood buddies, I looked around for his college roommates, and they were not there. Those people have always been around Bill Clinton.

AD: That's kind of interesting—going back to the group of people who seem to have the most animosity towards him, you hear the *very* unflattering nickname, Slick Willy, the idea that all of this is an act or a pretense.

PC: No one could act or pretend for fifty-five years that they're interested in you or care about your life or want you to come and see them or drop them cards. You can't do that. No one has the ability to do that unless it's real. The people who have helped him along the way are people he will never forget, and there are people that you and I don't know. There are people who—in 1974, I remember a fellow who couldn't get his black lung benefits and he was working in a coal mine in northwest Arkansas. Bill Clinton was not even elected to Congress that year. He had no—he was a *professor*. He spent the next two years working to make sure that that fellow got the compensation that he deserved and helped him deal with the bureaucratic network to get his checks delivered on time. There are stories like that all over the country. He called me five or six years ago and said, "I met a woman I was sitting by in a convention in"—Arizona or someplace, and he said, "She and her family are moving to Arkansas and they don't know anyone, and she just lost her husband. Will you help her? Will you help her find a place

to live? Will you help her get acclimated in the community and meet some people?" This is a person who was not even running for office. He just heard her story and wanted to connect with somebody who he thought could help her. This is the way he behaves. It is real. It is true. It is *exhausting* because sometimes you want to say, "Wait, Bill. You can't take on everyone's life. You can't wake up every day and take care of all of your childhood friends and all their problems and all their families' problems, and your college friends, and your former schoolteachers, and then get jobs for people who used to work—you can't take it all on." Bill Clinton thinks it's important, and if he can't do it, he passes it on to somebody on his staff to take care of because he thinks it's important. And he remembers it and then follows up. In weeks to come, he'll ask that staff person, "Did you call so-and-so? Did you take care of so-and-so? I want feedback." And that's real. You know, the people who call him Slick Willy think that his speeches are too good and that he couldn't possibly write them himself. Well, he writes them on *napkins*. As he became president, of course, he had to write—because you have to give them out.

AD: [Laughs] Yes.

PC: As he was running for office, you never had to give the total speech. Somebody could tape it and go transcribe it. But he would write them on the back of a note card or just an outline. But there would be people who would resent that, and say, "Nobody can be that good. He can't get up and give that—how can he be that smart and be a good speaker? How can that happen? And how can he have this many friends. Are they really his friends?" They are all *really* his friends

because the people that you've interviewed—you can go out in some of the rural areas of Arkansas and meet people who'll say, "Oh, my gosh! He always stops in here. Every time he comes through he stops here because he likes our"—whatever, or, "He always wants to ask about my kids and how they're doing in school." This is who he is. Now, you don't want to ask him *too much* about history or legislation or elections because he will tell you. He'll go all the way back to the 1600s, and if you're not prepared for it, you'll be there all day long. [Laughter] And if you ask him about a writer, "Now, who was he and what state was he from?" And he'll tell you the entire history of this individual because he reads *everything*. He reads fiction. He has mysteries stacked up. All the while, he's reading economics and political science, and he reads it all. He has what I think is as close to a photographic memory of anyone I've known. And he can work the *New York Times* crossword puzzle in ink while he's talking on the phone to you, while he is signing papers that is [ ]. He can multitask, and never misses a beat. He's like another wonder of the world. [Laughter] That's what we have here.

AD: Is there anything else that we've not touched on? Is there anything else you'd like to add as closing thoughts?

PC: Andrew, I don't know.

AD: I know we've talked about a lot of things.

PC: Well, and I haven't thought about it. I have actually had the two busiest days that I've had in a month, yesterday and the day before, and I honestly did not even think about an order or any of the things that I wanted to add or say. I'll think

about it, and if I think of something, I'll let you know. I have *loved* the journey, and I have loved being a little part of the Bill Clinton—from Hot Springs, Arkansas, to the White House. I learned a lot, and I have absolutely no regrets about the person that I worked for and the person that I cared about and the person that the country obviously cared about when he was elected. It has been special. I think he has a lot to offer. He is very young, so I think Bill Clinton will always be a part of the national and international political scene because this is who he is. He wants to contribute, and he will. He has a lot of energy. He has always had a lot of energy.

AD: Well, thank you for your time.

PC: Thank you.

[End of Interview]

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