



William J. Clinton Presidential History Project

Briefing Materials

Betty Currie

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BETTY CURRIE NEWS TIMELINE

PREPARED BY JILL ABRAHAM

MILLER CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA, 02/21/2006

- 1959** Currie moves to Washington, D.C. and becomes a secretary in the Navy Department. (Shirley Anne Warshaw, *Presidential Profiles: The Clinton Years*, New York: Facts on File, 2004, p. 93)
- 1969** Joseph Blatchford, Director of the Peace Corps, hires Currie as his personal secretary. Currie continues to serve as Blatchford's secretary when he moves to ACTION, the federal agency created to oversee the Peace Corps. During the 1970s, she continues to serve as the secretary to three of ACTION's directors. (Warshaw, p. 93)
- 1984** Currie works for Congresswoman Geraldine Ferraro's (D-NY) vice presidential campaign. (Warshaw, p. 93)
- 1988** Currie works for Governor Michael Dukakis's (D-MA) presidential campaign. (Warshaw, p. 93)
- 1992** Currie works for Governor Bill Clinton's (D-AR) presidential campaign. She manages the "war room" at the campaign headquarters in Little Rock, Arkansas. (Warshaw, p. 93)
- Governor Clinton defeats President George H.W. Bush in the presidential election.
- After the election, Currie stays in Little Rock and serves as Secretary to Warren Christopher, Co-Director of President-elect Clinton's transition operation. (Warshaw, p. 93)
- 1993**
- January* Days before the inauguration, Currie and other members of President-elect Clinton's staff work at the Blair House in Washington. (Michael Waldman, *POTUS Speaks: Finding the Words that Defined the Clinton Presidency*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000, p. 34)
- After Bill Clinton is sworn in as President, Currie assumes the job of Secretary to the President. (Warshaw, p. 93)
- May* *The Associated Press Political Service* notes that at the start of each work day Currie attends a briefing with Andrew Friendly, Personal Aide to the President, and Debra Schiff, West Wing Receptionist. (*The Associated Press Political Service*, 05/26/1993)

1997

- June* President Clinton and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton attend the memorial service for Betty Currie's sister. (*The Washington Times*, 06/02/1997)
- December* President Clinton attends the funeral of Currie's brother, who was killed in a traffic accident. (*The Washington Post*, 02/14/1998)

1998

- January* Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr subpoenas Currie to testify in the Monica Lewinsky investigation, after Vernon Jordan acknowledges that Currie asked him to help Lewinsky find a job and a lawyer. Currie would go on to testify before the grand jury four more times through July 1998. (*The Washington Post*, 01/23/1998; *The New York Times*, 07/23/1998)
- February* Secret Service logs reportedly reveal that Lewinsky visited the West Wing approximately three dozen times since she left the White House in 1996 and that Currie usually was the one who cleared her into the Oval Office. (*The Washington Post*, 02/04/1998)
- Summer* Divergent testimonies emerge before the grand jury about the particulars of President Clinton's relationship with Lewinsky. Currie is questioned extensively on her conversations with the President about Lewinsky and about gifts exchanged between the two of them. (*The New York Times*, 08/29/1998)
- September* *The Independent Counsel's Complete Report to the Congress on the Investigation of President Clinton*, otherwise known as *The Starr Report*, is released, providing the basis for the President's possible impeachment. (*The Washington Post*, 09/13/1998)

2001

- January* After George W. Bush's presidential inauguration, President Clinton departs for New York. Currie and other staffers accompany him on the trip. (*The Washington Post*, 01/21/2001)
- The New York Times* reports that the Clintons' cat, Socks, will live with Currie because Socks cannot get along with the Clintons' dog, Buddy. (*The New York Times*, 01/24/2001)

The Washington Post reports that Currie will work for President Clinton for the next six months, helping him to transition into private life. Currie and other members of the transition staff are based in Washington, across the street from the White House. (*The Washington Post*, 01/28/2001; *The New York Times*, 03/01/2001)

July

President Clinton's transition office in Washington closes. Currie officially retires from government service. (*The Washington Post*, 07/20/2001)

BETTY CURRIE SUGGESTED TOPICS

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Miller Center, University of Virginia, 02/21/2006

Joining the Clinton Administration

- When did you first meet Bill Clinton? Describe your initial impressions of him.
- How did you come to be involved in the 1992 campaign? Describe your major roles and responsibilities. Did these roles change over time?
- Characterize the Little Rock campaign headquarters "war room." With whom in the campaign did you work most closely?
- Discuss your observations of and interactions with Governor Clinton during the campaign.
- Discuss your duties during the transition. Characterize your working relationship with transition Co-Director Warren Christopher. Comment on the division of labor between Washington and Little Rock.

Secretary to the President

- Discuss the circumstances surrounding your selection as Secretary to the President. Did you have any conversations with the President or anyone else about your role and responsibilities in this position?
- Characterize your responsibilities as Secretary to the President. What were the most challenging aspects of your job?
- Describe a typical day as the President's Secretary. How did your responsibilities change during periods of presidential travel?
- How was staff access to the President managed? Who had direct access to the President?
- How was the President's time managed when he was working in the Oval Office?
- Comment on your relationship with members of the Oval Office staff, including Director of Oval Office Operations Nancy Hernreich and the Personal Aides to the President. Did you work closely with any other members of the White House staff?
- Discuss the organization of Oval Office operations in the Clinton White House. Did the character of Oval Office operations change under the different Chiefs of Staff?
- How would you characterize President Clinton's personal and management style?
- What were the keys to being a good Secretary to President Clinton?
- Comment on your observations of President Clinton's relationships with his senior advisors, congressional leaders, and foreign leaders.
- Did you ever travel with the President on domestic or foreign trips? If so, describe your experiences on these trips.
- How did the atmosphere of the West Wing change during the impeachment and preceding investigation? Characterize your experience testifying before the federal grand jury in the Monica Lewinsky investigation.
- As a close observer of the President and the other senior-most members of the Administration, discuss what you saw of the major policy initiatives of the Clinton White House and the key historical moments and figures.

The Clinton Post-Presidency

- How did you come to work on President Clinton's transition to private life?
- Describe your major responsibilities in this position.
- Discuss your ride to New York with President Clinton and other staffers after the inauguration of George W. Bush.
- How often did you interact with President Clinton during this time? Characterize his approach to transitioning into private life. What types of issues and activities took up most of his time in these first months? How did President Clinton feel about leaving politics after eight years in the White House?

The Clinton Presidency in Retrospect

- What do you consider your greatest accomplishments during your service in the Clinton Administration?
- What were Clinton's greatest assets as President? Which of his attributes served him best in the presidency?
- What features of the Clinton Administration and your role in it were overlooked or misunderstood by the press?
- How should the Clinton presidency be viewed in history? What episodes or events are especially instructive or revealing for the historian trying to assess this presidency?

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

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TIMELINES

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- Amy Goldstein, “Summons Thrusts President’s Gatekeeper into View,” *The Washington Post*, 01/23/1998.
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- Deb Riechmann, “Clinton Closes Transition Office in Washington, His Last Toehold in the Capital,” *Associated Press Newswires*, 07/19/2001.