

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

Governor Bill Clinton
Remarks Prepared for Delivery
To The Democratic National Convention
Accepting the Democratic Nomination
for President of the United States
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Tonight I want to talk with you about my hope for the future, my faith in the American people, and my vision of the kind of country we can build, together.

I salute the good men who were my companions on the campaign trail: Tom Harkin, Bob Kerrey, Doug Wilder, Jerry Brown and Paul Tsongas. One sentence in the platform we built says it all: "The most important family policy, urban policy, labor policy, minority policy and foreign policy America can have is an expanding, entrepreneurial economy of high-skill, high-wage jobs."

And so, in the name of all the people who do the work, pay the taxes, raise the kids and play by the rules -- the hard-working Americans who make up our forgotten middle class, I accept your nomination for the Presidency of the United States of America.

I am a product of America's middle class. And when I am your President you will be forgotten no more.

We meet at a special moment in history, you and I. The Cold War is over; Soviet Communism has collapsed; and our values -- freedom, individual rights and free enterprise -- have triumphed. And yet just as we have won the Cold War abroad, we are losing the battles for economic opportunity and social justice here at home. Now that we've changed the world, it's time to change America.

I have news for the forces of greed and the defenders of the status quo: your time has come...and gone. It's time for a change.

Tonight ten million Americans are out of work. Tens of millions more work harder for less pay. The incumbent President says unemployment always goes up a little before we start a recovery. But unemployment only has to go up by one more person before we can start a real recovery -- and Mr. President, you are that man.

This election is about putting power back in your hands and putting government back on your side. It's about putting our people first.

You know, I've shared these thoughts with people all across America. But always someone comes back at me, as a young man did this week at the Henry Street Settlement on the Lower East Side of Manhattan: "That sounds good, Bill. But you're a politician. Why should I trust you?"

Tonight, I want to tell you, as plainly as I can, who I am, what I believe in, and where I want to lead America.

I never met my father.

He was killed in a car wreck on a rainy road three months before I was born, driving home from Chicago to Arkansas to be with my mother.

~~After that, my mother had to support us. So I lived with my grandparents while she went away to study nursing in Louisiana.~~

I can still see her through the eyes of a three-year-old: kneeling at the train station in New Orleans, waving goodbye and crying as she put me on the train with my grandmother to go back home. ~~She endured her pain because she knew her sacrifice was the only way she could support me and give me a better life.~~

~~My mother taught me. She taught me about family, hard work, and sacrifice. She held steady through tragedy after tragedy. And she held our family, my brother and me, together through tough times. As a child, I watched her go off to work each day at a time when it wasn't very easy to be a working mother.~~

~~As an adult, I watched her fight off breast cancer. And again she taught me a lesson in courage. And always, always she taught me to fight.~~

That's why I'll fight to create high-paying jobs so that parents can raise their children in dignity. That's why I'm so committed to making sure every American gets the health care that saved my mother's life. And that's why I fight to make sure women in this country receive respect and dignity -- whether they work in the home, out of the home, or both. ~~You want to know where I get my fighting spirit? It all started with my mother.~~

When I think about opportunity for all Americans, I think of my grandfather.

He ran a country store in our little town of Hope. There were no food stamps back then, so when his customers -- whether white or black -- who worked hard and did the best they could came in with no money, he'd give them food anyway. Just made a note of it. So did I. Before I was big enough to see over the counter, I learned from him to look up to people other folks looked down on.

My grandfather had a grade-school education. But in that country store he taught me

more about equality in the eyes of the Lord than all my professors at Georgetown; more about the intrinsic worth of every individual than all the philosophers at Oxford; and he taught me more about the need for equal justice than all the jurists at Yale Law School.

You want to know where I get my commitment to bringing people together without regard to race? It all started with my grandfather.

I learned a lot from another person, too. A person who for more than 20 years has worked hard to help our children. Paying the price of time to make sure our schools don't fail them. Who traveled our state — without a salary — for a year. Studying, learning, listening. Going to PTA meetings, school board meetings, town hall meetings. Putting together a package of school reforms recognized around the nation. Doing it all while building her own distinguished legal career and being a devoted and loving mother.

That person is my wife.

Hillary taught me. She taught me that all children can learn, and that every one of us has a duty to help them do it. You want to know why I'm so committed to children and their futures? It all started with my wife.

I'm fed up with politicians in Washington lecturing Americans about "family values." Our families have values. Our government doesn't.

I want an America where "family values" live in our actions, not just in our speeches. An America that includes every family. Every traditional family and every extended family. Every two-income family and every single-parent family, and every foster family.

I do want to say something to those parents who have chosen to abandon their children by neglecting their child support: take responsibility for your children or we will force you to do it. Because governments don't raise children; parents do.

