William Jefferson Clinton History Project

Interview with

Carolyn Yeldell Staley
McLean, Virginia
2 October 2004

Interviewer: Andrew Dowdle

Andrew Dowdle: It is Saturday, October 2, 2004. My name is Andrew Dowdle and I am in McLean, Virginia, with Carolyn Staley. Could you please spell your last name?

Carolyn Staley: S-T-A-L-E-Y. My maiden name, for the record, is Y-E-L-D-E-L-L, and that is to differentiate me from the Pulaski County Clerk, Carolyn Staley, so that there is no confusion. Thank you.

AD: When were you born?

CS: I was born on September 7, 1946.

AD: In Hot Springs?

CS: In Owensboro, Kentucky.

AD: In Owensboro, Kentucky. I didn't know that. Who were your parents?

CS: My father is Walter Yeldell. He is an Arkansas native—grew up around Crossett Hamburg, Portland, Arkansas—down in southeast Arkansas. My mother is Emma Catherine Boswell Yeldell. She is from Owensboro, Kentucky. My father went from Ouachita Baptist University to graduate school at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and was a weekend pastor at a number of churches. One of them [was] at Yellow Creek, just outside Owensboro—actually, also the home church of Senator Wendell Ford. My mother was in the choir and they met there.

Kentucky and Arkansas mixed, and I was born there.

AD: When did your family move, in your father's case, back to Arkansas?

CS: Well, it would have been in 1952, I suppose. I was about—well, no, earlier than that, actually. I started first grade there. We moved nine months after I was born. My father accepted the pastorate to First Baptist Church [in] Clarksville. So in 1947 we would have moved to Clarksville, Arkansas.

AD: When did you move back to Hot Springs?

CS: We moved from Clarksville to West Memphis, Arkansas. We lived there for seven years. Then in 1961 we moved to Hot Springs, where my father was pastor of Second Baptist Church.

AD: What was your impression of Hot Springs when you moved there?

CS: I thought it was a beautiful city. I was fifteen. I moved kicking and screaming because I was entering high school and I had already been eager to—and been involved in student government in junior high, trying to be a leader and called to public service at a young age. I knew I wanted to do that sort of thing, so I was not really happy with moving. But I wasn't a rebellious child. I knew I needed to go where my father's church was. We immediately started having lots of guests from our former pastorates and family. We spent a lot of time touring the gorgeous lakes, mountains and vistas of Hot Springs, and I quickly came to see what a rich and lush place it was to live. It was a marriage of a European community that felt very European to me—certainly very cosmopolitan. I think European because I heard a lot of German-American accents. I heard a lot of

New Yorkers and Chicagoans who would come to Hot Springs during the racing season, or who would come to take baths. I could go to the Arlington Hotel after high school and just walk from the school across the promenade and feel very urban and very cultivated—to go into the Arlington and walk around the porch, and maybe sit and do my homework there and hear people speaking in very different dialects. I could order fancy food and see unusual things. I just thought it was quite interesting and wonderful to be able to be in that part of Hot Springs with the people and the beauty, then to go back home to South Hot Springs, which is where I lived and where our church was. It was a rich place. I was so pleased there was an arts center with the regularly changing exhibits. There was a community concert series that would bring in dance, orchestra, and fine soloists. Our high school choir had 350 members and was the top rated in the state. It was led by a New Yorker who had been an opera singer and was wonderfully trained and really knew the voice. Our band was top ranked in the state. Our teachers in the school were really professional scholars and took their teaching jobs very, very seriously. There was a respectfulness. It was just a rich, wonderful place.

AD: A lot of people talk about this. It almost seems like the idyllic version of the 1950s that you hear about.

CS: I suppose that's true. I was really pleased. It never occurred to me that Arkansas wasn't the top of the rock. I didn't have any sense of it being backward, rural, "Hicksville," any of that. Certainly, that was because I had also lived in West Memphis—just across from Memphis, [Tennessee], and had heard Van Cliburn

play and the Tchaikovsky competition. I just thought I—I had heard opera. It never occurred to me that I was getting anything less than any young person in America was getting. It felt good to be an Arkansan and to enjoy a nice quality of life.

AD: What was the racial atmosphere like in Hot Springs, especially compared to other parts of the state where you lived?

CS: We were in a segregated high school. Orval Faubus had been governor. We knew that Arkansas had really taken it on the chin during the [1957] integration [crisis] of [Little Rock] Central High School. I recall when my father was president of the Arkansas Baptist Convention and when we drove to San Francisco for the big Southern Baptist Convention—we were still affiliated with Southern Baptists, but [no] longer are. When we went there, my father would park the car backwards—back it in—so no one would see our Arkansas tags. We were afraid about egging and vandalism by people who didn't think very highly of our state. I remember that was a real wake-up. I knew that there were—I never heard *any* racial slurs. It was more just the state of the society in which we lived and grew up. There was not an overt, negative attitude toward people of other races. It was just accepted, "This is the world we live in." There was little discussion about it at the outset as we moved toward the mid-1960s. There was more and more discussion of integrating churches. I have very rich memories of when my father's congregation took up the issue of whether or not to seat blacks if they came to worship. I guess this could have been around 1962 or 1963. I

don't remember, but it was when I was in high school from 1961 to 1964. They decided not to seat blacks. They voted to that extent. The prevailing thinking was, "If they were coming to worship, that would be one thing, but this is a civil rights demonstration, and it's not in the true experience in to share worship experience, so we don't want to have our service disrupted." I remember standing—we had been taught to speak our minds in school and Virginia Clinton Kelley encouraged—our families had had discussions about "be a part of civil society." I remember sitting in that business meeting, and I raised my hand to speak. I said, "I just think it's wrong to close the doors of the church to *anyone* for *any* reason unless there's overt violence or disruptions. But if people wanted to come into our church, how could you, in the name of *Jesus*, or the God that all we worship—how could you deny someone entrance into your church?" I remember my father just smiled [and] said, "Thank you very much." He seemed proud of me, and he knew I was speaking [the] truth. In later years—I mean, I was—I was outvoted. My point of view didn't carry the day, but at least as a teenager. When I think back on that, I had the sense that something wrong was happening here, and we needed to try to be different about it. There was—I think our high school crowd knew that—at least the friends that I kept close contact with—felt integration was right, that leveling the educational opportunities, business opportunities, living opportunities was the right to do. We needed to get with it and move on.

AD: When was the first time you met President [Bill] Clinton that you can recall?

