WILLIAM J. CLINTON PRESIDENTIAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH SUSAN THOMASES

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TRANSCRIPT

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Riley: … that's stuff that I don't want to miss. Tell us about the Streett gangs.

Thomases: The Streett people. When the campaign first got started in September of '91, several of us went there for the announcement. Stephanie Streett ran the announcement. As far as I could tell, if there was anyone running the announcement, it was Stephanie. And then, shortly after that, Hillary [Rodham Clinton] hired Patty Solis Doyle, and she became the other focal point. They were the two key people who were there from the beginning all the way through. They were the trusted people.

Riley: Yes. We haven't spoken with either of them. In Senator Clinton's orbit, we have talked with Kelly Craighead, Melanne Verveer, and Capricia Marshall. Maggie Williams is coming up. Our brief is principally the '92 campaign and the White House years.

Thomases: That's all I know about. I don't even know about the White House years. I know about the negative campaign.

Riley: Exactly. So far we've talked with most of the Chiefs of Staff, several of the Deputy Chiefs of Staff, the two National Security Advisors.

Thomases: Which ones? Sandy [Samuel Berger]?

Riley: Sandy and Tony Lake. We talked with probably half a dozen members of the Cabinet and most of the press secretaries.

Thomases: Let me tell you, from my point of view, the only person who's important for you to talk to is John Podesta. He's the only one who knows both the campaign and the White House. I adore him. He's just a fabulous person, a huge talent, and a most overly modest guy.

Riley: We've had one session with him, and he agreed to do another. We just haven't been able to schedule it.

Thomases: He's fabulous.

Riley: And he's also very busy.

Thomases: I know he's very busy, but I've known him since before the Clinton campaign. He's a fabulous person, understated in everything. But he's brilliant and talented, with his head more together than anybody else. He has the calmest positive personality of almost anybody I know.

Riley: We hope to be able to get back to him. Let me lay out for you the ground rules here. Obviously, we're tape-recording this, but the principal ground rule is that this is completely off the record. It's being tape-recorded, but you own your words. Nobody in the room is allowed to repeat anything that's said behind the closed doors except you. A transcript is going to be prepared that will come back to you in about six months. The transcript will become the authoritative record of the interview. You have an opportunity to review the transcript. If you want to make amendments to some of the things you said, you can do that. If you wish to place restrictions on particular aspects of the transcript—

Thomases: You mean when I say something really mean and horrible about someone? I have a reputation for doing that, but I've tried to change my behavior.

Riley: Well, I hope not.

Thomases: No, no. I mean that. I went to the reunion in Little Rock a while back, and one of the women came to me and told me how devastating my criticism of her was. On the one hand, I told her, "You deserved it," but I felt bad that I had not tempered it afterwards with some comment that she had really grown up. So I have to learn to temper my criticism with compliments every so often.

Riley: That may be an admirable personal trait, but it makes for a terrible oral history.

Thomases: I have a way of being honest with people that they find very disturbing.

Riley: Well, I hope you will speak honestly.

Thomases: I do. That's the way I am. That's what you get.

Riley: We're delighted to have that. But again, part of the reason for creating an opportunity for you to revisit your words is to encourage candor today with the idea that you have a second crack at it if we get into something that's sensitive or delicate and you're concerned that you might not want that out in the public domain at some point.

As a routine matter, of course, we hold all of the interviews until the completion of the project, which is about two or three years away, and then the entirety of the cleared archive will be made available. I emphasize the "cleared" archive, because that means, again, that when the transcript comes back to you, if there are certain passages you would like to hold onto for a longer period of time, you have the authority to do that. We would hope that you wouldn't be overly aggressive in holding onto pieces of this, because our purpose is not to hear your story for ourselves, but to create a document that historians and students can come back to 15 years or 75 years from now and get a picture of the way it really was, not just the way it appears in the press account.

Thomases: I'm just reading what's-her-name's book on [Abraham] Lincoln—

Riley: Doris Kearns Goodwin.

Thomases: It's amazing. I'm so impressed.

Riley: My wife has just finished reading her book, *No Ordinary Time,* about Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt.

Thomases: I was not that impressed with that. I thought it was okay, but this book is far more impressive.

Riley: Monique [VanLandingham] told me that what's absolutely remarkable about that book is the extent to which Goodwin was able to go back and access all of the personal letters and the extended memoranda, the kinds of things we don't have nowadays, either because people are afraid an independent counsel is going to get his hands on it, or they just don't have time.

Thomases: Or you have someone like George Stephanopoulos, who has his buddy and creates his lies. I don't dislike George, but I always found him untrustworthy, and he proved it. It's sad, but he proved it. He's a brilliant, talented guy, and I don't know what makes him that way. His father is one of the most exceptional people I know. But whatever George's issues were, he did something I feel was totally unethical.

Riley: Well, we haven't spoken with him yet.

Thomases: Oh, he's brilliant and talented, and you'll get a story.

Riley: He already has one version of his story on the record.

Thomases: Two versions. He has two versions of his story on the record, and he has someone fabulous running interference for him. James [Carville] covers for him all the time. I love James. James is terrific.

Riley: Do you have any questions for me about this? We're scheduled to go until about noon. Someone's going to bring us some lunch, and then we have until 3:00.

Thomases: Okay, fine.

Riley: We'd be interested in hearing a little bit more about your biography. Your parents were politically active, is that true?

Thomases: No. I was a child of a mixed marriage. My father was Republican, and my mother was a wildly liberal Democrat. So it was always interesting, but neither of them was terribly political. My mother was very involved in League of Women Voters politics, but she was not involved in electoral politics—with two exceptions. I disliked him so much I have trouble remembering—she was very fond of her local Congressman named Andy Maguire, who was a very liberal guy and who was also very ambitious. He was not my favorite person, but my mother and my brother Matthew [Thomases] both like him very much.

He was devastated because he wanted to be Senator from New Jersey, and then when he decided to run, a friend of mine was running his campaign. I went to her and said, "Gina [Glantz], you're finished." She said, "Why?" I said, "Because Bill Bradley wants to run, and he's going to run, and he's asked me to run his campaign. So you can either withdraw now or wait until we actually make our announcement."

Riley: You went to Connecticut College?

Thomases: Yes.

Riley: And for a while you wanted to be a historian, is that right?

Thomases: No. I was a historian and I am a historian still—something you'd never know. I went to Conn College and graduated in three years. I promised my father I'd do a fourth year of schooling, and I went to Columbia and got a Master's in European Intellectual History—way, way back when, the earlier the better. I'm a person who thinks that if you haven't looked at something for 500 years, you don't know anything. So what you do is not something I would have done. This is current events.

Riley: Hardly history.

Thomases: No, no, I know. I had some wonderful, wonderful teachers, and I adored what I did. One of my favorite teachers from Connecticut dropped dead, and the school was desperate. They hired someone to teach the course, and it was a disaster. So the head of the department called me and asked me if I would be willing to come up there and teach the course for a year, which became four years. I loved it.

Riley: What period of time was that?

Thomases: Nineteenth-century Europe.

Riley: What period of time in your life?

Thomases: It was in the '70s.

Morrisroe: Were you active politically during your collegiate days?

Thomases: No. I had always been active in civil rights issues. Englewood [New Jersey] did just fine in getting through our CORE [Congress of Racial Equality] integration because it was a much bigger issue for people outside the town and a much harder issue on the people who lost in town than everybody else. I went to the high school. We were on split sessions, which was one of the things we had to go through in those days, but it was fine. Those of us who wanted a good education got a good education.

I graduated from high school and went to Connecticut College, which in those days was not looked on with as much favor as it is today. I wanted to go to Barnard, but my father would not let me go to college in the city. I didn't want to go to Vassar because my father's partner's daughters all went to Vassar. Conn College was the nearest school—within a couple of hours of

New York City. I went there with the intention of graduating in three years. At that time, I didn't value it. I had to get my BA, so I wanted to get through. I went through in three years.

Riley: Did you do anything in the civil rights area while you were there?

Thomases: I didn't go down south like a lot of people did. I said, "I don't need to go down south. All I need to do is go to the town next door." I always felt that there was unfairness in people's attitude toward the South. I'm not saying that the South didn't need to change, but there was enough racial inequality in the next town. There were a lot of things that could be done right in northern New Jersey.

Morrisroe: You mentioned that your parents had different political affiliations. Early on in this period, did you have more of an affinity for the Democratic Party?

Thomases: On economic issues, I tended to agree more with my father than my mother. I was not anti-union, and my father was wildly anti-union. But I agreed with him on economic issues. I agreed with my mother on human rights issues.

Morrisroe: Did your work in civil rights during that period draw you into Democratic Party politics in the state?

Thomases: I knew the players, let me put it that way. New Jersey is such a small state. It sounds weird. It's a large state, but politically, there are only 100 people in politics in New Jersey. I haven't lived in New Jersey for years, but even now I know everything that's going on in every issue. I'm a huge fan of Dick Codey's. Of course, Jon Corzine is a good guy, but he should have stayed in the Senate and let Dick Codey run again for Governor.

Dick Codey did a wonderful, wonderful job when he had to step in as Governor. I think he's a fabulous guy, but he and I disagreed over the years on issues because he's not pro-choice. He's from a devout Catholic background, and when I ran Bill Bradley's campaign in '78, on that issue he was not in our corner. But he and I got along just fine. One of the things I learned: you can disagree without hating each other. Today there's all this disagreement; now if you disagree, you hate each other. I don't subscribe to that.

Riley: The materials in the briefing book indicated that you first met Bill Clinton in a kind of antiwar—

Thomases: I met Bill Clinton in 1970 in the context of the antiwar movement.

Riley: How were you introduced to the antiwar movement?

Thomases: That was my mother's thing. First of all, it just didn't make sense to me. It was so stupid than anyone thought that a bunch of tan pants attacked our troops, that somehow we were under assault. If you've read any Vietnam history, you know that the French had been through it and they lost. Who did we think we were that we were going to go in there and win?

I was very friendly with a guy named Tom Finney, who was a partner of Clifford, Warnke, McIlwain & Finney**.** Tom—for reasons I never understood—took a great liking to me, and he

and I stayed friends until the day he died. He sadly died of ALS [amyotrophic lateral sclerosis]. He was a wonderful guy. He had been in the CIA and knew all about it. I had a lot of respect for him. I understood better from him exactly how we got in there and what a mess it was. He was antiwar, and even though he and Gene McCarthy were on the same side of the issue, he was much more intelligent about it. I couldn't stand Gene McCarthy.

Riley: You met Clinton in the late 1960s?

Thomases: In '68. I got involved in the McCarthy campaign because of my mother. That was one thing my mother drew me into.

Riley: Can you tell us a little bit more about the context in which you first met Bill Clinton?

Thomases: I met him on a street corner in Washington. We knew someone in common. He probably remembers better than I since he remembers everything. There was an organization called, I think, Project Purse Strings. I went to Project Purse Strings and saw him there. Then that evening I went to a dinner party, and he was there. He said to me, "Look, you've seen me three times in one day. That's it! You're stuck with me. I'm your friend for life." And that was it.

Morrisroe: What were your first impressions of him?

Thomases: I thought he was terrific. First of all, anyone who says to you, "I'm going to be President," either they're a nutcase—if you're a New Yorker you'll give him (mmmm) one of those. He seemed bright, and he certainly knew what he was doing. We liked each other. (We were talking about that just the other night. We had Christmas Eve dinner. Hillary, Chelsea [Clinton] and he took my son and me out for Christmas Eve dinner this year.)

He and I just liked each other, but what brought us together was our common interest in civil rights and our comfort level with people of color. I immediately saw it in him, and I felt it in myself. You either are comfortable or are not comfortable with people of color. He and I just had that in common, and it worked.

Riley: Were your antiwar politics parallel?

Thomases: I'm older than he is.

Riley: How does that make a difference?

Thomases: It makes a difference. He was not really in the '68 campaign. Harold Ickes was a much greater influence on me in terms of his politics. I don't know if you know Harold.

Riley: We have talked to Harold.

Thomases: Harold and I are really close friends, and Harold and I were also the same. Harold, of course, went south, and I always chided him. I said, "You took the easy route."

Riley: He lost a kidney, didn't he?

Thomases: Now he has lost a kidney. It was easy to be on the right side when you went south. I don't mean to be righteous about this. It was far harder to stick with the civil rights movement in the North at the time, and I had more failures than he did. People who went south had some real successes. Not that I envied them, but I was working in Newark, New Jersey, and it was harder. It was different; the spirit was not quite the same.

Riley: You're suggesting that there's a connection between the race question and the antiwar question. These things are overlapping when you're meeting Bill Clinton in 1970?

Thomases: Yes.

Riley: So you meet him on a street corner, and you have dinner with him that day.

Thomases: I was impressed with him. Anybody who speaks that well on complicated issues is impressive.

Riley: So you're just having conversations with him then.

Thomases: Yes.

Riley: How did you manage to stay in touch after that? Were there frequent contacts?

Thomases: We liked each other. Not frequent contacts. He and I were laughing about that the other day. First of all, I had three brothers, so I was on to him at the beginning. I said, "You have to be straight with me." He was going out with a very beautiful woman who was my friend, and I said, "You're going to get your heart broken, so beware." We had a brother/sister kind of relationship.

Riley: You didn't date him?

Thomases: Oh, please.

Riley: I just raise the question because—

Thomases: You should ask him. He said I was too smart to do that. Not that I was too smart; he was too smart. He realized that he wanted to be my friend, and he knew that if he messed with me in that area, we would both end up losers. First of all, I'm older than he is. Second of all, I grew up in a world of men. I have three older brothers, seven male cousins. He would have had a hard time.

Riley: You were on to him.

Thomases: Not only on to him. I adore him, and for years I tried to get him to behave himself, and it was a consummate failure. In that part of his life, I never was successful. I told him if I ever caught him doing something in the campaign, I was walking. So during the campaign he behaved himself.

Riley: I have to ask you, Susan. Is this something you picked up very early on—that this guy was an operator?

Thomases: Oh, please. He's not an operator at all. He doesn't have self-control. It's not that he's an operator. I used to think of him as the Pillsbury Doughboy. Now he's an attractive man, but when I first knew him, he was just a kid.

Riley: Was he bearded when you first met him?

Thomases: I don't know. During those years he had a beard. I think he grew a beard when he came back from Cambridge. I think I saw him when he came back, and he had a beard.

Riley: So you liked each other.

Thomases: We really liked each other. I think we were more bonded on issues of civil rights than we were on the issue of the war, because the war for him was not that big an issue. It wasn't as big an issue for him as civil rights.

Riley: That was part of what I was probing about. There was a sense then, when you read, for example, David Maraniss' book.

Thomases: Which I think is very good.

Riley: I do, too, but I didn't want to prejudice your reply.

Thomases: No, no, my reply wouldn't have been prejudiced. It was at that time that I also met Taylor Branch, and Taylor Branch is someone I adore. He's a fabulous guy. Taylor was in that original group. He was part of Project Purse Strings, too. I'm trying to think who else.

Riley: Taylor is on our advisory committee.

Thomases: I haven't talked to him in years, but I think he's a terrifically bright guy, and I'm happy at all his successes.

Riley: His book is just about done. He has a cover story in *Time Magazine* this week. I'm looking forward to that. How frequently are you in contact with Clinton after you first meet him?

Thomases: He would call me out of the blue—I'm a late-night person, he's a late-night person—and we would talk about things. He's politically the smartest person I know. I just don't know anybody who's better than he is. Even Harold—who I think has a unique point of view in terms of the organization of the Democratic Party—is not Bill Clinton's equal in terms of understanding the political process. Harold has just learned the human dynamics of it from Bill Clinton over the years. He mostly knows about the organizational aspects of it—or the disorganizational aspects of it.

Morrisroe: So is he calling you soliciting your advice or input with respect to his own political future and career? Or is he talking substance about issues? What were the types of discussions you would have?

Thomases: Mostly just touching base issue things. It was not substance. My theory was I don't do issues. I do organizational things. I had issues that I cared about—and still care a lot about. But that was not my thing. My greatest talent in politics is I am a fabulous scheduler and always have been. I have a sense of the dynamics of it and the timing of it. I don't know where it came from; it was just there.

The first time I ever really did it was once when I was in graduate school and I needed money. I took a job from the Kennedys, and I watched how they set up their operation. I said, "Boy, this is something I understand, and I can make this happen."

Riley: This would have been about what time?

Thomases: Sixty-four—Bobby [Robert F.] Kennedy's campaign. I had finished Connecticut College and moved to New York City, and I was living here when he was running for Senator.

Riley: You were involved in the [George] McGovern campaign in '72?

Thomases: I hate McGovern. I made a mistake. My opinion of him was wrong. I just thought his politics were stupid. I thought he was so dumb. Given that he was a war hero, he should have taken a whole other focus on that. But I didn't know him well enough. I was very friendly with a man named Alan Baron.

Riley: I don't know that name.

Thomases: You don't know about the original *Baron Report*?

Riley: Okay, that I do know.

Thomases: There was a political rag called the *Baron Report*. If you talk to [Roger] Cook and ask Cook what his report is mirrored on, it's the *Baron Report*. Alan Baron was a fabulous guy from Iowa who wrote something called the *Baron Report*. Alan Baron was a gay Jewish guy who never admitted to being gay. I said to him, "Alan, come out of the closet. This stuff is ridiculous. This is so stupid." He was from Sioux City, Iowa.

Riley: Well, that explains why he didn't come out of the closet.

Thomases: But he wasn't living in Sioux City, Iowa. His mother was a very successful insurance broker in Sioux City. I don't know whether she's still living. Anyway, I adored Alan Baron, and he was politically very smart. He was a huge McGovern supporter. I kept saying, "Now, Alan, why don't you just redirect the campaign and focus on the fact that he's a war hero and not on the fact that he's this liberal guy? Everyone's treating him like a pansy, and you're never going to get anywhere with his politics." It was a disaster. And also, I'm not on the same wavelength with Eli, what's his name?

Riley: Segal.

Thomases: Segal. Eli Segal and his wife are not my favorite people. I have a lot of respect for him. I think he's a great businessman, but he's just not my favorite person on a personal level.

And his wife—who I think is a very good lawyer and a terrific person—nevertheless proved again to me how politically inept she is.

My sister in-law is Donna Dees-[Thomases]. Do you know who Donna Dees is? She's the woman who came up with the idea of the Million Mom March. She's a brilliant, talented publicist. She started out working for CBS. She's now working for the man who owns the *Daily News*. He's a rich guy, and he has all these TV stations. Mortimer Zuckerman. He's not a New Yorker. He's originally from Boston. He happens to live in New York and owns the *Daily News*.

Donna put together the Million Mom March. She came up with the idea and built a truly grassroots organization because of the kind of person she is. Phyllis Segal came in there and tried to change it, and she just alienated all the mothers. Most of the mothers were not highly educated and were not wild activists and had not been antiwar anything. They were not part of the movement. She was totally insensitive to these women who had come out because they were antigun. She thought she knew better than anybody, and Donna was offended.