And I want to say something to every child who is trying to grow up without a father or a mother: I know how you feel. You're special, too. You matter. And don't let anyone ever tell you you can't become whatever you want to be. If the politicians who are lecturing you don't want you to be a part of their families, you can be a part of ours.

The thing that makes me angriest about what went wrong these last 12 years is that this government has lost touch with our values, while politicians continue to shout about them.

I was raised to believe that the American Dream was built on rewarding hard work. But the folks in Washington have turned that American ethic on its head. For too long, those who play by the rules and keep the faith have gotten the shaft. And those who cut corners and cut deals have been rewarded. People are working harder than ever, spending

nights and weekends on the job instead of at the Little League or the Scouts or the PTA. But their incomes are still going down, their taxes are going up, and the costs of housing, health care and education are going through the roof. Meanwhile, more and more people are falling into poverty -- even when they're working full time.

People want change, but government is in the way. It has been hijacked by privileged, private interests. It has forgotten who really pays the bills around here -- it's taking more of your money and giving you less in service.

We have got to go beyond the brain-dead politics in Washington, and give our people the kind of government they deserve: a government that works for them.

A President ought to be a powerful force for progress. But right now I know how President Lincoln felt when General McClellan wouldn't attack in the Civil War. He asked him, "If you're not going to use your army, may I borrow it?" George Bush: If you won't use your power to help people, step aside. I will.

Our country is falling behind. The President is caught in the grip of a failed economic theory. We've gone from first to thirteenth in the world in workers' wages. Four years ago, candidate Bush said America is a special place, not just "another pleasant country on the U.N. roll call, somewhere between Albania and Zimbabwe." Now, under President Bush, America has an unpleasant economy stuck somewhere between Germany and Sri Lanka. And for most Americans, life's a lot less kind and a lot less gentle.

We've fallen so far, so fast that the Prime Minister of Japan actually said he felt "sympathy" for America. When I am your President, the rest of the world won't look down on us with pity. They'll look up to us with respect.

What is George Bush doing about America's economic problems?

Well, he promised us fifteen million new jobs by now. And he's over fourteen million jobs short. We can do better.

He has raised taxes on the people who drive pick-ups trucks, and lowered taxes on people who ride in limousines. We can do better.

He promised to balance the budget, but he didn't even try. In fact, the budgets he submitted have nearly doubled the debt. Even worse, he wasted the money and reduced our investments in education and jobs. We can do better.

So if you're sick and tired of a government that doesn't work to create new jobs; if you're sick and tired of a tax system that's stacked against you; if you're sick and tired of exploding debt and reduced investments in our future -- if, like the late civil rights pioneer Fannie Lou Hamer said, you're just plain sick and tired of being sick and tired -- then join

with us, work with us win with us. Together we can make the country we love, the country it was meant to be.

The choice you face is clear.

George Bush talks a good game. But he has no game plan to compete and win in the world economy. I do.

He won't take on the big insurance companies to lower costs and provide health care to all Americans. I will.

He won't streamline the federal government, and change the way it works; cut 100,000 bureaucrats, and put 100,000 more police on your streets. I will.

He never balanced a budget. I have. Eleven times.

He won't break the stranglehold special interests have on our elections and lobbyists have on our government. I will.

He won't give mothers and fathers a chance to take some time off from work when a baby's born or a parent is sick. I will.

He doesn't have a commitment to keep family farms in the family. I do.

He hasn't fought a real war on crime and drugs. I will.

He won't crack down on polluters, clean up the environment and take the lead on creating jobs in environmental technologies. I will.

He doesn't have Al Gore. I do.

And he won't guarantee a woman's right to choose. I will. Hear me now: I am not pro-abortion. I am pro-choice. I believe this difficult and painful decision should be left to the women of America. I do not want to go back to the time when we made criminals out of women and their doctors.

Jobs. Health care. Education. These commitments aren't just promises from my lips. They are the work of my life.

Our priorities must be clear: we will put our people first. But priorities without a clear plan of action are empty words. To turn our rhetoric into reality we have to change the way government does business -- fundamentally. Until we do, we'll still be pouring billions of tax dollars right down the drain.

The Republicans have campaigned against big government for a generation. But they've run big government for a generation, and they haven't changed a thing — except from bad to worse. They don't want to clean out the bureaucracy; they just want to run against it.

But we Democrats have some changing to do too. It is time for us to realize that there is not a government program for every problem. And if we really want to use government to help people, we've got to make it work.

Because we are making those changes, we are, in the words of Ross Perot, a revitalized Democratic party. I am well-aware that those who rallied to his cause wanted to enlist in an army of patriots for change. We say to them: join us — together we will revitalize America.

