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Clinton Presidential Records
First Lady's Office
Melanne Verveer
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FOLDER TITLE:

Dick Morris

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RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
- P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
- P4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
- P5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
- P6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

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- b(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
- b(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
- b(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
- b(4) Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
- b(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
- b(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
- b(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
- b(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]

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this narrative, but I was happiest when I saw him. I admire, someone with that label. And these specialists in figuring out how to win elections and win elections, accepting assignments with the highest potential for success, and he has been doing that since when he told me about it the next year. He was a subject on a national strategy memo, played a speech. Bill Clinton pressed for months, he was a dead end.

Others beckon. I asked me to help. I was winning the race I could have had, I said, to call. In 1978, I was pling Dukakis from primary victory. "Come," Atwater said. "Come, Governor. He'd be a winner in 1988."

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"soft on defense,"
ing ridiculous.

I told Atwater, never agree that he's the best man for the time, Dukakis has to believe him, not you. I'm trying to make your

Instead, I suggest Dukakis admitted example. "Here he is against capital punishment; he is against capital wrong."

And after each accomplishment came the president's plaintive refrain, "of course, nobody knows we did this" or "we'll never get the credit we deserve on this one" or "the newspapers never printed that we got this one done." Aching from what he considered neglect of his record, Clinton needed not only recognition of his achievements, but praise as well. Typically, much of Bill Clinton's self-image comes from the feelings reflected by others around him. In a room, he will instinctively, as if by a canine sense of smell, find anyone who shows reserve toward him, and he will work full time on winning his or her approval and, if possible, affection. My wife, Eileen McGann, for one, is ambivalent about Clinton, and he senses it. She likes him and agrees with his programs, but she resents him for some of the potholes that blemished my relationship with him while he was governor. Each time he calls and Eileen answers or when they meet at a reception, he focuses his six feet two inches of oozing charm on her—though usually with little effect.

America is the ultimate room for Clinton. For him, a poll helps him sense who doesn't like him and why they don't. In the reflected numbers, he sees his shortcomings and his potential, his successes and his failures. For Bill Clinton, positive poll results are not just tools—they are vindication, ratification, and approval—whereas negative poll results are a learning process in which the pain of the rebuff to his self-image forces deep introspection. Intellectually, polls offer Clinton an insight into how people think. He uses polls to adjust not just his thinking on one issue but his frame of reference so that it is always as close to congruent with that of the country as possible.

I was shocked when I read the poll's results. Voters believed that the president had not accomplished much and didn't stand for anything. President Clinton was in deep, deep trouble. I briefed him and Hillary over the phone. The accomplishments of which they were so proud—a smaller budget deficit, more jobs, rising exports—met a solid wall of rejection. Most voters believed they weren't true. Those who agreed they were accurate denied Clinton credit. Those who gave him credit said it had no impact on their likelihood of voting for his candidates in the 1994 congressional election.

The president debated the eight hundred people in my sample with all his skill and effectiveness. "But what do they say when we tell them we've created millions of jobs and cut the deficit for two years in a row? They can't deny that. It's a fact."

"They can, and they do," I answered. "Every day the papers are filled with stories of layoffs or companies closing."

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"But those are the big companies," he replied. "It's the small businesses that are creating the jobs, and nobody writes about that."

"Look," I answered, "if you were asking them about the good works we have been doing in Guam, then you could tell them what we've done, and they might believe it. But this is about the economy that's right in front of them. If they don't agree that you've created jobs or they believe you shouldn't get the credit, you'll never convince them otherwise. Never. It's a total waste of money to try."

A lot of politicians believe that if they have enough money, they can persuade voters that anything is true. In Clinton's case, he had the added virtue of having facts on his side. I told him, "Don't confuse me with the facts. You'll never get them to believe you."

Hillary took up my point. "Bill, when I go out and speak about these jobs we say we've created, you can tell they don't believe it," she emphasized. In the Arkansas years, at the end of every discussion, it always fell to Hillary to tell her husband the political facts of life. This apparently hadn't changed.

"But there is good news," I added. My job was to say what could be done, not what couldn't. "They are prepared to believe in your smaller achievements, and these are enough, more than enough, to move their votes back to you."

I elaborated: "They believe you delivered family and medical leave, and they love you for it. They believe you named pro-choice judges to the Court. They buy that you set up direct student lending and that this is lowering rates. The Brady bill, the assault-rifle ban, Americorps—these are what they know you did."

Clinton wasn't interested. "But I *did* create those jobs, and the deficit is down. Why won't they believe it? You mean we just have to forget all these things? Just like that?"

"Stop trying to get elected for the right reasons. Just try to get elected," I answered. "The jobs and the deficit news are too new. If it happens for four years, maybe they'll begin to buy it, but now you can't make them believe it's true."

"But it is true."

"So what? Jesus Christ," I said in exasperation, "there is a perfectly good and fine list right here of bite-size achievements that they can and will digest—give you credit for—and that will move up your ratings. Why not embrace them? Why not run on them?"

Hillary joined in. "Bill, these things work. They're important to people. I know the response I get when I talk about them. Dick's right."

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House Democratic leadership. George Stephanopoulos had always been a link to House leader Dick Gephardt, for whom he once worked. Deputy Chief of Staff Harold Ickes was a link to labor, the left, and Jesse Jackson. Mack McLarty, Clinton's former chief of staff, was a link to the business community, as is Erskine Bowles, the new chief of staff who was then deputy chief. Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown was a link to blacks, the party's national structure he once headed, and the business world. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Henry Cisneros is Clinton's link to the Hispanic community. All ambassadors, all devoted to the president, but all, in his eyes, tethered to his often fractious allies in the party as well.

I had no links in the party. I made it clear I would not stay for a second term. I would be out on election day, and I had only one goal: to win. It was an agenda Clinton could share.



I went to the White House secretly in early December to meet the president and the First Lady in the Treaty Room. Hillary had been my principal link to the president during the 1992-94 period. I had tried to offer her advice on her own work and on her own political style, advising incremental steps in health care and urging greater stress on cost-containment measures. We spoke once or twice each month. Much of the time I passed ideas on to the president through the First Lady. But since Clinton, in my view, had erred by setting out on a path of one-party government in 1993, I felt there was not much my day-to-day tactical advice could do to correct the major problems the administration faced.

When I reconnected with Clinton after the '94 elections, I looked forward to working closely with Hillary, as I had in past years. But the highly pragmatic woman I knew in the '80s was not the woman in the headlines of the '90s.

I tend to do little to prepare for meetings. The more I think about them in advance, the more nervous I get. I find that too much advance planning and focus impairs my spontaneity and just limits my creativity and imagination. So because of the importance of this meeting—I knew it was perhaps the most important one of my career—I deliberately tried not to think about it. I had probed my beliefs about what Clinton had done wrong in the past and how things could be made right again, but I avoided rehearsing my lines. My aim was to be loose, limber, quick, flexible, adaptive, and focused. These are the qualities one needs for a meeting with one Clinton, let alone for a meeting with both.

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But I did choose my suit and tie with care. Was this tie too flamboyant? Did this one smack of staid thinking? Did this one make me seem too arrogant? Clinton loves clothing. As governor, he once looked at my alligator shoes (politically incorrect, but I like them anyway) and said, "If I became a political consultant, do you think I could wear shoes like that?" He usually comments on ties.

The meeting went well.

"I want you to come back and do the things for me here that you did back in Arkansas," Clinton said. "I need new ideas and a new strategy. I'm not getting what I need here, and I want you to come in. I've lost confidence in my current team."

We joked about the parallel to my resuscitation efforts in 1982. Hillary teased her husband saying, "You know, you have to stop having to be rescued like this."

The president raised his hands defensively and said, "Last time, I swear."

I said that I needed to be assured that he would give me the tools I needed. "If we lose because I'm not good enough or you're not good enough, OK. But I know you, and I know me, and I'll take that chance. But I won't be in a position where we lose because I don't get the tools I need to win." I set three conditions for my return.

First, I wanted total control of the polling for the campaign. I asked that Clinton hire Doug Schoen from the firm of Penn and Schoen to do the work. Schoen, a professorial type, balding on top, thickening in the middle, with a ponderous way of judgmentally reciting the points he wants to make, has been a friend of mine since he was seventeen. He and his wife spent weekends at their home a few miles from ours in Redding, Connecticut. They were close friends with both Eileen and me. He was our drummer, pounding out a steady beat to show us where we needed to go and always laboring to keep us in step. More conservative than I, he focused on the alienated Democratic voter, the people we had to get back.

At the beginning, though, the president didn't trust Schoen. Doug had polled for his former nemesis, who was now the president's supporter and his successor as governor, Jim Guy Tucker. Clinton wondered whether Schoen's polling for Tucker had been accurate, and he squirmed at the notion of bringing Schoen into his confidence. He was especially worried about leaks, since they had driven him to distraction during the first two years of his presidency. He once told me, "I have learned never to say anything—anything—in a meeting larger than three people."

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In my case, I had a long way to fall if it were publicly announced that I was working for this Democratic president and was then fired. This was no ordinary Democrat. He was the object of the Republican party's fixation and hatred. Being convicted of working for Clinton would mean capital punishment for a Republican operative. So the secrecy, for me, was temporary protection.

I never asked for a commitment or a guarantee. I never asked for the political equivalent of tenure. I always assume that clients can and will fire me whenever they want to. I was especially worried that Clinton had not fired anyone on his staff. "I don't want to scapegoat anyone," he explained.

I thought, *Damn it, these are the guys you told me had screwed up health care, messed up Whitewater, and delivered the most crushing midterm defeat imaginable. Fire any of them? Of course not. How ridiculous.*

But I understood why he was reluctant to fire people. Bill Clinton has a deep sense of personal loyalty to people who have worked for him. He forms bonds with them that he finds hard to break. He was determined to assume full personal responsibility for his 1994 defeat and his persistent, harsh, and nagging superego would not permit him to share the blame for the disaster with others.

In spite of my misgivings, I said calmly, "That's up to you, Mr. President. I'll play the hand you deal me." He never really fired any of the consultants who helped him win in 1992. Mandy Grunwald, his former media adviser, was shifted over to the First Lady's staff, to give Hillary advice on TV appearances. James Carville remained for the entire campaign, as far as I know, on the Democratic National Committee—DNC—payroll but had little real direct role in the campaign from 1994 through 1996. Paul Begala moved to Texas. Stan Greenberg, his pollster, remained the DNC's pollster, did work on the fringes of the campaign, and labored long and hard to appear in the newspapers as the president's pollster long after I replaced him. With the old consultants likely gone (but poised offstage to return at any moment) but the old staff in place, I felt like a French revolutionary entering the palace at Versailles to try to work with the lords and ladies of the *ancien régime*.

In any event, neither Clinton nor I was prepared to bet our hides that this would last. So I became Charlie. That was my self-selected code name. I would call the Oval Office or the usher's office in the White House residence and announce that Charlie was on the phone. Nancy Hernreich, the president's chief administrative assistant and an old pal

of mine from Arkansas days, and Betty Currie, from Mississippi, were in on the secret. They would transfer the call to the president's private line, and we would talk.

Nancy, tall, beautiful, and bright with long blond hair, looks a decade or two younger than her still young years. She is clearly the person in the White House the president trusts the most. She is able and empathic, but very firm, and she knows him well. Sometimes she would intercept a call I had made to Clinton, asking "Do you have to speak with him right now? He hasn't really slept in three days, and he'll be zonked if we don't put him to bed." She keeps the president's business totally confidential. When she dies, her epitaph should read SHE KNEW EVERYTHING AND SHE LEAKED NOTHING.

Why Charlie? Some have speculated that it was a takeoff on *Charlie's Angels*, the television series in which various beautiful female operatives receive their instructions from an unseen Charlie. No way—I've never seen *Charlie's Angels* in my life; I use my TV set for viewing political ads and for watching Sunday-night movies with Eileen. It was really a code name I chose after my favorite Republican political consultant, Charlie Black, to whom I'd been very close. I got a kick out of using the name of a top Republican in my dealings with the Democratic president.

In part, the code-name business was a carryover from my earlier work with Clinton. Secrecy had been part of my method in Arkansas. During all of Clinton's races there, my name almost never appeared in the Arkansas press. Nobody knew I was there, and nobody could try to stop me. I was always way behind the scenes. It was ideal. My private life has always been very important to me. Perhaps I realized that publicity could destroy me—as it ultimately did. Instinctively, I avoided the stage and left before the cameras arrived. It was my style, and Clinton loved it.

Clinton was also delighted that nobody knew I was working for him in Washington. He'd whisper into the phone so that others in the Oval Office couldn't hear. He'd go out into the private library adjacent to his office to take my calls, always on the private line, so nobody could eavesdrop.

Once, during the winter of '95, I called to speak to the president. He was meeting with Leon Panetta, Harold Ickes, and a few other White House staffers, and sent word that he'd call me back. When he phoned, half an hour later, he said, conspiratorially, "I called you as soon as I got rid of those guys." He was never happier working with me than he was

in the Charlie days. He didn't catch on until he'd been the closest person

To turn the president's idea of how he handled the administration fall so low, the initial assumption was that the November and December

It all had to do with the Democrat in the White House. The election was marked by a Democratic Congress that takes haunted Clinton

The parallels between the way around Washington governors, not serious northern state capital. Kennedy wouldn't be so Clinton won the victory on a Republican cause of the recession from the shadow of Bush from Reagan. cent of the votes for started his race. They were stand-ins who dominated by its cost

Yet Clinton had a fare overhaul, American environmental initiative when his big proposal was necessary to implement

At first, they had one after another. enter the White House. you. We'll get it done ship this time. We

"I shouldn't have run against the Contract with America."

"We never ran a truly national campaign; they had a national campaign."

"They had a two-word message: 'less government.' Our message took an hour to recite."

The explanations ran on and on and on.



A curious duality dominates the way President Clinton handles bad news or defeat. In public, even with just a handful of intimate staff or advisers, he appears to deflect blame easily. Even in private, he says that when something goes wrong, it is someone else's fault. On the train trip to the Democratic convention in 1996, he snapped at a reporter who was asking about welfare reform. That night he told me over the phone, "My damn staff is scheduling me so tightly, every minute of every day, that I don't get enough sleep. Anytime I look up, somebody's putting a camera or a mike in my face. No wonder I was so tired that I almost took that reporter's head off."

But I learned by my close association with him as he coped with the two major defeats of his life, those of 1980 and 1994, that he doesn't really blame others for his own errors. Bill Clinton savages himself for his mistakes. He doesn't articulate his responsibility because his mind is so filled with self-criticism. This brutal self-criticism became evident in 1980 and again in 1994, when he explored his own failings and concluded that he faced permanent political defeat.

Clinton has a knack for sensing danger. When he believes things are going badly or feels the need to change course, he complains loudly to anyone who will listen. Invariably, he predicts disaster and continues in this vein until he feels the situation is getting under control. At such times, he exhibits anxiety, restlessness, even insomnia. Sometimes he becomes ill.

He is almost always on target in his analysis of danger. Many of us will not speak of a difficulty unless we have a clear idea of how to solve it. We find it too threatening to recognize a danger before we can articulate, even if only to ourselves, a route of escape. Not Clinton. Before he has any idea of what to do to solve a problem, he emphasizes the looming adversity. He doesn't immediately suggest ways out but simply complains and in this way sometimes finds an answer to his dilemma.

His awareness of danger sets those around him scurrying for ways to deal with the difficulty. They also serve to mobilize his own thoughts.

Together, the results usually point to a so-

Once he perceives it.