So I called her up and said, "Phyllis, why don't you back off? Let these women try to organize, and just keep them from getting into trouble. That's your job. Your job as the lawyer is not to tell them what to plead, but to guide them so they don't do anything that oversteps the law. That's our purpose in these things. They'll get the people to come out. They have the connections. They'll create the buses. They don't need to be organized. They need to be supported."

Some people have trouble doing that, and the Segal family is one of them.

Riley: Were you in contact with Bill Clinton during the McGovern campaign? He was doing work in Texas?

Thomases: I don't know whether it was just before or just after the McGovern campaign. There was some big meeting we all came to. Let's go back to where we really got friendly again. I went to work for [Jimmy] Carter. Carter was before McGovern. Anyway, I liked Walter Mondale a lot. Why did I love Walter Mondale so much? I didn't think he should run for President, but I was for children. The whole issue of my life was children and how children don't ask to be born. Our job is to take care of them and protect them until they come of age, and teach them how to protect themselves. That's what I worried about, and so when Walter Mondale decided that he was going to be Jimmy Carter's Vice President, I said, "Okay, I'll sacrifice my life and go to Atlanta and sit there and do Walter Mondale's schedule." I was in law school at the time.

Riley: That was in '76.

Thomases: Seventy-six. I was in law school, and I came up every Thursday to go to law school, and the rest of the time I was in Atlanta doing Walter Mondale's schedule with Michael Berman and Dick Moe and Jim Johnson.

Riley: There was a brief interval in 1974.

Thomases: When Walter Mondale thought about running for President.

Riley: I'm just picking up on something we had in the briefing materials. It indicated that you had gone down to Arkansas to help Bill Clinton when he was running for a Congressional seat in 1974.

Thomases: I spent one night there. I supported him, but at that time I had a business, and I was working in Texas all the time. So when I was going back and forth to Texas, I often stopped in Arkansas to see them.

Riley: By this time Hillary was on the scene?

Thomases: Let me tell you. He fell in love with Hillary. I met Hillary Clinton originally through a man named Steve Cohen, who is a professor of law at Georgetown University. He's a tax professor now, a brilliant, brilliant guy. He and Harold Ickes were best friends. They probably still are best friends, but Steve and I haven't been friendly in recent years. Steve Cohen was one of these people who ate only white things.

Riley: I'm not sure exactly what that means. [*laughter*]

Thomases: White things: pasta—You know, white things.

Riley: Marshmallows.

Morrisroe: I've actually heard of this. [*laughter*]

Thomases: Anyway, he went to law school with the Clintons. When they were at Yale Law School, I was teaching at Connecticut College in New London. I would commute back and forth from New York to New London, and I would often stop in New Haven and have dinner with one or another of my friends. So I occasionally would bump into them. I first met Hillary through Steve Cohen, and then subsequently, when Bill Clinton told me he had this thing for her, I said, "Oh, watch out." First of all, when I was teaching at Connecticut College, Hillary Clinton was it. Connecticut College was a wannabe Wellesley, and so all of us in that world knew who Hillary Clinton was.

Riley: Had she been on the cover of—

Thomases: No, no, she was speaking at their graduation, and that was a huge thing. So I knew of Hillary Clinton in that way at that time. Bill Clinton introduced me to her in a different way, but I actually first met her through Steve Cohen.

Riley: And your impressions were that this was an admirable woman?

Thomases: She's a brilliant woman. How many people do you know who speak in paragraphs? I mean seriously. She's the only person I know. I jab her all the time. I can barely string sentences together, and here's a person who was speaking to me in paragraphs. And it wasn't just one paragraph, it was two paragraphs. If you listen, you're just blown away by it.

Riley: And interpersonally you got along well in these early days?

Thomases: Oh, fabulously. We've always gotten along.

Riley: You said when Bill Clinton said that he and Hillary were an item—

Thomases: I said, "She's too good for you." He had a thing for her. I said, "You'll be lucky if she talks to you. She's so nice, and she's so brilliant, and she's so straight. It's one thing to like her; it's one thing to have hopes—" But the truth is she absolutely adored him and she still adores him. So it didn't become an issue.

Riley: So this wasn't a match you thought was a natural?

Thomases: No, no. They were two very smart people, but it didn't occur to me. But she was the one who was wildly crazy about him, and so that's why it worked. And now they're crazy about each other, and it clearly works.

Riley: So the fact that you had gone down and spent maybe a night or a weekend working in that early campaign was a natural outgrowth of the fact that you had known these people already for some considerable time.

Thomases: Yes.

Riley: You said earlier that many people tell you they want to be President of the United States, and you think they're crazy. Had Bill Clinton told you that at this time?

Thomases: Andy Maguire wanted to be President of the United States. I can tell you all sorts of people who want to. Do you want to know all the people who have told me they want to be President? I can give you a list.

Riley: But Bill Clinton told you at a very early stage.

Thomases: He told me at a very early stage that he wanted to be President of the United States, and he knew it was hard, and he might not make it, but that was his objective.

Riley: And you thought he was nuts?

Thomases: No, I thought, *That's interesting. Poor boy from Little Rock, Arkansas, that's cool.* But very smart. I was very impressed first off with how smart he was. The thing about him that always amazed me was if you talked to him about something he hadn't heard of before, he would say, "Send me something to read on that." And then the next time you talked to him, he would know more about it than you did. I know a lot of smart people. My oldest brother went to Amherst. My cousin, Bill Weisberger, created some theory of physics that no one else created. He's a brilliant guy who teaches at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology]. So I know a lot of brilliant people. It's not as if he's the first brilliant person I ever met.

But he's the quickest study on any subject I've ever met, and I know a lot of smart people—a lot of people who are smart for a living. I was a lawyer in a hotshot law firm. Willkie Farr & Gallagher is a major law firm, and I was a partner there, and I worked on some major deals. I worked with a lot of very smart people. He could have been good at anything he wanted to be

good at. He's incredibly smart, and he has a very fine brain in terms of the way he sorts through things and establishes his intellectual and personal priorities. That part of his life is very clear, and obviously it works for him.

Riley: But he is also somebody with a common touch. He's not somebody whose intelligence is in the clouds.

Thomases: Yes, exactly, and I had enormous respect for the common touch. But the thing I liked about him most was that he had his priorities right. He thought the people part of things really mattered and that things could be done about that, and I liked that part of him very much. I liked the priority he put on education. I'm disappointed in what happened in health, because I think he could have done more in that area, and he should have treated that as more of a priority. But he realized how hard it was.

Riley: Was it clear to you at the time that he was going to go back to Arkansas?

Thomases: Yes, very clear, because he understood that that's where his roots were. Everybody argued with him about it—even I raised the issue that he could be successful if he stayed east. He said, "No, no. If I'm going to be successful in politics, I have to go where I come from."

Riley: Were you concerned? You had a shared view of issues that would have put him into the liberal spectrum of the American political system.

Thomases: No. You people label things wrong. He was good on issues relating to people, like education. He cared about the things that mothers care about: education, non-violence. For a guy who came from the South and who believed in guns, he was as clear on the issue of non-violence as any public figure at that time. And it was hard. I had enormous respect for him because it was not easy coming from Arkansas to have issues—you can be for guns without being for violence.

Riley: This is actually what I'm getting to: if you were concerned whether, in heading back to Arkansas, he was creating a pathway to national prominence that would have required him to be more conservative than suited his nature, or maybe than suited your nature, politically.

Thomases: My nature is irrelevant. He's the one who's running. I have enormous admiration for anyone who chooses to run for public office. It's not something that I ever found personally intriguing, but I realize how hard it is, and he was willing to put himself on the line.

I first became really friendly with him when he ran for Attorney General and I went down there to watch him being sworn in. Do you know what they give the person who becomes Attorney General of Arkansas? A gun. I went down there to be supportive of him, not just in his campaign, but each time he was sworn in. I flew down and watched him be sworn in as Attorney General and get his gun. And that told me a lot—not about him, but about Arkansas. That's totally appropriate.

My father had been the sheriff of Passaic County in New Jersey when I was a kid. I said, "Dad, why did you run for sheriff?" He said, "No one else wanted to be sheriff, and we need a sheriff." And that was it. We had guns in our house. My father was not a gunny, but we had guns. My brothers all learned to shoot rifles. We had a farm in Pennsylvania, and they liked to go out and

shoot whatever was out there in the woods or in the field—kill little animals. It wasn't my thing, but guys liked it. My husband [William Bettridge] was very much a gunny. When he died, we had guns in the closet. I took them out of the house because I didn't want my son finding them. I gave his guns away.

Morrisroe: Do you have any recollections of Clinton as a campaigner during these early years?

Thomases: He was amazing.

Morrisroe: Can you share with us a little bit about any?

Thomases: He touches people, physically. Have you ever seen his hands? You have to meet him and shake his hands. He's a person who touches people. First of all, he's so tall. I think people don't realize how tall he is until they see him in person. Have you ever seen him in person?

Riley: I have, but only at a distance.

Thomases: Well, you should go see him in person. He's a very tall man, and in politics that does make a difference. And he has these incredibly beautiful hands, not just physically beautiful, but they're big hands, and he touches people. If you watch him, he sort of scoops people up with his hands and includes them—he has a way of including people. When he's talking to you, you know that he's paying attention to you and he hears you. He has the most incredible memory. So every person he sees, if he's ever seen them before, he remembers something about them, and they cannot believe that he remembered it.

He has this incredible personal touch because of his great way of focusing on whoever he's speaking to—and this incredibly memory of having met someone. I know a lot of politicians, and they don't all have that skill. I never did government. I don't do government, and I never really went to Washington. Well, I went there for the summer after my junior year of college, and I was so puked out that I couldn't stay. It's just not my kind of town.

For example, I love George Mitchell. A former student of mine needed something from George Mitchell just this week, and I said, "Go see George Mitchell and tell him you're a former student of mine. I'm sure he'll help you if he can." She said, "Why do you say that?" I said, "Because when he first ran, I supported him, and he'll never forget that." I had a fundraiser for him and raised his first big chunk of change from little people. I didn't raise big money—I raised big money from little people, and I showed him how to do it. I said, "You can't just raise money from rich people. You have to raise money from all the little people, and I'll get it done for you."

I've had the experience of working with some pretty terrific people in politics. For example, Bill Bradley and I were friends in college, and when he decided to run for the Senate, someone told him, "Susan Thomases could run your campaign." He said, "Really, her?" He kept looking for someone else to do it, and they said, "None of these people can do it. If you really want it, you're going to have to ask Susan. I don't think she'll do it. She's just started to practice law."

So he had to ask me, and he knew that he was asking something big, and that he would owe me. And Bill Bradley doesn't like to owe anybody anything. But I ran his campaign. I said, "I'll run

your campaign, but don't ask me to go to Washington. I'll help you find someone to be your chief of staff, but I'm not going to go to that town. I'll get you elected."

He said, "How do you know that?" I said, "I know that because I know New Jersey and we can get you elected."

Morrisroe: Was his the first campaign you ran?

Thomases: The first one I ran from the top. I had been in other campaigns, but his was the first one I ran from the top.

Morrisroe: In what capacity did you work in the campaign? Were you doing scheduling, as you said you had a knack for?

Thomases: In some of them, I would do scheduling or advance. I also like to get out the vote, GOTV. I understand that in every campaign, you don't wait until the end to GOTV. That's the way you build your campaign, around getting out the vote.

Morrisroe: Had you considered a career as a political consultant before returning to law school? Or was it just something you were interested in on the side?

Thomases: I had a skill. I could have done it as a business if I had wanted to, but the truth is I thought to myself, *When you start doing it as a business, that's when you get in trouble.*

Morrisroe: So what prompted your decision to go to law school?

Thomases: I was a historian. I either had to go back to school and get a master's degree in business, or I had to go to law school. As a person who was interested in history, I thought I was safer going to law school—although now I wish I had taken a joint degree. If I had it to do over again, I would have taken a joint MBA and LD degree from Columbia.

Riley: This is a friend of yours among a number of friends who said they thought they could be President. At what point did you start thinking seriously that this could work?

Thomases: I didn't have a lot of friends who wanted to be President. I knew a lot of people.

Riley: You knew a lot of people who wanted to be President.

Thomases: They were not all friends—just people. Bill Clinton and I really hit it off. We became friends, just friends. I liked him a lot, and I liked his values a lot. In September of '91 he invited us all down to Little Rock, and he announced that he wanted to run for President. I'm sure you've heard this from everybody. It was quite a meeting. It was very well done, very well organized. It was terrific. I knew people in his circle. Webb [Webster] Hubbell and I were friends, and I've been very sad about what happened with Webb. I knew a lot of the Arkansas people from other ways too complicated to tell you, but I always liked Arkansas. I knew it all sorts of different ways.

Riley: At what point do you remember thinking that this person actually had what it took to be President of the United States, and it wasn't just something floating around in the ether?

Thomases: I watched him when he was Attorney General of Arkansas: the things he chose to do, the way he chose to run his shop, his priorities. I was impressed with him. He would show up in New York once in a while, and every time he was coming he would call to tell me and ask who he could meet.

Riley: So he's building this network.

Thomases: Yes. He put together this meeting in Arkansas in September. We all trudged down there, and I liked the group of people I met. I liked the Chicago people he brought in. I'm very partial to Chicago. My sister-in-law's from Chicago. We had a great time, and those of us who went down for the meeting bonded in some ways. We all knew we were there to be part of his future. I thought it was very well put together, very well organized, and I was impressed.

Riley: Had you gotten any sense before this that Hillary was unhappy in Arkansas? Or did the transition into Arkansas work for her?

Thomases: It was weird. I was often on the wrong side of the issues. I didn't say, "Hillary, you should keep the Rodham name," but it was not a big thing that she had to take the Clinton name. She finally figured out herself that she had to do that. Those are the things people have to figure out themselves. If I had been really smart, I would have known that from the beginning. That was a difficult moment for her to live through. Working for the Rose law firm was a good thing for her. Vince Foster was also one of the most talented lawyers I knew. He was a terrific lawyer. He could have come to New York and been a great lawyer. Personally, I adored Vince.

I actually knew his father. Before I was a lawyer, one of the things I did was work for a consulting firm owned by an African-American guy who had gone to high school with my oldest brother, and who had gone to Bates College. He wanted to start a business. His name was David Boone, and he was the first black superstar at IBM [International Business Machines]. He was an IBM salesman, and he was a great guy. He grew up in my town. He was a great athlete. He had been orphaned at an early age, and so my father helped put him through college.

He wanted to start a business, and I said, "Look, I have two things. You want to start a business? I'll write some proposals for you so that you can get some federal business," because that's the way an African-American could function in this world. "I'll do the proposals, and you'll get the business. But you have to hire the people." His best friend in high school was a guy named David Johnson. David Johnson and I are still best friends. David Boone and I are less friendly because he's gone off to do other things.

The Johnson family was an incredibly successful African-American family in our town. The oldest of the brothers was a lawyer; one of them was a doctor. These boys were the first generation that finished high school, although one of his sisters hated me. The Johnson family and I have always been very close, particularly David. Why did I start this particular story?

Morrisroe: Working in the firm.

Thomases: I went to work for this African-American business, and I traveled all over the South. They wanted a black firm to do family planning, so they had the National Family Planning contract. In those days, George Bush, Senior was for family planning; we loved him because he was the family planning king. We won major family planning contracts in all these communities east of the Mississippi and along the Mississippi. I went to Helena, Arkansas, to help them open a family planning center. Vince Foster's father came up to me in the hotel lobby one day and said, "Girl, you're going to need my help." I said, "I need all the help I can get. What do you suggest?"

He was very helpful, introducing me to people and helping figure out what to do. So I actually met Vince Foster's father before I met Vince Foster.

Riley: So you had your own independent networks in Arkansas?

Thomases: Yes. Not just in Arkansas, but all through the South.

Riley: I wanted to ask you a couple of things about this same period.

Thomases: That was also the time I learned how prejudiced the state of Indiana was. David Johnson was a Little All-American football player. He and I went to Indianapolis together. He said, "Susan, you have to get in the back, and I have to be your driver. Otherwise, we will get lynched driving through this town."

Riley: Well, I'm from Alabama, so I'm glad to hear there's something—

Thomases: I'm telling you, Indiana, of all the places I'd been in America—One of my best friends in the world is Jim Rogers. He's from Demopolis, Alabama. Have you been to Demopolis?

Riley: I have, but only passing through.

Thomases: Anyway, the Rogers family is a big Yale family. Jim was the first one to go to Yale, and Jim lives here in the city. He's very famous. He's the motorcycling millionaire, or whatever he calls himself. He writes books about motorcycling through America. Jim Rogers is a major money investor. He was George Soros' original partner, but he quit George Soros, taking many millions of dollars with him, because he was tired of doing that.

Jim Rogers and I are still good friends. He just called me this week. Every year he used to give a party for southerners in New York. He owns a beautiful house on Riverside Drive, and he and I made a bet about Clinton because he felt Clinton was nothing. I bet him that Clinton would not only be nominated, but he would be President. And then I bet him that he would be reelected. I won a lot of money from Jim Rogers.

Riley: Bill Clinton lost an election in 1980, which was an unusual event in his career.

Thomases: Yes, but he rebounded.

Riley: Do you remember having conversations with him or Hillary after this? Did they consider getting out of politics?

Thomases: No, never considered it. I never heard getting out of politics murmured. Maybe he did. I wasn't there all the time, but I never heard of that.

Riley: But you were still in touch with them back and forth. You were traveling to Arkansas; they were coming to New York.

Thomases: Hillary and I continued to know each other on children's issues. She was into the Children's Defense Fund. She put me on the Children's Defense Fund board, and in fact, I'm being honored next week by the Children's Defense Fund.

Riley: How frequently were you seeing her?

Thomases: I went to the board meetings and we talked a lot. As issues came up, we had conversations. I had a separate relationship with each of them, and then a relationship with them together. She and I worked together on children's issues, and here in New York State we had a lot to do. The Children's Defense Fund has a great New York office, and so I was instrumental, being out of Washington. I felt there was not much I could do in Washington, and I was not much on federal legislation. I could most use law in terms of helping the states develop policies that made sense for children.

Morrisroe: What's your perspective on her relationship with Bill Clinton during this early period? How did she complement him as a campaigner? What did she bring to the campaigns, to his service in office? It would be helpful to have some observations from people who knew both of them before the '92 run and how they worked together.

Thomases: The first time we had a funny experience. Hamilton Jordan was impossible, and she and I were struck by how impossible he was, and what a sexist he was. Here we were in the Carter campaign, and we had to put up with this guy. Jody [Powell] was fabulous. I didn't know him very well, but observing him in that campaign, he was incredibly effective.

Riley: This is in '76 you're talking about.