CS: I remember, first of all, hearing his name. I had moved to Hot Springs at age fifteen entering the tenth grade. Hot Springs High School was grades ten, eleven, and twelve. I was having to start all over at a very pivotal time, I felt, being as dramatic as I am. [Laughs] It was a very pivotal time in my life. [I] had friends of a lifetime, I thought, in West Memphis, and had enjoyed being in Memphis a lot, and I really didn't know much about other parts of the state except for Clarksville and the Ozarks. It was a shock. I knew I wanted to be involved in student leadership and in music, so I had to get really busy that summer in meeting friends and finding out, "Who are the leaders? Who are the people—friends I want to know? Who are the musicians?" Both in terms of student leadership and conducting my own little unscientific poll, and asking around, "Who I should know? Who would I share interests with? Who should be my friends?" It can take a while to make friends. I heard Bill Clinton's name mentioned both as a musician and as someone interested in student government. I hadn't met him because we went to different churches. He was a Baptist, too, but at that time he was living on Park Avenue in Hot Springs. A new house was being built next door to mine. A man in our church, Kay White, was the contractor and was building it. I would go in there—it was one of those "all-electric, live better electrically" homes. It had sunken tubs, a vacuum system installed in the house—just the latest modern developments in that nice ranch house. I would walk through and say, "Wow, this is pretty fancy, and I wonder who's going to live here." One day, I was about to go into geometry class. I saw

Bill in the hallway. We hadn't been introduced. I had already been chosen as the accompanist for all the choral programs, and he must have heard me play at some point. This was midway through our sophomore year. I was at the water fountain, and he was talking to another friend. He raised the tone of his voice—raised the volume and said, "And *she's* going to be my next door neighbor." That was the first thing he ever said to me, and it was even obliquely to me—it was *indirectly* spoken to me. He raised the volume of his voice so I could hear him. I remember looking at him and smiling. I don't remember that we were formally introduced. There wasn't this formal introduction type of thing. It was the first time he acknowledged that I existed, and I knew that he knew I existed, and I was happy about that. So they moved in next to us, and I found out later that that was because Virginia had learned that they didn't own their home, and she was very distressed about that. She felt her marriage was not going to make it, and bought this house and had moved her sons and herself there. This was nothing I knew about until after I had started reading Bill's book or other biographies. That's interesting to me—we can come back to that—but we just didn't talk about family problems. It wasn't that kind of "I'm okay, you're okay" arm-chair psychology sort of society. Everybody assumed that when we got together as friends, we left whatever was going on at home *there*. We just enjoyed life as teenagers. We didn't use our time sitting and moping and worrying about what was going on at home—in *anybody's* home. When we went into each others' homes we were very welcome, warmly received, and had a great time. Whatever was going on kind of

moved off the front burner when friends came in. I remember [him] saying to me—after he moved next door, he asked if I would be his accompanist for the saxophone solos that he would be playing in all-state band and competitions. There was a solo and an ensemble strand to those competitions, and he asked if I'd play. It made sense because I was right next door, and he knew I was pianist. I was glad about that. Later, he asked if I wanted to car pool to school. Just the two of us were riding together. I gave him $2 a week for gas. I remember we both ran for a lot of the same kinds of things. We wrote essays. We entered competitions. It turned out that we had a variety of common interests in our lives, so it was a great friendship.

AD: As you got to know him better over the course of high school, were there any things that were different or surprised you as opposed to your first impressions?

CS: Everything I had heard about him bore out to be true, and then some. It only got better. What I learned about him only improved. I found that he was very mature, very adult. He was truly a young man. He was responsible for Roger, his younger brother, a lot of times. He was driving. He had responsibilities at home as a driver for the family, running errands. He was very serious about school. He was competitive without being over the line. It was simmering right under the surface. He wanted to be the best at everything he did. I was shocked when I found out that he was driving to Fayetteville from Hot Springs to go to band camp, or driving to—he was trusted with more responsibilities than most kids his age. His mother was working. Not many of our mothers were working. She was

up and off to surgery earlier than Bill and Roger left for school, so he had responsibilities there. I just remember that he seemed very mature to me, driven, and respected. His stature—he had attained his height, and was truly a young man.

AD: You had mentioned that shared interest in student politics. When you were working with him in student organizations, what types of activities did you do? What was your impression of him as a student leader?

CS: He was, first of all, the person everyone nominated right off the bat for president of whatever it was. Why is that? Whether it was science club, chemistry club, math club, student council, student body president—he was band president. He was nominated for student council. He was just the instinctive, natural person that students immediately thought of as a leader.

AD: Do you think that's because of charisma—hard work in the sense of responsibility?

CS: All of that. I think he showed early interest in leadership. He was smart. He was dependable. We took all these jobs seriously, whether it was decorating for prom or trying to plan a year of student activities. We rolled up our sleeves and took it seriously. He was all work and all business, and he had a great time, too. He was a naturally charismatic young man and showed leadership skills at an early age. Plus, I will say, Johnnie May Mackey, our high school principal—the first woman principal for forty years or so at Hot Springs High School—really had—not only was she an excellent principal and manager, she was a leadership development

expert. She was very active in the American Legion Auxiliary, and her husband had been a World War II veteran, so the themes of patriotism, love of country—public service, as statesmanship, not politics, nothing cheapening—it was always—this was always alongside medicine, the ministry, teaching, getting involved and serv[ing] your nation. Teaching us respect for the flag. We had Flag Day assemblies. She would bark at us saying. "When that flag goes by you, stand up." And she taught us that our nation deserved our very, very, best. We had that kind of tenor to our high school life. It was very, very respectful. We took it all very seriously. He stepped right up. She seemed to sort of tap—when [she] saw an interest—if someone stepped up [and] said, "I want to run for student council," or, "I want to run for class office," she watched that. She saw—"We've got a young leader. Let me do all I can to encourage." So he had the benefit. We all had the benefit her guidance, too.

AD: A number of people I've talked to have said that even from an early age he had a much easier relationship with adults than with children, and was very able to interact with them on a more equal basis than you would typically expect. What was his relationship like with his teachers and, as you mentioned, with the principal?

CS: Just one of tremendous respect. There was a friendship. They respected him, too. They respected the students who earned respect. There was a seriousness about school, and he did his best. He was always prepared. He loved learning and, of course, every teacher wants that kind of student. I think Virginia, also, was

critical in this in that she treated him as an adult—had adult discussions with us as young people. She helped us think about what was going on in our community that was right or wrong, or that was a problem. She urged us to think about how to make it better. We weren't treated as children. We were asked to step up and take adult responsibilities, and we were treated as young adults.

AD: We talked a little before the interview about President Clinton's experience at Boys Nation and Boys State. Could you elaborate on that experience—what you talked with him about and your observations?

CS: Sure. Boys State and Girls State were run by the American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary, and are still in place. My son and daughters went. It was an honor to be selected to go to Boys State or Girls State. The first step was teachers nominated—it was a leadership incubation and kind of a lab experience. Boys State and Girls State was an opportunity to go and experience local government for a week in the summer. They had elections for mayor, city council, then county politics and state politics with a combination of the election of the governor and two senators to go to Washington [DC], to see the Boys Nation and the Girls Nation. The weeks were held at separate times, so it was not a co-ed experience. There was a little drama around, and a little crossing of fingers among students as it came time to announce who had been nominated for Girls State and Boys State. You had to have, I believe, a certain GPA [grade point average], and have demonstrated an interest in leadership. It was a big honor to be elected to go, or to be selected by your teachers to go. They were run a little

differently, and I'm not an expert on how Boys State runs. I think Bill ran for governor, if I recall reading or understanding from him. I think they actually ran for Boys Nation there. At Girls State, the counselors nominated or selected those who would go to Girls Nation. I had run for governor. It was interesting. Students came to me. The girls who were going to Girls State came to me and said, "We want to run you as governor." And I'm sure that something like that happened for Bill. Boys were different. Boys State was different. David Zorub, who was a year ahead of us, was, I believe, a Lebanese-American living [there] and going to Hot Springs High School, and had been elected governor of Boys State. I think Bill had observed not only his student leadership, but that it was pretty prestigious and fun to be governor of Boys State. You could meet people from all over the state, speak at a lot of places, and go back the next year and serve as governor for the younger class that was coming in as Boys State people. Anyway, I'm sure Bill wanted to run. As a young leader, it makes sense. I think somewhere in there, or maybe after that, he was selected statewide leader of the DeMolays, the boys' equivalent of the Masons. He had been top in the state in saxophone—first chair in all-state band, so he was already making a statewide name for himself and making friends all over the state. His penchant for meeting people and remembering people and being popular statewide was well known. We were both elected early. He was first selected to Boys Nation, then a couple weeks later I went to Girls State and was selected to Girls Nation. What a thrill, for only four young people from our state—two boys and two girls—to be elected