In early December I based my argument on my strategy for r... I based my argumen... monly assumed that failures. I think they become vulnerable... Their mandate runs... for voting for them.

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Clinton was intrig... tecedents. He cited th... Iran-contra hearings

Then our discussion turned to the First Lady. My polling showed clearly that Bill and Hillary were locked in a sort of zero-sum game. The more powerful she seemed, the weaker he seemed. The voters who protested Hillary's power, telling our pollsters, "Who elected her?" were the same ones who five minutes later described the president as "weak, wishy-washy, ineffective."

I urged that Hillary withdraw from overt participation in White House staff meetings and politics so that the impression of secret hidden power not sap her husband's image and undermine perceptions of his strength. But I did not feel Hillary Clinton should be silent. That would be a big mistake. The more often people heard Hillary speaking out for her beliefs, the better they would like her. They needed to see Hillary *in public* so they wouldn't spend their time morbidly imagining what she was doing *in private*.

It took a seventeen-year relationship with the Clintons to allow me to give advice so frankly. Obviously, one of Bill Clinton's problems was the public image of Hillary Clinton. Normally, a consultant would hesitate before addressing a president about the First Lady. But I knew I didn't have to be careful. Both the president and Hillary wanted the best advice I could give. The more candid the better.

President Clinton is deeply supportive of Hillary. He believes in his soul that she is one of the best people he knows and is unshakably of the opinion that she can do no wrong. He makes no concessions at all to the claims of many Americans that she is untrustworthy. But he and she are willing to listen endlessly to practical advice about how she should handle herself and what missteps she might be making.

Generally, I gave such advice directly to the president, who then passed it along to the First Lady. He would dispassionately note what I was urging, usually without comment, and tell Hillary about it later. Unfortunately, Hillary took the advice too much to heart and stopped attending the weekly strategy meetings. She never came to one after January of 1995. I missed her. Her input was always helpful, and she is a sound, practical thinker.

The president was not at all sorry to see Hillary absent herself from the White House political and strategy meetings. He just switched to asking her advice in private. He routinely took to Hillary each week's written "agenda" (a summary of the polling data and advice on strategy, and she read every word. I know they talked at length about it in private, because she showed intimate familiarity with every bit of it.

2. Present a Democratic way of achieving this agenda. Cut the deficit not by slashing programs Republicans urge [cutting] but by protecting the programs people need and Democrats value and cutting the others. Reform welfare in a way that helps welfare recipients move up, not which punishes them. Use Gore's [reinventing government] program to cut the public sector's size rather than [doing] the wholesale dismantlement Republicans urged.
3. Use executive branch actions to show leadership in a positive direction. Develop an executive-order strategy to move the country forward that is not dependent on Congress.
4. Use foreign policy situations to demonstrate your strength and toughness to the American people. Show by your actions in foreign situations, where you have control unfettered by Congress, that you are in charge and the boss.
5. Don't add to the damaging perception that you have flip-flopped on issues. It is never worth the price. If we've said something before, we're bound by it. We won't change it. The American people aren't against you because of your positions nearly so much as because of their perception of weakness and indecision. Don't ever, ever change your mind.

At each point in this presentation, he would interrupt and describe his vision of what I was discussing. After my point about moving toward the goals of the Gingrich agenda but using progressive means of reaching them, he alluded to his success in achieving the conservative goal of raising Arkansas's education standards not just by testing teachers' competence but also by insisting on a big raise in teachers' pay.

He said that his administration had done a poor job of making sure that important executive actions by the Cabinet agencies were announced at the White House level. He suggested that Bill Curry be placed in a position to harness these initiatives so they were seen as his initiatives, not just those of Cabinet members. I supported the idea, but made it clear that I needed Curry to work directly with me to implement the entire strategy, not just a piece of it.

When we came to the part about not flip-flopping, Clinton agreed strongly. For months afterward, any position anyone proposed on an issue could be killed if there was evidence that we had taken the opposite position in the past. "If we never flip-flop again," I said, "there's an even chance we can get this perception down by '96, but just one will bring it all back."

Then our discussion clearly that Bill a The more powerful protested Hillary were the same on "weak, wishy-was

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The president w the White House p asking her advice i written "agenda" (a and she read every because she showed

chaired by him or by Erskine Bowles, with George and me in leading roles. This meeting served as a good way to coordinate the work of the other staffers, most of whom did not attend the strategy meetings.

When the post of White House communications director became vacant in the early summer of 1995, I worked hard to get Don Baer the job. It was very important that I have an ally who could run it without friction and could keep our message on target.

The president was willing, but the First Lady had her own ideas. In August, she called me at my weekend house. She was pushing Ann Lewis, the director of Planned Parenthood and a longtime friend of hers, for the position. She invited me to meet with Ann, herself, and the rest of her staff to discuss it.

Although Hillary and I had reestablished relations via the telephone in May, this was my first invitation to a meeting since the swimming pool mess. I eagerly accepted.

Hillary's crowd was at the meeting in the White House solarium, which served as unofficial headquarters for the girls' club, as she called her advisers. The room is airy and light and decorated with beautiful floral fabrics, which give it a more modern feel than can be found in the rest of the building, with its eighteenth-century furniture. With Hillary were Maggie Williams, her chief of staff; Melanne Verveer, the First Lady's friend since school and her issues director; and Ann Lewis. Mrs. Clinton was clad in a gray workout suit with tennis sneakers and no socks. She wore no makeup, and her hair was pulled back in a ponytail.

I appealed to the group for an alliance. I knew that "the boys," as they called Panetta, Ickes, and Stephanopoulos, had cut them out as surely as they had cut Gore's people out. "If we work together, we can turn things around and give the president a chance to win," I said.

Hillary complained that her people had no way of getting information about the staff's plans for the president. She was harshly critical of "the boys" for screwing things up, and she spoke vehemently about their lack of political savvy.

I said that I had always believed that Ickes was her person (the relationship between Harold and Susan Thomases had suggested it).

"He's not mine," Hillary said with a grin and added that she had privately "tried to get a few good people" into the White House staff but couldn't. She had urged Mike McCurry's selection as press secretary and for Bowles's elevation from director of the Small Business Administration to deputy chief of staff. Both were excellent choices, and I said so.

I promised that "whatever we'll do it together."

One outgrowth of this was Hillary's happening, and it was as much a reaction from her.

As for Lewis, she wanted to have a keen sense of being indebted to her for her behalf during the crisis. I feared that Lewis would be a disaster.

In view of the press, I suggested that while Don Baer played a ground role, Ann Lewis would handle the political charges. I was sure no mistakes would be made.

McCurry was a political quester, a press secretary, and their respective new message.

Maggie Williams was Maggie Williams. Maggie is more for getting her issues and political.

I had essentially formed an alliance among liberal Democrats and the First Lady, dealing with

I promised the closest coordination with "the girls" and made clear that "whatever I'm doing, you'll know about it, we'll talk about it, and we'll do it together."

One outgrowth of this new alliance was that I began to meet privately with Hillary about every other week, to keep her posted on what was happening, answer her questions, and address her concerns. I felt she was as much my client as her husband was, and I needed to get instructions from her as well as from him.

As for Lewis, I felt she was grandmotherly but shrewd. She seemed to have a keen instinct for power and handled herself well. Hillary was indebted to her for her stand-up role in speaking out on the First Lady's behalf during the Whitewater scandals of the previous two years. I gathered that Lewis had had to leave Planned Parenthood and needed a job.

In view of Ann's ability as a spokesperson and her skill with the press, I suggested that she be *campaign* director of communications while Don Baer take the White House job, which is more of a background role. As the campaign press person, Lewis would deal with political charges and countercharges and could do what she did best: make no mistakes with aggressive reporters.

McCurry welcomed having someone to whom he could refer overtly political questions that he felt he should not address as White House press secretary. It worked out well, and both Lewis and Baer did well in their respective roles. Baer became my main collaborator in crafting a new message for the White House.

Maggie Williams and Melanne Verveer and I also worked closely. Maggie is motherly and kind with a gentle manner but a sharp instinct for getting her boss to hear new ideas. Melanne had a good sense of issues and policy and we collaborated on many issues.

I had essentially formed an alliance of the principals, but I had also formed an alliance of the outsiders. It is odd to call the president an outsider among his own staff. But like the vice president and Hillary, he remained often in disagreement with his staff, who marched to the beat of the liberal Democrats in Congress. The president, the vice president, and the First Lady were my key allies, united in their frustration with dealing with "the boys" of the White House staff.

mer New York City cop—helped bring a raw, cutting emotional power to the advertising. Penczner, a mild, restrained, polite southerner, came from the world of country-music MTV, where he had produced videos for the Allman Brothers, Garth Brooks, and many others. Penczner brought us ideas that were well outside the mainstream of political advertising.

In Arkansas, Clinton and I had written most of his ads, and I had supervised the production of the spots, working closely with David Watkins of Little Rock. Now the president was not enthusiastic about Squier's firm. Clinton said he liked Squier, but was not especially impressed by his work. The First Lady was downright opposed to hiring him and echoed objections brought to her attention by Susan Thomases, who felt that Squier would take public credit for every successful move in the campaign and disappear from view if things turned bad.

I could not resolve the Squier situation through Erskine Bowles and confronted the president directly in a rare daytime Oval Office meeting. Clinton said he was grateful to the media creator Frank Greer, who had helped him in 1992. "Frank got screwed because he wouldn't talk to the press, so he let the other people who did my advertising in 1992 leak on him and knock him. Frank never answered in kind, and I feel I owe him." He wanted Greer to buy the media time, a function Squier was supposed to handle. I told him I would work only with Squier.

I was determined to avoid the chaos that had dominated the Clinton advertising effort in 1992, where media creators fought one another and every decision was a struggle. I wanted total control or none. I wouldn't take a middle position.

Clinton likes to divide his advisers so that he can understand which issues are truly important by watching the splits and cracks when they clash. These "seams" let him step in and take control, something he could not do in a homogeneous operation.

Greer is an ideological liberal, closely allied with Ickes. I did not want to see even part of the paid-media operation fall under Ickes's influence. I pointed out that we had decided to fire Greer in the 1990 Arkansas gubernatorial race because he wasn't following our guidance and gave us ads that we didn't want. "Let's not have to fire somebody twice," I said.

"But he did a great job buying media for me in '92; he got it very cheaply, cheaper than you guys can."

I was inflexible. "Either you let me have my team intact, as is, or you build your own without me. We can't have the factionalism of 1992. Media must be consistent, and it can't be with a patchwork team."

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In that prediction, I would turn out to be wrong. It wasn't until the spring of '96—a year later—that the hunter-gatherer groups formed, and it was every Republican for himself. Until then, the Republicans were determined to stick together, a determination that I badly underestimated. But I was right in predicting that their proposed budget would be the object of derision across the nation. I simply underestimated the capacity of the Republican party to stick to an unpopular position as it became more and more disliked by the public. I underestimated the capacity of Gingrich and Dole for political suicide.

Panetta and Stephanopoulos, normally Ickes's allies, intervened on my side to tilt the consensus toward going ahead with the advertising, but Erskine Bowles properly insisted that we project how much we wanted to spend through the end of the year rather than budget one week at a time. "What we had been doing," he complained, was "no way to run a business."

We agreed on a ten-million-dollar budget for the balance of 1995.

No president had ever advertised even remotely this far in advance of an election and none had used issue-advocacy ads, intended not to urge his reelection, but focus on the budget issues before Congress. Ten million dollars was about equal to what most presidents or candidates for the presidency spent on media ads for the entire primary season, from Iowa through the convention—yet here we were spending it on issue ads more than a year before the election year even began. I am sure I irritated everyone by repeating that if we spent money on ads, our polling numbers on the issues would rise, and those better numbers would generate more money. The president had seen this exact thing happen in our Arkansas days, but the numbers now showed one zero more than he was used to seeing.

Clinton complained bitterly at having to raise this much money. "You don't know, you don't have any remote idea," he said to me, "how hard I have to work, how hard Hillary has to work, how hard Al has to work to raise this much money." He didn't mean phone time. He rarely, if ever, had to pick up the telephone, as president, and ask for a campaign donation. But he did mean work. To raise a million dollars, he usually had to attend a massive fund-raiser, most often outside Washington, and shake hands with hundreds and hundreds of people.

Eileen and I went to a few of these events—paying our own way—and watched the trial by handshake as it grimly unfolded. We usually waited at the end of the receiving line since we were not eager to displace the customers. We stood—as Clinton had to—for hours while he shook each

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way. The Democrats relied upon the same deception to convince their constituents that the choice is raising taxes or deferring a balanced budget. What they really want to postpone are cuts in politically less popular programs that are equally essential to *their* political base, such as housing and energy subsidies, community development, legal-services aid, summer jobs, and job training.

Voters didn't believe that Democrats, Clinton included, wanted to balance the budget. At our May 16, 1995, strategy meeting, I said that on the budget, our polls showed that we had created a clear impression: "They believe you oppose a balanced budget," I explained. "You submitted a budget in deficit, oppose the balanced-budget amendment, and attack Republican plans to balance the budget. If it talks like a duck, walks like a duck, and looks like a duck, it's a duck. Voters think Clinton is a tax-and-spend liberal."

The White House staff was almost united in opposing a speech recommending a balanced budget. Except for Erskine Bowles, Bill Curry, Don Baer, and domestic adviser Bruce Reed, all others said no. "Just when we have the Republicans on the ropes," they argued, "why should we let them off by proposing cuts of our own?" The staff warned that senior citizen groups would turn on us since a balanced budget would have to include some cuts in Medicare. George Stephanopoulos said, "We'll lose our moral traction on this issue."

I replied that we could differentiate between our cuts, which required providers to lower their costs—and the Republican cuts—requiring fewer services or higher premiums for beneficiaries.

Opponents of the balanced-budget speech said that voters wouldn't take the president's proposals seriously because they obviously wouldn't pass. I countered that these proposals were a necessary definition of how we were different from both orthodox Democrats and Republicans. Triangulation, I said, was the key to winning the election.

Panetta and Stephanopoulos were particularly vigorous in arguing that such a speech would split us off from congressional Democrats. "They will go ballistic on the Hill," George predicted accurately. "They'll never forgive you," he added inaccurately.

But the president was inclined to give the speech. He felt uneasy without an alternative. He keenly felt his own irrelevance. "I can't just sit here passively and not play a role in this debate. I have to get into the argument. But until I have a plan, I can't join the debate." He was sure that the budget could be balanced without his core budget priorities being cut.

Vice President Clinton, he said, was the way to progress.

I reached for the phone. I asked for Stephanopoulos. He came back on the line. I told him off with a usually have my conversation. I was worried about strongly that. "I think get." "I think get." "We just can't get to be on the line."

Still the president needed a full speech.

I argued that a certain date.

He rejected the alternative but the exemption. "As for your staff, your speech, it will be a prime-time affair. You get the credit. It might not be the way it happens."

The president before he made a decision. He never seen him look at the mirror. He seen "See," I would row—and the president.

The president stars aren't as lower down." "less all the speech."

Vice President Gore backed a balanced-budget proposal. Without one, he said, we would have no standing in the current debate and no way to prove our fiscal moderation to swing voters.

I reached out to Hillary, drawing on our newly restored relationship. I asked for her help in convincing the president to resist the Panetta-Stephanopoulos line. In the years in Arkansas, Hillary was often my back channel when I wanted Clinton to do something but had turned him off with my nagging. Always pragmatic and shrewd, she would usually have come to some conclusion on her own, and would welcome my conversion to *her* position. This time was no exception. While she worried about the risks of alienating the Democratic left, she felt strongly that her husband had to speak out and advocate a balanced budget. "I think we've got to do this," she said in her usual emphatic style. "We just can't be left out of this debate. We've got to get into it. We've got to be on the map, to take a position."