I don't have all the answers. But I do know the old ways won't work. Trickle down economics has failed. And big bureaucracies — public and private — have failed.

That is why we need a new approach to government. A government that offers more empowerment and less entitlement; more choices for young people in public schools and more choices for older people in long-term care. A government that is leaner, not meaner; that expands opportunity, not bureaucracy; that understands that jobs must come from growth in a vibrant and vital system of free enterprise. I call it a New Covenant — a solemn commitment between the people and their government — based not simply on what each of us can take but on what all of us must give to make America work again.

We offer our people a new choice based on old values. We offer opportunity. And we demand responsibility. The choice we offer is not conservative or liberal; Democratic or Republican. It is different. It is new. And it will work.

It will work because it is based on the vision and the values of the American people. Of all the things George Bush has done that I disagree with, perhaps the thing that bothers me most has been how he derides and degrades the American tradition of seeing — and seeking — a better future. He mocks it as "the vision thing." But remember what the Scripture says: "Where there is no vision the people perish."

I hope you don't have to begin tomorrow without a vision. I hope you don't have to raise a child in this world without a vision. I hope you don't have to start a new business or plant a new crop without a vision. For where there is no vision the people perish.

One of the reasons we have so many children in so much trouble in so many cities is because they have seen so little opportunity, so little responsibility, and so little community that they literally cannot imagine the kind of life we are calling them to lead. Where there is no vision, the people perish.

What is the vision of our New Covenant?

An America with millions of new jobs in dozens of new industries moving confidently into the 21st Century. An America that says to entrepreneurs and business people: We will give you more incentives, more opportunity than ever before to develop the skills of your workers and create American jobs and wealth in the new global economy. But you must do your part; you must be responsible. American companies must act like American companies again – and export products, not jobs. That is what the New Covenant is all about.

An America in which the doors of college are thrown open once again to the sons and daughters of stenographers and steelworkers. We'll say: Everybody can borrow the money to go to college. But you must do your part. You must pay it back – from your paychecks, or better yet, by going back home and serving your communities. We'll have millions of energetic young men and women, serving their country, policing the streets, teaching the kids, caring for the sick, helping young people stay off drugs and out of gangs, giving us all a sense of new hope and limitless possibilities. That's what the New Covenant is all about.

An America in which health care is a right, not a privilege. In which we tell all our people: Your government will have the courage – finally – to take on the health care profiteers and make health care affordable for every family. But you must do your part: Preventive care and prenatal care and child immunization; saving lives and saving money and saving families from heartbreak. That's what the New Covenant is all about.

An America in which middle class families' incomes – not their taxes – are going up. And, yes, an America in which the wealthiest – those making over \$200,000 a year – are asked to pay their fair share. An America in which the rich are not soaked – but the middle class is not drowning, either. Responsibility starts at the top; that's what the New Covenant is all about.

An America with the world's strongest defense; ready and willing to use force, when necessary. An America at the front of the new global effort to preserve and protect our natural environment – and promoting global growth. An America that will never coddle tyrants, from Baghdad to Beijing. An America that champions the cause of freedom and democracy, from Eastern Europe to Southern Africa, and in our own hemisphere in Haiti and Cuba.

The end of the Cold War requires us to reduce our defense spending. And we will plow those savings back into jobs right here at home. The world needs a strong America, and a strong America begins at home. That's what the New Covenant is all about.

An America where we end welfare as we know it. We will say to those on welfare: you have the opportunity through training and education, health care and child care, to liberate yourself. But then you have a responsibility to go to work. Welfare must be a second chance, not a way of life. That's what the New Covenant is all about.

It's time to heal our country.

So we will say to every American: Look beyond the stereotypes that blind us. We need each other. For too long politicians told most of us that what's wrong with America is the rest of us. Them. Them the minorities. Them the liberals. Them, them, them. But there is no them; there's only us. One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty, and justice, for all.

How do I know we can come together to make change happen? Because I have seen it in my own state. In Arkansas we're working together and making progress. There is no Arkansas miracle. But there are a lot of miraculous people. Good people, pulling together. Because of them, our schools are better, our wages are higher, our factories are busier, our water is cleaner, and our budget is balanced. We're moving ahead.

I wish I could say the same thing about America under the incumbent President. He took the richest country in the world and brought it down. We took one of the poorest states in America and lifted it up.

And so I say to those who would criticize Arkansas: come on down. Especially if you're from Washington — come to Arkansas. You'll see us struggling against some problems we haven't solved yet. But you'll also see a lot of great people doing amazing things. And you might even learn a thing or two.