to Girls and Boys Nation—for two of us be next-door neighbors was quite special. We knew we were going to get to go to Washington to meet the president. That was sort of the big event. I know that when we both came back from Washington, for some funny reason, we didn't spend a whole lot of time basking in that the way it may have been thought we would have. It was a quiet sort of respectful sense of, "Wow!" We felt so, so fortunate to be ushered into the back halls of Congress and the White House, and Capitol Hill. We rode the Senate and House elevators. We spent the day with elected officials. "We really were encouraged," was the sort of subliminal message to "please come back and do this. We're expecting you will be our future leaders, so we want to show you a day in the life of Senator Everett Dirkson," who I shadowed. I don't know who Bill shadowed. But it was remarkable. Then to meet [President John Fitzgerald] Kennedy, who was a Democrat. who was young and who was bright, who was idealistic and was such a hero. To get to meet him really was—if you ever had a question in your mind, "Am I going to run for office and am I interested in this?" that put it right over the edge to have that honor to meet him. As we came back from Boys and Girls Nation we were asked to make speeches all over the state, and I did see in Bill that there was a genuine firming up of his desire to lead in some way, whether it was in elected office—we weren't sure what role or how it was going to shape up. It was quite remarkable. In an unstated way it put him over the edge, I think, into saying, "Yes, this is something I'd really like to do."

AD: Do you think that had a big effect on his decision to attend Georgetown

[University, Washington DC]?

CS: I do, because he was there on campus. As I recall, Boys State was held at Georgetown on campus, so that was—I'm not sure how many campuses he had visited out of Arkansas. He had been to the University [of Arkansas, Fayetteville], band camp and other places throughout the state. Anyway, I'm sure it's a beautiful campus. It has a wonderful reputation. It is [in] the nation's capital, and had a stellar foreign-service program. I feel sure that it played a role. I remember he and I were in physics class together in our senior year, and it was just across the hall from Mrs. Irons—Edith Irons, our guidance counselor. I had gone in—I just *worshiped* Bill. We weren't just chatty and giddy. We were very serous about our work and our piano and sax. I just had a huge respect for him, and I saw in Mrs. Irons' office a Georgetown catalog. I took it, willfully. Bill sat behind me, over one row, and I put it under my chair on top of my books, in clear view, hoping it would spark some interest. So I played a little role in that. Georgetown was the only school he applied to. He said, "Let me see that." [whispering] He grabbed it. "Let me see that." He was just very hopeful that he would be accepted there. And he was.

AD: Is there anything else you would like to add about your high school years?

CS: I continued to marvel at the respect for learning that our teachers demonstrated and a lot of our classmates demonstrated. The high academic respect for standards, the remarkable arts programs. We really were in a golden age of both the teaching profession and student interests and in doing well in school. We had

many students who were really driven to do their very best in math, science, Latin, literature. I'm more and more grateful, as I think about it, how great that was. Then to have people like Mrs. Mackey leading us toward leadership and increasing our vision about, "This is *your* world. *You're* the next leadership."

AD: Do you think that you and the other people in your group recognized that—even [on] an intuitive level at that time—in terms of the opportunities you had compared to some of the other schools in the state, or was that something that was after you left, before you had that realization?

CS: I think, for me, it was after. I remember Bill coming home from Georgetown, and we would start having group friendship—we got together all the time with friends. It was like a daily routine—whose house we were going to be at. Then it was just sitting around talking. I don't remember so many movies, but sitting and talking about what we were doing and what was on our minds. I remember Bill—Bill was always center stage. He did have a healthy ego, but was always practicing—that's how I looked at him—practicing talking about issues. That's why, when I'd see his press conferences or see him on talk shows or any venue today, I recognize that was the same guy. Those talents were there already in high school and in college. I remember him saying about school and how Arkansas schools stacked up—he said, "I've made a discovery. Something has dawned on me that babies are born the same everywhere. New York, Chicago, Hot Springs, Arkansas, San Francisco, or wherever. But it's what happens to us as youngsters and, particularly, education plays an awfully large role in our

development and our future." I've decided it must have dawned on him as he had met student from all over the world, from [the] east coast and the west coast who had, perhaps, more opportunities, more extracurricular [activities], more AP [Advanced Placement] courses. We had a few advanced—I don't remember. We had advanced American History and advanced courses, but not a lot. There was an Honors English section, but that was kind of—maybe it was just—I don't know how American education—was it just starting? That kind of AP testing in about the mid-1960s?

AD: Probably so, about that time.

CS: When he came home from Georgetown, he had discovered that there were students who'd had more opportunities than he had. He saw education as the great leveler, and was already saying, "If I do run for office and I'm able to make a difference, I want education to be the top priority." And it was.

AD: Where did you attend university after you graduated?

CS: Well, my dad was on the board at Ouachita Baptist University, [Arkadelphia, Arkansas]. Although I was accepted and wanted to go to Baylor [University, Waco, Texas]—I had a music scholarship there—I never felt really that was strongly supported by my family. I was the first—the oldest sibling. I went to Ouachita for three years, then transferred—got a wonderful education there, then wound up testing out of all my pre-certifications where I would be. When I went to Indiana University [Bloomington], which is probably the finest public school in America for music education, I was so pleased that I was—I was able to get a

teaching assistantship and all those things based on what I got at Ouachita. For me it [Ouachita] was so small, and I just wanted to hear more live performances. I wanted more competition. I wanted to be a concert pianist or [a] concert singer, and I just needed to go away and get a bigger school. I went three years to Ouachita, then got my Bachelor's and Master's [Degrees]—I wound up in voice—I had a double major in voice and piano, but had to make a choice. Voice was newer to me, and I loved that, so I finished my Master's at Indiana University in 1972.

AD: You had mentioned something about a trip to Philadelphia in 1968 with a side trip to Washington [DC].

CS: Right. During college, Bill and I stayed in touch. Of course, our homes were still next door neighbors. It was fun to see him when he came home—hiding in closets with other friends, surprising him when he got off the plane when his mother brought him home from Georgetown. We just couldn't *wait* to see each other, and stayed in touch a bunch. When I told him I was going to Philadelphia during Spring break, he said, "Why don't you stop by and let's see friends and do some Washington touring." He made arrangements for some wonderful girls, who I still stay in touch with—the Georgetown friends—a place to stay. Everything was set. These were the days before e-mail, and long-distance calls were expensive, so we didn't make a bunch of them. I already had my ticket. Well, I learned that Martin Luther King [Jr.] was shot and had died. I didn't hear from Bill that I shouldn't come to Washington. [I] had my plans made, so I went