Still the president hesitated to pull the trigger. He complained that he needed a full plan before he could possibly speak to the nation.

I argued that he could indicate his intention to balance the budget by a certain date, provide general numbers, and get on with it.

He rejected that: "I won't have any credibility if I don't present a full alternative budget." What worried me about this was the risk of pre-emption. "As you sit there and write your damn budget," I protested, "your staff will leak each cut day by day. By the time you give the speech, it will all have been covered, and the networks won't give you a prime-time address to the nation. It will be old news and you'll never get the credit you deserve." I added that my dire prediction of leaks might not be accurate; "It's just," I said intemperately, "that it has always happened before."

The president's determination to fill in all the lines of a full budget before he made a proposal to the nation reflected his intellectual style. He never sees concepts or wholes; he sees collections of detail. When he looks at the night sky, the president doesn't see a slice of the universe. He sees random stars. I would point out the constellation Orion. "See," I would say, "there's the belt—those three stars over there in a row—and there's his elbow, and those two stars are his legs."

The president would then quibble: "That can't be a belt; the three stars aren't arranged in a straight line; look how the middle star is a bit lower down." His perfectionism makes generalities hard to reach, unless all the specifics are arranged in exactly the right way.

ican electorate watched the speech in full. Had it run only on the nightly news, only about a quarter of the electorate would have seen it, and only for a minute.

The final preparations for a Bill Clinton speech are not orderly. The president futzes with each draft line by line. On June 13, 1995, as we prepared to go on the air, we went through it once more an hour and a half before airtime. Squier, Stephanopoulos, Baer, Curry, Howles, Panetta, and three or four others including myself crowded into the small vestibule off the Oval Office, where the president sat at a tiny desk near the door, pen in hand, still going over the speech. Another dozen aides gathered in the hallway outside the open door, trying to get in, to hear, to comment.

The president read each word for the tenth time. He thought he ought to be clearer still on the difference between his Medicare cuts on payments to providers of service—doctors and hospitals—and Republican cuts, which would force co-payments and higher premiums on beneficiaries.

Don Baer and I took the draft, cut and pasted it, and entered the alterations on a computer at forty minutes before airtime. Then came the phone call: Hillary had some ideas to add. I knew immediately that this was a test of our relationship. She had been instrumental in the birth of this speech, and now she wanted to see whether I would act like "one of the boys" and refuse to include the changes she wanted. As it happened, her proposed changes were excellent. She wanted, for example, more elaboration of the additional health benefits—mammograms and Alzheimer's care—that we proposed to add to Medicare. But even if her suggestions had been drivel, I would have gladly battled for their inclusion. I had waited five months to resume my relationship with the First Lady, and I was not about to blow it again.

At delivery minus twenty-five minutes, we gave the president a clean draft. I pointed out Hillary's changes, and he nodded. Instead of scripping up the pages and striding confidently into the Oval Office for five or six rehearsals, as I expected him to do, he sat down again, took out his pen, and made more changes. Finally, Bob Squier had had enough. "Mr. President," he said in his best it's-past-your-bedtime tone, "the speech is fine, fine. You just need time to get your act together and run through it a few times."

I chimed in: "Sir, no changes are nearly as important as rehearsal. You're not just the author of the speech, you're the one who has to deliver it too."

When he asked me to support his promotion, I declined: George was a colleague—a valued one—but not my ally, we both knew it.

In late November, when the president named his former deputy press secretary, Evelyn Lieberman, to succeed Bowles, I was astounded. Lieberman and I hadn't had much to do with each other, and I was under the impression that she was very close with Ickes (I later learned that she was closer to Hillary than anyone). In fact, Evelyn turned out to be warm and helpful to me most of the time. But I didn't know that in November. What I knew was that she was no Erskine Bowles and not likely to be my ally on critical matters.

I also learned that plans were afoot to name as campaign manager Kevin Thurm, an Ickes protégé and, I was told, a former college roommate of George's. My encirclement now seemed complete.

Evelyn Lieberman's appointment was announced immediately before one of our weekly strategy meetings in the Map Room of the White House residence. The meeting went well enough, but before it was over, I handed the president an angry note: "I just don't get how you expect me to do my job when you keep appointing people who have exactly the opposite strategic and political worldview from yours and mine." It was this note that triggered the president's explosion.

As I recovered from the unexpected sting of the president's 1995 explosion, I pondered Clinton's words. I couldn't understand his accusation that I had made Vice President Gore my "employee." It was true that I worked closely with Gore. I may at times have come close to being *his* employee, but certainly the reverse was not true! The president may have been referring to my frequent dependence on the vice president to press my views on him during their weekly lunch meetings. It became evident that he resented being lobbied this way.

It is true, as the president had noted, that I had fought hard to hire Squier to do our ads. And I'm glad I did. Those were the ads that had brought us within sight of victory. His ideas often led to friction but this hardly accounted for the president's eruption, which implied an entirely contrary view from mine of the White House operation.

At eleven P.M., hours after I had returned to Connecticut that December 7, the president called to apologize. He was surprised that I had gotten home "so fast." I said anything was possible when you really want to "get the hell out of town." Eileen sat at my side as I poured my soul out to the president. I had never spent a lot of time bothering him with complaints about his staff, but at that moment, I did.

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In following the values agenda, the president was really treading a path the First Lady had mapped out years before, with her focus on children's issues, women's concerns, and education. Her book, *It Takes a Village*, presaged many of the issues Clinton raised in the speech.

The public was tired of the budget battle and I had little difficulty in persuading the president that we should change the subject. Clinton was surprised at first when I urged him to spend only a few moments in his State of the Union Address on the budget, but soon realized this was wise. People were bored by it.

I had more difficulty emphasizing values over economic issues. Ever since the New Deal, the economy had been the basis of the Democratic party. For Democrats to run on social-values issues, as opposed to economic concerns, was like feeding the donkey peanuts and the elephant hay.

But polling showed that 65 percent of voters thought that "values" issues such as crime, school discipline, TV violence, and curbs on tobacco advertising were the most important. Only 30 percent felt economic issues like wages, benefits, jobs, wage stagnation, and imports were more important. The polling also showed we already had the votes of those who felt the economic issues were important—they were our base. But we were still losing among those who gave values preference. They were the voters we had to persuade.

Over the months, the focus of the administration shifted more and more to values and away from the traditional economic arena.

In the end, the values agenda succeeded in laying out a new plan of action for the country, one that America focused on during the months before the election. But deciding what ideas to promote and how to present them was not easy in the Clinton White House.

I wanted us to address the values agenda three or four times a week. First, though, we had to identify through polls which values were important to Americans. Once the president gave his approval, we developed concrete proposals to support each value with government action. Then came the hard part: getting our proposals approved by the relevant agencies and White House staffers. After that, we'd have to schedule an event at which the president could speak. We'd review the issue with press secretary Mike McCurry so he could underscore its importance to the press.

Each issue presented unique problems. Here are a few:

Handguns and Domestic Violence Tom Freedman showed me legislation being introduced in Congress by Senator Frank Lautenberg

sated by noting that we would have to publicize the high-tech gear the president would be using on his vacation.

Clinton was not happy. This was carrying things too far. "Can I golf?" he asked in a question dripping with sarcasm. "Maybe if I wear a baseball cap?" he bargained.

"You're going to golf anyway," I answered glumly.

He began to pose hypotheticals. "What if I hike, set up my campsite, and go fishing but I don't catch anything? Will that be OK?"

I deserved the ribbing. This advice was the ultimate in carrying polling to a mindless extreme. Nevertheless, on his vacation he did camp in a tent. He did hike in the national parks. But, damn, he also golfed! No wonder at this stage we were still behind Dole!

"That's the first vacation I've taken that didn't help me in the polls," Clinton said irritably upon his return. "The first one. After all my *other* vacations, I've always risen a point or two. *This* vacation I didn't go up at all." He was rubbing in that I had gone too far with my poll-driven advice and I took his complaints in good spirits.

But, I felt, he was also bitter about the way his public life had intruded on his private time, especially his time with Chelsea. I heard more than sarcasm in his complaints; I heard pain, and I regretted having contributed to it.

Also in the interests of maintaining the president's populist image, I tried to keep him away from Hollywood and the jet set. In 1996, he and Hillary were invited to Martha's Vineyard for the wedding of their longtime Hollywood friend Mary Steenburgen, formerly of Arkansas, and Ted Danson of *Cheers*. At a meeting with Panetta I groaned when I heard about this. Leon helpfully suggested that it was hurricane season and maybe the president wouldn't be able to fly up there. Then Stephanopoulos and I began plotting. But there was no way to talk Hillary out of it. I tried and got burned in the process. "We're their friends, and we're going," she said.

We did succeed in limiting the time they were on the Vineyard and arranged to follow the visit with a trip to the Boston area and with a statement about protecting police officers. I also asked Hillary's advance people to try to avoid photos of the president or First Lady with any of the many film stars present.

Leon's meteorological instinct worked the best. There was, indeed, a hurricane. The storm didn't stop the Clintons from going to the wedding, but it did force their early return. Coverage of the wedding was all but drowned out by the focus on Hurricane Opal.

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During the president's 1996 vacation in the Rockies Clinton called me and asked, "I want to take Chelsea rafting. She really likes it. Do you think it's OK?"

"Is it dangerous?" I asked. I didn't know what he was getting at.

"No, there's no danger," he said, "but do you think they'll make a joke of it?"

I was dense, but then I got it. "You mean about white-water rafting?" I ventured.

"Yeah."

"No sir, go rafting. Even if they joke about it, they'll have to write that you went rafting, and that will be good for you politically."

Chelsea is as unaffected by her parents' status as it is possible for a president's daughter to be. She has a clear sense of herself, of who she is, and she marches to her own beat. For virtually her entire life, she has been either a governor's daughter in a small state where the governor is the center of attention or the president's daughter. Yet there is no trace of conceit, arrogance, or class consciousness about her. She knows that her status is temporary and that it is based on her parents' achievements, not her's. She knows that she'll have to make her own way in the world when all this is over.

I have known her since she first trotted into our meetings at the Arkansas governor's mansion. She had beautiful curly blond hair. As a teenager, she is good-natured, smart, and mannerly. When I called the president at the White House residence and she answered the phone, she always dutifully checked to see whether her father could come to the phone, and she took down messages precisely.

During a meeting I was having with the president in 1993, she and a friend burst into the Oval Office, soaking wet. As a Secret Service guard trudged after the pair, Chelsea excitedly announced, "We were kayaking and we capsized."

The president laughed at the sight of his bedraggled daughter and corrected her firmly but nicely. "Are you going to say hello to Mr. Morris?" he asked.

The Secret Service man did not appear amused.

During Christmas week in 1995, I had an appointment to see the president in the White House residence for a political chat, and I asked permission to bring our niece, Katie Maxwell, with me to meet the president. Hillary was delighted.

Katie, a fourteen-year-old all-American-kid-type child, entered the residence with me, and together we waited in the Map Room for the

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president, who silently, almost unnoticed, wandered in. He comes into a room like that. You assume his every entrance will be announced by bands and drums, but it isn't. He is quiet and unobtrusive. He doesn't call out to those in the room to attract their attention to him; he just enters and waits to see what's going on and to be noticed.

Katie almost bumped into him, startled to see the president standing there smiling. He seemed smitten with Katie's charm—it's hard not to be—but he soon turned to leave the room, saying he'd be right back with us. A few minutes later, Hillary came in, looking radiant. I introduced Katie, explaining that since Eileen and I have no children together, Katie is the closest thing.

Hillary insisted on introducing Katie to Chelsea, who was making bread with a machine she had been given for Christmas. Katie effortlessly joined in, having used such a machine at home. A friend of Chelsea's joined them and they all baked bread together for the hour or so I spent with the president.



Chelsea's unpretentious manner very much mirrors her father's. Recently I visited a former client whose ego was the opposite of Clinton's. In addition to offering me a Coke, he insisted that I endure a lecture on his life, showing off one by one all the pictures on the wall of him with famous people and all the trophies and awards he had ever received. Visiting Bill Clinton, you have none of that. He never gives anyone the sense that he feels he is anybody important. He doesn't deprecate himself, but he just lets the fact that he's president speak for itself, and he moves on to other subjects. Lyndon Johnson once replied to a soldier's statement that "the president's helicopter is over there" with the comment, "They're all my helicopters, son." Not Bill Clinton.

Often he said of an official duty, it's "something I have to do because I'm president," distinguishing Clinton the man from the presidency. He doesn't resent the ceremonial aspect of his job—much of it he enjoys—but he knows that it's the job, not him, that commands attention. He doesn't, as Churchill once accused someone of doing, let his brains go to his head. Humility is Clinton's least recognized virtue.

Instead of a taste for pomp, Clinton has a morbid appetite for criticism. Although sensitive to partisan attacks, he wants criticism from people he meets and feels insecure unless he gets it. This is partly a legitimate need for feedback, to help him understand his shortcomings.

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But much of it reflects insecurity. Unless you bounce criticism back to him, he can't locate you on his radar. Until he knows what you *don't* like about him, he doesn't feel that you *like* him at all.

Don Baer never got from Clinton the credit he deserved for his speechwriting or for his subsequent direction of the overall communications effort. The president never was at ease with Baer and only reluctantly, after much badgering, did he agree to promote him to director of communications. After Baer took that job and organized the White House message operation, Clinton still never praised him or made any effort to get to know him personally. I told Don that I thought this was because Baer never criticized Clinton to his face.

At an Oval Office meeting about the '96 campaign, Baer presented a concise, well-structured, and effective draft stump speech to the president. Clinton read through it and then talked about all the other things he was thinking of that day that might go into the speech. I was about to say that his stump speeches lacked discipline and that he should focus on the speech text Baer had given him. Instead, Baer jumped in, trying to please the president, and instead of defending the excellent speech he'd just presented, offered to include all of Clinton's meandering thoughts in a revised version. I watched the president's face as Baer spoke. It reflected the feeling that Don had caved in too easily, that he should have stood his ground. Clinton wants to be challenged. Subordinates who give way unnerve him.

If in the first five minutes after you meet Clinton, you don't mention something he's done wrong, you've lost him. He's bored by what he's doing right. But he'll try to fool you. He'll come on bright-eyed and eager and tell a story about how well he did in this debate or that speech. Don't let him con you, the answer he's looking for is, "The speech was pretty good, but I didn't like the part where you . . ."



One of the more memorable moments of the president's 1995 vacation took place on August 16, when Senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey announced that he would retire from the Senate at the end of his term. There was speculation that he was planning to run as an independent for president or challenge Clinton in the primaries. He left both options open—though I didn't think he would do either, especially since he had barely defeated an underfunded Christie Todd Whitman in his last race. For some weeks, he allowed the speculation to continue, probably to emphasize his condemnation of Washington politics.

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But then Gingrich or Armev speaks up, and he pulls his head in like a turtle and says nothing. He really lets those guys run him."

Clinton believed Dole was manipulated by his Senate caucus and really stood for nothing on his own. Clinton saw Dole as Clinton's detractors saw Clinton: wishy-washy, indecisive, unwilling to take stands. Clinton felt he was more decisive than Dole was. "I make decisions. I take stands: Bosnia, balanced budget, affirmative action," Clinton ticked them off. "Dole is all over the map. He was for banning assault weapons, but now he's not. He was for affirmative action, but now he's not. He used to be for a constitutional amendment on abortion; now he's not sure. Once he hated supply-siders; now he's running with one. But they say *I'm* the flip-flopper. I just don't get it."