In the end, the New Covenant simply asks us all to be Americans again. Old-fashioned Americans for a new time. Opportunity. Responsibility. Community. When we pull together, America will pull ahead. Throughout the whole history of this country, we have seen time and again that when we are united, we are unstoppable. We can seize this moment, we can make it exciting and energizing and heroic to be an American again. We can renew our faith in ourselves and each other, and restore our sense of unity and community. Scripture says, our eyes have not yet seen, nor our ears heard nor our minds imagined what we can build.

But I cannot do it alone. No President can. We must do it together. It won't be easy and it won't be quick. We didn't get into this mess overnight, and we won't get out of it overnight. But we can do it. With our commitment and our creativity and our diversity and our strength. I want every person in this hall and every citizen in this land to reach out and join us in a great new adventure to chart a bold new future.

As a teenager I heard John Kennedy's summons to citizenship. And then, as a student at Georgetown, I heard that call clarified by a professor I had named Carroll Quigley, who said America was the greatest country in the history of the world because our people have always believed in two great ideas: first, that tomorrow can be better than today, and second that each of us has a personal, moral responsibility to make it so.

That future entered my life the night our daughter Chelsea was born. As I stood in that delivery room, I was overcome with the thought that God had given me a blessing my own father never knew: the chance to hold my child in my arms.

Somewhere at this very moment, another child is born in America. Let it be our cause to give that child a happy home, a healthy family, a hopeful future. Let it be our cause to see that child reach the fullest of her God-given abilities. Let it be our cause that she grow up strong and secure, braced by her challenges, but never, never struggling alone; with family and friends and a faith that in America, no one is left out; no one is left behind.

Let it be our cause that when she is able, she gives something back to her children, her community, and her country. And let it be our cause to give her a country that's coming together, and moving ahead -- a country of boundless hopes and endless dreams; a country that once again lifts up its people, and inspires the world.

Let that be our cause and our commitment and our New Covenant.

I end tonight where it all began for me: I still believe in a place called Hope.



BY MARGARET THOMAS—THE WASHINGTON POST



ASSOCIATED PRESS

President Clinton embraces his wife, left, as he leaves for the funeral in Arkansas of his mother, Virginia Kelley, 70, shown above during inaugural festivities. She died from complications related to breast cancer.

The Woman Who Shaped the President Dies in Her Sleep

By David Maraniss
Washington Post Staff Writer

Bill Clinton is in every sense his mother's son. It is not an exaggeration to say that the best way to understand the precocious boy from provincial Arkansas who grew up to be president of the United States is to appreciate Virginia Dell Kelley, who died in her sleep early yesterday at her ranch-style house on the outskirts of Hot Springs.

The public came to know President Clinton's mother, who was 70 years old when she died of complications relating to breast cancer, by her outward flamboyance: the white streak in her

black-dyed hair, the painted eyebrows high on her forehead, the silver necklaces and golden shoes, the outings to Las Vegas and Churchill Downs.

She also gained attention for her novelistic marital history. Before finding security with retired stockbroker Richard Kelley, she had lost three husbands, including Bill Clinton's father, a traveling salesman with a secret life of previous marriages and children, and his adopted father, a car dealer who drank too much and tormented the family with verbal and physical abuse.

But behind Virginia Kelley's exotic public persona was a strong woman who more than anyone, even more than Hillary Rodham Clinton, shaped Bill

Clinton and directed him toward what she long ago took to be his destiny at the White House—the building that he left yesterday afternoon to fly back to Hot Springs to prepare for her funeral.

Most of Clinton's defining characteristics came from his mother. A clear line can be drawn back from his perseverance in the political world to her resilience in the face of personal tragedy and trauma. If he lost an election or an important legislative battle or she lost a husband or suffered from breast cancer, they kept going in similarly relentless, seemingly indefatigable fashion.

"I got that stamina from my mother," Clinton once said. Carolyn Yeldell Staley, one of his high school friends, said Virginia's themes were, "You can do anything, this will not get us down, no struggle is insurmountable." Mother and son were eternal optimists, according to Hillary Clinton, who once said, "Bill and his mother always see the glass as half full." Along with that optimism came a tendency to repress unpleasant thoughts or memories. Clinton has a nearly photographic memory—he recently stunned a friend visiting the White House by saying, "Let's call your parents!" and then reciting a number he hadn't dialed in more than a decade ("It's four-seven-two, ten-eleven, right?"). Yet for decades he nonetheless blocked out more important though painful memories involving his occasionally abusive stepfather, Roger Clinton. His mother had blocked out those same memories as well.

Clinton's gregariousness, his fun-loving nature, his glad-handing, his hugging, his propensity to empathize with whomever he happens to be talking to at the moment—all those were traits he picked up from his mother. "If I see you once, you're my friend; if I see you twice, I'll more than likely hug you," she once said.