Thomases: Seventy-six. She and Bill went to Texas. Their job was Texas. For the Carter campaign, he was in Arkansas and then, because he had been in Texas for McGovern, he was also somewhat involved in Texas. The Carter operation had a chip on its shoulder that I never understood. I always attributed it to Hamilton, but there may have been other reasons why it was that way.

Riley: A chip on its shoulder reflected how?

Thomases: In all sorts of ways. I was there as part of the Mondale team, and I was trying to be as helpful as I could in as nice a way as I could. I had enormous respect for Jimmy Carter. He's not my kind of person, but I had a lot of respect for him. Hamilton was very tough on us women in the campaign—tough in childish, stupid ways. Hillary and I used to joke about him, about how he was a caricature of a good old southern boy. But he didn't need to be that stupid, because

he was clearly a smart guy. As a New Yorker, I would say, "I wonder what his relationship with his mother was," and Hillary, of course, said, "Oh no, it's much more basic than that."

Riley: So you worked together on that campaign. Did you work together again in 1980?

Thomases: I was not in the '80 thing. Harold was for [Edward M.] Kennedy, and therefore I just sat '80 out. I went to law school. I was in the law school class of '77, and I had already pissed off my future partners by taking a year off after I finished to run Bill Bradley's campaign for the Senate. They were kind enough to do that because Bill Bradley was an important person in New York, and that was worth doing. I went back to the firm with the understanding that I wouldn't do politics if I was going to come to the firm and actually be a lawyer.

Then they made me a partner. You know, at New York law firms, it takes seven, eight, or nine years to become partner. They made me a partner in three years, partly because I was an old lady, but probably because they needed someone to run the office. They had a lot of business and they made a lot of money, but they couldn't figure out how to actually get the bills paid. So they asked me if, in addition to practicing law, I would take over those functions for the firm.

Riley: Bill Bradley is also a very smart guy. He's a Rhodes Scholar, right? Give us a comparison of Bill Bradley and Bill Clinton.

Thomases: I won't do that.

Riley: You won't do that? Let me set aside the intellectual part. Could you give us a comparison of the two as campaigners and politicians? I'm not asking you who is smarter, by the way. I'm just asking you to give us a characterization of how their minds might work differently.

Thomases: I just don't—I won't go there.

Riley: Is it also true you'd rather not address the question of the campaigning style?

Thomases: Bill Bradley is a great campaigner. He had the same kind of dogged, out-there responsibility. For example, the whole idea of the bus tours, which David Wilhelm and I agreed on one hundred percent. Whose idea it was first, we'll never know, but when I ran Bill Bradley's campaign in New Jersey in '78, I came up with the idea that no one had ever done a 21-county tour in New Jersey. There are 21 counties in New Jersey. It struck me there's no reason that someone in New Jersey couldn't go do all 21 counties in one day. Bill Bradley had the energy to get that done, and so I organized this 21-county bus tour.

It was a good thing. New Jersey is a diner state, and all political life in New Jersey revolves around the diners. So we did a 21-county tour. We stopped in 21 counties at various places, and we did all the diners. We had a great time. I did that with Bill Bradley, and it was a huge success. There are times I could strangle Bill Bradley, even to this day. He thinks of me as, "Oh, she does good schedule." He had no idea.

A young man who worked in the campaign with me went on to become his campaign manager when he made the aborted attempt to run for President, and that was a total failure. It never occurred to Bill Bradley that maybe the guy he thought had run his campaign in '78—a nice

guy—had, in fact, made a contribution, but the campaign had actually been run by me. It was very hard for him, because he didn't want to owe me any more than he already did. Bill Bradley is the kind of person who doesn't want to have debts.

Bill Clinton doesn't mind having debt, owing people things. He's secure enough to be able to say, "I'm indebted to all these people" and to be grateful. It doesn't bother him. Bill Bradley always likes to be his own person, but if you're in politics, you can't be your own person.

Riley: When you talked about Clinton as a campaigner, you emphasized the physical and tactile nature—

Thomases: Bill Bradley is the same way, but he's not as accessible. This is where David Wilhelm and I worked this thing out. You see, my reason for doing the bus tour was that I wanted to show him how accessible this man was. He might be running for President of the United States, but he would be accessible. That's a major message in politics. Remember, people do not have access to politicians. But if they're going around the state on a bus, you don't have to be invited. All you had to do is show up. It was creating this sense of accessibility. That was a characteristic of Bill Clinton: he was accessible.

Bill Bradley was willing to be accessible to a point. He's a wildly private person, and it's very relevant. He's very private. He didn't like being a star, so he was always drawing lines, creating his areas of privacy. He had to. He was a basketball star, and he didn't want everybody in his life, so he kept a distance from people in a way that Bill Clinton would never do.

Riley: So Clinton's sense of privacy was much different.

Thomases: He had no sense of privacy, not that I know of. I have yet to see his sense of privacy. Not that he doesn't like private time, but he feels that it's his decision to put himself out there, and he has to be there for people. He doesn't mind it. He enjoys it. He feeds off it.

Riley: Now let me ask you the same question about Hillary Clinton as a campaigner.

Thomases: She's another great campaigner.

Riley: Is she also tactile?

Thomases: She's less tactile than he is, but she has enjoyed campaigning tremendously, and she's fabulous at it. She gets better all the time.

Riley: And is also accessible?

Thomases: I would have supported her no matter what she did, but I was amazed at how effective a campaigner she was. Not initially. During his campaign she was always very effective, but as a campaigner for herself, she was fabulous. This idea of doing all 69 counties in New York turned out to be brilliant. And the idea that she thought she could come in here and run for Senator? An act of genius. I was worried about her. I was terribly worried that she would make this decision and not succeed. And I was so proud of her since I couldn't stand [Alfonse M.] D'Amato.

Riley: What's your sense of her with respect to the kind of psychological accessibility you attribute to both Clinton and Bradley? Was that accessibility also true of Hillary Clinton?

Thomases: No. Did I say Bradley was accessible?

Riley: Well, I guess less accessible.

Thomases: He was much less accessible. He was accessible in that he's a great street campaigner. He's accessible in terms of being out there for people to come up to him. He loves to talk to people on the campaign trail, but he draws a line very clearly: "This is my space, this is your space." And as soon as he's off the campaign trail, he's not the kind of person you walk up to in a restaurant. He would take offense at that.

Riley: Would you say Mrs. Clinton is more like Bradley in that regard or more like her husband?

Thomases: She's more like her husband.

Riley: We had talked about the question of his own zone of privacy. I get the impression from talking to other people that Mrs. Clinton has always been much more concerned about retaining—

Thomases: She's very protective of her family, and they both were very protective of Chelsea. That was very important to them. And it was important to her that they had some area of their life that was private. But it's not to the same extent as Bradley.

Morrisroe: Did you ever have any conversations with Mrs. Clinton about what it was like for her to move down to Arkansas and be involved in politics there?

Thomases: The one I talked to about it—I can see her face, the Jewish mother, what's her name? [ed. Note: Sara Ehrman] The woman who drove her to Arkansas, who was just crying the entire time. She was in charge of Jews for the '92 campaign, and she's very involved in Jewish affairs. She was the one who drove Hillary to Arkansas, and the whole way she was saying, "Are you sure you want to go there? This is a terrible mistake." She adored Hillary, and she was so upset that Hillary was signing up for a curse and a terrible thing by going to Arkansas.

The wonderful person who, unfortunately, you won't get to interview was Diane Blair (but you can read her books). I think Diane Blair is the one who made the difference for Hillary. She made life bearable for her. Diane Blair was a fabulous person. To this day I miss her. Diane was originally from Washington, and she married Jim Blair, who was (and still is) a big power in Arkansas. That gave Hillary a wonderful friend. That was important.

Morrisroe: Did it take her long to become comfortable with southern politics, or to be able to operate effectively in that arena?

Thomases: You know what they had in common? She loves food. Hillary loves food, and the food thing made it easy. I think she developed relationships around food that worked for her. She might say something different, but when I saw her down there, what seemed to make sense for her was this love of food. The food thing made her instantly comfortable.

Riley: Did you talk much with the two of them about their concerns about Chelsea's privacy?

Thomases: No. We didn't talk a lot about it. It was clear that that's what they wanted, and they did a great job. I was impressed with what they set up for her when they went to Washington. We talked about that when they first went there. Whether to put her in a private school was an issue they had to work out, and I think that choice was brilliant. Chelsea is a pretty special person in her own right.

Morrisroe: During the '70s and the '80s, you had the benefit of both knowing the Clintons and being well connected politically with people in New York and Washington and around the country. What were other people's impressions of Bill Clinton and his prospects?

Thomases: They didn't know him. Let's start with number one: many of them didn't even know the name. Some of them remembered the horrible speech he gave that he had to work his way out of. One set of insiders remembered that, but they also remembered the fact that he came back by going on Johnny Carson's show. They didn't know him well enough to really have an opinion about him. I don't think enough of them had met him.

When he decided he wanted to run for President, Harold's decision to back him was a big thing. While I was involved, I knew that if Harold had gone another way and decided that he did not want to back him but wanted to back another candidate, it would have been very hard for Bill Clinton to win in New York. And I felt that winning in New York and getting that victory under his belt would turn the tide. I said to Harold, "I'm willing to take some time off to help him."

I went to New Hampshire to go around with Hillary to see how the campaign treated her and whether they were listening to her. I was not happy with what they were doing or not doing with her. That was my first sense of them. They didn't get her. The people who were organizing the campaign were a bunch of Washington types, and they didn't quite get her. They characterized her in certain ways that were just not correct.

More importantly, they characterized their relationship. They didn't really understand how bonded they were to each other, and how they were not just husband and wife, they were truly best friends. They didn't get that.

Riley: I want to ask you about one other thing in 1988. You mentioned the speech.

Thomases: The famous speech? First of all, I didn't like Mr. [Michael] Dukakis. I'll tell you where I come from on that. In '88, someone asked me to go to Boston to look at the Dukakis campaign with her. I forget who it was. I love John Sasso. I think he's a great campaign organizer, and I think he's a terrific person. I'm a big John Sasso fan. So I went to Boston to check out this campaign.

I came home, and Bill Bradley and I had a big fight. Bill Bradley went out and endorsed Dukakis. I said, "You're endorsing him so you don't have to run for President, and I think you're stupid because this is the year you should be running." I felt this way, and [so did] Michael Eisner—who at that time was a big Bill Bradley supporter—and Michael Kaye, who had done Bill Bradley's television for his '78 campaign and was still very involved with Bradley.

I said to Bradley, "If you want to run for President, there's no timetable. This idea that you're going to wait until '96 to run is just stupid. This is a year where there's an opening on the Democratic side, and so if you decided you wanted to run for President, the nomination would be yours. Your endorsing Dukakis is the most stupid thing ever. Dukakis is the wrong person for the job. It won't be good. He'll be a horrible candidate, and his wife has problems."

While Ernestine [Bradley] has issues, Ernestine doesn't have problems. Ernestine is Ernestine. She's her own personality and that has raised issues, but she herself does not have a problem.

Riley: How did you know that Mrs. [Kitty] Dukakis had problems?

Thomases: I'm a person who listens to people, and there were people in Boston who knew that she had a drinking problem. A drinking problem is a drinking problem, and it doesn't disappear. It's sad. You can deal with a drinking problem like Betty Ford did, or you can not deal with a drinking problem, like Kitty Dukakis. I'm a huge fan of Gerald Ford. The Republican daughter in me really felt that Gerald Ford should have been treated better, that we Democrats gave him an unfair hard time.

Riley: There was a period in 1988 when Bill Clinton was seriously contemplating running for President. You're shaking your head no. He called an awful lot of people to Little Rock.

Thomases: He had conversations because he was a compulsive talker.

Riley: Did you go?

Thomases: I talked.

Riley: You talked over the phone with him?

Thomases: Yes.

Riley: But you don't think he was ever giving really serious consideration to running in '88?

Thomases: I can't remember the year the Democrats had a Memphis conference. There was a midterm convention some place, and I think it was in Memphis.

Riley: That must have been 1990.

Thomases: No, no. It was before '88. I have a picture of myself, Bill Bradley, and Bill Clinton together. He doesn't remember this, but Albert Hunt, who wrote for the *Wall Street Journal*, came up to me at the time and said, "Which of those two guys is going to be President first?" I said, "It's not up to me, it's up to them. If someone wants to be President, he has to decide." And he said, "So which one will be first?" I said, "Bill Clinton, because he wants it. He's more honest about wanting it, and he wants it more. Bill Clinton will be first."

Bill Bradley assumed that some day he would be a Presidential nominee, but he didn't have the fire in his belly to go out and get it. It's not like the old days. They don't select you for President.

When it comes to Presidential politics, everyone always laughs at me because I think one of the greatest Presidents in American history was [James] Polk.

Morrisroe: You share the view of many political scientists, actually. He's rated high by political scientists.

Thomases: Why Polk? First of all, he was a great politician. But mostly he had a vision about what he wanted to accomplish were he to be elected President, and he was willing to go out there and campaign for it, and he did it. He got elected; he went ahead and did it. When he got it done, he said, "Okay, I've accomplished what I wanted, and I'm not going to run again." He went home and then he died. He created America as we know it. We would not have the borders America now has but for Polk. Before he ran for President, he was a great Senator, and yet no one really understood that about him. You have to have a sense of why you're running for President.

Riley: And this Clinton had.

Thomases: And this Clinton had.

Riley: And also a sense about how to get there.

Thomases: Because he knew politics better than anyone. But Dukakis! What was Dukakis? What was Dukakis? I'm asking you.

Riley: I'm good at asking questions, not answering them.

Thomases: Think back to the Dukakis campaign. What was the campaign about?

Riley: Competence. I'm giving you their answer. "This election is about competence," I think Dukakis said. Am I wrong? That's not a call to arms, really.

Thomases: No.

Riley: So we get through the disaster of '88. Now Clinton's beginning to make a name for himself.

Thomases: On the fringes.

Riley: On the fringes, and through an organization called the Democratic Leadership Council. That's not the Democratic Party that you're—

Thomases: It's so funny. What's the guy's name who formed this?

Riley: Al From.

Thomases: Al From. Now do you want to hear a funny story about this little small world? This is about me, but it's so funny. Al From and I had a prior knowledge of each other. Harold Ickes and Al From had a very difficult relationship. Harold Ickes was the traditional Democratic Party, and Al From was this other thing. Harold Ickes was always more liberal than most people.

Anyway, Al From and I had known each other from high school. People don't know this. It took me a long time to remember how I knew him. When I met Al From, I knew I knew him already, and Harold said, "What are you talking about? How do you know him?" I said, "Harold, just let me think about it. It's going to take me awhile." He said, "Susan, you're always saying you know everybody." I said, "I'm telling you, this guy and I know each other. I'm sure either he or I will remember at some point from where." Well, we did. What do kids do when they're in high school?

Riley: Go to band camp?

Thomases: Something like band camp. Northwestern University has a summer school of journalism, and Al From and I were in that school together in the summer of '60. When I finally put it together, it was so funny. We all went there representing our schools and our various school newspapers. I was not a great high school journalist. A woman who taught English at my high school, Sally Winfrey, asked me if I would go to this program. Four or five of us went from my little teeny high school in Englewood, New Jersey. They wanted us there. So I went.

I said, "Ms. Winfrey, does that mean I have to work for the newspaper?" Working for the newspaper meant you pissed people off, so I didn't want to work for the newspaper. But I was the high school yearbook editor. She said, "Susan, you're going to be editor of the yearbook, and so you have to go there and learn about those things."

So I went, and it was a wonderful experience. There were a lot of people from the South in the program, and it was the first time I had ever spent really meaningful time with people from the South. My roommate was a girl from Shreveport, Louisiana, who I would still be friendly with. I remember her father was just horrified: not only had his precious daughter gone from Shreveport north to this summer program, but her roommate was a Jew. It was a terrible thing. Her name was Carolyn Wilkins.

Anyway, for me it was a very interesting experience. It was a five-week program, and they were very tough on us. It was meeting people in the same grade from all across the country. I had done some interesting things with my summers. I had gone to work camp, and I had done some hiking camp, and I had all sorts of life experience, but I had never met so many people from different parts of the country. It was my first pre-political experience with people from all over the country, and it was the first time I created a different kind of network, a non-eastern network. So for me it was very exciting, and also, I loved Chicago, and Northwestern was terrific.

When I came back, I was thinking of colleges, and my father, of course, drew a very small circle on the map of where he would pay for me to go to college. His first choice was Vassar, but I didn't want to go to Vassar. Connecticut College kind of eked its way into the circle. My father had a very narrow idea because my parents lived in New York a lot of the time and they did not want me far away. They wanted me to be nearby when they came home. Otherwise, I might have gone to Northwestern because I was so impressed with it and with Evanston. For me it was a life-changing experience, and that's where I first met Al From.

Riley: Now later on you encounter Al From, but my basic question was whether your Democratic Party contacts after the '88 election—as people are beginning to look forward to '92—are receptive to Bill Clinton. Or is there skepticism about somebody who seems to be—

Thomases: Harold had problems with Al From, but he didn't have problems with Bill Clinton. That was the juxtaposition. Harold met Bill Clinton through me, and Harold appreciated his virtues as a politician. And like me, Harold had spent some time in the South. Harold's family is from Maryland, but more importantly, he appreciated what a talent Bill Clinton was, and he thought it was doable. So he made up his mind that we in New York could support Bill Clinton. In that '92 campaign, Harold and Sarah Kovner and I all decided that that's where we were going, that's where we would be.

[BREAK]

Riley: Is there anything else you want to touch on? You said you went to a '91 meeting. Was it in Little Rock or Washington?

Thomases: Little Rock. In September of '91, he had a meeting in Little Rock, and he made us all fly there. The guys from Chicago and Colorado came down. He got us all together in the same room. He said, "Look around the room. All of you are my friends; you've been my friends for years. I'm putting together this thing, and I want to let all of you know so you all have common knowledge."

Riley: So the decision was already made at that point that he was going to run?

Thomases: So far as I knew.

Morrisroe: What was the reaction?

Thomases: "Well, glad to get started," was the reaction of most people.

Riley: But that was a tough year to make a decision to run for President, because [George H.W.] Bush's approval ratings were still pretty elevated, right?

Thomases: You know, the nice thing about Bill Clinton is—and this is one of the things I love and respect about him—you don't make your decision based on what the other guy's doing. That's not the way you do things. Things change. Things can always change, and you can set the tempo of your campaign and get out there and say what you want to do. There's no question that Bill Clinton had an idea of what he felt the American people were hungering for. He felt, in fact, that President Bush, as much as people liked him, was not responding to that need.

Riley: So the numbers weren't frightening. Did he explain how they intended to go about winning?

Thomases: No. He talked about what kind of campaign he wanted to run. I didn't know David Wilhelm, and he and I went through a brief rocky period, but we eventually got together on the issue of this bus tour because it made sense to both of us. Rahm Emanuel became a total ass. I ended up supporting him for Congress, and I think he's a good Congressman, but the truth is because he was so defending of David Wilhelm, he had to bash me, which was a stupid waste of his time. He tried to tell the Clintons they should fire me. Patti Solis Doyle, who's very friendly with him, from Chicago, said, "Susan, this is really going to be difficult." I said, "Hey, I'm totally confident the Clintons want me to do this, and therefore I don't care what Rahm Emanuel thinks."