During the budget debates, the president did not dislike Bob Dole. He saw Dole as a professional trying to score points. He seemed to feel that if Dole were left to his own devices, without the burden of running for president, the two of them would manage a budget deal in a few hours. I think he initially regarded his opponent as a fair and decent man.

But the accusations against Hillary in the Whitewater affair made Clinton a harsher partisan than he had been before. When the blows became very personal, he responded by vilifying the Republicans, including Dole.

President Clinton eventually believed—or persuaded himself—that Bob Dole was evil. After Elizabeth Dole's memorable praise of her husband at the Republican National Convention, he felt the Kansas senator was getting a free ride and he worried that I was unwilling for him to attack Dole often or vehemently enough. While on vacation in Wyoming, he screamed into the phone at me, "He's an evil, evil man." I envisioned his face contorting as he slowly pronounced the word—*eee-vvv-illl*. "He *likes* cutting food stamps. He *likes* it. He enjoys [*en-joooyyys*] cutting Medicare. He *relishes* slashing education. He *loves* cutting immigrants. It's how he gets his kicks. This is not a good man. This is an *eee-vvv-illl*, *eee-vvv-illl* man."

At first, I think he liked Gingrich. He saw Newt as an intellectual soul mate with whom it was fun to match wits. He looked forward to talking with Gingrich and often came back from their calls with a shy smile on his face. Leon and George were afraid that between his relationship with Gingrich and mine with Lott, Clinton would sign a budget deal not to the administration's advantage.

But by the end of '95, after Gingrich practically ordered his committee chairmen (no need to say chairpeople, there were no women) to in-

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that the president was helping them raise their children the "right" way influenced their votes more than abstract observations about the president's character. "When you first hire someone to work for you," Penn said, "you look carefully at his résumé. But when he's been on the job for four years, you look at his job performance." Did Clinton duck the draft? Who cares? The real question is, What kind of a commander in chief has he been? Did he inhale? Well, check out how aggressive he has been as President in fighting drugs. Was his sexual behavior inappropriate? Well, as president, is he fighting to cut teen pregnancy? Does he want curfews for teens? Each of the scandal attacks in other words is seen through the prism of his record as president.

Republicans failed to focus on the fear that Clinton would veer to the left in a second term since he would never have to face the voters again. Our polls showed this was our Achilles heel. Dole tried this argument, but soon reverted to character attacks instead—a bull attacking the cape, not the matador.

I constantly warned that Dole could appropriate our values agenda to defeat us.

I warned Clinton of this at an early-February strategy meeting at which Leon and Mike McCurry had objected to my strategy of launching a new values issue nearly every day.

"It will all be a blur to the press," McCurry said. "Better to load up a big idea and trot one out every week than to do small-bore stuff every day."

I answered that on the day we launched our big shot, a plane might crash or there might be an earthquake or a riot in Bosnia. Such events, I argued, would wipe out our story and kill our entire week.

Leon said the White House was overloaded from having to vet ideas at the pace I was suggesting them. "We're going to make a mistake one of these days," he warned.

I replied that we hadn't made a mistake yet and that our biggest mistake would be to lie back and let Dole steal our issue. "If we go slow," I said, "we leave that much more for Dole to steal. Once the primaries are over, Dole can come to his senses and steal the values issues from us. We'd be dead then if we hadn't already made these issues our turf. We got a good, solid head start with the values agenda in the State of the Union Address, but we have to keep at it each day to retain the edge."

Leon muttered that it was a good thing Lincoln didn't have to conduct the Civil War by the polls.

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Throughout the campaign, I constantly imagined what Dole might do. I would stage an argument with myself to see how vulnerable we would be to a particular strategy that Dole might adopt. As a result I often responded to threats that seemed quite real at the time.

I needn't have worried. During the primaries Dole found that we had preempted traditional Republican messages and his handlers failed to come up with an alternative. His candidacy temporarily fell victim to the two men who had something to say: Pat Buchanan, with his jingoistic isolationism, and Steve Forbes, with his pro-growth flat tax.

Buchanan's revanchist ideas of isolationism and reaction has a continuing but sharply limited appeal among Republicans. I repeated to the president what I had said to him in October 1994, when he was considering invading Haiti, "Racism and isolationism are the two most deadly, poisonous forces in our politics."

We saw that Buchanan's radical agenda could win 20 percent of the vote easily and if he fought hard, as much as 33 percent. But he couldn't get more. The game for Dole was to win the Republican nomination by getting Buchanan one-on-one in the later primaries and forcing the other 67 percent to vote for him as the more moderate candidate.

After Gramm had immolated himself by getting caught in a low-turnout Louisiana caucus contest with Buchanan and Dole, and as Alexander failed to take off, Steve Forbes was the only obstacle in the way of a Dole-Buchanan race.

Forbes's single-idea candidacy was initially attractive in a field of candidates with no ideas of their own. His message stood out because, apart from Buchanan's, it was the only message. Voters respond when the other candidates are saying the same thing and you are saying something different. What you say doesn't even have to be that good; it just has to be different.

What Forbes was saying wasn't that good at all. The flat tax never overcame voters' suspicions that it was a way of lowering taxes for the rich and transferring the burden to the average family. When Forbes then combined his flat tax with a tax cut so as not to transfer the tax load but reduce it, he tripped over the deficit issue and never recovered.

Forbes might have come closer had he kept his wits about him. Instead, he proved fragile—the political glass jaw—vulnerable to a knockout punch. After he finished a close second in Iowa, he was euphoric. But that set him up for disappointment when he finished fourth

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in New Hampshire, where Dole's negative ads destroyed him. He won Delaware and Arizona. This seemed to buoy him, but he had failed to spend money heavily enough and early enough in the later-on states—like Illinois, Michigan, California, and Wisconsin—to win delegates there. He just withdrew. He might have done very well, since Dole's early heavy spending had brought him very near the caps on pre-convention spending set by federal law. This left him with little ability to compete with a strong Forbes media blitz in these big states with so many delegates.

Neither Buchanan nor Forbes could have been forced out of the race in the usual way: by donors withholding money as their prospects dimmed. Buchanan didn't need money to get his message across; his ideas were so outrageous the press publicized them for him. Forbes had his own money. Had he hit Dole in state after state, he would have piled up a large stack of delegates.

Clinton was amused by how Forbes had been "finessed out of running negatives by Dole." The president noted that "Dole was the one running all the negative ads, but he gets on Forbes's case about all the negatives Forbes is running and shames Forbes into pulling the negatives while Dole continues to eat his lunch." Bill Clinton's lesson: if you need negative ads to win, never let yourself be so embarrassed that you quit running them.

Ultimately, Forbes would not have had enough delegates to win anyway because the Republican party's rules are stacked against outsiders. Many states, like New Jersey, select their delegates by district, without even putting the name of the presidential candidate next to the delegates supporting his candidacy. This is done so the well-known politicians in the district (the congressmen, the state legislators, and so forth) will attract voters to their own names as delegates and win no matter whom they are supporting for president. Some states don't even use primaries at all but name their delegates at a state convention—a laydown for the insider. These factors would have stopped Forbes from winning outright or even from denying Dole a majority. But Forbes would have gone to San Diego with a large block of delegates. Not a majority, but a lot.

When Dole faltered, Forbes could have mounted an effort to force him to step aside, citing his ineffectual candidacy. As they gathered in San Diego for their convention in August of '96, the Republicans were so afraid of losing the election with Dole as their nominee that Forbes might have found it possible to cream off enough nervous Dole delegates to win. In any case, Forbes could have inherited the "on deck" slot for 2000 and begun to capture the legitimacy so vital for Republican

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presidential candidates just as the '76 defeat set up Reagan, the '80 defeat set up Bush, and the '88 defeat set up Dole. But Forbes showed that he was an amateur by folding after Arizona and mounting weak efforts in the remaining states.



As the primaries zigged and zagged through Dole's bad days and good days, our strategy sessions were consumed with guessing who would win what. I was wrong as often as anyone else. Bob Squier rightly lectured me to keep my predictions about "other people's races" to myself. "Just get it right in predicting the one he's paying you to predict—Clinton's race," he urged.

In any event, when Dole emerged as the nominee, we entered the campaign with about the same lead we had held ever since the State of the Union Address—seventeen points. Now the task was to hold this lead as Dole launched his campaign.

We waited for the onslaught of Republican issue-advocacy ads. As early as September 1995, the president had been worried that in a massive ad buy, wave after wave of GOP media would drown out our message, overwhelming our one- to two-million-dollar-per-week expenditure. Our worries gave way to incredulity as the Republicans remained off the air throughout the primaries and stayed off the air even after Dole wrapped up the nomination. "Where is their money?" I kept asking. Twice a week, I would nervously call Jamie Sterling, our ad buyer, and ask if there had been "any sign yet" of a Republican buy. Nope. Soon I was calling every day and, by April, even more often.

I'd run out of reasons to explain their inactivity. They had plenty of money they could have spent. Why weren't they?

As the enemy guns remained silent we had the airwaves to ourselves and we used them to highlight legislative issues actually in play in Congress where Dole's and Gingrich's positions were unpopular. Right after Dole clinched the nomination in March, his ratings rose to all-time highs as people decided to learn more about him, now that he was one of the two November finalists. If Dole had shaped an initially positive impression, he would have sustained it throughout the year, but if he acquired negatives, he would be dragged down permanently. By ceding the airwaves to us during this period, the GOP lost whatever chance it may have had to win the election. By the time the Republicans advertised in June, Dole was finished. By then we had locked up the race.

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The opposition had given us twelve months of unanswered, unobstructed access to the airwaves. By the time the Republicans ran their first ad, we had spent about thirty million dollars on issue-advocacy ads without any opposition. Thirty million dollars is about three quarters of the *total* amount of money either Bush or Clinton spent on media in all of 1992, primary and general elections combined.

In December 1994, our polling showed us at only 33 percent of the vote in a two-way contest against Dole. By the end of February 1996, we were at 53 percent against Dole in a two-way race and at 50 percent in a three-way race with Perot. The president ultimately received 49 percent of the vote—about what our polls predicted eight months before the election. For all the ups and downs, the fact is that President Clinton had just about the same share of the vote when Dole got the nomination as he had on election day itself.

The entire Dole campaign, in other words, did not drop Bill Clinton's vote at all.

Yet, whenever we asked specific questions about Clinton—Is he a strong leader? Is he effective? Does he stand up for what is right even if it is unpopular?—his ratings were poor. On average, only about one third of the voters gave the president consistently high marks on these questions, while another third gave him poor ratings. The rest were in the middle. I warned that these ratings were our soft underbelly. But we found that when we measured Clinton against Dole on any of these questions, the president consistently outscored the Republican nominee. "Let's stop running against perfection," I urged. "Let's just run against Dole."

We implemented a strategy of compare and contrast. Developed by Penn and Schoen, the idea was to pit Clinton's legislative-issue positions against Dole's in all our ads so as to make the contrast clear. When measured not against utopia but against a real opponent, Clinton looked quite good.

This idea violated a key part of the conventional wisdom. A president is not supposed to put himself and his opponent in the same ad on the same level. If you are president of the United States, this is thought to be a double error—it means you are giving your opponent stature and downgrading yourself.

Nevertheless, that's exactly what we did. Our ratings rose sharply. Voters may not have found Clinton especially effective, but they found him more effective than the hapless, ad-less Dole—stronger, a better leader, more willing to do what's right, standing more for America's values.

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Meanwhile, we were pouring it on with an intensity born of our conviction that this election would be decided early. "This race will be over by May," I predicted. "After that, not much is going to happen at all. The voters will lock in. A few points here or a few points there. But by May it will set in a pattern. Now, not in the fall, is the real campaign!" I fought, loudly and successfully, the week-by-week battle to stay on the air to highlight the positions that separated us on the questions before Congress. Ickes groaned his disapproval.

Dole's ineffectiveness in the Senate visibly injured his campaign. At first Dole was planning to campaign from his Senate seat. This was a gigantic blunder, as he soon recognized. George Stephanopoulos said it best: "He's campaigning from quicksand." The Democrats used the procedural rules to twist the majority leader into a pretzel. He couldn't get anything passed or even defeat anything as the Democrats tied up the floor with filibusters that required sixty votes to break, and he had only fifty-four.

George explained the press situation to me vividly. "He'll walk up and down the Senate office and cloakroom corridors all day long, and reporters will line up and ask him questions. They'll stick microphones in his face, and he'll answer. We'll pounce on the answer, and that will be the story of the day, not what he wants the story to be." It was like a fraternity hazing, and it worked just as George predicted it would.

As I watched George deftly maneuver the Democratic congressional forces to stalemate Dole on the Senate floor, my admiration grew. He would call every morning to say, "Dole is giving us a gift today," and he would explain what the hapless Republican was planning and how he had arranged to counter the move. Each day it would happen as George had predicted.



Even after I had fought hard and lobbied successfully for Stephanopoulos's inclusion in our strategy meetings, I still had the sense that the president worried that he was leaking to the press. According to White House rumors, Clinton was particularly incensed at what he felt was George's role in helping Bob Woodward with his devastating critique of the first years in the Clinton White House, *The Agenda*. For his part, George vehemently denied hurting Clinton and maintained that his role with Woodward resulted in a far more positive book than would otherwise have been written. I side with Stephanopoulos on this one.

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Earlier, in the autumn of '95, the president had exploded at me over a *Washington Post* story that revealed some of our polling data. I told him that I had not spoken to any press person on or off the record about that insight.

"I know you don't talk to the press," Clinton said, "but you talk and you talk and you talk and you talk, and your words end up in print. You talk to my staff and they talk to the press. It's as bad as if you had called a reporter directly." He asked me whom I had discussed the issue with. I mentioned George and Rahm Emanuel. "You *only* told George and Rahm. Jesus Christ, why didn't you just issue a press release?" the president blustered. "Why didn't you just send it out over the AP wires? You *just* spoke to George and Rahm. Don't you get it, that that's all it takes around here. I don't say anything I don't want to see in print. Were you born yesterday? Do I have to spell it out for you?"

But I am still inclined to think that George didn't leak. At one point, the president asked me to deal directly with Trent Lott to see whether a budget deal was possible. I asked George to provide me with budget data so that I could handle my end of the discussions with the Republican senator. In response, he kept up a flow of helpful and accurate information—and no one ever read about any of this in the papers. I kept the president closely posted both on my talks with Lott and on George's role in providing me with the data.

At a strategy meeting in June of '96, I gave a memo to the president and the vice president commenting on several White House staff members. When we were alone after the meeting broke up, I reviewed these notes with Clinton.

The first comment concerned Gene Sperling, noting how he had ensured that the college-tuition and school-construction initiatives the president wanted survived Laura Tyson's efforts to kill them. "Gene has done a first-class job," the president said, stabbing his finger at Gene's name to make his point. "A first-class job."

Next I complimented Rahm Emanuel on his prodigious efforts to strengthen our crime program, usually in the face of Janet Reno's objections. The president nodded reversing his earlier criticism saying, "Rahm has really come around. He's doing good work."

Next I mentioned that George Stephanopoulos seemed a bit depressed lately and that I felt he sensed that the president didn't fully appreciate his efforts. I said that George's rapid-response efforts were "keeping us in the game," and I urged Clinton to reach out to George.