She hated as much as her son does to be alone, and encouraged him to surround himself with friends in their house. "She was very gracious towards me and all of Bill's friends," said Phil Jamison, one of Clinton's high school classmates. "I know Bill showed more affection toward his mom than any of us showed toward our moms. You could tell they were close and drew on each other and they both loved to be around people."

To some degree Virginia Kelley reflected the contradictions of her adopted home town, Hot Springs, a city that cherished and protected its children, holding them up as symbols of righteousness, while at the same time enjoying a very different culture centered on nightclubs and racetracks and gambling. There is a seeming duality in Clinton's nature that can be traced back to those competing influences as well: the righteous side that takes him to Baptist

Church on Sunday and shapes his political philosophy on individual rights and responsibilities, and the more risqué side reflecting the free-wheeling impulses of the son of an unashamed mother in a gambling town.

Clinton's mother invested most of her hopes and ambitions in her son from the day he was born in Hope, Ark., on Aug. 19, 1946, three months after William Jefferson Blythe, Bill's father and her first husband, died in a car accident. When the boy called Billy was 2, Virginia left him with her parents in Hope for nearly two years while she studied anesthesiology in New Orleans so that she would have a profession that might provide her son a better life. She married car dealer Roger Clinton when Billy was 4. Billy called his stepfather "Daddy," but they essentially reversed roles during Bill's adolescence, when Roger's alcoholism forced the son to become the man of the house. Clinton not only sheltered his mother from her husband's abuse, he also served as a father figure to his half-brother, Roger Clinton Jr., who was 10 years younger. "Bill protected me and took responsibility at such an early age," Virginia once said of her son. "There is no way I can describe to you what he has meant to me."

Virginia said she and her son had only one strong disagreement during Clinton's teenage years. After she divorced Roger Clinton in 1962, citing several instances of physical abuse, Bill pleaded with her not to remarry him. "You're making a big mistake, mother," she recalled her son telling her when she took Roger back three months after the divorce. She said she remarried Roger not because she loved him but because she felt pity for him.

By the time Clinton had established himself as a Hot Springs golden boy in high school, his mother had transformed the living room of their brick rambler on Scully Street into a veritable Bill Clinton shrine. He was the heroic son in a dysfunctional family. The dominant artwork in the room was a studio portrait of him surrounded by Boys Nation mementos and band contest medals framed with velvet backdrops. Virginia was already telling friends that her boy would be president someday. For posterity, she filmed his every move with a home

movie camera. When he delivered the benediction at the graduation of the Hot Springs High class of 1964, she typed out copies of his speech and sent it to friends and relatives.

"His voice was magnificent as it sounded over the microphone in the football stadium," she wrote to her mother. "Of course, I was so proud of him I nearly died. He was truly in all his glory that night."

There was a symbiotic relationship between mother and son during Clinton's long rise to fame. He was motivated to please her and she would let nothing get in his way. On the day he had his final interview for a prestigious Rhodes scholarship, she refused to take calls from doctors seeking her services as a nurse anesthesiologist. "I had to be near the phone when Bill called," she said later.

In the moments after he had been selected, Clinton told an interviewer that he was proud to win such an honor for his mother. When Clinton traveled through Europe during his two years as a Rhodes scholar, Virginia, from her home back in Hot Springs, sent notes to his hosts in various foreign cities, thanking them, as she wrote in one note, for "your hospitality to one that is so dear to me."

In many ways Clinton centered his political philosophy on the lessons of his mother's life. His oft-stated belief in future preference, the idea that one generation should sacrifice for the betterment of the next, was articulated by one of his college professors but had its roots in the sacrifices his mother had made for him. She was the daughter of the town iceman in Hope, a man so poor and sensitive that he cried one morning when he did not have enough money to buy her an Easter dress. She studied nursing and worked long hours at her job to pay for her son's education at Georgetown, Oxford and Yale. She ignored the slights of small-town aristocrats who disparaged her colorful ways and the dreams she had for her son. Her life, said one of Clinton's friends, was one warm embrace.

Her illness barely seemed to slow Kelley down in the year since her son was elected. Starting with last year's inauguration, when she was the life of several parties, the president's mother embarked on a whirlwind tour that took her to



BY MARGARET THOMAS—THE WASHINGTON POST

The president is joined by Hillary Rodham Clinton, the other most influential woman in his life, as he prepares to leave for Arkansas.

racetracks, gambling parlors and athletic contests around the country. Even in her final weeks, when she was under closer nursing supervision, she was able to celebrate Christmas at the White House and enjoy Barbra Streisand's performance at Las Vegas. When friends asked how she felt last week, she said "Fine," though they said her eyes looked more tired than usual.