ahead and flew from Bloomington—Indianapolis, probably—into Washington, DC, and saw plumes of smoke rising from DC as we circled to land. Bill was at the airport to meet me. I discovered later that Georgetown was ringed by National Guard to protect the students and the campuses and to encourage students to stay on campus and to not go looking around in DC where there could be danger. He met me at the airport. He looked very, very somber, and he said, "We've got work to do." In the aftermath of King's death—and he didn't know how much I had heard on the news about what was going on in DC, that there had been rioting, looting, damage, and fires in sections of DC. He said, "I've signed us up to do some community service. We're going to go from here and help some of the problem areas in DC." I said, "Fine, let's go." There was almost no one on the streets of DC—very few cars. I don't remember a whole bunch because there was a whole aura of quiet and the unknown, and a little fear for what we were doing, but never doubting it was the right thing to do. Bill drove to an agency—I believe it was the Red Cross. The Red Cross staffer came out and put signs on the side of Bill's car—he had taken in his senior year a white Buick convertible to school so he could get around, and was working for [U.S. Senator J. William] Fulbright [from Arkansas]. Anyway, they put the Red Cross [emblem] on the car, or something that said, "This car has permission to be on the streets of DC." I remember the staff member, a man, gave us hats, and gave me a scarf and said, "Put this on and then put the hat on over that because no one needs to see the color of your skin." Then [he] gave Bill—filled the trunk with what I

believe was food, medical supplies, and water, and then and told us where to go. Our instructions also were not to stop at stop lights, but follow the car that was in front of us that was going to be our guide car to take us quickly where we were supposed to go. I believe that was a church or school where people were given temporary shelter, and we dropped off the goods. Then I remember Bill said, "Let's drive a little closer in to where the problems have occurred and let's see if we can [get] a closer look." We parked the car along a curb. There were smoldering ruins of buildings, glass on the sidewalks, brick, front windows . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Beginning of Tape 1, Side 2]

AD: . . . about after you had dropped off the supplies and were driving closer in.

CS: I remember we got out of the car and started walking. There was not a soul anywhere around. It was midday, and we walked in complete silence just looking and smelling and sensing and thinking about what was going on in history. What was going to happen now that King had died? What I mean—it's like, "I don't want to just *hear* about this on the news. Let's go *really* see what's happening for ourselves." We were walking alone, and we turned the corner and there was a small group of African-American young men, kind of walking at a good clip up through the middle of the street. When we saw them, Bill just said, "We need to go back to the car." They didn't know who we were—why we were there. We didn't know anything about—it was just prudent to do that. We got back in the car and drove away—nothing abrupt, just, "Let's just quietly leave." I remember

at that moment as we got into the car, I said, "Oh, I wish I had taken my camera," and he kind of snapped at me. He said, "Why do you need a camera? You will *never* forget this as long as you live." And, of course, he was right—the visual memories—but I had an interest in photography, and I just wish I had grabbed my camera. I thought about that a bunch. The whole thing—just like the handshake with Kennedy. I have never really put it this way, as I think about it—the handshake with Kennedy, you know, the preparation for—and the invitation to be involved in public service, and then being at Georgetown just a few years later—you know, our senior year [in high school] John Kennedy dies. And our senior year in college, Martin Luther King, Jr. dies. The head of the Civil Rights Movement—really moving things along, taking huge risks, clearly a leader, though not an elected official, but a leader. So that was as though that was almost a handshake. It was as if Bill was saying, "I have a responsibility. I'm being groomed. I'm called to be a part of what happens next. This is another in a long line of opportunities that God has given me in my life to meet and to be up close to national history, and not because I'm so self-important or not because I'm on some kind of ego trip. But I feel *really* called, responsible, empowered, or the mantle has been put on me to lead this nation is some way that I don't yet know. To honor Dr. King's leadership, I have to be serving. And I cannot sit safely on a campus." I don't know whether he would have. I doubt it. If he hadn't had to go to National Airport to pick me up, I imagine he would have found a way to get off campus. It would be like chomping at the bit for him to know that history was

taking place just a few blocks into the city. Beyond that—I remember after we delivered those supplies we went back to his house, and his roommates were there. He was back in his room, and I remember that I could hear him just quietly saying—I don't know if he was looking in a mirror or what, but my impression was that he was probably looking into a mirror. He had learned a good portion of the "I have a Dream" speech, and he was saying it—kind of an oratorical homage to Martin Luther King. I thought, "I didn't know he knew that." We were grieving, and it was like we *knew*—I mean we were just—we knew America had lost and the world had lost a really pivotal leader. And it was—you know, I think about other young people—[they] could have said, "Oh, how tragic," and then moved on. But not Bill Clinton.

AD: And this leads to a question I've been asking everybody. When you look [at] this young man, somebody who is from the small-town South, who grew up in Orval Faubus' Arkansas—what led to that interest in civil rights and racial reconciliation?

CS: Well, I have read, as you have, that his grandparents in Hope had already established a sense of equal rights and civil rights, and community regardless of ethnicity in Hope. So he grew up with a grandfather who respected black people. Bill learned early, early on, to respect black people. He loved black musicians. We almost always had Ray Charles on, or other—you know, 1960s musicians from the Motown era were black. There was a respect for black people in high school—even though we had a lot of personal school relationships, we knew the

right way to live was in an integrated world. I don't know, except for Bill's sense of listening to what King's message was, watching the struggle at Central High, although that was a little young—we would have just been about eleven years old then. We were aware of what was going on. You would hear your parents talking about it and the community talking about it. You just take sides. You either decide, "I'm going to be for integration, or I'm going to be a segregationist." And we didn't grow up with anybody feeding us that sort of prejudice. I think he knew that that had worked as a social model and structure for X-number of years, but that it was important for us to move on into the Twentieth Century. And he felt he had a responsibility to help open the doors of life to everybody.

AD: It's interesting—what you said before really does seem that that moves from being something that's just an intellectual acknowledgment to an emotional commitment—if not before then, certainly by then.

CS: You know, I think that's right. I don't remember what the issues were that Virginia brought home to us. I don't remember specifics, but we, typically, would be sitting around a dining room table in his home listening to music—Stan Getz, Nancy Wilson, Ray Charles, classical—we liked symphonic music, writing letters, reading, playing cards, maybe not saying a thing. We just liked to be together, *all* of our friends. David Leopoulos would be there. Joe Newman would be there. I remember them the most. We would just be in our own world, but we were together. Virginia would come in—she would put her purse and

keys away, and would come in—and she was so glad to see us and knew there was a very special thing in our friendship, and that we were all on the mature side and wanted to be somebody with our lives. We were serious about life, but still had a great time. She would come in and say, "You just won't believe what I heard today at the hospital. You just can't *imagine* that these kinds of things *happen*. Let me tell you what happened." And either something she witnessed in the hospital or heard about—it could have been the denial of health care. It could have been the lack of money. It could have been a black patient. I have no recollection, but she would pose it to us as a debate topic—as an ethical dilemma, more than a debate topic. These were *real* people. And she was clearly very touched and concerned about something that had happened that day. She would share that experience with us, and then we would open it up to discussion. We would all sit there and talk about what our reaction was, what had happened, what needed to happen to remedy that—"What ought to be done is . . ." And it was all future tense. Nobody said, "You're going to run for this, and I'm going to run for that, and we are all going to run . . ." It was just this less than subliminal—it was a real-life, real-time topic of concern of injustice. So the theme of justice pulled through his home. The theme of justice is something you can't go to church even *occasionally* and not hear. The Biblical prophetic scenes of Micah, "To love mercy, do justice, and walk humbly with God." Just fairness. The sense of fairness was very strong in Virginia's world, and in our discussions. I think Bill was, from an early age—never a sense of privilege, never a sense of, "Oh, don't

get your hands dirty," or, "You're above that," or, "Let somebody else do that," or, "That's too dangerous." He had been around people in the medial profession. He began to meet—he had leaders and models in the teaching profession. His music—Virgil Spurlin—S-P-U-R-L-I-N—was a very important man in his life, and kept pushing Bill to get better and better and better. Everybody that Bill knew was a good servant, leader, mentor, model, et cetera. He was surrounded by my father, a pastor, his uncle, a businessman, his step-father in business—just the sense of right, the sense of wrong, the sense of fairness, and we just weren't raised to be bigots, but rather to work for justice.