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Despite his generosity toward Sperling and Emanuel, he was stonily silent at the mention of George's name. He looked at me, with a fixed expression, and kept his mouth tightly closed.

After an awkward silence, I moved on to the last name on my list, David Shipley. I praised his eloquence in speechwriting, citing his work in preparing the president's speeches in Austin on social tolerance and at the service for Ron Brown. Clinton opened his mouth, the lockjaw in remission, and resumed his generous praise. "Shipley has written some of my best speeches," he declared.

Still, the president looked to George as his chief adviser on the White House staff. George attended most of the president's meetings in the Oval Office and usually played the key role—apart from Mike McCurry, of course—in preparing the president for press conferences. The president very much valued George's judgment, and rightly so. It would have been impossible to have turned around Clinton's presidency without the professional skills of George Stephanopoulos.



As April and May unfolded, the president was still trying to get a budget deal and was offering to negotiate with the Republicans anytime. When the question was put to him as he hurried by in a Senate hallway, Dole suggested that he and Clinton sit down, one-on-one, to work it out. At George's suggestion, we accepted the offer; it was what we'd been seeking, and Dole's staff had to backtrack fast.

Dole looked worse each day. He was off stride and off message. He tried to repeal the gas tax Clinton had raised as part of his 1993 deficit-reduction package. This 4.3-cent-per-gallon hike had not meant much while gas prices were low, but after the oil scarcity and price increases of the winter and spring of 1996, it looked like a big bite to the motorist. Seizing on a tax issue, Dole trumpeted his desire to repeal the tax. We answered that he had voted for increases of more than ten cents over the years and opposed this one because it had been Clinton's bill.

For once, the Democratic congressional leadership played it perfectly, tacking the minimum-wage increase, a favorite among Democrats, on to the gas-tax repeal. Then, when the Republicans objected to the coupling, the Democrats filibustered and refused to permit any other business to be transacted on the Senate floor until the minimum wage was added to the gas-tax repeal.

The minimum-wage increase was about the only traditional Democrat-versus-Republican issue I found that resonated deeply with the vot-

ers. Although mothers with children were getting something out of it, it meant getting the issue. They and they loved increases voters gave.

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ers. Although most workers would never be affected personally, single mothers who were working for \$4.25 an hour and tried to support their children would benefit. As much as voters abhorred the welfare ethic of getting something for nothing, they disliked the idea of low wages that meant getting nothing for something.

Our polls also indicated that voters were not upset by the gas-tax issue. They knew that Dole was using it to try to get back in the race, and they learned, through our ads, that he had always supported gas-tax increases in the past. Except in the West, where miles add up quickly, voters gave the gas tax only a passing glance.

As the year unfolded, I noticed the difference between issues that appealed to self-interest and those that appealed to the voters' sense of fair play. Once again the conventional wisdom was wrong. It held that the closer an issue got to a voter's pocketbook, the more salient it became. But the opposite proved true. Issues that would directly benefit voters tended to be of less interest to them than those that would help others who needed the help more. It was politically more effective to raise the minimum wage for ten million single mothers and their kids than to cut a few cents off everyone's gas spending.

Clinton got the idea immediately. "It's exactly what I find when I'm out there speaking," he said when I explained the comparison in a May '96 strategy meeting. "They care a lot more about the other person than they do about themselves. It shows what we're made of as a people."

Based on this data, I advised Clinton to hold firm and demand the minimum wage as the price of a gas-tax repeal. Since Dole wouldn't turn his back on his business supporters, the minimum wage stayed down for the moment and the gas tax stayed up.

By mid-May, the president was soaring, with Dole still on the ground. Our ads remained uncontested. Our values agenda was firing up the voters. In May alone the president called for:

- a tax credit for adoption
- funding for AIDS research
- an end to discharges of new mothers within twenty-four hours of giving birth
- a crackdown on teen gangs
- a set of guidelines for corporate responsibility in handling employees
- a teen curfew
- a new program for Vietnam-era victims of Agent Orange
- a new anti-drug strategy

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- emphasis on computer literacy in schools
- approval of the far-reaching Wisconsin welfare-reform plan

While Clinton and I were focused on getting a budget deal—our fruitless quest for the Holy Grail—nothing seemed to move Dole from his determination to run against the deficit rather than cure it, even though the numbers between the two sides on the budget were very, very close.

The money was there for the deal. But there was no agreement because Gingrich, Dole, Gephardt, and Thomas Daschle (the Republican and Democratic leaders of Congress) agreed on only one thing: they wanted the issue for election propaganda—Medicare for the Democrats and the deficit for the Republicans—more than they wanted the problem solved.

Clinton didn't feel that way, nor did Trent Lott, but Lott had no power. Yet.

When Dole left the Senate, it was clear that Trent Lott would take his place as the majority leader. I called my old friend and told him I would do him the favor of staying far out of his way and off his phone while the race was in play. But when Oklahoma senator Don Nickles announced that he would not run for the position, but settle for the number-two job—majority whip—it was clear that Lott had the votes he needed. Only Trent's fellow Mississippian, the senior senator, Thad Cochran, ran against him, out of pure envy that Trent was vaulting over him even though he had been in office ten years longer.

At my next meeting with Gore, he inquired anxiously whether I could find time to help Clinton and him while I was going to be so busy running Lott's campaign for majority leader. My relationship with the vice president had been tense ever since late November, when the president had accused me of making Gore my "employee."

At root, I believe Gore sensed my absorption with Clinton after my January '96 meeting with the president had revived our close relationship. Thereafter Gore saw me as the president's consultant, not his.



Dole's people saw they were in trouble, and Dole saw it most of all. With Dole's dramatic announcement of his resignation from the Senate on May 15, 1996, they regrouped. This stirred the press to wonder if his new role as private citizen heralded a new race. As a result, Dole got four weeks of publicity. At the time of his May announcement and again around his June 11 departure from the Senate, we watched grimly as the

news featured five to ten minutes of praise each night for the senator from his colleagues in both parties. Basking in this adulation during his month-long operatic death scene, Dole must have thought he was moving rapidly up in the polls in response to the outpouring of flattery.

But he forgot something. He forgot to advertise during this period. We responded, in our ads, with a commercial showing moving crates and boxes from Dole's Senate office stacked high on a desk that was adorned only with Dole's nameplate and an old photo of the lonesome senator. The announcer noted that Dole was "quitting the Senate, leaving behind the gridlock he and Gingrich created." In the next scene, Clinton was active and in color, fighting hard to do the unfinished business of America—balancing the budget, reforming welfare, raising the minimum wage—now that Dole had run off to campaign full time. It was a devastating ad conceived by Marius Penczner. It captured all the cynicism of Dole's resignation and his abandonment of the very commitments he promised to meet if he were elected.

Clinton loved it, changing only a few words here and there. But he left the word *quitting* in place. Then, with Memorial Day approaching, Deputy National Security Adviser Sandy Berger called to urge that the word *quitting* be dropped from the spot. "He'll come back surrounded with veterans all around him and say, 'I never quit a fight in my life. Who is draft-dodger Bill Clinton to call me a quitter?'" I told Sandy that we had tested exactly this comeback and that it made no difference in our polling.

Unconvinced, Sandy must have called the president. Early the next morning, Clinton paged me as he traveled to his plane, asking whether the ad had been "shipped out" yet. I told him that it had been but that we could change it at the stations if he really wanted.

"You've got to get the word *quit* out of the ad," he said excitedly, almost breathlessly; "it'll bring up the draft thing, and the ad would be just as good if you used *left the Senate* instead."

I agreed that it wouldn't make much difference but said I didn't think it was a good idea to call attention to it by changing the ad once it was at the stations.

"Well, who cleared the text?" he asked angrily.

"You did," I answered and reminded him that we had played it twice for him two days before, at our strategy meeting.

"Well, it went by too fast for me to catch the word *quit*." He reminded me that an earlier ad had used the *q* word and he had ordered it changed. "Why didn't you listen and do the same thing here?"

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The Scandals of June '96

At the end of May and throughout all of June, the Republicans tried to break Clinton's grip on the race by dominating the news with hearings on scandals concerning Whitewater and the FBI files. I stayed away from the administration's efforts to rebut the scandal stories. It was the one conference call in which I never participated. I used to joke that "my job is to run the pump and the engines, not to patch up the hole people felt there was in the bottom of the boat."

I know nothing about the factual basis of the varied accusations or the lawyers' or administration's strategy in rebutting them. I did give three basic pieces of advice to Clinton in handling Whitewater:

1. As the attacks escalated, I urged him to increase his public focus on the values issues to offset the impact of the negatives.
2. Our polling found that Special Prosecutor Kenneth Starr and congressional hit men Alfonse D'Amato and Bill Clinger were especially vulnerable to the charge that they were trying to discredit the president

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I said that the newspapers were all using the words "Dole quits Senate" to describe what happened.

He hung up distressed.

The ad worked beautifully and largely blunted the impact of the Dole resignation. A few papers talked about the *q* word, and Dole mentioned it a few times, but nothing much came of it.

Still, Clinton would return to the "quit" episode whenever he wanted to show that our ads were less than perfect.



Before the San Diego convention, we had a second Colin Powell scare, this time with speculation that Dole would choose the hero general as his running mate. Our polling showed that this choice would make a considerable difference, as much as seven to eight percentage points for Dole, enough to knock our lead below 10 percent. The president reacted as usual to Powell: with terror.

Penn, Schoen, and I huddled. We tested four or five different approaches to a Powell choice. All but one did little to dent the general's popularity. The exception worked not to hurt Powell but to stop Dole from taking advantage of his popularity. We found that if we contrasted Dole's opposition to affirmative action, handgun controls, and abortion with Powell's support of these issues, Powell would not help Dole's vote at all.

So we composed a sample ad announcing the "great presidential debate of 1996—not the one you think, the debate between Bob Dole and [drum roll] Colin Powell." By noting that it was the president, not the vice president, who made the important decisions, we underscored how little it meant to have a good vice president if you didn't have a good president. Gore would shift uncomfortably in his seat when we made that argument.

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for partisan purposes. I advised Clinton to hammer at the link between Starr and his tobacco clients.

3. I urged the president himself never to mention Whitewater or any of the other supposed scandals and to leave the rebuttals to his lawyers, staff, and spokespeople. By talking about these scandals, he would have identified himself with them. Otherwise, the public would feel they concerned only his staff at most or his wife at worst.

The Whitewater and FBI-file charges and the drumbeat of hearings deeply disturbed the president. Each night's television news dedicated about 40 percent of its time to one or another of the subjects. Tom Freedman recorded a three-to-one ratio of *negative* over positive TV news coverage of Clinton. For Dole, it was the opposite. He got a two-to-one ratio of *positive* coverage in June, the period that included Dole's resignation from the Senate.

In late May and June, Governor Jim Guy Tucker of Arkansas and Jim and Susan McDougal were convicted in Kenneth Starr's first contested Whitewater trial. The president's best friend, White House staffer Bruce Lindsey, was named an unindicted co-conspirator by Starr in the trial of Arkansas banker Herb Branscombe. And to cap off the month, it was revealed that two junior White House staffers, Anthony Maresca and Craig Livingstone, had examined FBI files of prominent Republicans, including former secretary of State James Baker, a violation of their right to privacy.

As Republican congressman Bill Clinger conducted hearings on the matter, the implication was that the files had been studied, at least in part, in an effort to get dirt on Billy Dale, whose dismissal from the staff in 1993 had led to the travel-office scandal. Dale was indicted for financial irregularities in handling the office's affairs but was subsequently acquitted by a jury.

Then Senator D'Amato's committee issued its report attacking the White House for its handling of Whitewater and the investigation of Vincent Foster's suicide.

Next, the press accused Hillary of secretly communicating with the spirit of Eleanor Roosevelt, and a former FBI agent turned author accused the president of womanizing and drug use.

Quite a period.

When the story of Hillary's alleged séances with Eleanor Roosevelt broke, we polled its impact. We found that while 25 percent of America

ing the Tucker slogan on its head, saying, "You can't lead if you're not there."

The ad got lots of laughs and lots of votes. Pryor won handily. After the election, an *Arkansas Gazette* editorial cartoon summarized the campaign theme Clinton and I had designed—the need to show toughness. It was a takeoff on the familiar *Peanuts* cartoon in which Lucy holds a football for Charlie Brown as he fruitlessly attempts a successful kick-off. Before each try, Lucy takes the ball away at the last moment, and Charlie Brown ends up on the ground. But here Charlie Brown has David Pryor's face, and Lucy watches in astonishment as the football soars aloft. She says, "David Pryor, you kicked the ball!"

Pryor's comeback earned me Bill Clinton's respect. My theories seemed to work.



My early career was marked by an emphasis on negative advertising. In the '70s, I was one of the first consultants to use such ads. They mirrored the anger of the times and the public's disappointment with a generation of politicians who had brought on the disasters of Vietnam and Watergate.

In the trenches, I was a necessary evil. But once Clinton had been elected governor, my style seemed undignified. So in 1979, he fired me. Clinton had decided it would be inappropriate for the governor to use the same polling and campaign tactics that had helped him get elected.

He was in an Eagle Scout mode (Boy Scout squared). He probably felt like an Olympic pole vaulter who had just soared twenty feet through the air with the aid of a fiberglass pole. I was the pole, useful for making it over the bar but expendable once it had been cleared.

When he fired me, he said, "You do as well as or better than I do what I do best: politics. And that is an assault on my vanity."

He lost his very next election. His increase in car-license fees, which I had advised against, and his opening of Fort Chaffee to Cuban refugees had combined to put him in a vulnerable position. In the final days of the 1980 débâcle, Hillary phoned Eileen: "We need Dick down here right away. Bill's losing the race badly." I was in Orlando, working hard to elect Paula Hawkins, who would shortly become the first woman in U.S. history ever to be elected to the Senate on her own, without the help of a father or husband who had held the office previously.

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Eileen asked me whether the Clintons' reaching out for me again soothed my hurt at having been fired. It sure did. I hastened to Arkansas, but it was too late. Clinton had let his Republican opponent, Frank White, pound him while he, keeping to the high road, refused to return the fire. By making Clinton the issue, White hadn't needed to prove he could be a better governor; he only had to show that Clinton had done badly. Indeed, my polling showed that few voters thought Clinton would lose, but they were backing White to teach Bill Clinton a lesson: not to ignore their opinion. When we asked whether they would vote for Frank White if doing so meant that Clinton would lose, enough said no to tip the election back to Clinton. But Clinton hadn't wanted to admit that he was in trouble. With only a week left, we couldn't turn it around.

Without a goal, Bill Clinton tends to become disorganized. He ignores political projects that he has planned carefully. His attention span shrinks. He loses focus. His worst trait is a tendency toward intellectual clutter. It causes him to lose track of political priorities, especially if he already lacks a clear goal and a well-planned strategy. It allows him to be easily seduced by the last idea he heard, so that he will meander aimlessly in pursuit of it. It means that when he tries to return to the task at hand, he can't distinguish the core necessities from the irrelevances. The multiplicity of alternatives paralyzes him. But when he recovers enough to shape his strategy, he becomes devastatingly effective.

After the 1980 election, Hillary called again. "Bill needs you right now, and you've got to help him see how he can get his career back on track."