On the last night that Clinton spent with his mother, last week in Hot Springs, they went to her favorite restaurant across from the Oaklawn racetrack, where Virginia Kelley was a regular patron known for her \$2 bets. Virginia and her husband, Dick, Clinton and his wife and daughter, Chelsea, were there along with four of Clinton's high school friends. As they finished eating pizza, Clinton turned to his friend David Leopoulos and said, "What do you want to do next?" "Let's go bowling," Leopoulos said. He and Clinton both looked at Virginia Kelley. "That's okay, isn't it?" he asked.

"She just rolled her eyes," Leopoulos said. "The same fun-loving look of love and exasperation we'd get from her when we were kids. That's my last memory of her—that look of joyful pride. People don't understand. . . . What she did with her two hands and desire, she accomplished far more than most people do with everything material in the world."

Clinton's mother succumbs to cancer

By Frank J. Murray
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Virginia Kelley, 70, mother of President Clinton and a tireless *bonne vivante* whom he called the shaping force in his success, died unexpectedly yesterday from unspecified complications of breast cancer.

"She had lunch with friends and literally, out of the blue, passed away in her sleep," said Clay Farrar, family spokesman in Little Rock, Ark.

Mrs. Kelley, who retired in 1981 after a 40-year career as a nurse and nurse-anesthetist and married Dick Kelley a year later, first was diagnosed with cancer during her son's 1990 re-election campaign. Five days after a radical mastectomy she returned to the campaign trail.

A few months ago Mr. Clinton said "my brave mother ... struggles on with her breast cancer condition." Chemotherapy was administered but there was no sign she was near death, friends said.

Mrs. Kelley died in her sleep early yesterday morning at her resort-area lake-front home in Hot Springs, Ark. Her husband called 911, but it was too late. Mr. Kelley notified the president at about 2:30 a.m. EST.

The Garland County coroner said death was caused by complications from her cancer.

Mr. Clinton's mother, who saw one son go to prison for selling drugs and the other become president of the United States, spent a joyous Christmas at the White House with both of them.

"If we weren't survivors, we wouldn't be here now," she said.

With Mrs. Kelley's death, the president lost his No. 1 defender and, by all accounts, the person who taught him by example his personal political style.

The colorful and admittedly flamboyant first mother reveled in Bill Clinton's many successes and Mr. Clinton spoke proudly of her as well, even when she pursued her favorite avocation of gambling, which he

IN HER OWN WORDS

Virginia Kelley was outspoken about life and her son, the president of the United States. Quotations taken from a largely unpublished 1991 conversation with Clinton biographer Charles F. Allen, who made the full text available to The Washington Times.

"Usually I keep my mouth out of Bill's affairs because I know so little about it. I really should never open my mouth."

"Bill has shown such a thirst for knowledge and I just don't think he can know too much about anything."

"Nobody loves to play more than I love to play."

"The proudest I ever was of Bill, and I may get really emotional, was the speech he gave when he was defeated [for re-election as governor in 1980]."

"I miss Chelsea a lot."

"We've had a lot of grief in our family, but you can't know the good days if you don't have some bad ones."

"He is a perfect son. . . . He has never raised his voice at me. Not even once."

On first meeting Mr. Clinton's father, William Jefferson Blythe Jr., at the hospital where she worked as a nurse: "It was really love at first sight and, you know, I never did see it as a mistake."

On Roger Clinton Sr., whom she married twice: "A wonderful, wonderful man, but alcoholic."

The Washington Times

considered "the dumbest thing."

She was a regular at Hot Springs' Oaklawn Park racetrack and became a fan of casino gambling when it ran wide open but illegal in Hot Springs.

"He's extremely opposed to gambling," she said.

Once her son entered the White House, she got many invitations and often attended major sports events, including the Super Bowl. She celebrated New Year's in Las Vegas, where she was introduced by Barbra Streisand at a concert.

She admitted to puzzled despair when her son returned to Arkansas from law school and took a \$15,000-a-year teaching job. "What is the deal? We have struggled 10 years to educate this man. Now he's going to make \$15,000 a year and just loves it," she recalled saying.

Her loyalty never flagged, even when close personal friends stopped talking to her in protest to his actions as governor of Arkansas.

"Usually I keep my mouth out of Bill's affairs because I know so little about it. I really should never open my mouth," said Mrs. Kelley, who never really hewed to that policy.

"The president asked that I emphasize that he believes his mother had a wonderful and very active life," said Mr. Farrar, Mrs. Kelley's stepdaughter's husband.

"Nobody loves to play more than I love to play," she told biographer Charles F. Allen, co-author of "The Comeback Kid," in a 1991 interview provided to The Washington Times.

In that interview, 13 years into Mr. Clinton's elective career, she called it "the most remarkable thing I have ever seen in my life that he has gone this far without one touch of scandal."

Although Mrs. Kelley was thrice-widowed and married five times, Chelsea was her only grandchild.