Riley: Did you meet anybody new at this stage?

Thomases: Oh, I met a lot of people. I didn't know all the people Bill Clinton was friendly with. I didn't know the Chicago crowd. I knew of some of them. Michael Driver, who was from Colorado, was a friend of mine and Clinton's. He goes back to the antiwar days. And then there was another guy, another Colorado guy, I had met as a lawyer. I didn't meet him in terms of politics, but I met him because he was a lawyer and he and I had seen each other in the antiwar context. I knew or knew of some of these people, and then I didn't expect myself to be as involved in the campaign as I became.

Riley: Yes. You had mentioned that you ended up going to New Hampshire.

Thomases: No. I went to New Hampshire because he asked me to go to New Hampshire and spend a little time traveling with Hillary.

Riley: When was that?

Thomases: In the fall.

Riley: In the fall of '91, so it was well before the primary.

Thomases: Well before the primary, yes. So I went to New Hampshire.

Riley: You're Hillary's traveling companion?

Thomases: That was my first experience with the most important thing that came out of this campaign, and that's my devotion to—what's the name of that restaurant? It still exists, where you can get good food. Boston Market. That was my first experience with Boston Market. That was very important. That was a key thing.

Riley: That was in New Hampshire, and you're now traveling with Hillary.

Thomases: Well, just for brief moments. I went up there just to see how her campaign went and how people were responding to her, to get some sense of it, be on my own with her. But I didn't stay. I came back to New York, and I spent my time figuring out what her New York campaign would be like.

Morrisroe: Apart from their treatment of Mrs. Clinton, what were your other observations about how the campaign was run there and the people who were involved in Clinton's campaign?

Thomases: I thought the people from New Hampshire were terrific. I had enormous respect for the New Hampshire people involved in the campaign, but some of the Clinton people did not integrate themselves as much as they should have with the New Hampshire people. That was my take. There was a young man there who was busy working for [Robert] Kerrey, and his name was Sean [Patrick] Maloney. He's now running for State Attorney General in New York. He's a good kid, and he worked for my law firm. He's a very sweet kid. We met there, and I said, "When your candidate folds, there's a place for you in the life of Clinton."

And of course that happened, and he came to work for Clinton, and in the end, when we chose to go to Little Rock, Sean and another young man, Chris Dixon—who was my husband's godson—decided to come with us. Chris had worked for Paul Tully, and Tully said he was a genius, that he improved on everything he did because he was a statistician. Chris was the one who ended up doing all the data analysis for the campaign. He's now an investment banker. He came to live with us and got his undergraduate and his masters degrees from Columbia, then went to Harvard Business School. He now has his own business, but Chris Dixon came to live with us and he and Sean were with us in Little Rock, and they were part of our lives there.

It was clear to me that I would have to go to Little Rock because you cannot run a schedule from New York and tell people, "Do this, do that, do this, do that." I was just offending everybody because they resented the fact that I was doing this from New York.

Riley: I want to go back and ask you a few more questions about what you were finding out when you traveled in New Hampshire. This is the first time you had been with Hillary as a campaigner. Or had you been with her as a campaigner in Arkansas?

Thomases: I had seen her as First Lady of Arkansas. I had not really been with her as a campaigner. I had been with her in Arkansas a little bit when she was doing her education things. She was not really a campaigner; she was working on education reform. She was working on a serious issues campaign. She and I had known each other from the Children's Defense Fund that goes back to '73.

Riley: Were there other people in a comparable position to you whom they were calling on occasionally to travel with her? I'm just trying to get a sense about whether you had a different kind of relationship with the family.

Thomases: The best person to ask about that is Capricia Marshall. She probably has a clearer sense of that than anyone. These young women were fabulous—they are fabulous. Knowing them has been one of the most special things to me. When I came into this campaign, Capricia Marshall and Patty Solis were not talking to each other. I said to them, "The two of you have to get together. This is just ridiculous. You're going to end up being best friends. I don't know what your problem is, but you have to work together, so let's sit down and clear the air. First of all, you're both of Mexican-American heritage. You have to start talking to each other and getting along." They're now fast friends. I can't imagine that they ever didn't get along.

They were terrific in "Hillaryland," as I call it, with their one man. The women of Hillaryland became really fabulous, and I was thrilled when Hillary was able to persuade Maggie Williams to come and run the campaign. That made all the difference. Maggie was fabulous. I told her she was allowed to hate me for life for making Hillary do that to her, but it made all the difference because they needed some leadership. Melanne is terrific when it comes to doing issues, but Melanne does government; she doesn't do politics. We needed someone who did politics. Maggie Williams was the person who could do it.

Riley: You suggested that you had been called to New Hampshire because there was a concern that Mrs. Clinton wasn't being properly used in the campaign—or it was your judgment.

Thomases: Yes. His judgment, her judgment, and my judgment.

Riley: Can you tell us what you mean by that? How was she not being used, and how was your assistance to be useful in making sure that she was being properly used?

Thomases: They pigeonholed her. It was really complicated. Some of it was the campaign's decisions, some of it was her performance, and some of it was the public's perception of her. She was so strong a personality that there were people who felt that when they were together, her strong personality made him seem weaker. I didn't feel that way, but there were others who did.

Riley: Were you called in to New Hampshire? Did you go to New Hampshire when all of the firestorms broke loose up there over Gennifer Flowers and then the draft? Or did you stay in New York?

Thomases: No, no.

Riley: You did go up. Can you tell us your recollections of going to New Hampshire under those circumstances and maybe give us your own account of what unfolded?

Thomases: I don't know when I was in New Hampshire. I can go back and look. Let me take two steps back. The dynamic was very clear. Betsey Wright was handling whatever those issues were, and it had been very comfortable because Hillary had let her do it. It was easy. Hillary could sort of take a viewpoint. She could deal with it either by saying it wasn't happening and wasn't true, or she didn't have to deal with it. Hillary never really had to deal with his extramarital activities until Monica [Lewinsky]. That's just the fact.

It was a much bigger thing for the people in the campaign than it was for either him or her. Someone like George Stephanopoulos, the squeamish guy of the century—"Ooh, ooh, I can't stand this campaign." I said, "Then quit. Your theatrics are just adorable, but quit. If you can't handle it, quit." "Oh, he needs me." I said, "No, you need him. Just remember who's in charge here. You're working for him."

Right then I should have had a sense that he was—I never trusted George after that experience with him at that moment in the campaign, because I saw it was all about him. I saw him as a spoiled kid. Since I had such respect for his father, I just could not imagine him being the two-faced kid he turned out to be, but he was. Do you want to hear the irony of ironies? His mother-in-law is a very good friend of mine, Muffie [Brandon] Wentworth.

Riley: That came later, the marriage.

Thomases: Yes. But irony of ironies: the woman he married [Alexandra Wentworth] turns out to be the daughter of an old, old friend of mine. That's what my whole life is, these "one degree of separation" situations.

Riley: That's Manhattan, isn't it?

Thomases: No, it's not Manhattan. Muffie had a series of husbands.

Riley: Brandon.

Thomases: Muffie Brandon. She was a wonderful person, but her husbands kept dropping dead on her. Her best friend in college is a very close friend of mine. My relationship with Muffie goes back a long way.

Riley: I missed the connection. Muffie Brandon is—

Thomases: George Stephanopoulos' mother-in-law.

Riley: I had not made that connection. It's all becoming crystal clear now.

Thomases: I'm trying to think of George's wife's maiden name. I don't think it was Brandon. I think she was Muffie's daughter by—

Morrisroe: Wentworth.

Thomases: Wentworth, yes. Muffie went to Bryn Mawr with a very close friend of mine, Eve Bachman. I forget Eve's maiden name. Eve was from an old New Hampshire family. I knew Muffie, the mother, back in 1968. When I worked on the McCarthy campaign in '68, I was in Portland, Oregon, and Eve Bachman is from Portland. I got to know her and her husband, Roger, very well at the time.

Riley: It is one degree of separation.

Thomases: I'm telling you, it's amazing. My husband would say, "Oh, this is so disgusting."

[BREAK]

Riley: I wanted to go back and ask one more question about New Hampshire. Did you get the sense when you went up there that you were being called in primarily to help the campaign deal with the fallout that was being created by all the stuff that was popping up?

Thomases: No.

Riley: You were there primarily to help Mrs. Clinton?

Thomases: My purpose there was to help the campaign focus on how they were going to use Hillary Clinton. They could not simply put her on the sidelines; they had to fully integrate her into the campaign and accept the fact that she had to be a major decision maker in the campaign. They couldn't just treat her as "campaign wife." They had to include her and understand the relationship between the Clintons, and that she was going to be included in all decision making.

Riley: Did it surprise you that the people working in the campaign and running the campaign weren't sufficiently attuned to their relationship to know that they had to do this in the first place?

Thomases: No. George Stephanopoulos thought he was the big shot because he was coming from Washington and he had been solicited to do this. He had no sense of that, and George Stephanopoulos has problems with women. I don't say that unkindly. I don't know whence they come. I don't know enough about his family and everything, but it's a real issue with him.

Riley: I've been doing interviews for three years now, and I've done all the readings and so forth. One of the things that is very perplexing is the network of relationships in this campaign. You have a lot of different people—maybe it's truer later than it is by the New Hampshire stage—who have titles that sound like something you might be able to identify. But it's not clear what the web of individuals were doing. You have David Wilhelm, who I guess was nominally the campaign manager, but then you have Stephanopoulos—

Thomases: Stephanopoulos was not ever a manager. Stephanopoulos was always into doing press. There was no confusion about that. Stephanopoulos, however, had some real issues. Stephanopoulos did not have any loyalty to Clinton, and for me it was very offensive. He was clearly there for himself. It was all about him. So when I learned afterward that he was calling up this guy every day and giving him the inside scoop, I thought, *This is a guy building his career.* It was clear from day one of the campaign that he was one person who was in it for himself. I was trying to figure out what his agenda was, but I never quite got it right.

And then he and James [Carville] became such big buddies. I have enormous respect for James, but to say James liked me would be an exaggeration. James had a lot of respect for me. He and I had a fight because I told him one day that Clinton was going to Mississippi. He said, "That's stupid." I said, "Tell your candidate that. I'm sending him to Mississippi only because he made a promise that he would go. So if you want to tell your candidate he's being stupid, you tell him. But quit screaming at me. This is not my decision; it's his decision."

He apologized. I said, "Sometimes you have to do something that doesn't make sense. I know there's no political reason for him to go to Mississippi, and it's a waste of however many hours we're going to be there. But because he made a commitment to a candidate that he would go, we're going. And I'm going to try to minimize it by making sure that it's sandwiched between two things that make sense."

Riley: Did you get the sense at this early stage that James understood the relationship between Bill and Hillary?

Thomases: He had a lot of respect for Hillary. I don't know that he understood the relationship, but he understood that her views had to be taken into account and included. James has enormous respect for women—probably because of his mother. James and I never became close friends or anything like that, but I never had a problem with him.

He had to deal with me. I controlled the schedule. We had scheduling meetings. I listened to what they had to say, but he understood that I had the backing of the Clintons, and so it didn't make sense to get into a fight with me. We made our decisions together. It's not as if I arbitrarily said, "Oh, the Clintons are going here, there, or there." It was a lot of consensus.

Riley: But in Carville's case, he's also a very strong personality like you are.

Thomases: Yes, but he sees the big picture. He's a very talented guy. He has real emotional needs, and if you listen to his emotional needs and consider them, it works out fine. I personally never had a problem with him except for what he felt was my stupid decision to take him to Mississippi. I think he never felt close to me, but I think he didn't have a problem with me either.

Riley: But he wasn't someone you would have had problems with at the New Hampshire stage before you came on.

Thomases: No.

Riley: We'll track through pretty quickly to the point when you go to Little Rock, but I'm still interested in your early perceptions of what you're seeing. Mickey Kantor's around at this stage.

Thomases: Yes, and Mickey Kantor and I had known each other for years. I had known Mickey for other reasons, and I knew about the tragedy with him and his wife. I knew about his friendship with the Clintons. I had a lot of respect for Mickey.

Riley: What was Mickey's role in New Hampshire?

Thomases: He was trying to keep the campaign together.

Riley: Was Eli Segal involved at this stage, or does he come in later?

Thomases: He's involved in this stage. Of course, New Hampshire is near Boston. I'm not really fond of the Boston people. I have enormous respect for him as a businessman, but I don't have much respect for him as a politician. There's a difference.

Riley: Were you in the group of people consulting with them about the possibility of going on *60 Minutes*?

Thomases: Yes.

Riley: Do you have any recollections of that?

Thomases: I was all for doing that, and I think he did just fine there. You don't turn down *60 Minutes*. The show was okay.

Riley: There must have been an awful lot of pressure building up in the campaign at that point. I'm just trying to get a portrait.

Thomases: First of all, I have total confidence that Bill Clinton can pull off anything he chooses to do, so I was not worried about him.

Riley: Even at this stage?

Thomases: Yes. Remember, I had already known him for years. It's not as if this was my first political experience with him. I wasn't worried about him even though this was a whole different arena. First of all, he's very smart, and he thinks very well on his feet. I figured he could handle it. He might make a few gaffes, but nothing would kill him. Ultimately, it would be the voters who would make the decision. It would not be *60 Minutes*.

Riley: Were there people involved in the campaign who felt the *60 Minutes* venue was not a good idea?

Thomases: It was all confused, let me put it that way. It's very hard. Who turns down *60 Minutes* and doesn't turn down *60 Minutes*? I don't know that we all had ambivalent thoughts about it, but it's something that makes you feel ambivalent. You're going to do it, you hope it works out. If you turn it down, it may cost you in other ways. So to do it, to at least get yourself out there, made sense. Bill Clinton made the decision to do it. I have a lot of respect for candidates. It's their campaign; they have to make the decisions. It's not our campaign.

That's what annoyed me about George, and it annoyed me about some other people. He thought it was his campaign. It was not his campaign; it was Bill Clinton's campaign. Anyone who chooses to run for office has to have good people around them, but they're the candidate. It's their life, and they have to make the key decisions—especially someone who's going to be President. You have to hope they're going to make the right decisions, and you have to give them the chance to do that.

Riley: Was there much internal discussion about the particulars of Gennifer Flowers' allegations? You're an attorney. I don't know whether anybody was asked to dig in and find the reality behind these things.

Thomases: The person who did it was Betsey. That was Betsey's job.

Riley: And you had known Betsey for some time.

Thomases: Of course. She was his Chief of Staff when he was Governor. Betsey is wonderful, and Betsey is also crazy.

Riley: How so?

Thomases: Well, because she had needs. I shouldn't use the term "crazy" so lightly. She had an interest and a possessiveness about Bill Clinton that was unique to her. She had controlled his life for so long when he was Governor that she felt in this national forum somehow she was losing her identity with him.

Riley: To some extent that was true, right?

Thomases: It was totally true. I have enormous respect for Betsey. It was very hard for her, and she was turned into a bit of a caricature, which was unfair. We all were. Who's that stupid guy who wrote that book?

Morrisroe: Joe Klein.

Thomases: I was just laughing. I've known him for a long time, but he had his needs, too. Do you know what I mean? My husband was ready to kill him.

Riley: You didn't think much of the book.

Thomases: I thought the book was very clever. You have to think the book is very clever.

Riley: Did you know who wrote it?

Thomases: Absolutely, from day one. It's transparent. There's an event in the book that only he could have known, so it was clear that it was him. He's very smart, by the way—very, very smart. And he was no more selfish than anybody else. George Stephanopoulos had no basis for pointing a finger at him. He didn't pretend he was a Clinton loyalist. George was the only one who was two-faced. In any other profession, George would have been drummed out of the campaign, and I think he would have been if it hadn't been for James. Clinton was unduly kind to him.

Morrisroe: Just a quick question about Hillary Clinton. She perhaps had the most to gain or lose by the *60 Minutes* appearance. To some extent, her response to the events was perhaps a more pivotal issue in the *60 Minutes* appearance. Did she have any reluctance about appearing?

Thomases: No.

Riley: Did you ever get the sense that she was wavering over things at this point?

Thomases: Hillary really didn't deal with that aspect of that relationship until Monica Lewinsky, and then she dealt with it. You can go back and look at it. That's the only time in this whole thing that I have felt there was a near crisis in their relationship. The other things were all irrelevant.

Morrisroe: I'm curious about how the women working in the campaign responded to the Gennifer Flowers incident. Not just you.

Thomases: It's so interesting. There were three groups of women. There was the group who wished they had a special relationship with Bill Clinton. Those were the women who said, "I wish it were me." There were the feminist women who were just outraged, but in a childish way, not in a well thought-out way. Then there were the people who just found it worrisome. But they didn't find it *that* worrisome, because they all felt that we Democrats had made a mistake when it came to Gary Hart, that we overreacted to the Gary Hart thing. They felt that we as Democrats had handled that very poorly, that we'd killed our own by being so judgmental.

So there was some thinking about how we were going to handle it, and people concluded that it really wasn't relevant. People overlooked it and went on. They were much more concerned about other things—that he stood for so many things that made such a difference. It was so clear that he was a winner that they focused on that.

Then, of course, when he did so well in New Hampshire, it was a rush, and everybody was ready to move on. When it came to New York, no one really thought we were going to win. Everybody thought that [Paul] Tsongas was going to do much better than he actually did. Harold and I were confident that we would do better than they anticipated. We didn't think we would end up doing as well as we did, but we thought we would do better than they anticipated, and we ended up doing much better than anyone thought was possible.

Riley: Any particular stories about the New York campaign?

Thomases: It was just perfect. First of all, we had such a good time. I did a great schedule for Hillary, and she had so much fun campaigning in New York. She couldn't believe it. I took her to Arthur Avenue, to all these neighborhoods where they just adored her, neighborhood she really had never seen before. It was perfect because she didn't campaign in Manhattan. She campaigned outside of Manhattan, and it was a big success. He did very well in New York.

Harold did a very good job of orchestrating his campaign. He saw himself as possibly winning in New York, and so he loved it. He loved the energy. He has always loved New York, and he felt invigorated by the campaign. He came out of it totally high about himself and about the possibilities. Doing as well as he did in New York was really, I believe, the turning point. I don't know how it eventually will be written up in history, but I felt very much that we managed to put him on a winning track. After that it was all gravy, just collecting all the votes.

Riley: The convention was here.

Thomases: Yes.

Riley: Did you have any part in the development of the convention?

Thomases: I had a role in walking to the convention, which made all the difference. The person who ran the convention is my very dear friend Michael Berman, who is the most special person in the world. Michael and I have been friends for years, from the Mondale days. I trust him absolutely. He was not a Clinton person. He was a Democratic person, but he made sure that the convention was well run, and it was fabulously well run. When we started with Clinton in the street, and that walk up into the convention—and then walking into the convention was fabulous. All the excitement of New York, all the positive things about New York, got built into the convention.