I found him in this state of confusion when I returned, right after election day, to begin a two-year drive to restore him to power. I saw that it would be futile to talk him out of his depression. He seemed so out of place, a big man cramped into a little office in a local law firm, walking out to the corridor to see whether he could borrow a secretary to do his typing for him. Evicted from the spacious governor's mansion, which had been decorated by former governor Winthrop Rockefeller, he and Hillary had rented a small yellow frame house with built-in bookcases and heavy, Germanic furniture. He mentioned that it seemed odd to do his own laundry now, after two years in the mansion. He needed a goal and a game plan to keep him on a straight track. I knew that once he felt the tug of a goal, order and good judgment would return to his life.

Sensing his mood, Hillary had also approached her old friend Betsey Wright, who had served as political director for AFSME—the labor union for government workers—and asked her to manage Bill's 1982

nately, it was not the one I had anticipated. In my next poll, his rating dropped ten points. I feared I had killed Clinton's career. I thought the ad would work, but now he seemed dead because he had listened to me. I flew to Arkansas like a prisoner about to receive his sentence. I met Hillary at the airport, and we drove to a meeting where Bill was speaking. On the way, I told her about the poll but brashly and confidently predicted that he would soon rise again. "It's like getting a smallpox shot," I explained with bravado. "You get a little sick, but you don't get the disease when you are exposed to it for real." I boldly proclaimed that Clinton was now "invulnerable to negative ads" because the voters had heard him apologize and had forgiven him. And I prayed I was right.

As we watched Clinton speak, I said to Hillary, "He could be president." In those days, her eyes and hair were brown, and she wore glasses with Coke-bottle lenses. She looked at me through them and said, "We have to get him elected governor first."

Oh—that!

When Bill finished speaking, I did my routine on him. I must have sounded like the lawyer who had lost his client's case in court but was promising great things on appeal. The Clintons probably didn't believe me but decided to stick around to see what would happen.

Then the gods of politics answered my prayers. Clinton moved up and up and up. His chief primary opponent, his nemesis, Jim Guy Tucker, attacked him on car-tag fees, crime, taxes, schools, and anything else he could think of, but none of it worked. It all just bounced off. Why? "He apologized," voters would tell me in my polls.

Clinton won. As he rolled over his opponents, the *Gazette* changed its caricature once again. Clinton was back in a baby bonnet inside his carriage, but the carriage had treads and a turret. It was a tank.



I owe my political instincts to heredity and environment. My grand-uncle was Judge Albert Cohn, who ran the Jewish parts of the Bronx, a borough of New York City, for the Democratic party organization headed by the legendary boss Ed Flynn. Promoted through the ranks, Cohn became a judge in the appellate division, the second highest court in New York State. I remember meeting him only once, at the celebration of my cousin's bar mitzvah, when I was eight. Judge Cohn asked me whether I was having a good time, and in reply I said, "I didn't like the show."

responsibility emerged as we talked, taking the place of the old government handouts.

These ideas first materialized in Clinton's educational reforms in Arkansas. I latched on to an issue Hillary Clinton had suggested: that teachers be tested for competence. This issue came to distinguish Bill Clinton from the special-interest advocates of the Arkansas Education Association, the teachers' union, and made clear that Clinton's commitment to schools was motivated by a love of children, not an affection for teachers' campaign money. He raised teachers' pay, but he wanted results. He increased funding but demanded that students pass certain tests to get promoted. Clinton saw early that the economic problems of his small, undeveloped state could be solved only by major improvements in public education. This link between schools and good jobs was a mainstay of his state political career and became a theme we deployed in his White House years. As Clinton prepared for a possible presidential race in 1988, our talks intensified and we developed the idea of a "new partnership" as the campaign's theme, an idea that evolved into the New Covenant that animated the '92 race.

We both wanted to merge Democratic compassion with the Republican notion of responsibility. When I urged him to run in 1988, I drafted an announcement statement that read, "We need a new partnership between our government and our people. We can't continue to ignore people's problems as President Reagan's administration has. They don't go away. They just grow. But we can't just pass out aid and hand out checks as we did in the New Deal and the New Frontier and the Great Society because when the money is spent, the problems remain, unsolved and festering. Instead, we need a new partnership where government helps people if they are willing to help themselves, where government renders aid but demands standards and performance and commitment to self-help in return."

That speech was never delivered, however, and in 1988 I faced a dismal array of traditional Democrats as potential clients. I turned in frustration to the Republicans and went to work with then congressman Trent Lott of Mississippi and George Bush's campaign manager, Lee Atwater.

Two years later, when Clinton ran again for governor, I agreed to handle his campaign out of loyalty, despite the disappointment of his failure to run for the presidency in 1988. It was to mark a turning point in our relationship.

"How can that be?" my client asked.

"They're ready to give you a gold watch for your retirement, but they want a new governor. They think you've served them well but that you've been in office too long," I explained.

I said, "We have to transform this from a referendum on you to an election between you and McRae." Hillary came up with a good way for starting the rebuttal campaign. She suggested that she appear at McRae's next press conference and challenge him directly for misstating her husband's record and for not articulating any solutions of his own. "If I take him on," she said to her husband at a meeting with me, "it will get a lot of publicity, but it won't necessarily signal a deep concern about the race by you. It will just be your wife expressing her anger at attacks on her husband."

We agreed to Hillary's suggestion, and she went to the McRae press conference and directly challenged him. The effect was just as she had envisioned. McRae's gain slowed. But more was needed.

I proposed an ad in which we rebutted Shannon's attacks on Clinton for his out-of-state trips. Our defense of these journeys was that they had brought new business to Arkansas and that, in his foreign trips, Clinton had concluded export deals for Arkansas products. Polling showed that people believed that the economic purposes of his travels justified the governor's absence. Our ad showed workmen building a brick wall that rose higher and higher as the announcer spoke of Clinton's success in bringing jobs to Arkansas through his explorations outside the state. Citing McRae's criticism of these trips, the ad concluded, "Don't let McRae build a wall around Arkansas." To film the ad, our media creator, David Watkins, built a shoulder-high brick wall down the middle of his swank Little Rock office and filmed the workmen adding each layer of brick. We began to air the ads in early May as the primary loomed four weeks away.

Clinton's race was not the only election I was handling in Arkansas. Betsey Wright, now state Democratic chairman, had asked that I work on four or five key state legislative races to defeat long-term incumbents who had always opposed Clinton's programs. If the governor were to run for president, Betsey explained, he'd need to have a loyal legislature so he could campaign around the country without fear of embarrassment in his home state. Most of these races were primary fights, and they too were reaching their peak of activity in May.

One morning in early May, just as our rebuttal ad started to air, I underwent dental surgery in New York after several days of pain. Because of

Clinton charged me from behind. I slipped to the floor. I stood up, Clinton said, "Don't go, I'm so close behind me. Hillary hit my shoulders and said, 'Please forgive me. I didn't mean it.' He said, 'I'm sorry. I'm not a day. He's not h

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In pain and facing this harsh and unjustified criticism, I lost my temper too. If he was too hasty in his criticism, I was too sharp in my reply. Storming out of the breakfast room through the kitchen toward the door to the outside, I railed, "Thank you, thank you, thank you. You've just solved my problem. I'm getting shit from Atwater and shit from [Trent] Lott for working for you, and now I can solve my problem. Go fuck yourself. I'm quitting your goddamn campaign, and now I'm a free agent. I can be a fifty-state Republican and don't have to take your shit."

Clinton charged up behind me as I stalked toward the door, grabbed me from behind, and wrapped his arms around me to stop me from leaving. I slipped to the floor. Hillary helped me to my feet. The moment I stood up, Clinton became apologetic. "Don't go, don't go, I'm sorry. Don't go, I'm sorry," he said as I walked out the door, slamming it behind me. Hillary ran after me to calm me down. She put her arm around my shoulders and walked me around the grounds of the mansion. "Please forgive him," she pleaded. "He's under so much pressure. He didn't mean it. He's very sorry. He's overtired, he hasn't slept well in days. He's not himself. He values you. He needs you," she repeated.

I calmed down enough to drive to my hotel, and I called Eileen, shaking in rage. Later Hillary called and said how much Bill wanted me back. Then he came on the line to apologize. I phoned my fellow consultant Ray Strother, a longtime friend (so I thought), to tell him what had happened and to seek consolation.

I couldn't leave Clinton three weeks before his primary, but from then on I dealt with him in a formal, almost frosty way. I stopped calling him Bill, always addressed him as Governor, and left when our meetings were over rather than hang around and chat. I think the incident weighed heavily on his mind too and that he sincerely regretted his behavior that night.

I have never talked about it in public since, but Ray Strother has, endlessly. When he was working for Bob Kerrey's presidential candidacy in 1992, Strother leaked his version of the story to several newspapers, hoping to undermine Clinton. And author David Maraniss in his biography of Clinton, *First in His Class*, also reports the incident, citing former Clinton campaign manager Gloria Cabe as his source. Despite numerous entreaties from the press, I refused to be interviewed on the subject. One enterprising reporter from the *Los Angeles Times* came to Connecticut to interview me about the Los Angeles riots. Showing up at my door with no appointment at six forty-five in the morning, it turned out that he just wanted to know what had happened in the governor's mansion that day. I would not comment.

Clinton is given to emotional excesses that lead him to rages. He controls them well, and none has affected his capacity to serve as president. I relate the Arkansas incident here not because it seems relevant to his ability to serve in office but because it did affect our relationship for the next few years and because it's time to put the exaggerations to rest. By 1994, the story had been transformed to the point that Clinton was supposed to have punched me.

"You think you can handle those Sandinistas up there?" Trent asked, using his favorite term for Ickes, Stephanopoulos, and Panetta.

"Yeah," I answered. "If the president's with you, it's funny how easy it is to win."

"Hey," he said, "that'll be fun. You'll run the White House, and I'll run the Senate." Then a frown came over his face. "You haven't answered the real question: what about Hillary?"

"She likes me; I helped her husband win," I answered.

Trent grunted skeptically, and talked about the president.

"I like him," he said. "He's from Arkansas, and we both came from poor backgrounds. I kind of like him. Don't like his politics. Do like him." Then Trent the politician gave way to the statesman. "Besides, I'm old-fashioned: he's the president, and we only have one at a time, and if I can help him, I'll do it. But don't ask me to get mixed up with his wife.

"We'll have to be careful," he said, speculating on how the relationship might work. "If you're seen as too close to me, it will hurt you. They'll suspect you anyway because you've been a Republican."

"Same for you," I replied. "I won't be very popular in the party when I jump over to Clinton. My being for Clinton could hurt you since I've worked for you. If you want to call me a son of a bitch, I won't mind."

"I do that now," Lott reminded me. "I'll have to think of something stronger."

We agreed to stay in close touch.



Lott went to work lining up votes. He got his old House buddies—Hank Brown of Colorado, Connie Mack of Florida, Dan Coats of Indiana, and Judd Gregg of New Hampshire—to help him persuade other senators to vote for him. Phil Gramm of Texas jumped on board, figuring he could use Lott to upset Dole as he fought the Kansas senator for the presidential nomination.

Trent almost got Strom Thurmond's vote. Strom had told Trent months ago that he'd be for him, but age caught up with the ninety-two-year-old South Carolina senator, and he forgot his pledge and signed on with Simpson. "I gave my word," he told Trent in explaining his vote for Simpson.

New York's Alfonse D'Amato wanted, like Rodney Dangerfield, to get respect and figured that he could do so as chairman of the Republican Senate Campaign Committee—the campaign manager for Senate

a relief to deal with a senator who controls events and doesn't let ideology or his party control him. Above all, he *trusts* Lott to keep his word and to keep their dealings under wraps.

When Clinton came to town in 1993, Lott was suspicious of him, as all insiders are of all outsiders. He wondered at the president's naïveté as he blundered through his first year in office. He bridled at the high-profile role Hillary assumed. He wondered whether Clinton's head was screwed on right. But as he came to see Clinton in 1995-96 and, particularly, as he began to see the president from my inside point of view, he came to understand him and like him.

For my part, I consciously played the role of matchmaker, selling each man to the other. I knew ultimately that they would have to govern together and did all I could to prepare the way. I met Lott every few weeks and called him more often. When I had not spoken with him for a while, he would gently chide me by answering my call with "Hello, stranger."

When I met with Lott and talked to his staffers, they welcomed me as a good man gone awry. Many remembered the frantic days of the 1988 campaign, when I would commandeer a desk and type out an ad or a speech for the congressman in his race for the Senate. They had a hard time figuring out what I was doing with Clinton, but if it was OK with the boss, it was OK with them.

Sipping my ever present diet Pepsi, I'd be called into Lott's office. He would gesture for me to sit to the left of his desk, facing him in his high-backed Senate chair. Often these meetings led to awkward situations. The president paged me in the middle of one, and I returned the call while Lott looked on, smiling indulgently. Another time, Lott was having a particularly difficult time persuading a Republican senator to back a bill the administration was supporting, so he called the man and said he was going to put a "staff member" of his on the phone. I got on and, without giving my name, tried to persuade the Republican of the administration's position. I failed.

Clinton wanted me to stay in touch with Lott and avidly welcomed the information I brought back. As the Clinton-Dole and Clinton-Gingrich relationships hardened into adversarial postures, this connection provided the president with his only real opportunity for a conversation with a congressional leader.

Lott always saw our meetings as part of his job. "If the Republican legislative leaders don't talk to the president's advisers, what use are they?" he'd ask. Good question.

from various Democratic factions. It was his patience, among other things, in dealing with staffers who represented priorities of labor or minorities or Congress that spared him a primary fight and won him an unopposed nomination.

Without the help of his staff—and certainly if it opposes him—it is very difficult for a president to move, no matter what his personal views. To articulate a policy or an initiative requires coordination and cooperation. Facts have to be assembled. Discordant voices in the administration have to be stilled or mollified. Most of all, proposals or ideas have to be vetted by White House and Cabinet department staffs to see whether they are legal, make sense, are affordable, and won't anger key constituency groups. The president owns his voice but not his government.

President Clinton's style is not to give direct orders or instructions. He has an almost Oriental way of waiting until the forces move, as they naturally will, in the direction he prefers. His actions are dictated more by his sense of timing than by bullying his way through. If he feels the force is with him and time is on his side, he'll wait for the force to produce results on its own. If he feels things are moving against him, he'll usually wait then too, to see whether they reverse themselves of their own accord. Only when all else fails does he take direct, personal action.

It is odd that a president seen, correctly, as an "activist" is so passive in his political method. But the more I worked for Clinton, the more I understood and began to admire and adopt his practice of letting historic forces do what they would, on their own, without attempting to intervene.

His style was to send out signals—to me, to Panetta, to his Cabinet, to Gore, to Hillary—and wait for us to get the point, however gradually. Sometimes this procedure seems passive as he avoids giving orders, but he always knows where he wants to go and finds the right time to get there.

There is a spiritual side to Bill Clinton that I was not often privileged to meet. Like a ship captain searching for icebergs in the Arctic Ocean, I mostly saw what was above the water—his rational, logical mind and his keen ambition. But beneath lay a vast and somewhat mystical spirituality that has a great deal to do with what he does and how he thinks. Not really devoted to formal religion, Clinton works hard at encoding in his memory religious insights he uses as a daily guide to his behavior.

For example, once he told me a story he had heard from Andrew Young, former Atlanta mayor and colleague of Dr. Martin Luther King

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the *Post* during the 1992 election. Before the president summoned me to Washington, Maraniss had interviewed me. I respected his professionalism—and still do—and decided to answer questions on my work for Clinton when he was governor of Arkansas.



