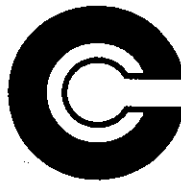


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"THE MOST INFORMATIVE TEXT AVAILABLE ON THE MAN WHO
WOULD BE PRESIDENT" (Kirkus Reviews)

THE COMEBACK KID:
The Life and Career of Bill Clinton
by Charles F. Allen and Jonathan Portis

"Stealing a march on the competition, this is the first bio of the Democratic hopeful to exit the chute. The book's texture reflects the authors' professional provenances as educator and political reporter, respectively, and therefore holds a plenitude of information..."

--Booklist, July 1992

THE COMEBACK KID: The Life and Career of Bill Clinton (Birch Lane Press, August 1992; \$18.95 cloth) had its genesis in a graduate seminar conducted at the University of Mississippi in 1988. The book is based on the doctoral thesis submitted by seasoned educator and native Arkansan Charles Allen on Governor Bill Clinton. Co-author Jonathan Portis--also a native of Arkansas--is a veteran editor who served at both the Arkansas Gazette and the Memphis Commercial Appeal. He has transformed the narrative from an intellectual treatise into a dynamic and moving story of Bill Clinton.

In **THE COMEBACK KID**, the authors ponder, "Can Bill Clinton be a world leader?" "Does he have the courage to defend America's interests in whatever the 'global economy' that he refers to so often, turns out to be?" "Does he have the leadership ability to face down the powerful medical and insurance industries, a huge business lobby and a dissipated Congress in order to get his national health care program installed?" "Does he really believe he can acquire a tax cut for the middle class without digging a deeper hole in the deficit?" "Is Bill Clinton a leader, or does he just want to be president?"

Clinton uses the word 'change' in nearly every other paragraph. But can Clinton really change anything? The authors determine that a better question to pose is "Did he really change anything as governor of Arkansas which was the second poorest state in the nation when Clinton was elected to his first term?" And that is the question they go on to address at length.

Item: Clinton has said, "I've been too young to do everything I've ever done." In 1974, at age 27, he ran for Congress in Arkansas and was defeated. At age 32, Clinton became the youngest governor in the nation.

Item: One of Bill Clinton's teachers at law school was the conservative law professor Robert H. Bork. Clinton said he used to 'go round and round' with Bork in the classroom...he was the only member of the class who had not been beaten into submission. Clinton would later submit written testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee opposing Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court.

Item: The fight to reform education in Arkansas began almost immediately during his first term as governor. He outlined two controversial proposals: a bill providing fair dismissal procedures for teachers and a bill calling for mandatory achievement tests for all students.

During his first term as governor--Clinton pushed through budget increases of 40 percent over a two year period for public education, the largest increase in the state's history.

Item: In his 1980 bid for re-election, Clinton was defeated by Frank White, "bringing Camelot down around Clinton's ears," wrote Arkansas journalist John Robert Starr. Political theorist David Osborne attributed the defeat to Clinton's "inclination to put good policy over good politics." In interviews during the 1992 campaign, Clinton would admit that the 'trouble' he brought to his marriage began during these dark days.

Item: In his next bid for election as governor, his campaign theme was "You can't lead without listening." His issues were jobs, education and utility rates. Clinton became the first governor in the state's history to be defeated and come back to regain the office.

Item: Halfway into his second term, the Associated Press determined Governor Clinton had accomplished 69 of the 119 promises he had made during his campaign and was still developing 35.

In 1984, the Board of Education approved his proposed standards. "It's a great, great day for Arkansas," Clinton declared. The controversy over teacher testing in Arkansas drew national attention.

Item: SOURCE OF THE GENNIFER FLOWERS STORY: In 1988, Larry Nichols was an Arkansas state employee who had a keen interest in the Contras. Nichols ended up resigning his position, saying Governor Clinton had forced him to quit, accusing him of using taxpayers' dollars to assist the Nicaraguan revolutionary movement. In 1990, Nichols filed a \$3 million suit, charging that he had been unjustly fired. Among other things, the suit alleged that Governor Clinton had engaged in extramarital affairs with five women, one of whom was Gennifer Flowers. Teams of Arkansas reporters pursued the story and came back with denials from all of the women named. In fact, at this time Gennifer Flowers was so angered by a radio report of these allegations that she threatened a lawsuit.