Riley: One of the other New Yorkers who becomes associated with Clinton later on is Bob Rubin.

Thomases: He's wonderful. Bob Rubin lives two doors down, you know, in the corner building at 80th and Park. He's my friend and neighbor.

Riley: Were you partly responsible for bringing Rubin into the Clinton orbit?

Thomases: No. Clinton got him himself.

Riley: So they were fishing in New York waters other than off your boat?

Thomases: We were all in the same boat. Rubin was part of it. Harold and I knew Rubin. Remember, Clinton knew Roger Altman separately from us, from Georgetown. They knew each other, but Harold and I knew Bob Rubin, and I made sure the introduction took place. Bob Rubin says all the time that he's dealt with a lot of smart men in his life, but never anyone as smart as Bill Clinton. He'll tell anybody that. So if you haven't interviewed him—

Riley: We have.

Thomases: He said that, didn't he?

Riley: Of course. Bob Rubin is a pretty smart guy himself.

Thomases: And I'm saying that he knows a lot of other smart guys, and so he was totally into that. We did not have to sell him.

Riley: Let me make myself clear. What we try to do sometimes is figure out if there are clusters of people who have an affiliation with the candidate.

Thomases: Bob Rubin was an exceptional person, and when he agreed to go into the administration, there were a lot of us in New York and around the country who felt, *This will help the Clinton administration become special, because he's special.* It's interesting because there's a guy who also was at Goldman Sachs whom I've become very friendly with—a New Jersey person from Monmouth County whom I've tried to get involved in New Jersey politics. He's another one who came to me from the same time in Goldman Sachs' history. He's a younger version of Bob Rubin.

Riley: Please be sure to insert the name in the document when it comes back. Now when is it that you take the position of scheduler?

Thomases: I was doing a bit of the schedule here, a bit of the schedule there, and Bruce's [Lindsey] wife, Bev [Lindsey], was doing the schedule. I had known her as an advance person. She was a very good advance person, but she had three problems. One was that although she knew the Clintons well, she didn't have their confidence—not because she's not a wonderful person and a smart person. The way she presented herself was not as a confident person, and they didn't believe that she would be able to—When you're the scheduler, you have to be able to accept the fact that people won't like you. It's not a popularity position. And Bev was struggling with that.

Second of all, Bev Lindsey does not think strategically. When you make scheduling decisions, it's not the scheduling decision of the day. In your mind, you have to have a pattern that you want to emerge, and you have to have a sense of timing. You can't just do a string of good events. There has to be a dynamic. There has to be a rhythm to the events. There has to be a

building and an ebbing. You have to have high points, and you have to use your events to make a point. You have to keep the candidate busy all the time, but you can't just string a bunch of events together. You have to be going in some direction. You have to have turning points. You have to have the events underscore the issues and the images of the candidate that you're trying to project.

The bus tour was all about accessibility. Then we had to go into the South and make sure people knew he wasn't just accessible, but he was willing to cut against the grain. So I organized a whole bunch of events to show that he had the courage to do that. We went into the South and did something against the textile industry. There were certain points where we wanted to show his character and the kind of President he would be.

That's what you do as a scheduler. You don't just schedule events. You're trying to send a message with what you do. It's like doing television. You have to have a plan in your mind. You also have to work with good people. One of the best people who helped me be a success was Anne Hawley, who explained to the people in the press why he was doing what he was doing, what the message was. She traveled with the press and did press advance. She was terrific.

If you don't tell the reporters what the message is, they don't get it. You have to essentially write the story for them. You have to have someone on the bus who's telling the press all the time, "This is why we're doing this, and this is what it means." You need to have the person who's helping you orchestrate the campaign with the press people. You have to hit the press people on the head, because they're lazy. They're busy. It's a horrible job to be traveling on the bus.

Riley: You said you were doing some scheduling work before you officially took the job.

Thomases: Yes. I was doing scheduling starting with the scheduling for him and her for the New York primary. I was always calling Little Rock to tell David or Bev, "This is what you should do. Don't do this, don't do that." I realized that I was pissing everybody off by doing it long distance, so my husband said, "Susan, look, this isn't going to work. We probably should go there." I said, "I won't go there unless he wants me to." So my husband, who got along fine with Bill Clinton, called him and said, "If you want my wife to really help you, we're willing to move to Little Rock. But you have to say so if you want her to."

Riley: They had sanctioned you to be involved in the scheduling process before that.

Thomases: All along.

Riley: And had communicated to the other members of the staff, "Susan's going to be working on our behalf to do some of this."

Thomases: Yes. But certain people thought they could push me aside and I would just disappear.

Riley: But you didn't do that.

Thomases: I was doing what Clinton wanted me to do, and they had trouble accepting that. They kept hoping against hope that it wouldn't be true. Rahm Emanuel was the first and foremost of

those. Rahm Emanuel also had a lot of problems with me because Vic Raiser and I had been friends. That's the other thing people don't understand. That's a name you don't know.

Riley: I do know.

Thomases: When I was in business for myself many years ago, one of my biggest clients was Erie County, and I knew Vic Raiser from there. So in this campaign he and I already knew each other. I adored him, and he adored me. I thought it was wonderful that he and the Clintons got along so well. We found that so ironic, and while I didn't know Molly [Raiser] as well as I would have liked, I knew him. I was so sad when he died. I was just personally devastated, because I had such a great fondness for him. He and I were such big buddies.

He and I and Joe Crangle—who had been the county chairman for years in Erie County—knew each other so well. Joe Crangle is a total Roman Catholic, and when I was doing family planning in Erie County, he was always covering his eyes and saying, "Susan, you know I love you so much." I said, "Joe, we can be friends even though we don't agree on everything. I'm for family planning. I didn't say I was for abortion, so we can get along fine."

I had a contract with the federal government to do family planning in western New York State, and it was not an easy contract. But Catholics were not our big problem there. It was the people who thought that family planning was unnatural, that you don't interfere with Mother Nature. It was the fundamentalist Christians even back then who were the big issue in western New York State in terms of family planning, not the Catholics. That's from where I knew Vic Raiser.

Riley: So what's happening, then, is that your own networks are beginning to—And those who don't know, like Rahm Emanuel, that Susan Thomases has all these people networked in, are a frustration, because you can't get your hand around this force that's—

Thomases: He wanted to kill me. And I wanted to kill him, because he was such a jerk. I had a lot of respect for him, but he simply didn't know how to allow—He was from Chicago, and if you're not from Chicago—He's a very good Congressman. I contribute to his campaign. But he is what he is.

Riley: Did either Bill or Hillary ever voice concerns to you that you were being too rough on people?

Thomases: No, not once. They never asked me to stop anything, ever. They used to laugh about it. Hillary kept apologizing. She said, "Susan, you're taking the heat for me because people take out on you what they can't say to me." I said, "So what? I don't care. It doesn't touch me. It doesn't have anything to do with who I am."

Riley: Most good politicians have to have somebody who can tell them no. Do you remember being in the position of having to tell Bill or Hillary no during the campaign?

Thomases: Yes.

Riley: Any specific instances come to mind?

Thomases: I told him if I found him having sex on the campaign, he was dead, that I was leaving and taking everybody with me. I said, "You're stupid enough to blow this whole Presidential thing over your dick. And if that turns out to be true, buddy, I'm going home, and I'm taking people with me. If you don't have enough self control to keep yourself straight, then it's just dumb."

Riley: It worked.

Thomases: It worked. During the campaign he was as straight as could be. He just was. They knew that I would land on his neck with both feet. Sometimes you have to be that blunt, and he gets it. That's not a long speech. It takes all of about 30 seconds.

The other thing is, when you make mistakes, you have to be willing to admit it. I made a couple of small mistakes, and I said to them, "Look, I'm sorry this didn't work out as well as I thought it would, but this is how we can make it better. This is what we're going to do. We're going to do a repeat of the thing, but in a different way. We still have the same goal. We still have to accomplish the same things. I'm not backing off from what I want to accomplish. It's just that the method I selected did not accomplish that."

Morrisroe: You mentioned your discussion with President Clinton about the fact that you wouldn't tolerate any extramarital affairs. Did you have any conversations with Hillary or Bill Clinton or David Wilhelm about the parameters of your authority and what you would require in terms of decision-making authority to take this position? Or in terms of any other requirements you felt needed to be met for you to do your job effectively?

Thomases: The following things. My husband had to be willing to come to Little Rock. If he wasn't willing to come, I wasn't coming, number one. I wasn't going to leave my son, so he had to be willing to come and bring Tom [Bettridge] with him. The second thing is if they ever decided they didn't want me there, I wanted them to tell me. I did not want to hear about it from some other person. I came here only for them, and if it wasn't working out for them, they needed to tell me.

And I wanted to tell them for sure that if he did get elected, I would not go to Washington. I never wanted to go into any government, and so he shouldn't let anyone convince him that the reason I was doing this was that I had some personal political goals or personal job goals. I was perfectly happy being a lawyer. I love my practice. Some members of my law firm were not happy with my doing this—not because they didn't like Bill Clinton, because some of them did. But it was not what I was supposed to be doing. I was a partner in the law firm, and that was not their thing.

I was totally comfortable with my relationship with them, and if they had been unhappy with me, I'm sure they would have been comfortable telling me. I would be shocked if they would say, "No, no, no, it was tense, it was a problem." I would be unbelievably shocked. As far as I was concerned, there was no tension in our relationship at any point during the campaign.

The irony of it was that Al Gore could never get along with me. I was not totally happy when he selected Al Gore as his running mate. I was a Lee Hamilton fan, and I still am a Lee Hamilton fan. I always felt that Al Gore had issues to be resolved in his own head, which proved to be true.

When he selected him, I was behind it, but I insisted that I also have control over Gore's schedule because I wanted the schedules to mesh.

Gore started out by saying that he didn't want to do the bus trip. I said, "I don't care if you end up hating the bus trip. All I want you to do is leave the convention. We're going to start with the bus trip, and if you want to leave after stop number three, after we get to Pennsylvania, you can leave. It's a message we want to send about his accessibility and the kind of candidate he'll be, and I think it should be fun. You should end up liking it." And he did. He ended up loving it, but he would never own up to that.

Al Gore and I had a discussion after he won. I adored his father, let's leave it at that. I adored old man [Albert, Sr.] Gore for his courage and his standing in the days of the Vietnam War and the kind of Senator he was. I felt for Vice President Al Gore. It's hard to be from a fabulous family. The mother was terrific. The father was terrific, and it's a hard thing. It's not easy.

And the other thing is, my husband is a fabulous person, and my husband adored me. My husband adored Bill Clinton. He was there with me the whole time, and so I had my own support system. I did not need a support system out of the campaign. But I was fortunate enough to find a great support system in the women who were around Hillary. I adored them. We were mutually supportive of each other. It was a wonderful thing for me to get to know them. I'm still friendly with them. It's really nice.

Riley: When did you go to Little Rock? When did you make the move?

Thomases: It became clear to me after the convention that I really would have to go. I could not keep doing things long distance.

Riley: The President called you after your husband talked with him?

Thomases: Yes.

Riley: And he said, "I need you to come to Little Rock."

Thomases: No. He said, "I hear you're coming to Little Rock." He told me who would find me an apartment, and it worked out perfectly. I've always liked Skip [James A. Rutherford] a lot, and I knew he would be very helpful. He's a terrific guy, and so it was fine. I actually like Little Rock.

Riley: What did you find when you got down there? How was it living in Little Rock?

Thomases: First of all, we had a nice apartment. I brought with me the woman who took care of my son. I felt confident that with her there with Tom he would be taken care of, and Billy would not have the full responsibility for taking care of him.

Riley: Tom's not school age by this point.

Thomases: He was little, but he ended up going to preschool there. Right behind our apartment complex was a Montessori school run by an unbelievably terrific woman, so Tom had a very

good and positive preschool experience. The General was there, the Colonel was there. In our puny little apartment complex there were some former military people who became a real part of my son's life. He liked all the people living in the complex. He liked the activity around the complex because it was almost city-like. He was very happy there.

My husband brought him down to the headquarters. I have some nice pictures of him coming to visit me there. He would run around. He was a happy kid, and he had his father around all the time. It was nice. Billy was the one who was cooking for all the people in the campaign. He would make sure they all got fed. My husband loved to cook. It was perfect. And he liked living in Little Rock because it's an easy place to shop for food and all those things. He loved all those grocery stores. His adjustment problems were when we came home.

Riley: I have to tell you, without betraying confidences, that we heard how important your husband was as a support source in Little Rock.

Thomases: He was a fabulous guy. He was a wonderful person. And because he had such a sense of humor and everybody liked him so much, he softened a lot of people's feelings about me. He had the best sense of humor, and he was the most likeable person. He was incredibly easy to like, and so it was very hard to be hard on me when they liked my Bill so much.

He was also a good golfer. The reason he loved being in Little Rock was that he played golf all the time. That was the selling point. Bill Clinton said, "Let me tell you something. Forget about finding an apartment and everything. You can play golf any time you want."

Riley: Did he ever play golf with him?

Thomases: Yes. Not just with him, but he played golf in Arkansas with other people.

Riley: I assumed with other people, but I didn't know whether he ever played golf with Bill Clinton.

Thomases: Yes, and he was very funny talking about Bill Clinton playing golf. My husband was a very frank person, so he would always say, "Bill Clinton and I play golf about the same, Susan, but I admit my mulligans and he doesn't." [*laughter*]

Riley: You talked about the importance of developing a strategy for deployment of the candidate and the others. How closely were you working with polling people like Stan Greenberg in developing a sense about where you needed to do this?

Thomases: Paul Tully and I agreed that the decisions you make about where you go have only so much to do with polling. They have to do with what the strategy is in terms of which states you need. So I was more interested in the kind of polling that Chris Dixon was doing in terms of how we were doing in certain states. The kinds of things that Tully was having our godson do told us how effective we were in the various states we had to win.

Riley: So you had an electoral map notion when you came in?

Thomases: No, not just an electoral map notion. We had a state map notion. It wasn't electoral because we had certain states that we wanted to win and get the votes in. There were areas where we would know we were doing well, but we also had them by state. So we had some electoral things, but also how we were likely to do in various states.

Riley: But the tracking was on a state-by-state basis rather than the kind of thing you would find out from a national poll that tells you how your candidate is doing.

Thomases: Yes, exactly.

Riley: Who were the crucial people? You mentioned Paul Tully and Chris Dixon.

Thomases: David Wilhelm. He and I started out on the wrong foot, but we eventually became total allies on this.

[**BREAK**]

Riley: You were telling us during the break that there was a 9:00 meeting.

Thomases: No, an early morning meeting. Much earlier! 9:00? Please! We were all busy, busy, busy. We were up early, and we had an early morning meeting. It was James and the pollster and whoever wanted to address us on whatever the issues of the day were. We spent a minute talking about the schedule. Mostly it was just what was happening and the message of the day so that we were always on the same page. I always felt the campaign was extremely well run in that way.

Riley: Were people who were traveling with the candidate in on this call by telephone?

Thomases: Yes. It wasn't a call; it was a meeting.

Riley: But there were people who were traveling with the candidate involved in the meeting by telephone.

Thomases: Yes.

Riley: Who was traveling with the candidate?

Thomases: Bruce.

Riley: Tell us about Bruce.

Thomases: I love Bruce. Bruce is the best.

Riley: What does Bruce do? It's a little mysterious.

Thomases: He was a shoulder person of all kinds. He was Clinton's person. He was there all the time. He was a shadow. He's a great lawyer. He's a great person. He was the man. If you wanted to get hold of Bill Clinton, you talked to Bruce.

Riley: And Clinton relied on him for—?

Thomases: Totally, totally, everything.

Riley: Political advice?

Thomases: You have to ask him, but they were together all the time. And as I said, if you wanted to get a message to Clinton, the surest way was to get it to Bruce.

Riley: And it's still the case, isn't it?

Thomases: I think it's possible—for some of us. For me it isn't. If I want to get a message to Clinton, he's right up the street now.

Riley: Exactly. You have the advantage of geography.

Thomases: But also, there's so little I need to talk to him about now.

Riley: There was a point during the campaign—and this comes out in some of the written accounts—where there was a canceled poll that Stan Greenberg had wanted to do that evidently had you and him locking horns. I don't know whether this rings a bell with you.

Thomases: It's possibly true, but obviously it was not a big issue.

Morrisroe: One question we skipped over in the period before you came to Little Rock was your involvement in handling the Whitewater inquiries in March of 1992. At that point you were not full-time with the campaign. How did that portfolio, in terms of responding to Whitewater inquiries, fall to you?

Thomases: I think it was a little bit because I had a relationship with the Rose law firm, and they felt that because of my relationship with Webb, I could get to the bottom of it. In the end, I felt that it really was more than I could handle—it needed some real professional attention. So I suggested that they get a team to do nothing but that.

Riley: Needed professional attention?

Thomases: Someone needed to coordinate it, and it needed to be someone who had a sense of that, someone who had investigative experience. I was a lawyer, but I never had experience doing that kind of investigation.

Riley: But it was more in terms of figuring out what had actually happened, rather than putting a face on it for the public.

Thomases: Exactly—what happened. Everyone was saying things, and there are so many nutcases in Arkansas. It was always clear to me that Jim McDougal was not totally together, and

this was part of his psychodrama. He needed to be managed. I always felt that Susan McDougal was a perfectly decent, sane person, and I didn't feel that she was going to get a fair shake unless we got someone who really paid attention to what was happening. It was clear to me that he had real mental issues.

Morrisroe: Who did you go to when this team was put together?

Thomases: Bruce. I didn't go to Bruce, but I talked to Bruce. I talked to one of the Chicago lawyers, one of the guys from Denver. I can't think of his name right now. I raised the issue with him that we really had to get serious professional advice on this because this could not be handled with one hand.

Riley: Did you have a sense about why this became such a big issue?

Thomases: Because it was juicy. Everyone always assumed there was some dark underbelly. You know, this was Arkansas, there's some dark underbelly. Everything was blown out of proportion: there must be something, some scandal here, some scandal there. Every time I looked at it, there was no "there" there. They kept on. I said, "Hey guys, I just can't find the 'there.' I clearly do not have the tools, and so we have to have a professional investigator really put it all together bit by bit. Right now, I see that there is no 'there' there."

Riley: One of the criticisms—and some of this was friendly criticism of the Clintons in this regard—was that if in fact there was no "there" there, it was behavior that some people claimed looked suspicious because there wasn't a full vetting of some of the material.

Thomases: I agree with you. That's how I felt. That's why I felt we should have some professional team actually go through it with a fine-tooth comb.

Morrisroe: And did that happen?

Thomases: I would say in the end it happened.

Morrisroe: Am I wrong? I don't recall during the campaign there ever being something—

Thomases: This was not in the campaign. This was after the campaign.