AD: After your undergraduate days, what happened to your friendship over those next few years—from the late 1960s to early 1970s—the next four or five years?

CS: Bill went to Oxford [University, England]. I saw him when he came home from Oxford. We stayed in touch. We were avid letter writers—I looked forward to his, and he told me he looked forward to mine. We would write long letters—exploratory—about "What I'm going to be when I grow up" kind of stuff. I fell in love with Jerry Staley at Indiana University, and married in 1970. I had been living in Indiana. We moved to northwest Indiana near Chicago, to Valparaiso University, and taught there. Bill went to Yale [Law School, New Haven, Connecticut] and then went to Arkansas to teach [at the University of Arkansas Law School] and run for Congress. All through that, we were in touch. He would call or write letters. He let me know when he was getting serious about Hillary, and would call me on his way to Chicago to see her when I was very near

Chicago. We didn't get to visit, but we stayed in touch. I remember saying, "How can you marry somebody I haven't even met?" [Laughter] She had come to visit Hot Springs. Bill came over to see me, but I think she was deep into a book or something, so she just respected his friendships. I hadn't met her. I was delighted for him. He sounded so happy. He was headed into his political launch pad. We had stayed in touch all through our years in Indiana and when he was elected. When he ran for attorney general, of course, I remember calling him and being so proud. And then when he ran for governor he sort of put it to us this way—he called and said, "Now, I *thought* if I did something good [with] my life, you'd maybe come home and be a part of it. We had talked about this for so many years. And maybe the state's arts council is a place we could look." So my husband and I thought about it, and thought it was a good move for us, so that's what we did.

AD: That sounds good. We were talking about maybe talking about that more in depth later on . . .

CS: Sure.

AD: . . . in terms of your role and in terms of Governor Clinton's policies at time. What was your first reaction when you met, now, Senator [Hillary] Clinton?

CS: Oh, we had talked. She had come to Indiana and ran Jimmy Carter's campaign there, so we had been on the phone. Of course, I had huge respect for her. I did for Bill, too. As I think about meeting him and all our high school years, I always did have a quiet respect for him, and we just were rarely silly and acting up. We

weren't geekie. I guess we were just good kids, you know. Nobody was ever doing anything wild. Everyone loved running around together, so I knew—and he had talked to me one Christmas, I guess, sometime—maybe it was a summer—one time when we were in Hot Springs, to talk to me about—"What's the guy that you marry going to be like?" He said, "Well, here's what the girl I'm going to marry is going to be like." I remember him telling me that she is going to need to be very actively involved in her own work, outside the home." I thought, "Boy, that makes perfect sense," because Virginia was never a stay-at-home mom. She was always present and involved in their lives. She was a working mother. So I knew that made sense, that he would want a woman who was active and involved—mentally active and serving. It made perfect sense that he would have met just the perfect girl at Yale. I was delighted to meet her. I think it was after he was elected governor, and they were just making the transition to planning the inaugural and planning his new administration. [I] stayed in their home an got acquainted with her. I was delighted to make friends with her.

AD: So despite the differences in terms of background or some surface stylistic differences, you see some similarities between her and President Clinton's mother?

CS: Yes, well, and ambitious, strong, bright, service oriented. And, of course, her background—Bill had grown up in church, [and] Hillary grew up in church. Bill was ambitious and scholarly, and Hillary was this as well. They both were achievers and had a public-service heart, and both had grown up with an

understanding of what justice is. I remember one little personal episode—nobody ever dated much, but when we had to have an escort for something, sometimes I would go with Bill to things, and he with me. But we'd all be together. Sometimes events require you to pair up. We went to—I couldn't dance. I was a pastor's daughter, so I couldn't dance. Now that's not so much the case, but that was very strict then. I honored my dad and, although as a class officer, one of my jobs was to decorate for prom and to make sure the football dances were all organized—I could go and watch them, but I couldn't participate. In college, we had a debutante season in Hot Springs—as if people needed to be introduced to society—but anyway, we had a debutante season and there was a cotillion club, and Bill and I went to one of these debutante balls together. I was sitting at a table just talking and enjoying friends and not dancing. Bill was dancing with everybody. Someone said to him, "Doesn't Carolyn dance?" And he said, "No, and my dad sells Buicks, and I don't drive Fords, either." That was a little classic example of him saying, "Be fair here. Respect this person." He always was interested in fairness, justice and friendship. We talked about black and white issues and segregation and making the world a better place when we were kids. It was just a wonderful and magical time. Sometimes I think about [it], even today, and say, "God, what were you doing when I had nothing to do with choosing my neighbor. He had nothing to [do] with where his mother would find a house and move. How is it that our lives were brought together and that we still remain close friends?"

AD: What was it like growing up next to the president, in retrospect? You've talked a lot about that. It seems to me to be one of those things that would be hard to put into context.

CS: I think there is a grace that comes with being put next door to Bill Clinton as a neighbor. There is a grace that somehow, the friend that *was* is still the friend that *is*. It's harder for us to stay in touch, and there are a whole lot more people who need his time. I still consider him my best and dearest friend. I knew, although it was an unspoken awareness, that he had everything that I thought a future president would have. I remember even when I would visit him at Georgetown, and he would be in class—I would walk to the White House—just take the tourist walk-throughs, thinking, "And that's where Bill's statue is going to go in Statuary Hall in the Capitol," or "When *Bill* lives in the White House, he's going to have *American* furnishings. Why are all these *French* decorative arts here? The White House should be a museum of America's finest furnishings, and so Bill is going to have American things." I was just thinking about what he would do as president and, again, respectfully, because I think I knew it was going to become true, I didn't voice that to him. Sometimes if I found a birthday card or a get well card, or something that had the future president, I would always pick that for him. I don't remember how many of those—not more than once or twice that happened, but there was just a quiet respect and kind of—we all *knew* where we were going. I honestly thought, "He probably won't be elected because he's too honest," so later for him to get hit with the "Slick Willie" moniker was really a

perversion of the guy we knew. I had heard him say "Honest Injun" a lot to Roger. That was just their understanding. If you asked somebody a question and you wanted to make sure they were telling the truth—he'd say to Roger, "Honest Injun?" And if Roger said "Honest Injun" back to him—well, that was giving your word, and honesty was really important. I just remember going—and we all talked about he won't be—we'd have little quiet discussions about Bill running for something. I remember our friends saying, "We're going to see your names in lights." I think mine was more about music and performing, but I also knew I had an interest in public service. It has been wonderful to be able to knit staying very active in performing and, also, serving in public service and then ministry work. Keeping all those threads of life active. I knew he was going to be president if he wanted to. I felt he had everything it took.

AD: You have hit on a topic I've also been asking people about—on one hand, you see a lot of people who are his friends—longstanding friendships that are very deep friendships, ones he spent a lot of time and effort maintaining over the years. Then, on the other hand, you have a group of people who have a lot of animosity toward him. Is there any light you can shed in terms of why there is such polarization?