"I miss Chelsea a lot," she said shortly before Mr. Clinton launched his presidential campaign in 1991.

Somehow, as a child, Bill Clinton plunged himself into studies and activities at which he excelled even though death, separation and domestic violence intruded often on his family life.

His father, William Jefferson Blythe Jr., died in a car crash before Bill was born. Stepfather Roger Clinton, who divorced and remarried Virginia during a tumultuous relationship in which Bill intervened to protect her from beatings, died of cancer in 1968. In 1969 she married Jeff Dwire, who died in 1974 of a heart ailment.

She campaigned for understanding of alcoholics and said she attended Alcoholics Anonymous meetings herself every Sunday to learn more about the disease that afflicted Roger Clinton Sr. and Roger Jr.

Mrs. Kelley was born Virginia Cassidy in Bodcaw, Ark., about 12 miles from Hope, to Eldridge and Edith Cassidy, who also had been a nurse. The Cassidys were struggling farmers who ran a grocery in the black neighborhood of Hope.

The funeral will be tomorrow.

She had a first-class smile. I will remember it and, well, I'm real glad we're not far from a cure - but we weren't close enough to save Virginia Kelley, were we?

I remain angry.

And so it goes.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE-MDC: January 19, 1994

Copyright 1994 The Atlanta Constitution
The Atlanta Journal and Constitution

January 8, 1994

SECTION: EDITORIAL; Section A; Page 14

LENGTH: 327 words

HEADLINE: Virginia Kelley, an American original

BODY:

The Elvis-loving First Mother, Virginia Kelley, was an all-American heroine straight out of a soap opera. She outlived three husbands, survived an abusive marriage to an alcoholic and gave birth to a president.

Indeed, scriptwriters would have a tough time conceiving of a more colorful character than the mother of President Clinton.

Mrs. Kelley, 70, died this week after a long battle with breast cancer. Certainly, her greatest accomplishment was guiding her first son through school and encouraging him to pursue his dream of becoming president.

But aside from that, her life was full of triumphs amid tragedy. The small-town girl from Arkansas buried her first husband, William Blythe, four months before their son, Bill, was born. Blythe was killed in an auto accident, leaving his widow to support herself and the baby.

To do so, she left her child with her parents and went to study nursing and anesthesiology in New Orleans. She learned to make a decent living and returned to her son in Arkansas.

Her 1950 marriage to Roger Clinton also tested her ability to survive under difficult circumstances. Her second husband became an alcoholic who beat her. He died of cancer in 1967.

Again, the resilient woman got married, this time to Jeff Dwire. But after six years, he died of complications from diabetes. In 1982, she married Richard Kelley and spent the last decade of her life in comfortable retirement.

Throughout all the deaths and setbacks, Mrs. Kelley remained an optimist and a fun-lover. Over New Year's weekend, she attended the Barbra Streisand concert in Las Vegas. "I just get up every day and figure out how I can make it the best day of my life," she said.

Despite the false eyelashes and penciled-in eyebrows, Mrs. Kelley was no phony. She loved her family and found joy in her passions: betting on horses and listening to Elvis. A grocer's daughter who made something of herself, this American original will be missed.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE-MDC: January 9, 1994

Copyright 1994 The Times Mirror Company
Los Angeles Times

January 7, 1994, Friday, Home Edition

NAME: VIRGINIA DWIRE KELLEY

SECTION: Part A; Page 1; Column 3; National Desk

LENGTH: 1165 words

HEADLINE: VIRGINIA KELLEY, CLINTON'S MOTHER, DIES AT AGE 70

BYLINE: By DAVID LAUTER, TIMES STAFF WRITER

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

Virginia Kelley, a woman of unquenchable optimism and flamboyant spirit who buried three husbands, battled breast cancer and saw her elder son elected President of the United States, died in her sleep early Thursday in Hot Springs, Ark., at age 70.

Active until the end, despite a recurrence of her cancer several months ago, Kelley had spent Christmas at the White House and New Year's Eve in Las Vegas, where she watched Barbra Streisand perform. According to friends, she was eagerly anticipating her annual Opening Day visit to the horse races in Hot Springs later this month.

The President flew to Arkansas on Thursday afternoon to coordinate arrangements for the funeral, which will be held Saturday. An aide said Clinton would continue with a scheduled weeklong trip to Europe for a NATO summit and meetings in Moscow with Russian President Boris N. Yeltsin.

Kelley's life contained ample doses of the stuff of tragedy -- poverty, widow's veils, cancer, the arrest of her younger son, Roger, on drug charges -- along with the dramatic rises and falls of her elder son's political career.

Yet in the darkest moments she stubbornly refused to adopt a gloomy mien, insisting to all that the secret to life was to take whatever happened and just keep going.