When I advised Governor Clinton in the 1980s, I avoided, as usual, any press exposure. I visited the Arkansas governor's mansion twenty to thirty times a year and was never mentioned in either of the state's daily newspapers. Clinton liked it that way, and so did I. I'm not the message, I'm not the candidate, I'm not the issue—he is. I'm only an adviser. The governor and, now, the president makes all the decisions. It was in the interests of us both that I not become like Pierre, the spy, a character described by the comedian Danny Kaye. With a thick French accent, Kaye noted that "Pierre was very successful; he was very famous; wherever he went, people would stop, point, and say, 'Look there goes Pierre, the spy.' "

But I didn't like being entirely left out of history, either. Many books had been published about Clinton in Arkansas and I was not mentioned in any of them. I decided, therefore to wait for a legitimate historical work before I talked about our relationship.

When the book appeared at the very end of January 1995, Hillary was annoyed. I had told the story of how she and I had discussed installing a swimming pool in the governor's mansion. The segment in Maraniss's book, *First in His Class*, that describes the incident is this:

Some people sensed a growing resentment in Hillary that she had to take on so many private duties in the partnership while at the same time, she was being asked, unfairly, she thought, to sacrifice material things. In 1985, Hillary told consultant Dick Morris that she wanted to build a swimming pool on the mansion grounds. She said among other things it would be great for Chelsea. "I said, 'How could you even think of that? You'll get killed for that!'" Morris recalled. "And she said, 'Well, it's really not for us, the mansion is for all future governors of the state and they'll all be able to use it.' And I said, 'You'll never be able to sell that argument. The next time you fly over Little Rock, look down and count the number of swimming pools you see.' She said, 'Well a lot of people have swimming pools.' I got really sarcastic with her and said, 'On the next poll, do you want me to ask whether people have swimming pools?' She was really mad. Very angry. She said, 'Why can't we lead the lives of

normal people?" I saw in that flash the resentment from a lot of those issues, the sacrifices they made staying in public life."

I had worked closely with Hillary for seventeen years. In 1980 and in 1994, she was key to the decision to bring me back to work for her husband. In the 1993-94 period, I spoke with her every few weeks about her own career, and she also passed my ideas on to the president. But when she saw the Maraniss quote she became annoyed. I had left out of the story the fact that the pool was not to have been paid for with taxpayer money at all. Understandably, she was upset. I wrote her notes of apology. I was very contrite.

Hillary is usually a very, very warm person. She is loving and caring, quite the opposite of her sometimes strident public image. For example, in 1993, my mother and father visited her in the White House. My mother, seventy-nine at the time, was an ardent admirer of Eleanor Roosevelt, a dedicated feminist, and a great fan of Hillary. The First Lady graciously received them and spent half an hour with them though only five minutes had been allocated on her schedule for the visit. Her only reason was kindness. There was nothing my parents could ever do for her in return. This was probably the happiest moment in the last year of my mother's life.

A few months later, when my mother was dying, Hillary called often to console me and share the experiences of her own father's death the year before. She was a major support in my grief and I can never forget that. On the very day my mother died she received a warm and comforting note from Hillary.

But when Hillary is stung, she reacts viscerally and closes up. After the Maraniss incident, she ostracized me. There is no colder feeling on the planet. She is intensely human and sensitive and feels every slap and aches with every blow. Her stoic exterior masks enormous pain. Although I felt she was overreacting to my comments to Maraniss, I understand her reaction. It came at a time when her adversaries were hurting her and I was truly sorry to have added to her pain.

During the blackout period, I communicated with Hillary through the president. I continued to urge her not to fade from view, as others had suggested, and advised her to tackle new projects she cared about: the inadequacy of the government's response to Gulf War disease and the need for more widespread use of mammography for elderly women. Hillary's influence on the Gulf War-disease issue encouraged scientific investigations that confirmed that many U.S. troops were exposed to dangerous toxins when American planes bombed Iraqi storage sites.

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I was always puzzled by Hillary's mistakes in the health-care debate of 1993-94. I spoke with her many times about the issue, always stressing the importance of using cost-containment measures to lower health-care expenditures. But she became fascinated by the idea of a complete reworking of the health-care system and fashioned a white elephant that wouldn't sell and undermined the president's credibility.

I vividly remember one phone conversation we had in early September 1994, immediately after it became clear that the president didn't have the votes even to get the health-care bill out of the Senate committee to which it had been assigned. I warned Hillary that the failure to pass any health reform at all would seriously injure the administration in general and her reputation in particular. I suggested that she back a limited bill to ensure that workers could take health insurance with them when they changed jobs and that pre-existing conditions could not be used as an excuse to deny coverage. It was legislation like that in the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill that Congress passed late in 1996. Bob Dole had endorsed such a concept. I said that if the Clintons backed the Dole bill as an alternative, Dole would be forced to support it since it was his bill, even though he was reluctant to pass anything at all that summer, hoping to use Clinton's failure to reform health care as a campaign issue.

Hillary was adamant that she would not back such a bill, because "you can't fix part of the problem. If you do this over here, it causes this bad reaction over there. You've got to do it all or do nothing." She also worried that the legislation I was suggesting might lead to higher premiums.

I felt that Hillary had been convinced after a year's study of health care that nothing short of utopia would work. Long gone was the pragmatic Hillary I knew in the '80s and would meet again later in 1995.

After the election defeat of 1994, she was far less certain of herself. She regretted not having backed a compromise health-care bill and wondered if she had made a mistake. To be sure, she also justifiably blamed the tens of millions of dollars that the insurance industry lobbyists spent to defeat the bill—whereas I wondered why an administration capable of raising tens of millions of dollars itself let the insurance ads go largely unanswered.



My relationship with Hillary did not improve until May 1995, almost five months after the Maraniss book was published. The turning point was an odd one.

After my mother's death, my father got a call from Blanche Funk, his high-school and college sweetheart. The Jewish immigrant neighborhood of 156th Street in the East Bronx, where he lived in a tenement and she in a slightly more ritzy semi-attached house, assumed they were going to marry. Then along came la femme fatale, Terry Lesser, my mother. Bohemian in her ways, seductive in her feisty independence, she lured my father away. After their sixty-two-year tryst ended with her death, my father took Blanche's call, and they had dinner. Nine months later, they married. He was eighty-three; she, seventy-nine. I wondered why, at that age, they waited so long.

It so happens that Blanche's oldest and dearest friend is Florence Thomases, the mother of one Susan Thomases. Blanche and Florence had met as Hunter College freshmen, and Blanche has known and loved Susan since she was a baby. And Susan, of course, is Hillary Clinton's closest friend and adviser.

Everybody assumed that Susan and I would be at loggerheads. Susan, the core of the liberal wing in Clinton's circle, was my natural adversary. But she and I felt a bond because of Blanche's marriage to my dad. Though we were acquainted and each of us heard nice things we had said about each other, a rarity in politics, we had never been close during the Arkansas years.

After the marriage, I called Susan and suggested we meet. "You're basically my half sister," I said.

"We're certainly *mishpachah*," she answered, using the Yiddish word for extended family.

We met for lunch on May 30 at her law office in the Citicorp Center in Manhattan. I'm sure she had heard awful stories about me, and I had certainly heard such stories about her. But the Susan I met that day and since is warm and generous, more motherly than ruthless. She made her points firmly but clearly and she had a very subtle grasp of politics. We got along fine.

As we chatted, Hillary called. Susan put me on the line, and Hillary and I talked directly for the first time since January. She made no reference to our estrangement, although I did use the opportunity to apologize to her for the fifth time, this time directly. The message implied by the circumstances of her call was clear: You're back. Don't screw it up. Susan's my main person.

The major storm over the Maraniss book came not from my remarks about the swimming pool but from the fact that Betsey Wright, Hillary's friend and Clinton's chief of staff and campaign manager in the Arkansas

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years, had supposedly told friends that she had been "covering up for him [Clinton] for years" and that "she was convinced some state troopers were soliciting women for him and he for them." Maraniss did not attribute these quotes directly to Betsey but to unnamed "friends" of hers whom he had interviewed.

The president was beside himself when he read these accusations. "How is my daughter going to feel when she reads these lies, this horseshit?" he screamed into the phone to me at the end of January. He was livid at Betsey and felt betrayed. He kept saying, "How could she do this to me?" But I pointed out that the quotes weren't Betsey's.

Betsey's lawyer issued a statement giving Betsey's account of what she knew. She denied that she had any knowledge of troopers' soliciting women for Clinton. Instead, she said, the troopers were using their status as Clinton's bodyguards to solicit women for themselves. This statement quieted the story somewhat, and Clinton got over his rage. But the pain for Clinton lingered for weeks, for months. I felt that it left deep scars that took months to heal.

Clinton's major concern was about how the book would hurt Hillary and Chelsea. As a husband and father he wanted to protect them from pain, not always an easy task when you are president. He was consumed with concern. When he realized that there was really little he could do to shield them, he became very angry. His face became raw, red, and angry as he railed against the injustice and the violation. He wouldn't stop. On and on he would talk, into the night, pounding his fist, elaborating his resentment, voicing his anger.

His anger deeply disturbed me, all the more so given his normal self-possession and dignity. I watched him as if I were a small child watching a father lose control—frightening in its intensity and its revelation of a father's essential humanity, a discovery no less disquieting when it is a president of the United States.

A year or more later, I met with Maraniss and told him of the intensity of Clinton's hurt. He was genuinely surprised that the president had responded to the book so emotionally. Having suffered exposure by the press, I am astonished that journalists are so unaware of the pain they cause. Perhaps they should not refrain from such journalism; they have a responsibility to the public. But as people, they should weigh the suffering they inflict.

In the weeks following the publication of the Maraniss book, I suggested that Clinton divert public attention from it by focusing on hard-

the president, anxious that they not be treated roughly, called after the officers to treat them with respect. "Remember, they have rights too," Clinton said from the podium.

Hillary cited this episode a few days later and told me she felt the Republicans may have planted the hecklers in the audience. "How could they afford five-hundred-dollar tickets?" she asked. She warned that the Republicans might use similar tactics at our convention and that we had to be careful to screen the people who got tickets. I ignored her comment because it seemed to demonstrate her tendency to overreact.

The blunt truth is that Hillary is no damn good at subtle infighting. What she's great at is advocating her beliefs, whether before a thousand cheering students or to the president over breakfast.

I worked closely with Hillary's speechwriter, Lissa Muscatine, on the First Lady's convention remarks. As I saw Lissa work, I realized that being Hillary's speechwriter is unlike any other writing assignment. Hillary is constantly thinking of new ways to express her beliefs. Lissa's job is not so much to write the speeches as to collect Hillary's variations each time she speaks, like a recorder of oral history, keeping them in a notebook and recycling them in the next day's text. Hillary's speeches are composed of a bit she gave here or a riff she used the other night and a sequence she explored last week in Kentucky. From these scraps, an effective speech emerges, as it did on Tuesday night at the Democratic National Convention.

Hillary's speech that night was very effective and it picked up yet another point for her husband, so that now we were only three points away from recapturing the Republican Convention bounce.

I proposed a radical idea—that Gore should speak a night before Clinton spoke, rather than on the same night, as the vice president has always done. I felt it would be good for Gore and Clinton for the VP to have his own night.

But the vice president's commitment to tradition runs deep in his psyche. He was suspicious that I was selling him out. He imagined that I wanted to minimize his role in order to let some other speaker enjoy the glory of speaking right before the president did.

"The vice president doesn't simply speak at the convention," he lectured me; "he accepts the nomination of his party for the office of vice president. That's very important to me, and it's very important to the process. By speaking before the roll call, you alter that tradition and reduce me to the level of yet another convention speaker."

His focus on the procedural decorum blinded him to the central reality: that if he was the featured speaker on Wednesday, he would do a whole lot more for himself and for Clinton than as an also-ran on Thursday, when his speech would be lost in the enthusiasm for the president's address.

I had given up on the idea until the magnitude of the Republican convention bounce alarmed me. It was one thing to speak blithely of a traditional and normal ten-point bounce for the other party, but these were points we had gained with blood and determination and couldn't, wouldn't, mustn't let them slip away. Ever.

I revisited the issue with Gore, hammering home my message. "This speech will define you. It will be the very basis of your candidacy in 2000. People will talk about your speech for four years if you give it right." I deeply believed this and worked desperately to talk some sense into Gore. He's a stubborn man.

But "give it right"? That was the real sticking point. Gore began to talk about what would happen if he didn't give a good speech. Where would he be then?

I finally understood—Gore wasn't fully confident of his own rhetorical ability. He'd read too many articles about his stiffness and coldness and he was beginning to believe them.

Tipper knew better. When Gore returned from his July 1996 visit to an ailing Yeltsin to congratulate him on his election, commentators noted how pale and rigid the Russian president had seemed. We now know that he had suffered a heart attack after his first June victory and had been ill during almost the entire runoff. Tipper told Al at the time, "Next to Yeltsin, you didn't look stiff at all, dear."

I told Gore I thought he would give a great speech and that he should go for it.

The president also hoped Gore would switch to Wednesday night so we could have a great program that evening. He insisted that Gore could do anything he wanted on Thursday night, even speak again if he wished, but the key was to make Wednesday night a winner, as Elizabeth Dole had done at the Republicans' convention.

After much shoving and pushing, Gore finally agreed to speak on Wednesday.

But would Tipper speak too? I had suggested that Mrs. Gore precede Hillary on Tuesday night, but she was reluctant. I quizzed the vice president, trying to learn if he was worried that if Tipper spoke on Tuesday

relations between her and Hillary might suffer. He turned rigid, like a Soviet Politburo member trying to avoid exile to Siberia, and said, "There is no tension between Tipper and Hillary."

OK. Got it. Actually, Hillary was amenable to having Tipper speak before her, especially when I proposed that Tipper not just introduce her but speak substantively about her own lifelong crusade against sex and violence on TV.

I urged Tipper to speak, citing polls that showed she was the most popular of the foursome. The president's favorable/unfavorable rating was 60-38, Gore's was 54-34, and Hillary's was 51-46, and Tipper's was 48-21. This reflected the fact that the other three had absorbed a lot of media punishment and she hadn't. When she finally realized that Hillary had no objection and that she could be of help, she agreed.

I suggested to Gore that he enumerate in his speech what the president's values agenda has meant for people day to day, hour to hour. I called the speech "rock around the clock." It began when your children brushed their teeth with clean water and ate fruit without dangerous pesticides. It continued through a trip to school without passing by the tobacco billboard anymore. The husband was taking computer courses at the community college for free, thanks to Clinton. The younger son was able to go to college on a scholarship, and so on. He liked the idea and used a lot of it in his speech.

I was sobbing with everyone else as Gore described his sister's painful death from smoking. He was magnificent. His speech closed two more points—leaving just one to go.

By the time Gore spoke on Wednesday night, the *Star's* accusations about my affair with the prostitute had already broken. I knew I was finished. I sat in my hotel room in tears as I watched Gore on television. I was proud that I had helped plan this convention. Clinton had recaptured all that the Republicans had gained, and the race would be locked into a pattern for the last two months.

The president spoke the next night. I watched it on TV from my Connecticut home, having fled Chicago one step ahead of the press posse. It was a speech I had written, Don Baer had improved, and Mark Penn had protected from the president's distracted attempts at revision when his attention was focused mainly on each day's train event.

The concept of the speech had been bold, and the president rose to it magnificently. Three months before, I had suggested to the president that he give a second State of the Union speech at the convention in Chicago. Citing the results of the '96 State of the Union speech, which

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believed that such communication was possible, voters believed by three to one that Hillary had been simply imagining Eleanor and what she would have said if she were alive now.