CS: A couple things come to mind. One is that his ego can be off-putting to some people. So the fact that he was—he was like anybody else in high school. Either his friends loved him or there were people who he became the sort of goodie-goodie or the super achiever, boring, ho-hum. Nothing was boring and ho-hum

about him, but some people are so happy being underachievers, and if there are achievers in their world it makes them have to think about, "Why am I not going that direction? Why am I just taking the easy route, the mediocre?" So I think he forces—his very appearance in your world forces you to confront, "What am I doing with my life, and why have I chosen not to be an achiever?" I think that makes people uncomfortable. One way they show being uncomfortable is by putting him down. And his ego. I think sometimes—Hillary and I would laugh, and I would say, "Has there ever been a mirror that he passed that [he] didn't look in?" She said, "Not one that I've found yet." [Laughter] We would just laugh. He had a very healthy sense of his appearance. He wasn't always really pleased with his weight, in particular. He struggled sometimes with skin eruptions, and he would—I'd say, "Bill, you look fine. You look good," and he would say, "Well, a duck can waddle." I remember he would say that to me. [Laughs] "A duck can waddle. I'm not interested in waddling. I want to be in shape. I want to look good." Something that I didn't mention was that he didn't go out for sports, I think. I don't think he was so gifted in that arena, and he loved music, and he had to make a choice. Virginia had seen so many broken bones and brain injuries and difficulties coming off football fields from contact sports that she encouraged her boys to do other things. I wanted to put that in there. The popular guy in high school is often the quarterback or the sports hero, and there were those popular guys in our high school. Bill wasn't the kingpin, but he was one of a handful outstanding young men.

AD: Again—just jumping around—when did you first realize that he was going to run for president?

CS: As he became governor, it was just all but understood that "Okay, there is a natural progression to leadership. You do your best as a governor. You become chairman of the National Governors Association. You continue to grow in stature, and you gain national recognition." Even when he was attorney general and was gaining notoriety, and as a young candidate for Congress—all these things were beginning to put him in the public eye. When he became governor, there was a thing—again, we began to talk about it more, but the speculation about what's next. In 1987, he—and I'll show you—hanging on my wall—he was trying to decide what to do next, whether to run for governor, whether to run for Senate. Maybe he was going to be tapped to be a vice-presidential candidate, or would he run for president? He would talk with his friends. We were neighbors in Little Rock and about four blocks apart. We were kind of on his jogging path, and friends would often get together at our house. So we were talking about it one time. He wouldn't tell me his decision—it was such a respect for the decision and for the announcement. Also, this was a pretty private discussion that ultimately came down to his own life and his own prayer life. And discussion with Hillary and Chelsea about what they were going to do. He didn't tell us in advance. We were invited to—it would be, "Well, what do you think I ought to do?" He did a good bit of that. "What do you think about that?" We were invited to the Excelsior Hotel [in Little Rock]—now the Peabody—for

an announcement. It was going to be Bill's announcement of whether or not he was going to run for president. I believe—I can talk loud enough and look at this sign that the boxes on the newspapers that said either—they all said, "Clinton will not run for president. Details today." That was their best guess [laughter]—"Clinton will not run for president." So I went around town and collected a bunch of those, and I thought, "Well, that's probably the conventional wisdom that"—because we didn't sense a lot of banners and excitement about the day like would accompany what we thought a presidential announcement would look like. The national press was there and the ballroom was filled. He told me that the decision—when he announced that he was not going to run for president, then Hillary took the mike, and said, "You just have to [be] so strong and ready and have a laser clarity about this." Then I had a little get-together afterward that evening and welcomed him home. "Welcome home, Bill." I had a big sign made, "Welcome home." It was that Chelsea had figured so prominently in their discussion because they had talked to other candidates who had children about the wear and tear on the family that a presidential campaign had had on others. They just didn't feel they wanted to go through that with Chelsea at such a young age. I called the paper because I think I saw Roger later that day, and he wanted one of these signs, and other people had started grabbing them as a souvenir. I called the paper. I had a friend who worked at the *Arkansas Gazette,* and he said, "Guess what else I have? I have the other one that we were going to use if he had decided to run." It said, "Clinton will run for president." I said, "Oh, I would give

anything to have one of those." So I got both of those, double-sided glass, framed them, with a chain on the tops so Bill could turn it one way or the other. He signed mine and said, "We will, later." Then when he ran and won, he said, "And we did." It was kind of fun. It was remarkable. Just a quiet—I can't—almost a reverence for this whole process. Even when we were children at fifteen—just not talking about it overtly that you are going to run for president or that you going to be a leader, but sort of an unspoken understanding that this is possible.

AD: Were there any big differences between 1987 and 1991 outside of the family situation being a little different with Chelsea being four years older?

CS: She got older. He felt more prepared and ready. He had accomplished more things for Arkansas that he had wanted to do. Just a sense of being ready and eager to run as opposed to having any questions. I think running for the presidency is one of those decisions that one doesn't want to have any questions about.

AD: When did it become evident that [he] was going to be the next president? Do you remember any moment where you thought, "Wow, this is something that is not only a somewhat likely possibility, but a probability?"

CS: A bunch of us—now known as the "Arkansas Travelers"—I kind of went with some friends. I couldn't have stayed out of New Hampshire if I had wanted to. Several of our friends from high school went to work. That's when there were such dark and cold days, and we weren't sure whether or not he could turn around—the campaign tactics were so dirty—the disclosures about women and

how that was going to impact the race. That was really a pivotal time. Still, there was a sense of, "We can get past this." I think it was after New Hampshire and when the "Comeback Kid" label became well known, he was doing so well in the campaign—just tireless—and people responded to him. I think that's when I knew he could get this nomination. Even in New Hampshire, what the friends would do is go ahead of him and Hillary and talk to store owners and people up and down the street and say, "Bill Clinton is coming and would love to meet you if you have a minute to come out and say hello." And just to see, "Really? Oh, good. Oh, yes." And see them talking with him and I would hear a little bit about a story of somebody's life and say, "Bill, let me introduce you to this woman. She's really having a hard time as a single mom raising her daughter and having concerns about health care and costs." I would see this engagement and there was—what I was hearing in the press and on the news and what I was seeing as his connecting power, charisma. And just true caring. It was an honest concern for the problems of America. I believe I sensed that people—regardless of what the newspapers were saying—really were connecting with him and liked him and were going to support him regardless of allegations. It was nip and tuck there for a while, and then he just continued to get stronger and stronger. Boy, when he won the nomination, it was just *incredible* to be there. To get to go down on stage. It looked like he had the votes, and when he came out and they brought the friends down at the convention, and you know, just *unbelievable*. Okay, we had been living in a time warp. We knew in 1964 this was probably going to happen,

and here we are, some thirty years later. And "You're right, we did it."

AD: Do you think most of his friends had some idea that this was a possibility even back then, or [that] at least there was some interest?

CS: I think so. I haven't heard anybody say, "I am just totally shocked. It never occurred to me that he had the gifts or the equipping to be president." Yes. He wasn't pompous. It was his heart. What I always found so attractive was just his true desire to help people out of the right motives. Being concerned about the little guy, the common man, the family, the woman—justice and mercy. Those were just the common themes. It seemed to me that we needed a person like that leading us.

AD: We've gone over a lot of details, and we will probably talk more about your time in Little Rock, and also probably more about the Washington years, I guess, in the next round. But is there anything else you can think about adding? Anything we haven't touched on, or an interesting story we have not talked about?