Riley: On a related question, one of the things that happened in 1992 that had important implications later was a real souring in relations between the Clintons and the press.

Thomases: There was never a wonderful relationship. The trust in the press was never high—the Clintons never trusted the press.

Riley: Do you know why that was the case from the outset?

Thomases: Because they felt that the press' role with them was necessarily adversarial. It wasn't uniquely adversarial to them, but that was the nature of politicians' relationship with the press. The press couldn't get too close to the Clintons, and they felt that they had to have an adversary role.

Morrisroe: How would you assess the campaign's press operations?

Thomases: Parts of it were great.

Riley: Which parts?

Thomases: From the Clinton side, I think we did a very good job of getting our stories out to the press, of keeping the press informed. We did a very good job of giving the press people to talk to at things like debates. I think we used our talent pool extremely well as a campaign. I was not intimately involved in it.

Morrisroe: But you were an intimate of the campaign, so you were in a position to make the observations.

Thomases: I think we allocated the human resources of the campaign to be accessible to the press at the debates and at various other times. They did a very good job of that. Some of the press staff was terrific.

While I had certain issues with Dee Dee [Myers], I felt that I was unduly harsh on her at times because her laid-back California style did not always work with my personality. But that's not her fault. That was my fault. And I think she grew up a lot during the campaign. I think our radio operation was terrific. I still think the guy who ran the radio show, Richard Rushfield**,** is terrific. Coming from New Jersey, I'm a huge radio person, and I think we had a very good radio operation. It's a way of communicating with people in their cars—very important—and in their homes. I think the campaign did extremely well on that.

Riley: Did you ever get the sense that Bill and Hillary were overly defensive about their press relations during the course of the campaign? It's understandable, given what happened in New Hampshire, that there would be a great deal of tension. Was that fixable later on?

Thomases: I think if part of their team had been a person who was a respected press personality, it would have been very useful to them. For example, if Rick Kaplan had decided to be in the campaign and not outside. I don't think there was any press person who was a serious friend of theirs. This is not a sufficient example. For example, Cindy Adams and I are very good friends. Do you know who Cindy Adams is? She writes a column for the *Washington Post,* and she does television for one of the stations. She's a very good person and very smart. I told Hillary, "She's a good person, and you can trust her. She's not out to trash you. She just wants to tell the story because she wants to keep the public informed. That's what she needs to do."

Anyway, Cindy Adams ended up really liking Hillary, and she wrote some terrific stories about her. Some of them were a little bit surprising, but nothing dangerous and nothing scandalous. Hillary now trusts Cindy Adams absolutely, but it takes a while to build that kind of relationship. If there had been a press person who was a friend of theirs, it would have been easier.

Riley: I guess during the first year of the Presidency, they brought David Gergen in, to some extent.

Thomases: But David Gergen wasn't a friend, and he was not a trustworthy person. I think he's a perfectly nice guy, don't get me wrong. But I'm saying he was not someone they had known. He was someone who made himself known to them.

Riley: What you're saying is that the person who would have fitted in this ideal position you're talking about is somebody who would have known the Clintons very well.

Thomases: Would have known them—not that he had to be easy on them, but just someone they could say—For example, I'm very friendly with the television guy from Chicago, Jonathan Alter. He has cancer now. Anyway, my husband used to baby-sit for him when he was a kid in Chicago because my husband was from Chicago. He's on television for MSNBC. He lives in Montclair, New Jersey.

If the Clintons had had a relationship with someone like that, someone they knew before they got into politics, someone they trusted on some basic level that had nothing to do with politics, it would have been better. It would have been easier. They would have had someone to run interference for them or to tell them when they were acting out of whack.

Who they had was Harry Thomason. I adore Harry, but his relationship with the press was colored by his television career, and so it was awkward. I think Harry did a very good job for them in many ways. He helped present them to the public in some terrific ways. He's the person who helped make the bus trips, afterwards, really good. When at the end we decided to do that final bus trip into D.C., he's the one who made it happen.

One of the things I tried to do at the end—which didn't fail, but would have worked better had we had meaningful press relationships—was send him to spend a day getting to know Washington. It was to say he wasn't just on Pennsylvania Avenue, he was going to be a President who was going to be a citizen of Washington, D.C. It sort of worked, but it didn't work because there was no one on the other side to receive it. That was something Melanne could have played a role in, since she's clearly a D.C. person. Her husband, Phil, who I think is the greatest guy in the world, was my law partner.

Riley: Who had known Bill—

Thomases: —and Hillary forever, particularly Bill. They had gone to college together. Phil Verveer is the most honest American there is. There's no one more honest than Phil Verveer. He's an unbelievably fabulous person. He was my law partner, and he's a great FCC [Federal Communications Commission] lawyer, but he's an incredible human being, period. There's no more decent human being than Phil Verveer. As nice as Melanne is, her husband is even better. He's just an extraordinary guy.

Riley: Let's go back to the period when you're doing scheduling.

Thomases: That's all I ever did. What do you have me doing other than scheduling? I never did more than scheduling.

Riley: You told us what your strategy was, but do you have any highlights or lowlights from the period when you were doing scheduling?

Thomases: How could I be anything but happy? The bus trip was fabulous. The events that we did around various issues were very successful. None of our issue stops ever backfired on us. Some if it was dumb luck, but most of it was that Bill Clinton could pull off anything if you gave him an outline of what you wanted him to do. I've done other candidates. Any time you'd say to him, "Look, we're going to do this, and this is what we want to accomplish," no matter what you planned, he would always make it better. He just was good. He was just extraordinary. So the candidate always made us look good.

Bill Bradley was a very good candidate, but he did what you told him to do and did it well. So if you had a good event, he did it well, but if you hit a snag, his improvising was less creative and less successful than Bill Clinton's. I hate to do that because Bradley hates it when I compare him to Bill Clinton because it's a very unfair comparison.

Riley: Sure. They're two different candidates. But in our case, it's natural to want to have your baseline for comparing Clinton, and Bradley is the closest baseline to make the judgment. You had to know something about Bill Clinton's own personal schedule in order to be a good scheduler.

Thomases: I knew everything.

Riley: He was not an early morning person?

Thomases: He could be.

Riley: Could he?

Thomases: Absolutely, positively. He did whatever was required. He could get up early. He could work late. He was the best. There was nothing I ever asked him to do that he didn't say yes to.

Riley: Right. But you knew enough not to ask him to do certain things, I would expect. You wouldn't get him up to meet the first shift, the 7:00 shift, three or four mornings in a row, I would guess.

Thomases: But that would not be good for anybody, because that's not a message you want to send. You don't want to have your candidate up at the crack of dawn every morning. You want him to have a schedule that makes sense. That would never make sense.

Riley: But he's principally a night person?

Thomases: No. He's as good in the morning as he is at night. If he knows what he's getting up for, he's fine. Just make sure he's up and has a cup of coffee and a donut—although now he's not eating the donuts.

Riley: Were you concerned about his health at all during the campaign?

Thomases: No. I worried about his asthma, and I was careful about that. But knowing what I know about him now, I probably should have worried about more things.

Riley: How do you work around somebody's asthma?

Thomases: You try to make sure he doesn't go places where it's aggravated. You keep him in places where there's clean air. That was our biggest concern, his breathing and asthma.

Riley: He had trouble with his voice several times.

Thomases: Yes, that's what I'm saying.

Riley: It was a result of that?

Thomases: Yes.

Riley: I guess the acid reflux stuff was later. Well, you paint a portrait of a perfectly pliable candidate.

Thomases: I'm telling you, he was a good guy. And the advance people can tell you the same thing. Have you talked to any of them? We had a very good advance staff. It was really wonderful, very well run. The schedule could only be as good ultimately as the advance staff, and they were very good.

Riley: You were scheduling around Presidential debates. Did that create any particular challenges for you?

Thomases: No. We wanted to make sure that wherever he went to do a debate, he did some non-debate-related activity beforehand to keep his juices running and also to remind people that this was a campaign, and this guy was a human being. It wasn't all about the debate. So if something bad happened in the debate, you could take a moment to anticipate it or to correct it afterwards.

Riley: Did you ever worry about over-scheduling him, or did you know enough not to do that?

Thomases: You don't want to step on your own schedule by over-scheduling. You could over-schedule Bill Clinton, and happily he would say yes to everything. But you don't want to do it. You want to keep the schedule smart. You want to keep it so your message is out. You don't want to give the press choices. You want to make all the choices.

Riley: How often would you have Bill and Hillary together during the course of the campaign?

Thomases: Around the debates we had them together, but for other things, there was no reason for them to be together.

Riley: And they managed, regardless of how close they were—

Thomases: They managed to talk to each other a million times a day—constant contact. You had better know where each of them was at all times, because at any moment they're liable to call you and ask, "Where is she? Where is he?" They'd want to talk to each other. They constantly were in communication with each other.

Riley: You've already talked about the scheduling with the Vice President. There were particular challenges there.

Thomases: His team mostly worked out very well. The young man who did his schedule was from Virginia. His father had been Governor of Virginia. He's a very good guy, and he and I got along very well because he had a good sense of humor, which for me is a criterion. In this situation, you need your sense of humor to survive, and he had one.

Riley: How was life in the campaign headquarters?

Thomases: I have a picture of it in my other apartment. I loved it. I had my little desk in front of my map, and I could see the whole room. It was a nice place to be. It was air-conditioned, which is really important for me. Heat is the enemy. I have MS [multiple sclerosis], and heat is the enemy. As long as I was cool, I was fine.

Riley: Everybody tended to get along very well?

Thomases: I would say so. I have no idea. I'm sure there were resentments and all sorts of things, but I didn't traffic in them. The Hillary people sat—I didn't sit near them. They sat in a hub in the center.

Riley: Did you go home for lunch?

Thomases: No. I came there in the morning, and I stayed there until night. My husband and son came to see me a couple of times a day. That was what happened.

Riley: Who did you work with most closely? You had a scheduling staff?

Thomases: Yes. There was Anne Walley, Stephanie Streett, and an African-American woman whose name was—

Riley: It can be added later, Susan.

Thomases: The fourth scheduler—I don't remember her name—but Anne Walley and Stephanie were both Arkansans and this African-American woman was from the Washington, D.C., area and then the fourth person was—

Riley: So you basically had a staff of four.

Thomases: Four key people, and under them were others.

Morrisroe: You mentioned that you had Arkansans working for you. How would you characterize the integration of Clinton's Arkansas people and the people who came in from elsewhere?

Thomases: I think it went very well. The Arkansas people were very talented. Most of them had done politics for a long time in Arkansas, and they were very tuned in to what Clinton was known for. They were very true to the kinds of things he liked, so it made life very easy. His

decision to run his campaign out of Arkansas was the smartest thing he ever did. Being in Washington would have been disastrous. We would have had people hanging all over us all the time. Making the people who wanted to be around us come out to Arkansas and deal with Little Rock, a place where he was beloved, was much nicer. It was smart. It saved him a lot of trouble. If people didn't want to live in Little Rock, too bad. I thought it was a very smart decision.

Riley: The last big plane trip. There was a decision taken—

Thomases: To fly around.

Riley: Exactly. Tell us about that decision.

Thomases: I totally believed in it. I wanted to do it. I thought it was great.

Riley: Was it your idea?

Thomases: I thought it would be a good idea. We wanted to do something different that was a culmination, that emphasized the energy of the campaign and the endurance and the durability, so it seemed like a good way to end it all. It required high coordination, high energy, and new intensity. It worked well.

Riley: You were involved, then, in the selection of the venues for these things?

Thomases: I can show you the pictures—of her, all of them together, Hillary and him together. Instead of going to separate places, we brought them all together.

Riley: In fact, she had to speak for him in some places. Is that correct?

Thomases: Yes, because he lost his voice.

Riley: Then you were in Little Rock for the election.

Thomases: We were in Little Rock for the election.

Morrisroe: What was that like?

Riley: Do you remember much about the night?

Thomases: It was fabulous. Hey, your buddy gets elected President of the United States; it's not a big thing? It was a big thing. It was wonderful. We were pretty confident going in, but you can't be too confident. You have to wait. There are always hairy moments, and always there's something you don't quite know. So you try to distract yourself and do something other than that. On some levels, you're planning for the transition, keeping yourself busy thinking about what you have to do next. We schedulers have to always be at least a week ahead, so we didn't get to rest the same way everybody else in the campaign got to rest afterwards.

Riley: The story of this has the polling numbers beginning to trend away from you until the final weekend when Lawrence Walsh issues—Do you have any recollections?

Thomases: No, that's what it was. Things were rather nervous. In politics, something can always happen, so if you're smart, you're always on edge. You always try to think of how you can make it tighter and better. That's your job. And also, you could always make a mistake without even knowing it. So you try to think clearly. It wasn't as if anybody hated Bush. I think they underestimated Clinton. That's my bottom-line assessment. They just didn't understand the phenomenon.

Riley: Were you doing counter-scheduling with Bush?

Thomases: Yes, absolutely.

Riley: Were you checking to see what he was doing?

Thomases: All the time. Sometimes we chased him, and sometimes he chased us. "Chasing" is too strong a word. Sometimes we put ourselves in places where he had to deal with us. We did some of those military things so he had to deal with us, and those were very awkward because Clinton had no military experience. So for him to do those things was quite a challenge for him and for our team. Bush could have made more of it than he did.

I have a lot of respect for his people, but their scheduling was not as tight as it could have been. I can remember worrying all the time about ways they could get at us, because you're always playing both sides when you're the scheduler. You're thinking about what you would do and what they should do and what you might do or what they could do back to you. It's a chess game. You always think, *Oh, my God. If I were them, this is what I would do.* You're always thinking about that—or I was.

Riley: You put your candidate in some unconventional states, too, to get them to spend time: Texas and Florida.

Thomases: Yes. He wanted to go to Florida. He believed in Florida. A lot of people thought it was a waste of time, but he believed in Florida. And it was important for him to go to Florida—not for the first race. But ultimately, when he became President, it made sense that he had spent so much time in Florida.

Riley: Of the targeted states, I seem to recall you lost only North Carolina.

Thomases: Yes. I would like to have won North Carolina. Just because you lose one, you think *Well, could I have done it better?* Maybe we could have, but I don't think it was winnable. Obviously, we didn't win it. It's hard.

Morrisroe: Broadly speaking, with the advantage of hindsight it's always easier. Do you think there were any significant miscalculations made by the campaign?

Thomases: The truth is I would have to sit down and spend some time thinking about it. I can't answer that quickly. I'll go back and look at my notes and look at what you write. I may come up with a different point of view, but not right now.

Riley: You should feel free to put amendments on this.

Thomases: I just can't say that quickly. I don't know that there were many ways to make the campaign stronger. A lot of things broke our way, and I think the Bush people gave us a lot of openings. I have a lot of respect for them, but their campaign was not as tight as it could have been. That's my opinion. I don't mean that as a big criticism; we were lucky. We benefited from that fact. You can't control everything, and we benefited from the fact that they were not as tight as they could have been.

Riley: How soon after the election (it may have been before the election) were you approached about doing something officially with the transition?

Thomases: He asked me whether I could stay to help with the transition, and my first reaction was no, I want to go home. Not that I was unhappy, but I was ready to resume my normal life. I wanted to get Tom back in his life, back to nursery school. So my reaction was I'd rather go home. And then he said to me, "Susan, I would like to keep the team the same. We're not going to move to D.C." I thought they were going to move to D.C. right away, and one thing I told him was I did not want to move to D.C. Not that I hate D.C., but D.C. is not my kind of place. So I assumed that if they were going to run the transition out of D.C., I would go home.

And when they decided to run the transition largely out of Little Rock and to do the economic summit in Little Rock, I felt that I had to stay to do the behind-the-scenes stuff. I didn't have much role in that, but there were some behind-the-scenes things that needed to be done. And for them to break in someone new—

I began to transition stuff over to Anne Walley and Stephanie Streett. It was clear that Stephanie was going to go from Little Rock to Washington, and I felt that she would end up playing a key role there even though she was very young and lot of people didn't think she was able to do it. I had a higher opinion of her—I thought she was excellent. I thought she could do anything she was assigned. She just did the job; she didn't try to turn it into something else. She didn't try to suddenly get involved in the strategy.

Stephanie is Stephanie, and she's very efficient. She's solid and a very together person. She'll never be a strategist, but she's a very good implementer. She understands and knows her candidate well, and he trusts her absolutely. He knows her family. She's a Streett. So I knew that that would work well.

Riley: Your role during the transition was not just scheduling, though, was it? I got the impression that there were also some personnel dimensions?

Thomases: I did a few little personnel things but not big personnel things.

Riley: At what level? Can you recall some of the things you were involved in?

Thomases: I was involved in making sure Bernie [Nussbaum] saw the people he should see. That's really what I did, not for jobs, but to listen to them, helping him make decisions about who he should have for various jobs. For example, Arthur Levitt had been a good fundraiser for the campaign, but I decided he was someone Bill Clinton should consider for head of the SEC [Securities and Exchange Commission], which was not a job Bill Clinton thought was important. **B**ut I knew it would be an important job and that Arthur Levitt—whom I knew very well

personally and had known for years—would be a perfect person. He would be welcomed by the industry. He would be a person of great ethics, and Clinton would never have to worry about being embarrassed by him.

That was my primary goal, to make sure that none of the people who got involved with Clinton brought with them any baggage or anything else that would embarrass him. My job was to protect Bill Clinton from people who might otherwise mess with his reputation, and he would have no way of knowing.

So with respect to the SEC—an area that the whole commodities futures business and all that garbage had tainted—I wanted to make sure he was as clean as he could be and that he was protected. Having Levitt there gave him some protection. It ended up being an excellent choice, for which he got high kudos. Arthur Levitt was a person I knew, and I asked Bob Rubin if he thought he was a good choice. He said yes. So I suggested it, and I introduced them. It worked out fine. I introduced people he might not think of, and Bernie did as well.

Who was the other turncoat? The U.S. attorney who was blabbing his mouth recently? Louis Freeh is someone I knew. I had a very dear friend, Andy Levander, who worked for Freeh when he was U.S. Attorney, so I knew of all Freeh's problems. I knew his good points and his bad points because my partner, Benito Romano, had worked in the U.S. Attorney's office.

Bernie had a very high opinion of Louie Freeh, but in the end it turned out to be a mistake. Not a major mistake, but giving Louie Freeh a chance to move his jaw—he's such a self-righteous, vain guy. It's sad. He had been a good public servant, but he just can't control his need to talk about himself.

Morrisroe: Speaking of the Department of Justice, were you involved in the [Zoë] Baird nomination for Attorney General?

Thomases: I knew her from when she was at GE [General Electric], but no. I didn't know Janet Reno. I think she ended up being a good choice.

