



The Hillary Papers

Archive of 'closest friend' paints portrait of ruthless First Lady



BY: [Alana Goodman](#)
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On May 12, 1992, Stan Greenberg and Celinda Lake, top pollsters for Bill Clinton's presidential campaign, issued a confidential memo. The memo's subject was "Research on Hillary Clinton."

Voters admired the strength of the Arkansas first couple, the pollsters wrote. However, "they also fear that only someone too politically ambitious, too strong, and too ruthless could survive such controversy so well."

Their conclusion: "What voters find slick in Bill Clinton, they find ruthless in Hillary."

The full memo is one of many previously unpublished documents contained in the

archive of one of Hillary Clinton's best friends and advisers, documents that portray the former first lady, secretary of State, and potential 2016 presidential candidate as a strong, ambitious, and ruthless Democratic operative.

The papers of Diane Blair, a political science professor Hillary Clinton described as her "closest friend" before Blair's death in 2000, record years of candid conversations with the Clintons on issues ranging from single-payer health care to Monica Lewinsky.

The archive includes correspondence, diaries, interviews, strategy memos, and contemporaneous accounts of conversations with the Clintons ranging from the mid-1970s to the turn of the millennium.

Diane Blair's husband, Jim Blair, a former chief counsel at Tyson Foods Inc. who was at the center of "Cattlegate," a 1994 controversy involving the unusually large returns Hillary Clinton made while trading cattle futures contracts in the 1970s, donated his wife's papers to the University of Arkansas Special Collections library in Fayetteville after her death.

The full contents of the archive, which before 2010 was closed to the public, have not previously been reported on and shed new light on Clinton's three decades in public life. The records paint a complex portrait of Hillary Clinton, revealing her to be a loyal friend, devoted mother, and a cutthroat strategist who relished revenge against her adversaries and complained in private that nobody in the White House was "tough and mean enough."

THE SEX FILES

On July 28, 1997, President Clinton was facing yet another wave of allegations from yet another woman. Kathleen Willey had accused Clinton of sexually assaulting her, and Blair faxed a Drudge Report item about her claims to one of the president's aides.

Blair's [handwritten note](#) attached to the story: "Do we take Matt Drudge seriously?"

Six months later, Drudge would break the story of an affair between Clinton and 22-year-old White House intern Monica Lewinsky, setting in motion the events that would lead to the president's impeachment.

When Clinton finally admitted to the relationship after repeated denials, Hillary Clinton defended her husband in a phone call with Blair. She said her husband had made a mistake by fooling around with the "narcissistic loony toon" Lewinsky, but was driven to it in part by his political adversaries, the loneliness of the presidency, and her own failures as a wife.

She told Blair that the affair did not include sex "within any real meaning" of the

term and noted President Clinton “tried to manage” Monica after they broke up but things spiraled “beyond control.”

Blair described the contents of the Sept. 9, 1998, phone call in a journal entry.

“[Hillary] is not trying to excuse [Bill Clinton]; it was a huge personal lapse. And she is not taking responsibility for it,” Blair wrote.

“But, she does say this to put his actions in context. Ever since he took office they’ve been going thru personal tragedy ([the death of] Vince [Foster], her dad, his mom) and immediately all the ugly forces started making up hateful things about them, pounding on them.”

“They adopted strategy, public strategy, of acting as tho it didn’t bother them; had to. [Hillary] didn’t realize toll it was taking on him,” Blair continued. “She thinks she was not smart enough, not sensitive enough, not free enough of her own concerns and struggles to realize the price he was paying.”

Hillary Clinton told Blair she had received “a letter from a psychologist who does family therapy and sexual infidelity problems,” who told the Yale Law School graduate, “most men with fidelity problems [were] raised by two women and felt conflicted between them.”

The psychologist suggested that Bill’s infidelity had its roots in his childhood.

“He’d read about Bill’s bio; grandmother despised [Bill’s mother] Virginia, tried to get custody of Bill; Bill adored by his mother, but she left him, etc. etc.”

In her conversations with Blair, the first lady gave her husband credit for trying to end the affair with Lewinsky, and said he did not take advantage of his White House intern.

“It was a lapse, but she says to his credit he tried to break it off, tried to pull away, tried to manage someone who was clearly a ‘narcissistic loony toon’; but it was beyond control,” wrote Blair.

“HRC insists, no matter what people say, it was gross inappropriate behavior but it was consensual (was not a power relationship) and was not sex within any real meaning (standup, liedown, oral, etc.) of the term.”

ALL THOSE WHINEY WOMEN

Hillary Clinton’s blunt assessments were not confined to Monica Lewinsky. In a Dec. 3, 1993, diary entry, Blair recounted a conversation with the first lady about “Packwood”—a reference to then-Sen. Bob Packwood, an influential Republican on health care embroiled in a sexual harassment scandal.