I told the First Lady about this data, and she seemed relieved. We chatted for a while, and she asked me, chirping and chipper, in her high-pitched asking-an-innocent-question voice, "By the way, Dick, is there anyone I can call for you? I thought maybe you'd like to speak with Machiavelli or someone?" I asked if she would tell Metternich to beep me.

"No problem," she said.

The president dealt with his and his wife's troubles with less good humor. The constant pounding on his wife concerned him personally and the tempest in general worried him politically. It is hard to overstate the emotional beating Hillary took during this offensive by the Republicans as they attacked her daily with insinuations of dishonesty. The anger and pain the president felt as he saw his wife pummeled was profound.

He exploded at a strategy meeting on July 3, 1996, after a month and a half of bad news on Whitewater and the FBI-file scandal. "You can't tell me this drip, drip, drip isn't having an effect!" Red in the face and full throated in his cry of pain, he continued, "Every innocent person they drag through the mud, every honest mistake they call a shocking scandal, every item of information they twist out of all proportion—you can't tell me that's not killing me out there." He raged on at the astonished members of the group, who accepted this display of presidential emotion with averted glances. The president appeared to be scolding them, but he was, of course, scolding me, seated immediately to his left, catching a side view of his rage as he projected it toward everyone but me. "The hammering, the pounding, the garbage, the lies, the dirt, the innuendo, the stuff they make up and they throw at me, at my wife, at my friends, at my staff—you can't tell me that's having no effect. You can't tell me that!"

He was challenging my repeated assertion that none of these accusations would have the slightest eventual effect on his vote share. I knew he was berating the group as a way of testing me to make sure I stood my ground. He wanted to know how deeply I was convinced that the attacks had no effect. He wanted to quiet his worries and soothe his pain. So I said what he was expecting me to say. Sitting up in my chair as tall as my five-foot, six-inch frame would allow and summoning the adren-

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their dearest issues, the congressional Republicans had cynically tied the bill to the elimination of free health care for poor children and nursing-home care for the elderly, requiring that these Medicaid entitlements be replaced by block grants to be used at the states' discretion. They knew the president would never go along with these harsh cuts, and they looked forward with glee to his third veto of a welfare-reform bill. Their legislation would fail so their campaign issue might live.

But things were changing. I had predicted, earlier and prematurely, that the Republicans would split into hunter-gatherer groups. Now White House Political Affairs Director Doug Sosnik said the prediction was coming true. More interested in ensuring their own reelection than in sacrificing themselves for a lost presidential race, Republican legislators were now eager to enact laws they could take back to their districts as they campaigned.

Sensing the changed mood, Lott unlocked the welfare bill from its Medicaid cage and sprang it loose on the Senate floor.

In twice vetoing Republican welfare-reform proposals, Clinton had objected to the inadequate amount for day care. The bill now allowed for enough day care. He had complained that too little was available for welfare funds should a recession come. The contingency funds were now increased. He had protested that school lunches and child protection services should not be subject to state whim in a block grant and now they were not. Food stamps were restored as entitlements for U.S. citizens. These were substantial changes, but the president wanted more. He was under intense pressure from child-advocacy groups, particularly the Children's Defense Fund, on whose board the First Lady had once served. Protesting that a million children would still be cast into poverty by the bill, they lobbied hard for improvements. But what counted more than this outside pressure was the president's internal pressure—the constant demands of his own conscience fueled by his personal memories of poverty.

Most of Congress basically accepted the ideas of requiring work in exchange for welfare and limits on the length of time for which welfare could be collected, the core of the bill. The president advocated these changes. Over the objections of children's advocates and liberals, he also agreed to end the entitlement for welfare so that Washington would make block grants that the states would administer. "What sense does it make to call it an entitlement now," he asked me, "when Texas can pay one hundred eighty dollars a month and another state pays seven hundred? What kind of entitlement is that?"

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I told him flatly that a welfare veto would cost him the election. Mark Penn had designed a polling model that indicated that a welfare veto by itself would transform a fifteen-point win into a three-point loss. Of all the developments that could realistically happen to affect the race, a welfare veto and Powell as Dole's VP ranked the worst in their impact on the president's fortunes.

"What good will you do if you lose?" I asked the president. "If you veto that bill and lose, what will the Republicans do then to the very people you want to help?"

The Senate restored Medicaid funds for legal immigrants but kept the cuts in welfare and other programs. Although they refused to provide vouchers for child-care needs for mothers whose time limits have expired, they did allow funds for child-protection agencies to help children in such situations. They also provided that states could waive the cutoff in many cases.

The president was still deeply concerned by the cuts that remained in place.

So was the First Lady. I made it a point to meet with Hillary at least every other week throughout 1996. In one such session in May she told me flatly that she did not want to become involved in the welfare-reform issue. "We have to do what we have to do, and I hope our friends understand it. It's OK to require time limits and work requirements. I've always felt so, and I still do," she had said. But now that the actual cuts in aid to immigrants and children whose mothers were cut off from welfare were to be presented to the president, she was unhappy. She noted, with some resignation, that I was advising a signature, not a veto, and said she supposed it was my job to look only at the politics of the issue. "I know the politics, I know the numbers, but it still bothers me deeply," she said.

My argument to the president made a similar point. He was in a foul mood when he called late in the evening on July 31, 1996. He was deeply unhappy with the welfare bill and showed it. I had given him cause to believe that Lott would produce a somewhat better bill than finally emerged. I thought that Trent was weakening on vouchers and food-stamp benefits for legal immigrants, but I was wrong. The final bill did grant Medicaid to legal immigrants, but the other cutoffs remained. Now he denounced Lott in the harshest of personal terms. "He *loved* cutting off children. You should have seen his face. He was *delighted* that he could savage them, *delighted*," the president shouted.

Then he attacked me. "You've just given me biased polling on this

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Arkansan who moved to California and, with his wife, Linda Bloodworth, became successful in television production. Harry paints scenes in the air with his hands to demonstrate his ideas. He had been active in Clinton's '92 campaign and, with his wife, had produced *The Man from Hope*, which eloquently introduced Clinton to America. I liked and admired him from the start. The Clintons, especially Hillary, consider him a dear friend.

Penn, who pointed out that "every vote we need to win the election is within five hundred miles of the convention center in Chicago," worked with Harry to structure a train route that would take us by the front yards of a good portion of these voters' homes in Ohio and Michigan.

Hillary was worried the ever-zealous Secret Service would stop train and car travel in all directions to let the president's train pass. She was right to be sensitive. We learned that if we had kept to our original plan and gone to Pittsburgh by train, we would have tied up the entire eastern seaboard's rail network, which apparently operates out of that city. We averted that disaster by starting in West Virginia instead.

The Clintons presided over our first meeting to discuss the convention. Someone asked whether Hillary should join her husband on the train. The First Lady rarely attended political meetings, and this was the first full strategy meeting she had attended since I began working for Clinton two years earlier. She had been taking an awful pounding in the press, over the Whitewater and FBI-file scandals, and the president was deeply sympathetic. As we discussed whether Hillary should go on the train, the president reached over and took her hand, held it in his lap, and said, "I don't want to spend three days on a train without you." The room fell silent, and a tender moment passed between them. It was one of those moments the voters would dismiss as political posturing if it occurred in public. The president bit his lower lip; she looked serene and happy. They looked into each other's eyes. But this was not a public performance. There was nobody there but hard-eyed professionals long since committed to working for the Clintons. The emotions were real and we knew it.

Once before, in 1994, when Hillary was on the grill for her high profile, I said to her on the phone, "People just don't get it. It's that you really love him; that's all." She broke down and sobbed into the phone. She was alone, crying her eyes out.

Now, as we talked about the train trip, I said it would be an empty gesture if we did not dignify it by announcing substantive initiatives

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Harry Thomasson conceived of opening the convention with a completely nonpolitical night of nonpartisan speeches focused on values. Penn and I agreed. "Let the Republicans be partisan from the beginning," I argued; "let's have a night without politics, just values, to show the people where our priorities lie."

The president liked the idea in the abstract but worried about Harry's suggestion to invite Billy Graham to address the convention on Monday. Harry argued that he would be nonpolitical and that while he would never mention the president's name, his presence would signal our commitment to values.

Hillary liked Graham but warned that "he is a dedicated evangelist. He'll get up there and talk about abortion being evil and the way of Jesus Christ being the right way." I worried about how Jews and others might react. I asked Hillary whether she felt he could be secular. She noted that while he had done splendidly in his speech at Oklahoma City, she didn't know what he would say at the convention.

We flirted with the idea of asking Walter Cronkite to speak, but when he criticized us for being slow to take up journalist Paul Taylor's idea of accepting free time to appear with Dole throughout the campaign, we backed off.

I had long felt that Christopher Reeve would be an ideal choice. His courage, I felt, would resonate deeply. Although the president and the vice president liked the idea, I had to fight hard to convince the others that only nonpolitical speakers should speak the first night—heresy to the politicians. Finally we agreed that Gore should invite Reeve to speak. He accepted, provided he could write his own speech.

We all agreed to invite Sarah Brady to speak on Monday night, and her appearance with her husband, timed to coincide with our domestic-violence handgun proposal, was electrifying. Monday night gained us two points as we expanded our lead to thirteen. We had now recaptured six of the ten points the Republicans had gained at their convention. And our heavy guns hadn't spoken yet.

We debated whether Hillary should speak or not. Thomasson, in a rare misjudgment, proposed that the First Lady not speak but appear on the video screen, welcoming the delegates to "my hometown" and then conduct a tour around her old neighborhood, her old school, candy store, and so forth. "Too precious," said Hillary and she rejected the idea.

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Hillary was emphatic in rejecting efforts to enhance her image, which she felt could not convey a true picture of who she really is. Once I recommended changes in her wardrobe. Experts had told me that an open-necked look suggested more openness than the high closed collars she usually wore. But Hillary said: "I get colds frequently, and I need to keep my neck warm to avoid them." The same experts got me in further hot water by telling me that earth tones like brown and beige were more soothing than the brightly colored outfits she liked. She angrily replied: "If my husband cannot get elected president because people don't like the way I dress, he'll have to win without me. I will dress as I please. When he first became president, I promised myself always to be myself and that's what I'm going to be."

I told Hillary that I felt she should speak at the convention and focus on what she had done for her entire career: be an advocate for children. She agreed, and when Elizabeth Dole spoke so effectively for her husband a few weeks later, we were all thankful she had made that decision.

Hillary is warm and friendly as an individual but relatively rigid as a political figure. She's good at marching straight ahead to fight for what she's always fought for: health care, children, women's rights, education. But she doesn't share her husband's adaptability. She's not good at curves or changes or subtlety. She is basically not a manipulative person.

Many people have asked me if Hillary is a liability for her husband. She isn't. She's an asset politically. While the press tends to focus on her antagonists, she has a huge base of support for her battles for children and women's rights. I used to tell people who asked if she was hurting the president's ratings: "Dole has 51 percent favorable and 46 percent unfavorable. Hillary's ratings are almost identical. Hillary hurts Bill no more than Dole hurts Dole."

The key is to let Hillary be Hillary, to ask her to talk about what she believes in and to fight for children and women. Do that and she's great. Try to change her and it doesn't work.

I rejected the conventional wisdom that Hillary would seem too powerful or too liberal if she spoke about children. While I always feared that she would hurt the president by seeming to be too powerful, I also felt that the more she spoke about her genuine passion for children, the better she would do and the better the president would do.

Hillary has great power in the White House but not in the Machiavellian way many believe. It is not pillow talk or ideological nagging that sways the president when she speaks. Her fights for children evoke the president's memory of his own childhood. She taps directly into the

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poor boy that lingers in the president's soul. She speaks to the needs of that young child with an abusive stepfather, a distracted and harassed mother, and a town without opportunity. The president sees his own childhood in her views and her speeches.

The American people appreciate the positive advocacy of the public Hillary even as they suspect the hidden power of the private Hillary. The truth is very different. The private Hillary is very private and nonpolitical. She is a wife and a mother in very traditional senses of the words. When, in the privacy of their home, the First Lady advises the president about government issues, it is the *public* Hillary, the one we like, who speaks, the advocate for children and women and education. When she wants her husband's attention on a matter of policy, she doesn't whisper in his ear and pull his strings, she gives him the same speeches she gives us from her lecterns.

Once when she complained to me about my efforts to move to the center, I replied with a metaphor. My home in Connecticut was being painted at the time by what seemed to be live-in painters who manifested such care on every millimeter of our walls and ceilings that I doubted if Michelangelo had taken such care with the Sistine Chapel. Now I used the painters as a metaphor in my reply. "Hillary," I said, "we've worked together for almost twenty years. I thought you would have gotten it by now." She smiled slyly, suspecting what was coming. "I get called in every two or four years to paint the house. Before you call me, you arrange the furniture just as you like it, the couch over there, the wing chair here, and so forth. But when you called me, you knew I'd want to put the furniture in the center of the room. The center, the middle," I repeated to be sure the metaphor was not lost on her. "Then I cover it up with canvas, and I paint the walls and ceiling." I made a painting motion with my hand, adopting a shoulder-shrugging posture of an I'm-doing-my-job-don't-bother-me housepainter. "When the walls are painted and the paint is nice and dry, I take off my canvas covering and leave the house. I go away. Then you have four years to put the furniture back exactly as you and your husband wish."

"You sweet-talking devil, you," she said with a forgiving grin.

Only when she is forced against the wall by snapping wolves does she sometimes overreact by seeing enemies where there may be none.

The president celebrated his fiftieth birthday at a fund-raising party a few days before the convention. At the end of the evening, the gathering was disrupted by gay and anti-welfare-reform hecklers who shouted during the president's remarks. They were removed by the police while

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We both decided to protect what little privacy we had left, knowing how hard it would be to confront such a massive betrayal of trust in marriage. I can cite only my inadequacies and neuroses by way of explanation, and make promises that seem hollow after those I had made before and failed to keep.

But I know that I've changed.

I am learning how to control my compulsions. I look back on who I had become by August 28, 1996, and hope that I will have the strength never to lose my personal bearings again. I'm struggling to fix what was broken inside me.

One reporter asked whether I felt I had betrayed the president. I said, "No, he's doing fine. He's way ahead. I didn't take an oath of office to him, but I sure did take marriage vows, and I have certainly betrayed them. That's the betrayal that I'm focused on right now."

The president, the vice president, and the First Lady all called me on Thursday afternoon in New York, as we returned to Connecticut. The president's call came only a few hours before his speech. All were gracious, but Hillary was the most understanding and sympathetic. I sensed she was genuinely worried about me.

For weeks, I watched the presidential campaign unfold, reading the papers every day. The staff at the White House and the campaign workers and consultants had been instructed by Panetta not to speak to me. Campaign manager Peter Knight was designated the only person I could contact.

The most important thing I had helped achieve in my life was this victory in 1996. When I felt it was in danger, I did what I could to protect it.

I took advantage of my channel to Peter Knight to pass on advice to my former colleagues. I complained that the president was spending too much time campaigning and not enough on the kind of values-oriented presidential actions that had created his large lead in the first place. This advice was similar to that which I had offered in October 1994 after the president returned from the Middle East.

"The reason we held our lead," I told Knight on September 20, 1996, in my first call, "is that we made the incumbency more exciting than the campaign. In a campaign, Republicans and many independents will naturally gravitate back to Dole. It's a partisan event. But if their attention is riveted on what we are doing in the White House, they will tend to stay with us, not as a Democratic candidate, but because we keep their attention focused on his presidency."

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FOLDER TITLE:

Dick Morris

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