Everyone made such a big deal of Kimba Wood. Now Kimba Wood and I went to college together, and I like Kimba Wood. She's terrific, but I would never have recommended her for that position, because I knew her to be a person who was unlikely to be a good manager. I didn't have any other reservations about her, but she was a loner. Kimba Wood is a terrific person, but she was a military brat—she had an alcoholic mother and all the problems of a military brat. I don't mean to do a psychoanalysis or any of that stuff. I respect her a lot. She and I both graduated in three years. She was very smart and very tough. I had lived such a normal life, and the idea of living in the situation she lived in—I admired her so much, and that she could perform at that high level, given the family situation she came from. She's an accomplished person.

Riley: Susan, I'm still trying to get a sense about the parameters of your portfolio during the transition. You talk about some various personnel things.

Thomases: A gadfly, that's my personality. I did not have any particular portfolio. I tried to bring to his attention some of the most talented people I knew, and he could accept or reject

them. He accepted some and he rejected others—not rejected them. He had his own ideas of who he wanted, and the names I gave him were useful in some cases and not useful in others.

Riley: Was Bruce officially in charge of personnel during the transition?

Thomases: I would say so.

Riley: So were you working directly with Bruce on these things?

Thomases: No. I would make suggestions to Bruce. It's like we were all working in a clump.

Riley: Well, clumps are very hard to see from the outside. That's why I'm asking. I don't know whether there was an organizational chart with the person at the head of the clump or—

Thomases: I have no idea.

Morrisroe: Can I ask how you would assess the effectiveness of the transition? It's come under the criticism both then and later that perhaps too much effort was focused on Cabinet nominees, and that White House staff was not chosen as early as it might have been.

Thomases: There certainly was a lot of attention to the Cabinet nominees, and I think that was a good idea. I think it was important that the people who were going to assume those responsibilities have some time to put together in their own heads who they wanted working with and for them. So I personally think that was a good thing. In terms of the White House staff, I think the Clintons didn't have an idea of who would be the "manager" within the White House. That turned out to be a weakness of their White House.

Riley: There's been some speculation that part of the rationale behind this was that the President and Mrs. Clinton wanted to be their own managers. Does that sound realistic to you?

Thomases: It doesn't sound like them. I think they would have been happy if Mack [Thomas McLarty] had been a better manager. I think they presumed that because of his business experience he would be a good manager, but he wasn't.

Riley: Did you express concerns or reservations at any point during the transition about the nature or pace of the naming of a White House staff?

Thomases: I may have, but I don't necessarily think I did. I wasn't worried about it. The most important thing for me was that he was comfortable with the people he had working for him. I was very happy when he chose Bernie to be his counsel, because I thought it was a good choice. I think it would have been good if he had sat Bernie down and told him that he had to focus on what his job was. But I think Bernie did a good job for him.

Riley: Did you know Mack?

Thomases: I knew Mack, but he was not a friend. Vince and I were friends, and what happened with Vince Foster made me very sad. But the truth is, I don't think any of us could have—Even now, I go over that a million, million times. I don't know if any of us could have predicted it.

Maybe if I had known as much about his family then as I know now, I would have been clued in. As I said, I knew his father. I didn't really know his mother. I didn't know about his family history of having some vulnerability to pressure. I knew Sheila [Foster Anthony] was an accomplished person. I didn't know his sister that well, but I knew who she was, and I knew who her husband was. But I figured she was representative of what he was.

I feel so bad because what happened to Vince was a personal tragedy for Vince and for the Clintons. It was horrible for all of us. The passage of Vince Foster was really sad, and it meant that they lost a valued friend.

Riley: Vince and Hillary were especially close?

Thomases: They were law partners. But it was not an either/or situation. They had different relationships. He and Hillary were law partners, but Bill Clinton and he had been friendly since childhood. They grew up together, so they were all friends. And I was very sad about Webb. There was no way of predicting what happened to him. I knew Webb, but I knew Vince better. What happened to Webb is sad. You can't know everything.

Riley: The President's opponents made a lot of your telephone conversations with Mrs. Clinton.

Thomases: Maggie and I laugh about that all the time.

Riley: Is there anything more we should know about those conversations than what's out there?

Thomases: I was forced to remember more than was really in my mind. When you have MS, you worry all the time that you can't remember things, because your memory is, in some ways—I don't know how to describe it. Before I saw you today, I had to review in my mind some things so that I could try to remember them. I couldn't just come into this interview and say, "Oh, I can recall.…" I had to make a timeline in my head to remind myself of things because my memory isn't that on top of things. If I hadn't done some sort of pre-remembering, I would not have been able to have this conversation with you.

And yet even now I keep saying, "Did I forget something major? Did I not go over it? Should I have written it down?" You go through all those things. So I don't know that I've gotten everything right. It probably will turn out I've forgotten some major things, and I'll call you and say, "Oh, my God, I forgot to tell you.…" I'm liable to do that.

Riley: Well, it's our fault if we don't prompt you for something.

Thomases: I'm saying I don't know. I used to think my memory was my best friend, but unfortunately in the last eight years it's become my nemesis in some ways. I'm not apologizing for that; it's just a fact of my life.

That being said, I had the good fortune to work with some people who were very special, and it was a really terrific thing. I told them from the beginning that I wouldn't go into government, and I never wavered for a minute in that thought. People always thought that when he finally got elected, I'd change my mind, but it never occurred to me. First of all, I didn't want to live in Washington. Second of all, I didn't feel I had the temperament to be in government.

Riley: Tell us about your relationship with the President and the First Lady after you come back to New York.

Thomases: Friendship. We will always be friends. We were friends before I went there, we're friends now. If they ever feel they need me to talk to, they know they can, and I have no need to repeat the conversations to anybody else.

Riley: You were having conversations with them and your friendship evidently—

Thomases: I had very few conversations with them during the transition period because they were busy doing what they had to do. They had no time for casual conversation.

Riley: But what about after the transition, after they went into the White House? You made occasional trips down to Washington.

Thomases: They wanted company. The White House is a lonely place.

Riley: And so it was primarily social visits?

Thomases: Friends, friends, friends. They wanted to have someone they could talk to and know that I was just their friend. I had no agenda. I wasn't accomplishing anything. I didn't have any goals. I read these stories in the paper now about this one wanting this and being a lobbyist for that. That was never my thing. That's not how I made my money. My law firm never expected me to accomplish anything by working with the Clintons on this, that, or the other thing.

The only issue I worked on when the Clintons were in the White House was one that turned out to be as important to the Clintons as to my client. I did some work for JP Morgan, and they were very interested in privatization of certain parts of the government. I said to them, "Look, I've worked on this legislation." Bush Senior had passed the legislation, and the Clinton administration was in the process of implementing it.

One piece of that I did work on was nuclear energy. Essentially, it's in Ohio and it has to do with energy. It's an energy function, and they were privatizing—I always was a big fan of privatizing parts of the Department of Energy. That was a known fact. People were amazed by this. It was always my thing. Parts of the federal government should have been privatized a long time ago. I was always a fan of that, and always campaigned for it with Bush Senior and the Bush administration.

When Clinton came in, he privatized a piece of the Energy Department. But they didn't do as much as they could have because, as always, there was resistance from the parts of the government that did not want to be privatized. But the one piece I knew, I said to the Clintons, "Look, I've worked on this for years, and so I can't talk to you about this. This has been part of my portfolio for years, and you know it."

Riley: Now as a part of your conversations as a private confidant, I'm assuming that this wasn't just, "How's the family?" but was also, "How are we doing? Are there ways we can improve around here?"

Thomases: Very little of that.

Riley: I'm trying to go back through my memory to certain things cited in the briefing materials, where your name was at least raised in press accounts at the time as having some kind of role.

Thomases: Like what?

Morrisroe: The Supreme Court nominations to replace [Harry] Blackmun—

Thomases: Well, they knew that Ruth Bader Ginsburg had been my professor in law school and I thought she was fabulous. But Bill Clinton was in love with her; I didn't have to do anything. He already had a crush on her. I had no role in that because he fell in love with her. She had been my professor in law school, and I never thought he would have the courage to just go out and pick her. But when he met her, he fell in love with her. He called me and said, "Oh, you didn't tell me how beautiful she was." I said, "Oh, Bill, get off it." Literally, he just adored her. I said, "Beware, she has a very powerful husband, and he adores her, too. So if I were you, I'd be careful."

She was worried that I would somehow block her nomination. She and I had a serious disagreement on an issue. I said, "Ruth, do you think I'm crazy?" To this day, she and I have a significant legal agreement that we disagree on. I won't tell you what it is, but she and I disagree on it, and we disagreed on it all through law school. She was my teacher, and she would argue. I said, "Look, you're the smart one, and you're the boss. But I'm telling you, I don't agree with you. You can't make me agree with you, and I will always argue against you on this."

Now she's a judge. She can do anything she wants, but I still disagree with her. She's fabulous. She was a great choice. She's a person of great integrity, she had great dignity, and she's incredibly smart.

Riley: But to your knowledge the name didn't come from you?

Thomases: No. It probably came from Bernie.

Riley: We talked about Bernie, and your having a role in Bernie.

Thomases: Hillary was the one who wanted him there. But I'm saying Bernie brought Ruth in. Bernie was the one who was totally big on Ruth, and it took two seconds. I'm telling you, Clinton met her and it was all over. There was not even a discussion. Zoë was just not mature enough at that time. I think people put her in a situation where she could not succeed. I like her. I have enormous respect for her, and I feel sad that she found herself caught in that weird place. She didn't think it through.

Morrisroe: Going back to pre-inauguration, you had mentioned wanting to discuss—I don't want to get too far afield—the bus trip to arrive at the—

Riley: Oh, I'm sorry. That's something you said you wanted to talk about, and I skipped over it.

Thomases: I just thought of one or two things. He spent some time in D.C. as a citizen to try to create the sense that when he was President, he would make himself visible in the city—not just as President—and he would not suffocate the city the way other Presidents have done. He would be much more a resident of Washington, D.C. That did not succeed for him.

Riley: He took a walk on Georgia Avenue, right?

Thomases: He took a walk on Georgia Avenue, but that's it. It did not translate into something when he became President, partly because of the Secret Service and the whole way the White House is treated by the D.C. police and the Secret Service. The second thing was the White House has become such a closed place. It's sad the way this whole terror thing has infested the world.

Riley: But you had arranged then for a bus trip as the entry into—and came through Charlottesville.

Thomases: It worked really well. I thought it was a big success.

Riley: Did you do any of the other planning around the Inauguration activities?

Thomases: No. That was all Harry [Thomason] and the Inaugural Committee. I did nothing on that. I just went to the Inauguration; it was a lot of fun.

Riley: Had you ever been in the White House before the Clintons?

Thomases: Yes.

Riley: In what capacity had you been there before?

Thomases: A visitor.

Riley: All right, but maybe not in the family quarters before that?

Thomases: No, never in the family quarters.

Riley: Do you remember your first visit to the family quarters?

Thomases: Yes. It was fun, it was great. One of the things Bill Clinton did for me that made me very happy was appointing me to the White House Historical Association, which is really what I loved. I didn't seek it, I didn't expect it, but I'm thrilled. I'm still honored. My term is up this year, but it's been a wonderful role. I love the preservation of the White House.

Hillary raised a lot of money. We fixed up the White House. Everything is top, top, top, and with all our White House ornaments and everything, we've raised a lot of money. There's enough money to keep the White House going forever, and this group now is trying to use that money to reduce the number of White House tours. That makes me sad, because I really do think that people should still be allowed to go in. I think the closing down of the White House is unfortunate. If you close the White House door, it may be difficult to ever reopen it.

I think if something happens to the public, actually going into the White House helps give a sense of the people who live there. Letting the public into that part of their life shows that it's not just like Disneyland. And so making them use the visitors' center as opposed to actually using the real White House would be an unfortunate turn of events.

But as I said, I've been on the White House Historical Association, and my term is up now. I'll still be allowed to go to the meetings, and I'll probably go because I adore going. It's such a cast of characters. Hugh Sidey's dying was so painful for me. He was such a special person—so including of me and so gracious to me. It was just amazing to be part of that whole group that spends their time worrying about the history of the White House. Even for someone who doesn't care that much about modern history, it was a privilege to serve on the committee with him.

Riley: Did you notice any changes in the Clintons after they'd been in the White House for a while?

Thomases: I think they accepted their responsibility. It takes a while to get used to it. You wake up one day and you're President and First Lady of the United States. It's huge. I think they both adjusted to those roles extremely graciously. First of all, for me, being at Blair House was the most incredible thing. Blair House is like *the* historical house of America. I love being in the White House, but being in Blair House was something even more special. It was a privilege for me to be able to sleep in Blair House.

Riley: Are the rooms nice?

Thomases: They're very nice, but it's not just the rooms, it's the service. The woman who runs it is such a gracious woman. It's the classiest place in the world, it's just very special. It has an ambiance that's part of the diplomatic world. It's part of American history, but not really part of America in some way. It's like a transition building of incredible proportions, and I felt it was a great privilege.

Being in the White House is amazing. I have wonderful pictures of my son sleeping in the White House. He wanted to know where the vending machines were. He had a kid's view. Where's my vending machine? You can get anything you want at any time of day, and Tom wanted to know where the vending machines were.

Riley: That image is lodged in my mind now.

Thomases: My friendship with the Clintons has been such a privilege for me. It has been one of those happenstances of life that you can't plan for, you can't predict. I never lived my life to be involved in public life. That was never my thing. My goal was always to have a successful career, and in my imaginings my career never involved public life. It's not that I didn't like civic things. I loved civil service: worrying about education, healthcare, quality of life issues. I wanted to be involved in things like that, but I don't do government and never expected to. It was not my thing.

Riley: They had a very tough first couple of years in the White House personally.

Thomases: Yes and no.

Riley: Her father passed away.

Thomases: Personal losses, and Vince's death was horrible.

Riley: What are the sources of the personal resilience of these two people?

Thomases: First of all, look at each of their personal histories. In order to survive and get where they were, they came from resilient stock. That's true of each of them. It's not just true of him or true of her. I loved Hugh Rodham, and one of the things I loved about him was that the place he came from in Pennsylvania is near where my family has a farm. Every time you go to Scranton, you imagine that you're going to fall into the tunnels underneath because so much of the town is dug under. This weekend I was looking at those tunnels under the hills of Pennsylvania—the whole town of Scranton is built over them, and you always imagine it caving in.

Hillary's father came from that community. He was a tough Republican guy. He and my dad got along really well. While they came from very different places—my dad was a city person, and he was a quasi-rural person because Scranton is a quasi-rural town—they were these tough Republicans who really believed you had to take care of yourself. You were responsible for taking care of your own, and you shouldn't be looking to the government to take care of you. Hillary had a lot of that in her.

And Dorothy [Howell Rodham] is a very special woman. She has so much natural grace; she's just an extraordinary person. She's the First Lady's mother. She never imagined herself being there, yet she pulls it off with great charm. She's a woman of great natural class. It's pretty special.

Riley: And they rely on one another.

Thomases: Yes.

Riley: You mentioned Chelsea being an unusual young woman.

Thomases: Yes, she's a unique person. They had lots of friends, a cast of characters to help them when they had to travel before they were in Washington, so Chelsea had lots of adults worrying about the small things of her life. So she reflects not only being with her parents—who were there for her all the time and always spent quality time with her daily—but she had lots of other adults she could turn to and she relied on when her parents were busy with their work or Hillary had to travel for some reason. They had an amazing support system from when they were in Arkansas that they were able to successfully transfer to D.C.

Riley: They're both very religious people?

Thomases: I would say that she's more religious than he. I don't know how much you know about religion, but she's a very devout Methodist. And I'll tell you, it's serious business being a devout Methodist. Just read some 19th century history. She's a big-time, serious Methodist, and she really does believe—

The thing I remember so well, I went with her to Blackmun's funeral. Blackman was also a serious, big-time Methodist. That's a religious denomination that's a whole way of life. It's not just a way of prayer; it's a whole way of living. She believes in service and duty, and she has all these Methodist qualities.

He's a Baptist, and Baptists are different. They believe in God and praying, and he has a sense of duty. But his sense of duty is not the Methodist sense of duty. His comes from the American tradition of public service and what we owe our country. So he's much more secularly grounded in his sense of duty. Hers is really grounded very much in her faith, I think. That's my view, and since I'm a person of little faith—

Riley: That makes you an observer from a different vantage point.

Thomases: I'm an observer. I always admired that about her. She was religious at a time when none of the people her age were religious. She really believed in that stuff. When I first met her, when she was in law school, she talked about things like this in serious and sincere conversations. It was part of her being.

Riley: That leads to an interesting question, something I think people on the outside are grappling with. Why do these two people spark such hostility? What is it about them? There's an enormous industry of Clinton haters.

Thomases: There are two types of Clinton haters. One type is the people who really don't like them because of what they want to accomplish. There are really serious people in this country who don't like their idea of the role of government in people's lives, and they don't like them because of what they think the government should do to help people. They just don't like that.

And then there are the people who don't like them because they're jealous. They don't think a poor boy from Arkansas should have so much. There's some serious class jealousy of a type that makes me want to throw up. Sometimes I overhear a conversation like that which is very class-based, and it just makes me sick. They think Bill Clinton is poor white trash. How can this guy from poor white trash get ahead of us to be President? How did he sneak in there? It's ugly stuff.

Riley: You're a New Yorker.

Thomases: A die-hard.

Riley: How do you explain the evident hostility that the *New York Times* had for this President?

Thomases: Jealous. They wanted him to be their friend, and he wasn't their friend. They want to have an intimate relationship with anybody important, and they want whoever is important to think *they're* important.

Riley: Do you know Howell Raines?

Thomases: Oh, I think Howell Raines is a jerk. I do not know him very well. He's a southerner.

Riley: He's from Alabama, right?

Thomases: That's why he's jealous. He's a southerner who's jealous of Bill Clinton. He's one of those people who think Bill Clinton is white trash. I'm telling you—you don't know Jimmy Rogers, but he says Howell Raines just can't stand the fact that Bill Clinton is white trash. No one knows better than Jim Rogers. He doesn't love Bill Clinton, but he knows Howell Raines, and he knows the nature of Howell Raines' jealousy. He also says Howell Raines is not as smart as Bill Clinton, and he can't accept that fact.

Riley: Well, not many people are as smart as Bill Clinton.

Thomases: No, but some people aren't so bothered by it. It doesn't bother me at all that I'm not as smart as Bill Clinton. It doesn't bother me for 30 seconds. I'm perfectly glad to have him have all the brains and be responsible for the free world. Sometimes with these southern men, you know, you have problems. I don't understand them, but you have them.

Riley: A lot of it is inferiority complex.

Thomases: It's amazing. I call us swamp rats because a big part of my mother's family is from New Orleans. Wherever there's water, wherever the edge of society is, my mother's family is. And so over the years I've gotten to watch this. It's very interesting.

Riley: I'm trying to think if there were any other big events in the first year that I might bounce off you. We've touched on the Whitewater thing that bubbled up again at the end of '93 and early '94. Were you surprised that that came back out?