CS: I'm thinking about his family. I was at home all the time and practicing the piano, constantly, or dusting furniture because your house always had to be ready for the drop-in church member, you know. I was so honored and touched that his family bonded with my family, and that he would come by and he would know, "Well, she needs to get out of the house. She needs to somewhere." I was always busy and going, but it was always nice when he would stop by and just come to the door and say, "Wanna go to the post office with me or do you want to run errands with me?" I remember the times he would come in and sit and listen to

me play the piano, and I wouldn't know he was there until I finished playing. I worked on a Bach piece and he—one time he just started applauding, you know, when I finished. That was fun. I also remember that not only was Virginia a real champion and adored Bill and did worship him, and had pictures and his band medals framed. Everything tangentially that leads to that sort of thing. I remember Roger—and I would just like to go on the record with the warmth and kindness and love that I experienced from him. The step-father, Roger Clinton—when Bill and I would have parties, we would go to the grocery store and shop and buy everything we needed, and I would kind of take the typical—you know, I was still one foot in the old role of what girls would grow up to be, and the other in the emerging women's movement, but still enjoyed helping with parties. I brought in—one time, a party was going to be over at Bill's house, and I brought over big trays of food and finger sandwiches and cookies and things. I remember Roger just walking over and giving me a hug and saying, "You are just so wonderful. You're so talented. Some guy is going to be so lucky someday." And just being kind to me. Always wanted to ask—I always struggled with my weight, and they had this kind of—I don't know what you would call this exercise table, but it was a bench in three parts. One section you would put your hips on. You would lie on it on your back. What this was supposed to do was to help you lose weight. I don't know why. I would go over, and Virginia would say to me, "You've got a pretty face. Now we need to get some of that weight off. If you want to come use this exercise table any time, you are welcome to." So

sometimes when nobody was there—they would leave the back door open, and I could go in, and Roger might be there, and I would just go into part of the house where this was and just sit there with my own personal gym. I remember one summer . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[Beginning of Tape 2, Side 1]

CS: . . . Roger Clinton and what a friend he was to me. I guess a last memory—when I was in college, and Bill was in college, as well—in the summer we wanted to make a little money and we were looking for a job, and Roger Clinton was manager of the Clinton Buick parts department. He said, "Well, I could use some part-time help. I need to do an inventory." Well, if you have ever been in a parts department of an auto shop and seen the stacks and stacks and stacks of shelves and little nuts and bolts and gaskets and screws and—anyway, either Bill or I would get on a ladder and count, and we'd know the part number and they would give us a part number. Then we'd have to count what's in the bin. One day—I wasn't surprised—Bill found something better to do, and I was there alone in the parts department [laughs] holding up *my* end of the job. Roger came and got me from the stacks where I was counting things. He said, "I want you to see something." He was very quiet, and said very little. He said, "See that car out there?" He pointed outside, and said, "I want you to go out there and take a look at that car." It was not on a sales lot. It was off the parts department, kind of out the back, kind of grassy, alley kind of place where they parked cars, I guess. I

don't know what it was, but he just told me to go look at that car. I went out there, and it had just been brought in. It had been in an accident, and I am sure it was a fatality because there was flesh hanging on the steering column. I'm sure [I] just turned all shades of pale. I walked back in past Roger's desk, and I just looked at him, and I'm sure you could see that I was shaken. I had never seen anything like that. He said, "I want you to drive carefully, okay?" It was just a loving gesture of his to say that "Things happen in life, and I don't want that to happen to you. Please drive carefully." He was just a loving, attentive, caring guy. We learned later—as I mentioned before—we didn't talk about problems at home. Alcohol does change the personality, but Roger was always just very, very kind and caring, and I appreciated his friendship a great deal. Another memory I remember from Virginia—and my mother wasn't really happy about this. My mother and Virginia became very great friends. My first memory of her was just shocking—to meet someone who looked so different from anybody I had ever seen. Especially—I hadn't seen her make-up or anything like that. And I didn't know—you know, you didn't want to stare—but just knew, "Gosh, this is different." Her eyebrows and her hair. Nobody in my church drove around in a convertible with strapless tube tops on and a deep golden tan. A lot of people were on the lake, and a lot of tan people. She always looked like a million dollars. Just really gorgeous and glamorous, with lots of gold jewelry and flamboyance. She liked to work out in the yard. She wasn't a sun worshiper in terms of just sitting out in a chaise and oiling up. She kept a really beautiful rose

garden and liked working on her garden out in the yard. She and the preacher next door and the preacher's wife came from very different background and they were—Virginia loved going out to the race track and night clubbing during racing season, and Bill didn't take to that. She took him one time and he just didn't like it. He would walk himself to church, although they later started to go to a Methodist church after college. Virginia and her husband, Jeff Dwire [Virginia's third, married in 1968] did. Anyway, it was just a unique family next door, and yet she would sort of take me under her wing and teach me things about life. She would teach me [that] it was important to get up in the morning and put on your make-up so that you looked good all day long. "You never know when you are going to see somebody, and/or be called to go someplace so you want to be ready." So she took a lot of time in the morning to get dressed and be ready for the day. She would teach me—just talked to me about everything. I sent her, until she died, Mother's Day cards. "You are like a mother to me, my other mother." I had this pastor's wife mother, and this really worldly mother. Both of them had very common values in terms of how to live your life and to be ambitious and to do good and those kinds of things. Their lifestyles were really different. One time Virginia came by my house and said, "I'm going to the hospital. Why don't you ride with me?" Mother said, "Okay, that would be all right." I was sitting out in the convertible car at what was then Ouachita Hospital in Hot Springs, right by Hot Springs High School, and someone came outside and said, "Virginia wants you to come in." I followed, and we went towards surgery,

and they had me put on surgical scrubs and I was invited into a delivery room. This woman was screaming—they used something called twilight sleep, or something like that. She was not really awake and didn't know what she was saying. I observed the hospital—the operating room, in effect—the delivery room—and they were just talking about life, and this poor woman was giving birth and couldn't feel anything. But there I was just looking at this little baby coming into life and to the world. Virginia just thought that was something that would be good for me see and experience. And that was her idea. It just came to her mind when she was up there in the operating room, in delivery—"Why should Carolyn be sitting down there in the car reading a book? She could be up here learning, first hand, about what a birth of a baby is." Later, when I told my mother about it, she was a little taken aback—that was a little too much information, she thought. We were still very modest. But Virginia was all about learning everything you can in life—teaching us, and giving us guidance, and that was really remarkable. I was remembering, also, about how some days she would come over after she got home from surgery. I was in college and my siblings would have been in high school. She would brew a pot of coffee and come next door with it. Whatever my mother was doing, Virginia would say, "Let's have a cup of coffee." So they would sit in the living room and drink a whole pot of coffee, and Virginia talked mostly about Bill the whole time. My mother would occasionally—they were built very differently. My mother didn't want to brag about her kids. Mother would mostly listen to Virginia talk about what Bill was

doing and what was going on. They got to be fast friends and had such a good time. My mother would be out in the back yard hanging clothes on the clothesline, and Virginia would drive around the corner in her top-down convertible going to the races, and she would honk and wave to my mother. And mother would say, "*Virginia*, you're not going off—where are you going? You're not going to that ol' race track, are you?" And Virginia would say, "Kay, let's just say I'm going to a fellowship, and then we'll all be happy!" [Laughter] So they just had this wonderful [mutual feeling to] "agree to disagree on how to order our lives, but agree that we're all good people, and we have children we love." So that was always just really so much fun to be with them. And Roger was a lot of fun. He was just a little boy who lived next door and went with us everywhere, as I mentioned before. There was very little dating in the group, but clusters—groups of people going to movies, or going to play miniature golf or go bowling. We could get quarter hamburgers at Burger King—or Burger Chef, then—right next to the miniature golf—and loved to do that. When we were all grown up and living in Little Rock, sometimes they would—David Leopoulos, Joe Newman, and whoever else we could round up and I would meet Bill for lunch, and we would go play miniature golf—just a few rounds of miniature golf, which was just hilarious fun, and then go back to the office. He still enjoys that kind of thing. It was just a joy to spend time in a group of friends that still is so close today. A lot of the Hot Springs crowd wound up with jobs in Little Rock, and we have stayed together faithfully as friends. Even now, with Bill's

