Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Betty Currie

Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator: Currie, Betty
Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Betty Currie,
Dates: June 8, 2004
Bulk Dates: 2004
Physical Description: 6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:54:58).
Abstract: Presidential secretary Betty Currie (1939 - ) was President Bill Clinton's personal secretary. Currie also volunteered for the Democratic presidential campaigns of Mondale/Ferraro in 1984 and Dukakis/Bentsen in 1988. She joined the Clinton/Gore campaign in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1991, where she served with James Carville in the “war room.” Currie was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 8, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification: A2004_066
Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

President Bill Clinton’s personal secretary Betty Currie was born Betty Grace Williams on November 10, 1939, in Edwards, Mississippi. Soon after her birth, Currie’s parents, Theodore R. and Vivian U. Williams moved with their nine children to Waukegan, Illinois. She attended McAllister Elementary School on Waukegan’s Southside. Graduating from Waukegan Township High School’s business course in 1957, Currie found clerical employment at the nearby U. S.
Naval Training Station at Great Lakes, Illinois.

Following a move to Washington, D.C., Currie worked for the U. S. Navy Department, U. S. Postal Service Headquarters, U. S. Agency for International Development, U. S. Peace Corps/Action, and U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. Always striving, Currie completed special training by the U. S. Department of Agriculture and was enrolled at Howard University, American University and Antioch College.


Following Bill Clinton’s 1992 election to the presidency, Currie was chosen to serve as his personal secretary in the White House. She served throughout both of Clinton’s terms. In this capacity, Currie coordinated the Presidents communications including phone calls, letters, e-mails, coordinating appointments and greeted all visitors. Meeting heroes like Nelson Mandela and Rosa Parks compensated for the long hours. In 1997, Currie testified before the special prosecutor’s investigation of the Clinton/Lewinsky affair amidst a frenzy of media attention. Described by journalist and colleagues as truthful, she still retains her association with the Clinton family.

Currie, finally retired at the time of her interview, lives in suburban Maryland with her husband and “Socks”, Chelsea Clinton’s White House cat. She has a grown daughter.

**Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Betty Currie was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 8, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Presidential secretary Betty Currie (1939 - ) was President Bill Clinton's personal secretary. Currie also volunteered for the Democratic presidential campaigns of Mondale/Ferraro in 1984 and Dukakis/Bentsen in 1988. She joined the Clinton/Gore campaign in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1991, where she served with James Carville in the “war room.”
Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Currie, Betty

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Lane, Edgar Carey (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Currie, Betty--Interviews

Presidents--United States--Staff--Interviews

Clinton, Bill, 1946-

Social secretaries--United States--Interviews

African Americans--Genealogy

African American families--Waukegan--Illinois

Television broadcasting--United States--History

Navy Public Works Center (Great Lakes, Ill.)

Discrimination in employment--Washington (D.C.)

Presidents--United States--Election--1984

Mondale, Walter F., 1928-

Carville, James

Presidents--United States--Election--1992

Oval Office (White House, Washington, D.C.)

Presidents--United States--Election--1996

Clinton, Hillary Rodham

Lewinsky, Monica S. (Monica Samille),--1973-
Political corruption--United States

Canada. Treaties, etc. 1992 Oct. 7.

National Civilian Community Corps (AmeriCorps)

Waco Branch Davidian Disaster, Tex., 1993

Starr, Kenneth

Presidents--United States--Election--2000

Bush, George W. (George Walker), 1946-

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States. Executive Office of the President.

Occupations:

Presidential Secretary

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers|PoliticalMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History
Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation


Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 2/5/2020 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Betty Currie, Section A2004_066_001_001, TRT: 0:29:49 2004/06/08

Presidential secretary Betty W. Currie begins by describing her family background and sharing stories passed down from her ancestors. She tells of her mother, father, grandparents, and siblings, and explains how her parents met. Currie then shares memories of her childhood and family life growing up in Waukegan, Illinois. Currie also discusses her high school years and remembers the mass media's shift from radio to television in the 1950s.
Presidents--United States--Staff--Interviews.
Clinton, Bill, 1946-.
Social secretaries--United States--Interviews.
African Americans--Genealogy.
African American families--Illinois--Waukegan.
Television broadcasting--United States--History.
Navy Public Works Center (Great Lakes, Ill.).
Discrimination in employment--Washington (D.C.).
Mondale, Walter F., 1928-.
Carville, James.
Presidents--United States--Election--1996.
Clinton, Hillary Rodham.
Lewinsky, Monica S. (Monica Samille),--1973-.
Political corruption--United States.
Canada. Treaties, etc. 1992 Oct. 7.
National Civilian Community Corps (AmeriCorps).
Waco Branch Davidian Disaster, Tex., 1993.
Starr, Kenneth.
Presidents--United States--Election--2000.
Bush, George W. (George Walker), 1946-.

Video Oral History Interview with Betty Currie, Section A2004_066_001_002, TRT: 0:29:25 2004/06/08

Betty W. Currie recalls her career aspirations while in high school and explains why she went to work at Great Lakes Naval Base, forgoing college. After discussing her early exposure to the news, Currie describes her move to Washington, D.C. and tells of segregation and her early career working for government agencies, such as the Peace Corps. Currie then explains why she began working on Democratic presidential campaigns, starting in 1984 with Walter Mondale.

Video Oral History Interview with Betty Currie, Section A2004_066_001_003, TRT: 0:29:34 2004/06/08
Betty W. Currie recalls her work for the 1992 Bill Clinton presidential campaign, describing life in the "war room" with campaign director James Carville and describing the thrill of victory. Currie then discusses her transition to becoming Clinton's personal secretary. She shares anecdotes from behind the scenes, describing everyday life at the Oval Office during Clinton's presidency.

Video Oral History Interview with Betty Currie, Section A2004_066_001_004, TRT: 0:29:00 2004/06/08

Betty W. Currie recalls President Bill Clinton's first term in office, talking about Hillary Clinton's ill-fated health care plan, the North American Free Trade Agreement, Americorps, and the standoff in Waco, Texas. Currie then discusses Clinton's 1996 re-election campaign, and shares stories from his second term, focusing on her personal involvement in the Monica Lewinsky scandal.

Video Oral History Interview with Betty Currie, Section A2004_066_001_005, TRT: 0:29:33 2004/06/08

Betty W. Currie continues to recall President Bill Clinton's second term in office, explaining how the Monica Lewinsky scandal affected her public image and recalling Kenneth Starr's investigation. She remembers the end of Clinton's administration and shares her thoughts on the 2000 Presidential election. She then discusses her activities since leaving White House, and notes changes in White House procedure under George W. Bush.

Video Oral History Interview with Betty Currie, Section A2004_066_001_006, TRT: 0:27:37 2004/06/08

Betty W. Currie sums up her experiences working in the White House under President Bill Clinton, including her impressions of various Clinton family members and friends. She also compares the Clinton administration to George W. Bush's administration. Finally, Currie reflects on her life and career and shares her hopes and concerns for the black community.