Thomases: To this day I don't understand why that became so big. I just thought it was a non-event. That's part of the problem. I couldn't take the press' interest in it. I couldn't stand the reporter who was doing it for the *Times,* and that was probably my mistake. He thought of himself as having latched onto a good story.

Riley: It was [Jeff] Girth.

Thomases: Girth. Oh, my God.

Riley: Even the report we had here was that there was not anything to it other than—

Thomases: There was no "there" there, and he was trying to make something there. That was what was so frustrating. Every time you argued with him that there was no "there" there, he said "more cover-up." I said, "I can't give you any more because there is no more." Bad record keeping.

Riley: You were said to have been involved in the decision to cooperate in the writing of James Stewart's book.

Thomases: Yes. It was a big mistake. My best friend and James Stewart were friends, and I trusted James Stewart in a way I never should have. It's that simple. I assumed him to be a fair, honest journalist, and I turned out to be wrong.

Riley: Did he approach you, or did your friend get the two of you together?

Thomases: I knew the kind of thing he would be writing, and I thought that by being open with him, the Clintons might get a fair hearing. I turned out to be wrong. No one was more disappointed than I. My best friend, Jack Fitzsimmons, was this wonderful, fabulous guy. He went to Dartmouth and Harvard Law School, and he was my partner in the law firm. We were very good buddies, pals.

He was gay. He was one of the first victims of AIDS. He did a stupid thing and got involved with someone who had AIDS, and it was very sad. He was dying, and so I was seeing a lot of Jim Stewart. I stupidly thought that as a consequence of having lived through Jack's sickness with him, somehow he was a trustworthy person. And he turned out to be not a trustworthy person, but a sneak.

Jonathan Alter was the man I was trying to think of.

Riley: And we were dealing with Jonathan Alter in what context?

Thomases: He's a journalist I trust.

Riley: He was at the Hofstra conference.

Thomases: Yes, and he's a fabulous person. As I said, I know him because my husband babysat for him when he was a kid. My husband was living in Chicago at the time, and he knew his family. I still adore him. Jonathan Alter is a terrific guy. Right now he's suffering from cancer, but he's doing okay. He's battling and he's gotten it under control.

Riley: I also met Sid Blumenthal there who told me that he was a cancer survivor. That I didn't know about.

Thomases: It's one of those diseases that does not discriminate.

Riley: There were two other books written about this time. One was the [Robert] Woodward book. Did you talk to Woodward?

Thomases: No.

Riley: There was a decision taken in the White House to cooperate with that. Did you talk to the Clintons about whether that was a good idea?

Thomases: I know Carl Bernstein because Nora Ephron's sister is my best friend. Delia Ephron and I were roommates; we lived together for years. I had known the Ephron family, and therefore I knew Carl Bernstein. Carl Bernstein is always bumping into me around the corner and trying to get me up against the wall and convince me to talk to him about something. But right now I'm participating in nothing except for helping you guys. You're legit.

Riley: There was a great deal of buyer's remorse about cooperating with Woodard on that book, and I didn't know whether you had any independent knowledge of that.

Thomases: None at all. Having been burned by Jim Stewart, I was not anxious to get involved with anyone else.

Riley: The Stewart book, I think, may have come later.

Thomases: No it didn't. Early, early, early.

Riley: Elizabeth Drew must be a good friend of yours.

Thomases: I like her a lot.

Riley: I'm just saying that because there's one degree of separation.

Thomases: I like her a lot, but I don't really know her that well. Jim Johnson and I were very close friends for a number of years, and he and she were very good friends.

Riley: No cooperation with that?

Thomases: None at all.

Riley: Stephanopoulos' book came later. You've already expressed your sentiment on that. Can you tell us anything about the immediate aftermath of the 1994 midterm elections?

Thomases: That was depressing. That was a hard loss.

Riley: And for the two of them also, I would take it.

Thomases: Oh yes, for all of us. It was a blow to the gut.

Riley: Do you have any specific recollections about the period afterwards?

Thomases: No.

Riley: Dick Morris comes back into orbit.

Thomases: Bad guy.

Riley: Tell us about Dick Morris.

Thomases: I have never understood Bill Clinton's affection for him. I know him very well. His new stepmother went to college with my mother. Dick Morris' father and Blanche [Morris]**,** his current wife, went out with each other in college, and my mother and Blanche were close friends. So I had to live with Dick Morris' father before Dick Morris' father married Dick Morris' stepmother. I don't mean I had to live with him, but he was in the orbit of my family. He's a very sick puppy.

Riley: He's really made a career now out of—

Thomases: I know, but he was always that way. Harold would always say, "Which one is going to talk to this yoyo?" He's an amazing self-promoter, an accomplished liar, and very clever. He's not stupid at all, and he has his own agenda at all times. But Bill Clinton is intrigued with his thinking.

Riley: Mrs. Clinton presumably signed off on this?

Thomases: She sometimes shows some weakness because he seems so smart.

Riley: I'm thinking again in the post-'94 midterm elections when everybody was reeling from that experience.

Thomases: No, I'm saying, sometimes she's vulnerable because he's so smart. His intelligence seduces her because he seems to have a very clever analysis. So she gets momentarily seduced by him—I mean his mind. She finds his thinking is seductive sometimes.

Riley: Were you continuing to go down to see them after '94 and into '95?

Thomases: Yes. I went to Washington for my business. It had nothing to do with them. I would be there one day a week or one night a week, usually Wednesday or Wednesday night. And if I was there, sometimes I would see them and sometimes I wouldn't.

Riley: At the same time, all the Whitewater investigations were beginning to kick in. Did that create problems for you with your—

Thomases: It was a drag. I had to show up for those stupid hearings. I spent a lot of time sitting there and answering their stupid questions. I had to show up in Arkansas. I had to show up in Washington. They wasted a lot of the government's money. If [Robert] Fiske had stayed on in that role, everything would have been fine. He asked me questions. I answered all his questions, and then he had no more questions to ask me. Then what's-his-name reopened the same old issues.

Riley: Ken Starr.

Thomases: Yes, but not just Ken Starr, the other guy. Ken Starr was the head of it, but there was another guy who was under him, and he was obsessed. He kept me on the witness stand for almost three hours. I finally said to him, "I'm just too tired to answer any more questions, so you have to give me a break." He said, "Oh, you're just pulling a stunt." I said, "No, I'm exhausted. I've been listening to you for three hours, and you've been repeating yourself over and over and over again. You're hoping you're going trip me up. The truth is, I'm becoming gaga, and God only knows what's going to come out of my mouth because you have made me so gaga."

He said, "Are you accusing me of using—some label of techniques—on you?" I said, "sort of." This person was making me crazy, asking me the same thing from different angles over and over again. Then he said, "Your lawyer is too good." My lawyer was a classmate of mine named Andy Levander. I had him do it because he's a very good lawyer and he's my friend.

Riley: Did the fact that these investigations were going on place obstacles between your communications with Mrs. Clinton? Were there problems?

Thomases: There was a brief period when our lawyers agreed that it would be better if we didn't talk to each other. We both were unhappy about that, but we complied. It was easier because we could say we hadn't talked to each other.

Riley: Sure. But you said that was a fairly narrow window.

Thomases: Yes.

Riley: Were you involved in the '96 campaign?

Thomases: Not really. They didn't need me, there was nothing for me. The next time I got involved was when she decided she wanted to do something.

Riley: You indicated earlier that she had dealt with his womanizing in earlier periods either by having Betsey Wright assigned to deal with it or by just—

Thomases: The Betsey Wright thing was over before they got to the White House. By the time they got to the White House, Betsey Wright was nowhere involved that I know of. I don't know the details of their relationship with Betsey Wright, so I can't answer that.

Riley: That's fine, but you indicated that she had to come to grips with this directly at the point of the Lewinsky problem.

Thomases: Yes.

Riley: Were you talking with her?

Thomases: You call it the Lewinsky problem. Why do you call it that?

Riley: I'm trying to be delicate with the affair.

Thomases: What affair? Talking dirty, you mean? It's so stupid of him to talk dirty.

Riley: On the evidence of the report, there was more than dirty talking. My question was about Mrs. Clinton coming to grips with this. I'm asking you about your sense of how she managed to get through this very difficult period.

Thomases: I don't think there's any quick and easy answer to this. I think that, like everything, she dealt with it, and she worked out a resolution that worked for her. It was important for her to keep their marriage together. I don't think it ever occurred to her to do anything but. And I don't think she ever stopped loving him. She was pissed off at him. She would have hit him with a frying pan if one had been handed to her, but I don't think she ever in her mind imagined leaving him or divorcing him. To tell you the truth, a little tongue-lashing I can imagine, but I don't think anything else crossed her mind. But then again, I don't know. We didn't discuss it on that level.

Riley: And that was my next question. I didn't know whether this was the kind of thing that she had a network of people who—Having never been through anything even remotely like this, I don't know how one—what the sources of resilience are here.

Thomases: She's very resilient, and she's very able to deal with things on her own. If Diane Blair were still alive, Diane and I would be talking about this, and between the two of us, we would figure out something. But Diane sadly died, and that was a huge loss for all of us, but particularly for Hillary. Diane Blair was a brick in Hillary's life as far as I know.

Riley: And there was nobody else who filled—you didn't have that kind of relationship with Hillary.

Thomases: We had that kind of relationship on some level, but often it came down to Diane and me saying it was going to resolve itself in some other way. It's so funny, with you sitting here, I keep thinking to myself, *I really owe Jim Blair a phone call*. I adore Jim Blair. He's a friend of both Clintons. I feel very remiss because I haven't spoken to him in the last year at all. He's a terrific person, and he's been a good friend to both of them. So if you haven't talked to him—

Riley: We have not, but that would have fallen probably within the Arkansas end of the project, and I'm sure they intend to do so.

Thomases: Because he's a spectacular person.

Riley: Diane did—and she may have talked with you—a large number of oral history interviews at the end of the campaign.

Thomases: Absolutely, I know, for what she was doing. That was her plan.

Riley: They're very valuable.

Thomases: Oh, she's so good. I know. She did me. She was a great historian, and she was really a terrific person.

Riley: You said earlier that you never questioned the President's resilience. Did you think in January of 1998 that he was going to be able to ride this one out?

Thomases: Sure. I never spent 30 seconds worrying about it. Never occurred to me. The only thing I've ever been concerned about in recent years is his physical health. I've never worried about his ability to weather anything. I've lived such a sheltered life that I cannot imagine the life he's lived. I cannot put myself mentally in the situation he lived through. You know—his father was dead before he was born, his mother had so many needs—and so he became resilient long before I was a cognizant person. I'm older than he is, but he had to be resilient at the age of three. So I just can't imagine what devices he developed for himself to keep himself on track, focused. And being as bright as he is, it just must be amazing.

Riley: When we talk with others, they focus on this ability to—the word in currency has been "compartmentalize"—to take a problem and put it in a cell someplace in the brain and then move on and do other things. Does that resonate with you? Or do you think it's oversimplified?

Thomases: That's a little bit simplistic. I think he has the ability to keep multiple things in his brain at the same time in ways that you and I can't. So it's very nice of them to say that he can compartmentalize because it makes it easier for them to understand. But the truth is, I think that he can keep many things afloat and juggling. He's a great juggler, and I think he can do that in ways I can't and I doubt you can either. I just think it's a talent and a gift.

Riley: You said you became more prominent in the orbit at the point when she was thinking about running for the Senate. Is that right?

Thomases: The thing is, as his Presidency began to wind down and she reached out to Harold and me and told us of this idea she had, my first reaction was, "No, bad idea. I don't want you to subject yourself to what's going to happen to you."

But then it became clear to me that this was something she really wanted to do, and she convinced me that it was very important for her that she herself have validation by the voters. That was what was missing all along, that she could never say it, and her word was always questioned because she did not have validation by the voters. So she wanted to have a position so she could say, "My taking this stand has been validated by the voters. Therefore, it's legitimate for me to be active in this area." When I thought about it, I was not at all surprised that she decided to run. So when she decided to run it became very doable.

Riley: You were impressed by her qualities as a candidate?

Thomases: She was amazing. My role in the campaign was so miniscule. It was just watching it be put together.

Riley: Were you surprised by the extent to which New Yorkers accepted her?

Thomases: No, because she was legit. She was the real thing. She did the job, she worked hard. She opened herself up to them and said, "Ask me anything. This is what I want to do. I'll be there for you. This is not about me, it's about you. Whatever you need, I'll get it done." And people trusted the fact that she could be depended on to do that, that she would actually go there and get something done, that she would deliver for them.

Riley: Was she a quick study of New York politics?

Thomases: Everything. That's the understatement of the century. She's been amazing. She's been just terrific, and she's done a great job. She's so popular it just always blows my mind, particularly in weird places.

I'm now helping a young woman who's running for Congress in the 20th Congressional District, which is the district against the Vermont border. It's like upstate Vermont—almost all the way up to Canada, but not quite. It's a Congressional seat that's held by a Republican. It's literally up against the Vermont border. This woman, [Kirsten] Gillibrand, is running for the seat.

I said to her, "How's it going?" and she said, "Hillary's so popular there, I can't believe it." It's a totally Republican district, and she said, "If I could be half as popular as Hillary in these towns—I grew up here, and she knows more people than I do. It's amazing."

Riley: One of the things we forgot to ask you about was the healthcare stuff. Were you surprised that President Clinton appointed her to do that?

Thomases: No. But because a large part of my business is doing healthcare, I had to recuse myself. I could not participate in that. My clients are mostly drug companies, and I just said to them, "Look, Hillary, I can't help you with this. This would only be bad for the two of us because I represent all these drug companies. You don't need me around."

Riley: Had you known Ira [Magaziner] before?

Thomases: Yes, I do know him. I'm not a friend of his. I think he's a perfectly bright guy, but he spent too much time in his own head.

Riley: Do you have an assessment of what happened with that episode?

Thomases: No, I don't. It wasn't my thing, and I tried to stay as far away from it as I could because I didn't want to develop any—you know.

Riley: Sure. Did you talk with Mrs. Clinton afterwards to get her sense about why things had gone the way they had gone?

Thomases: Only to commiserate with her and tell her that I understood she was disappointed. But under the circumstances, I think she did okay. No one else did any better. Do you know anybody else who's done any better on this healthcare thing?

In New York State, I worked very hard bludgeoning [George] Pataki to pass Child Health Plus, and we were very successful, and I'm very proud of what we accomplished here. I still think it's made Pataki look tremendously good even though he still hasn't done what he should with it. Doing that was based, in large part, on what Hillary and Marian Wright Edelman and Donna Shalala and I and some other people put together when we were at the Children's Defense Fund more than ten years ago. It's so silly: all these things they talked about doing during the Clinton administration, we're now 12 years away from, and nothing has happened in the country. It's sad. It doesn't affect my life, it doesn't affect yours, but there are millions of people whose lives it does affect.

Riley: Did you ever hear from her an assessment about what transpired? Did she communicate to you, "Oh, I wish I had done this," or "I wish I had done that"?

Thomases: No. That's not her way.

Riley: Or an assessment of, "This is where things went off track"?

Thomases: No.

Riley: Looking back on the Presidency, is there anything in particular you wish they had been able to accomplish that they didn't get accomplished?

Thomases: Yes. I wish they could have done something about healthcare. It would have made a lot of things better in America. We're still on the edge of something, and it's still a total mess, and every month it gets worse. Look where we stand, and look what's happening with the unions now. It's even getting worse because we can't solve it. The strike that took place, this no-train strike, was all basically about healthcare. A little bit about pensions, but mostly about healthcare. Who's going to pay for healthcare, and are they going to have healthcare reimbursements, and what's going to happen with healthcare? As a society, we expect to have quality healthcare, but we can't figure out who we want to pay for it and how we want it to happen. Magic—magic's going to make it happen, right?

Riley: By the time the President left office, was there a sense of New York Democrats still embracing Bill Clinton? Or was there a sense of disappointment as he left office?

Thomases: I think they still embraced him. They were very protective of him when all these horrible calls came for punishing him and impeaching him. We New Yorkers rallied to him a thousand percent. There may have been less enthusiasm than there was eight years before, but I think there was still major support for him.

Riley: Did you ever go overseas with Mrs. Clinton?

Thomases: Never. I was overseas once at a time she was there, but I didn't go overseas with her.

Riley: Were you picking up signals about her when you were traveling overseas?

Thomases: They loved her. They totally love her. They love both of them. I was in England one week on business while they were there.

Morrisroe: What do you think the legacy is of the Clinton Presidency for the Democratic Party?

Thomases: Talk to me in a hundred years.

Morrisroe: Five hundred, isn't that the cutoff?

Thomases: It's five hundred, but I think it's hard for us to know. The truth is, what Democratic Party? That's a real problem right now, what Democratic Party?

Riley: Do you think she'll run for President?

Thomases: I just don't know. Right now she's thinking about running for reelection, and I think that after her reelection, depending on how that campaign goes, she'll address that issue. But I think she doesn't let herself think about it now as part of her self-disciplinary establishment.

Riley: You said you encouraged her not to run for the Senate. Would you encourage her not to run for President?

Thomases: These decisions have to be personal decisions. Let me tell you something, I encourage only young people to try to run for public office. For example, this woman Kirsten Gillibrand. I said, "When you're in your 40s and think you want to run for public office, by the

time you're in your 50s it's an iffy project." I think anyone who chooses to do this has a lot of guts, and I have to respect them.

Riley: Did you ever look back and wish you had gone to Washington after all?

Thomases: No. Not for 30 seconds, not for even one second.

Riley: For people who are looking back at this couple fifty years from now, we're not going to have the letters. We're not going to have the diaries. What are the things—?

Thomases: First of all, there may be more writings than you think. She's not a writer, but he is. So we don't know exactly what's in writing. God only knows what he's written down—if he's written down anything. But he's more likely to have written something down than she. They've both written books in the interim.

Riley: What did you think of the books?

Thomases: One of her books I think is pretty interesting.

Riley: And his book?

Thomases: Long.

Riley: I know. I've hauled it around. Actually, I thought his book did us a great service because it was—

Thomases: It tells you a lot.

Riley: The first half was a fabulous book. The second half—that he evidently spent much less time on—laid out a kind of chronology of what happened, but it left a lot of detail to be filled in.

Thomases: Oh, God. I don't know what time it is, but I'm supposed to call someone and I haven't.

Riley: It's 2:30.

Thomases: That's just the time I turn into a pumpkin.

Riley: I don't want you to turn into a pumpkin. I think we've done what we had hoped to do.

Thomases: You drained me.

Riley: I must tell you, it has been a most illuminating day, and we're very grateful that you've had us into your home. This will be something people are going to find valuable for some time to come.

Thomases: Whatever I can do to help you. Enjoy all the things you have—you're seeing some of my favorite people.

Riley: It's a privilege to have the chance to do this. It's fascinating work across the board, and I get a front-row seat to history every time we sit down. Thanks for talking to us.

Thomases: Thank you. Nice to see you and good luck.