[quadruple bypass] heart surgery just a month ago, I've sort of been the bundler of e-mails and jokes and humor to send to him. I've sent all the friends the e-mail access to him to get "funnies" to him. We know he loves to laugh. When he had his leg surgery when he was in the White House, Phil Jamison, who was our senior class president, and Jim French, our senior class vice-president—I was class treasurer—we all went to the White House to see him together, and he just constantly read one joke after another to us. Whoopi Goldberg had sent him a book of jokes. So we know that he loves to laugh and [it] would keep him very happy. Another memory is that when we were in high school—and I learned a little more about this because it was a blur to me—but when I read Bill's book, *My Life*, that there was a—when we were in high school we were sort of the guinea pigs for a point system that was imposed on us to encourage leadership of more students, and the way it worked, simply, is that the positions of leadership in the high school were given a point value, and you could only have ten. We were the first class that had to struggle with this. You could be—he was president of the band, and he had some other activities, and he couldn't be president of the senior class. I think he did have enough points that he could be secretary of the senior class. The way the class officers were chosen is just by an assembly request for nominations and on-the-spot elections. You never nominated yourself. It was even more remarkable because I don't remember anybody ever saying, "Would you nominate me for—?" something. Bill and I were both nominated for class secretary, and this has shown up in some books about his life.

I get labeled as one of the only people to ever beat Bill Clinton in anything. We were in a runoff, and it was just the two of us. We were ushered out into the hallway so they could vote, and I won. Bill said to me out in the hall, "So help me, if you beat me for this, I will *never* forget it." But it wasn't a threatening kind of thing, it was just a friendly, with a smile, "Dang, I want this job, and I hope I get it because I want to be class secretary, even though that's a girlie job. I want to be class secretary, and I want to be at least a class officer." He had been junior class president, and to go from that to nothing was, you know, was just—lots of fun memories. Christmas caroling—for years—I don't know if this is politics—I don't know that anybody cares about this stuff, but every year we got together at Christmas and go carol at our old high school principal's house. We always were getting together as friends—constantly parties. And I'm sure it served a dual purpose. One is to see people, and the other is to stay in touch and get votes, and be building a statewide—you know, county election crowd as far and wide as you could collect friends. Anyway, we had a marvelous time. We were both selected as the Elks Club Youth Leaders for 1964—seems not such a big, stellar thing, but any job, any opportunity—Bill and I always seemed to run for it. I don't remember that we'd talk about it, but that was an essay competition and, actually, you got this huge, kind of embarrassing trophy for it. We were both elected or selected Elks Youth Leaders of the Year. I think we knew we were on a roll. It's sort of like when you get Big Mo [momentum]. Girls State, Boys State, Boys Nation, Kennedy, DeMolay, Grand Pooba of the state. If he was, I don't know

the name of the DeMolay—it was like the statewide president. I was honored that he chose me as DeMolay Sweetheart, kind of a Girl Friday. That was because he was honoring me and saying, "You know you have been important in my life, and you are a leader, too, so here, I get to name you that." It was just a little friendship fun thing. I was really pleased. He got the Big Mo, and he had—he was first chair all-state band. He was doing all this statewide stuff now, so he was really starting to feel like, "Hmm, even by graduation from high school I have a statewide constituency. From band, from Boys State, from DeMolays. And I know people in every county."

AD: So it was natural for him to move back, not only for an interest in Arkansas, but also . . .

CS: But to have a constituency, and a place where he a dreamt of making a better world for people who live in Arkansas. Yes, it was very natural for him to want to come home. I think it's a matter of record that he and Hillary had a struggle in their relationship—not a divisive one, but just—"I've got to go home and start my ascent into political life." One of the things I remember and we can talk about later is when he was governor—I read the paper from cover to cover, and I especially followed anything about him. When he commuted some prison sentences and prison terms, and there was such and outcry about it, I went to see him and Hillary. He was out of office then, but running again—or it must have been at the end of his—how did it happen? Because they were in their house where they lived after he was defeated by Frank White. But maybe it was after

they were living there, and he had commuted them as a last act.

AD: [Inaudible]. Yes.

CS: Yes. I went to say, "I'm sorry about all this flap." Bill said, "But it's not true. What you read isn't true. And people are smart enough to figure that out." And I said, [inaudible]. And Hillary said "*See*, Bill! People believe what they read in the paper. You can't just let factual errors slide without responding to them, and you can't just assume that people are going to give you the benefit of the doubt." He didn't think anything would stick on him—kind of the Teflon guy that he got called later. Just lots of—those are sort of placeholder memories. I do remember, again, not politics, but "What did he do? What was it like to grow up and live next door?" We love—we didn't have any money, and we didn't have, like kids seem to today—constantly—money to go out, to go to the movies, to go to concerts. Our favorite thing to do if it wasn't playing cards or just being together or going out driving or going to somebody's house was to watch movies, and was to see what the four star movie that was on the late show. There wasn't a really good movie on at 8:00; it was always 10:00. So we spent a whole lot of time as a group just seeing how many stars—"Is there a *good* movie on tonight?" We would gather at somebody's house and watch. I remember one time, over at his house, again—appearances were so important in a pastor's family and we were living in—still kind of leading the Victorian southern protocol. The back door was open at Bill's house. I was over at his house. The carport door was open, but we were both watching a movie, and it was time for me to come home. My

parents hadn't told me what time to come home, but they knew that a movie ran two hours, and we had started at ten. My dad knocked on the back door. "Carolyn Ann, it's time to come home." We had both just fallen asleep in the easy chairs. There were "his and her" La-Z-Boys and a table and a lamp between, and we were watching the movie. It had timed out—probably the Indian signal was on the screen. [Laughter] Usually the "Star Spangled Banner" played, and you called it a night. My mother remembers, too, one time we were *all* asleep. A whole bunch of us back in our den at my house. She came back there and we had all fallen asleep. So we just—I think we were kind of a sub-family to each other in a way that—now that I know what was going on with David Leopoulos's family and hadn't been there a lot, and I know what was going on in Bill's family, and my home wasn't always just perfect. But as far we were concerned, when we were together there was this unconditional friendship and support, and it was a very wonderful group of friends. And I wish every young person could have a friend like Bill Clinton. He's just remarkable.

AD: Is there anything else you would like to add?

CS: At this moment I feel all right about it.

AD: We have gone over a lot of material, and I would like to thank you for your time.

CS: You are so welcome, Andrew. Thank you.

[End of Interview]

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