When Bill Clinton hit his peak of popularity in New Hampshire, the mainstream media and the tabloids all raced to the courthouse to dig out Larry Nichols' 1990 lawsuit and its sensational charges.

Meanwhile, in Little Rock, Larry Nichols had changed his mind. He announced that he was withdrawing the lawsuit and that his allegations of Clinton's affairs were based on rumors.

Item: On Hillary Clinton: In high school, she was an outspoken conservative, supporting Republican Barry Goldwater in '64. Her move to the other side of the political spectrum began when a minister in her church opened her eyes to the poverty of inner-city Chicago. Her political transformation gathered speed at Wellesley. By 1967, she was supporting US Senator Eugene McCarthy.

After leaving Yale Law School, Hillary worked briefly for the Children's Defense Fund, where she developed a life-long interest in children's issues. She was listed among the country's 100 top lawyers by the National Law Journal in 1988 and 1991.

Early on in his governorship, Bill Clinton appointed Hillary to head the Education Standards Committee.

Item: During his third term as governor, Bill Clinton's younger brother, Roger, Jr. was arrested for distribution of cocaine. He served a little over a year in a federal prison.

Item: In March of 1985, over 25,000 Arkansas teachers took Clinton's competency test. 1,315 teachers, nearly 4% of all Arkansas teachers, were forced to leave teaching because they could not pass. Despite much bad blood at the time, today the powerful teacher union (AEA), has high praise for the Clintons' achievements in education.

Item: As a result of Clinton's visibility on education issues, President Bush asked him to co-chair a national summit of governors to address ways to reverse "the decline of our educational system," set for September '89.

Item: When Clinton decided to run for president, the national media were curious about him, and soon were captivated by him. But--back home in Arkansas, he had nothing but media trouble. At the new Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, all three op-ed columnists actively opposed the run for the presidency by Arkansas' favorite son.

Item: Clinton's philosophy in the last few years has been to attract and keep industry. While this has kept a number of Arkansans employed, this philosophy has created a number of environmental problems.

Clinton has urged 'voluntary' guidelines, but industry almost always must be forced to spend money on environmental protection. Voluntary compliance has failed in Arkansas.

Item: Arkansas now ranks third in the nation in the percentage of its total state and local budget spent on schools. Almost 42% of its budget goes to education, compared to a national average of 35%.

About 77% of all ninth graders go on to finish high school. The national average is approximately 72%.

Item: There are many other pervasive problems in Arkansas that Clinton's tenure as governor has not impacted upon. What does he say when these problems are raised? He points to the Arkansas Constitution, which requires a balanced budget and forbids deficit spending.

Item: Health care is a top concern in America today, and Clinton's 'play or pay' plan for national health care may be one of his most attractive ideas. Employers would be forced to insure their workers or pay a special tax into a fund that would provide government coverage.

Item: The authors of *THE COMEBACK KID* postulate: "If George Bush is a 'prisoner of his pollsters,' Clinton is a captive to his fear of losing. In 18 years, he has lost only two elections; his second loss, in 1980, when he was tossed out of the governor's chair for two years, crushed his self-esteem, sending him into an emotional tailspin."

About the Authors:

Charles F. Allen conducted the interviews in this book in 1988-89 as part of his doctoral dissertation on Governor Bill Clinton for the University of Mississippi. Allen is a seasoned educator who has served as teacher, high school principal, school superintendent, county supervisor and educational administrative supervisor for the Arkansas State Department of Education. He was born and raised in Arkansas, and is currently residing in Little Rock.

Jonathan Portis is a native Arkansan who served as editor at both the Arkansas Gazette and the Memphis Commercial Appeal. His newspaper career has paralleled the political career of Bill Clinton, allowing him to observe the sweep of the governor's life-work. He also lives in Little Rock.

August, 1992