“HC tired of all those whiney women, and she needs him on health care,” wrote Blair. “I told her I’d been bonding w. creeps; she said that was the story of her whole past year. Fabio incident—sweeping her up, sending her roses.”

Privately, the Clinton White House was acutely sensitive to public perceptions of President Clinton’s treatment of women.

Supreme Court nominations were not immune from such considerations. In a three-page May 11, 1994, memo, Blair recounted her phone conversation with President Clinton about reservations he had about his preferred nominee to the high Court, the late Arkansas Judge Richard Arnold.

Noting Clinton allies had “really been trying to keep the women’s groups in line since Paula Jones filing,” Bill Clinton, according to Blair’s account, was concerned feminist groups “might blow sky high” if he appointed Arnold to the Supreme Court. Arnold had ruled that the Jaycees club could bar women from full membership—a decision later overturned by the highest court in the land.

The president was also concerned about accusations of infidelity in Arnold’s divorce records—allegations the president believed had the potential to reignite scrutiny of his own background.

“Stuff is in the [divorce] record—apparently includes other people—and no matter what Hatch says, this will come out, and will make it sound like the only friends [Bill] has in Arkansas are adulterers,” wrote Blair.

“This thing is so sick, according to [Bill], in a way he wants to stand up to it, but will come out and will be part of the pattern of sleaze.”

The president asked Blair to discuss the Arnold nomination with Hillary Clinton, who was dismissive of “grassroots” women’s groups.

“[Bill] wanted me to talk to [Hillary], so we got plugged in (at one point had 2 White House operators trying to get me),” wrote Blair.

“[Hillary] listened to what I had to say re women; thought those grassroots groups didn’t count for much; it was the DC groups who would be doing damage, and obviously [Hillary] concerned about [the] ‘climate’ because of the sexual harassment charge.”

The Clinton camp found itself dealing with Bill Clinton’s infidelity early on. In a confidential Feb. 16, 1992, memo entitled “Possible Investigation Needs,” Clinton campaign staff proposed ways to suppress and discredit stories about the then-Arkansas governor’s affairs.

Campaign operatives Loretta Lynch and Nancy McFadden wrote the memo, addressed to campaign manager David Wilhelm.

The first item on the itinerary discussed “GF,” a reference to Gennifer Flowers, the actress and adult model who had recently disclosed her 12-year affair with Bill Clinton.

“Exposing GF: completely as a fraud, liar and possible criminal to stop this story and related stories, prevent future non-related stories and expose press inaction and manipulation,” said the memo.

In 1998 Bill Clinton admitted he had had a sexual relationship with Flowers.

Another item, headlined “Women,” referred to Elizabeth Ward and Lencola Sullivan, also rumored to have had relationships with Bill.

“Elizabeth Ward ... determine attitude & check out background; Any Reep connections? When does Playboy come out?”

One of the documents in the Blair archive is an [unsigned note from Bill Clinton](#), handwritten on the personal letterhead he used in the mid-1970s. The addressee is unknown. A cover page reads: “Tomorrow is Thursday.”

The undated letter is written on the same [personal letterhead](#) that Clinton [was using](#) in 1976, prior to becoming attorney general of Arkansas. Hillary Rodham and Bill Clinton began dating in 1971 and were married on Oct. 11, 1975.

“Yesterday the recurring shakes came over me again and to rid myself of them I decided to go and buy something for you as much to be doing it as to actually wind up with things,” Clinton wrote.

He said he recently had bought books, including *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and *Bread and Wine* by Italian anti-Communist Ignazio Silone.

“By the time I could call last night it was too late and I was too spent,” the future founding chairman of the Clinton Global Initiative went on.

“Today is Thursday. I will be at the little place downstairs in the union at 11:30. If you aren’t there, I’ll understand. And if you are, I will.”

The fast-food lover and amateur sax player closed by confessing that he had fallen asleep the night before while reading an erotic love poem from the seventeenth century.

“At 3:30 this morning I fell asleep over Andrew Marvell’s *To His Coy Mistress*,” wrote Clinton. “It has been a while since I could feel something so sharply across three hundred years.”

Attached to the letter is a photo of a young Bill Clinton holding a saxophone, with the note, “I thought you might get a kick out of this—I was once even younger.”

YOU ARE ENTERING A WORLD OF PAIN

Days after President Clinton's impeachment in 1998, the first lady called Blair in good spirits, telling her friend that, "Most people in this town have no pain threshold."

"[Hillary] sounded very up, almost jolly," wrote Blair. "Told me how she and Bill and Chelsea had been to church, to a Chinese restaurant, to a Shakespeare play, greeted everywhere with wild applause and cheers—this, she said is what drives their adversaries totally nuts, that they don't bend, do not appear to be suffering."

Hillary Clinton's "adversaries" included the media, Republicans, and top members of President Clinton's staff, according to a *Washington Free Beacon* analysis of the contents of the Blair archive.

"HC says press has big egos and no brains," wrote Blair on May 19, 1993, during the White House travel office controversy. "That [the White House is] just going to have to work them better; that her staff has figured it out and would be glad to teach [Bill's] staff."

The First Lady often confided in Blair about her "hellacious" first year in the White House, and her many clashes with staffers, administration figures, and her husband. By the spring of 1994, Hillary was "furious" at Bill for "ruining himself and the Presidency."

"She keeps trying to shape things up, knows what's wrong, but [Bill] can't fire people, exert discipline, punish leakers," Blair wrote on May 17, 1994. "Never had strategy for Whitewater, troopers, Paula [Jones]. ... Inability to organize, make tough choices, drives her nuts."

Blair, a frequent guest at the White House, recounted two nights in mid-March 1993 when President Clinton spoke on the "theme of being spied on, taped, watched, imprisoned."

"[Bill] told me last 2, 3 months hideously stressful, and has really never had a break since campaign," Blair wrote. "Said when he named [Warren] Christopher to [State Department], screwed up the transition."

The insularity of the Clinton White House was not lost on administration officials.

"Chat w. [Attorney General] Janet Reno," Blair wrote on April 24, 1993. "She concerned that [Hillary Clinton is] resenting her 'celebrity' status."

"Janet wants to connect w. HC; not communicate thru Carol Rasco," Blair added.

“Finds HC a ‘mask.’”

SINGLE-PAYER NECESSARY

On Feb. 23, 1993, Blair joined the Clintons for a family dinner at the White House. The subject of health care reform came up.

“At dinner, [Hillary] to [Bill] at length on the complexities of health care—thinks managed competition a crock; single-payer necessary; maybe add to Medicare,” Blair wrote.

The account is at odds with public statements by the former First Lady that she never supported the single-payer option.

In an interview with the *New York Times* as she ran for president in 2008, Hillary Clinton said she had never seriously considered adopting a single-payer system, in which the government, using funds appropriated from taxpayers, pays for all health care expenses.

“You know, I have thought about this, as you might guess, for 15 years and I never seriously considered a single payer system,” said Clinton in the interview.

At the time of Blair’s account, the First Lady recently had been appointed to the president’s health care task force and had started her push for an insurance reform that hinged on the “managed competition” model.

However, at the February 1993 dinner, the First Lady already seemed to regret her decision to take on health care reform.

“[Bill’s] tenderly hugging and thanking [Hillary] for sucking up to all thos ego’s nd taking all this shit [*sic*],” wrote Blair. “She’s signaling him what a mess health care is, bu also, sweetly, ‘Don’t worry’ [*sic*].”

By the spring, the First Lady seemed deeply anxious about the effort.

“[Hillary] adamant; [Bill] must devise new outside strategy; we’re getting killed. Congress a bunch of whiners; no courage. Her health care plan will save billions in long run but will cost big \$ up front. [Members of Congress] don’t work; only 3 days a week; only care for re-election,” wrote Blair. “[Bill] clearly not very happy w. his own crew and advisors. [Hillary] urging hard ball.”

As the First Lady prepared to testify before Congress in September 1993, Blair wrote that “she’s begun to see that they don’t really care about the issues but want to feel they’re part of the process. So she’s slobbering over their ‘craft’ as she testifies.”

Hillary Clinton’s testimony is seen in retrospect as the high point of her failed health

care campaign.

“The week may have been the pinnacle of her career as First Lady,” wrote Carl Bernstein in his 2008 book *Woman in Charge*. “Hillary was making history, and there were comparisons on the floor of Congress to Martha Washington, Eleanor Roosevelt, and in one particularly tortured leap of logic, Abraham Lincoln.”

REALIST HILLARY: THEY’VE BEEN KILLING EACH

OTHER FOR 900 YEARS

On April 21, 1993, during a speech at the opening reception for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., President Clinton drew parallels between the genocide in Bosnia and the Holocaust.

That same month, he met with top U.S. military officials, diplomats, and aid workers advocating for military action against the Serbian forces of Slobodan Milosevic.

At the time, however, Hillary Clinton was not on board with the use of deadly force. According to Blair’s April 29, 1993 account, the First Lady said she “was very much against any intervention—had been killing each other for 900 yrs.”

Blair later spoke with President Clinton in mid-May and gave him “messages a la [Hillary’s] instructions: stop ruminating aloud re Bosnia.”

The White House was under increasing pressure to address the atrocities in the Balkans. Yet the United States waited more than two years before taking military action.

Blair’s papers are not the first indication that Hillary privately opposed U.S. intervention in Bosnia prior to 1995.

An unnamed friend of the Clintons told *Newsweek* in 1993 that the First Lady “regards [Bosnia] as a Vietnam that would compromise health-care reform.”

The author and controversialist Christopher Hitchens later [reported](#) a similar account from then-Secretary of Defense Les Aspin.

Since leaving the White House, however, Hillary Clinton has said that she favored earlier intervention in the Balkans, decrying “the tragic failures in Rwanda, early Bosnia, and up to now, the inadequate response in Darfur” in a 2005 [speech](#) to the United Nations.

SUPREME THWART

Hillary Clinton's influence on White House decisions went beyond policy, according to the Blair papers.

A three-page memo written by Blair on May 11, 1994, shows the First Lady privately urging President Clinton to reject his preferred 1994 candidate for the U.S. Supreme Court because of political considerations.

While Bill Clinton favored the late Arkansas Judge Richard Arnold, he and his wife had concerns about the judge's health.

Hillary Clinton also argued that rejecting Arnold would send a "message" to the judge's ally, *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* publisher Walter Hussman, Jr., whose paper often printed unflattering stories about the Clintons.

"Goddamn Hussman needs to know that it's his own goddamn fault; that he can't destroy everybody from Ark. and everything about the state and not pay the price for his precious Richard [Arnold]," Hillary said, according to Blair's account.

"He needs to get the message big-time, that Richard might have a chance [to be appointed to the Supreme Court] next round if Hussman and his minions will lay off all this outrageous lies and innuendo."

The details in Blair's memo challenge the contemporary understanding of Hillary Clinton's role in the debate over the 1994 appointment. The First Lady has been credited as one of the few members of the president's inner circle who lobbied in favor of Arnold's nomination.

However, that seems not to be the case.

President Clinton has said he did not appoint Arnold for health reasons. The judge had been diagnosed with advanced lymphoma, and according to the Blair memo his doctors could not guarantee he would live more than five years.

He died in 2004.

The health concerns were related to President Clinton's fear that Arnold could be his last Supreme Court appointment.

"At this point BC not sure he can get re-elected; they're killing him in the South, rise of fundamentalism, the Nazi's. Some of that he did to himself—gay rights in the military. Others just hate the one who's in," Blair wrote in an account of one of her conversations with the president.

According to the memo, Bill Clinton dispatched Blair to discuss the issue with

Hillary, but the First Lady stood her ground.

“If HRC carried the day, and it sounds as if she is, [the nominee] will be [Bruce] Babbitt,” wrote Blair. “She’s not wild about him. Wishes there were a 3rd choice.”

President Clinton ended up appointing Stephen Breyer, who became an associate justice of the Supreme Court in August 1994.

THE FUTURE IS NOW

As Hillary Clinton prepares for a possible 2016 presidential run, the Clinton team has a great incentive to focus on the future.

However, recent weeks have made it clear this will not be easy.

Sen. Rand Paul’s remark about Bill Clinton’s “predatory behavior” on a recent Sunday talk show generated a days-long media firestorm and reignited the decades-old Lewinsky controversy.

While Hillary Clinton has gone from the White House to the Senate to the State Department, experts say she will likely be forced to readdress some of the controversies that defined her husband’s presidency if she decides on a 2016 bid.

Neither a Clinton spokesman nor a spokesman for the Clinton Foundation returned a request for comment from the *Free Beacon* on the materials contained in the Blair archive.

As the 2016 contest draws near, however, the contents of this little-known archive of one of the closest friends of the most famous woman in the world are sure to receive fresh scrutiny.

While thousands of Diane Blair’s papers are available to the public at the University of Arkansas Library, an undisclosed number of documents remain kept in a restricted section of the archive. The *Free Beacon* was unable to gain access to those documents.

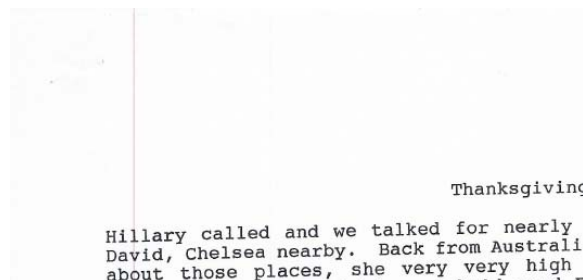
“With this collection, [Diane Blair’s] contributions will grow and live on, enlarging our understanding of history, politics and culture,” Hillary Clinton said in a video address at the opening of Blair’s archive in 2010.

“I hope also that some young scholar will come along and write the story of Diane,” she added. “We miss her still but this, along with so many of her contributions to us, lives on.”

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Thanksgiving

Hillary called and we talked for nearly
David, Chelsea nearby. Back from Australi
about those places, she very very high

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