*

"I just don't let myself dwell on troubles," she said in an interview early in her son's presidential campaign.

Asked, as she repeatedly was, what moment of Bill Clinton's political career had made her proudest, Kelley offered a

revealing answer that she continued to give even after he became President: "The night he lost his race for reelection" as Arkansas governor in 1980, she would say. "He gave a speech thanking everyone, and there was no bitterness. You can never give into bitterness."

That stubborn refusal to accept setbacks as permanent was a trait she passed along to her elder son. That, and a seemingly endless capacity for work.

"Driven is the word I'd use for her," said David Leopoulos, a friend of Clinton's since childhood. "Ever since I've known her, since I was 8 years old, it was nothing but work. She's always, just like he is, driven to get something done."

In recent months Kelley had considered, but rejected, taking long-shot and potentially debilitating treatments for her cancer, deciding instead to enjoy what time she had left, sources close to the family said.

She had continued to appear outwardly healthy in public as recently as last week -- although she had told friends that she found herself tiring more easily -- and her death caught friends and family by surprise.

On Wednesday, Kelley had lunch with friends, called the White House to talk to her son and, in the evening, watched a University of Arkansas basketball game on television before going to sleep, according to family friends.

Her husband, Richard Kelley, a retired food broker, discovered her death later in the night and called the President about 2:30 a.m. EST to inform him, White House Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers said.

The Garland County coroner listed the official cause of death as complications from cancer.

Clinton stayed up late into the night, calling Chief of Staff Thomas (Mack) McLarty and other old friends to inform them and reminisce, the White House said. At the morning White House senior staff meeting Thursday, McLarty eulogized her as a "remarkable woman."

*

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton saw her husband off to Arkansas with a hug and kiss as he boarded a helicopter on the White House's South Lawn. She and their daughter, Chelsea, are scheduled to join him today. Roger Clinton flew from Los Angeles on Thursday to join the rest of the family for the funeral.

It was the third time in less than 10 months that Clinton has traveled to Arkansas for memorials, having buried his friend Vince Foster and his wife's father, Hugh Rodham, last year.

Kelley stood in sharp contrast to the demure, colorless, television-era characters who dominate modern politics -- with her shock of white hair set off against a black bun, eyebrows painted into a thin, high arch and a bold horseshoe-shaped diamond ring on her finger to display her passion for betting on the ponies.

During the presidential campaign, reporters calling her for the first time would often be startled by an answering machine message informing callers that "if I'm not here, I'm probably down at the race track."

"She was a woman who traveled through life at her own velocity, flying her own colors," said television producer Linda Bloodworth-Thomason, a close Clinton family friend. "She managed to wring every drop of joy she could from her life."

The life was one in which the joy mixed often with pain.

Her first son was born four months after his father, William Jefferson Blythe, died in a car accident in 1946. The couple had barely lived together because Blythe had been drafted into the Army shortly after their marriage in 1943.

*

When her child was 2 years old, Kelley left him in the custody of her parents in the small town of Hope, Ark. -- where her father owned a grocery store -- while she traveled to New Orleans to train for a job as a nurse-anesthetist at the city's Charity Hospital.

"Everybody who loses a husband thinks they'll never get married again," she said in a 1991 interview. "I thought: 'My goodness, this child will be looking to me' " for support.

"It was the most difficult thing I ever did," she said, referring to the separation from her son. "I'd be working, putting a child under (anesthesia), and tears would be streaming down my cheeks thinking about my own child."

After completing her training, Kelley returned to Arkansas and shortly thereafter married Roger Clinton, a car dealer from Hot Springs. Clinton was the father of her second child. He beat Kelley during bouts of drunkenness, with the couple divorcing and remarrying during a union that lasted 17 years until his death from cancer.

A third husband, Jeff Dwire, a hairdresser, died of complications from diabetes after only a few years of marriage.

As for her fourth husband, whom she married in 1982, she once laughingly told a reporter: "I warned him I was probably a jinx." The two lived in a cottage next to a small lake outside Hot Springs, along with a large dog that lived out back in a doghouse covered with old Clinton political placards.

Kelley was a constant of Clinton's many political campaigns -- walking precincts to knock on doors, stuffing envelopes, answering phones.

During the presidential campaign, she and her husband led a contingent of Arkansans to New Hampshire to canvass the state for her son, and "at every moment while we were down, she would come into campaign headquarters and pump everybody up," said Richard Mintz, a former campaign official who is now a spokesman for the Transportation Department.

"When the times were really rough, she would help pump him up too," he said, referring to Clinton. "She was, perhaps, the world's greatest optimist."

GRAPHIC: Photo, President Clinton visited his mother, Virginia Kelley, and stepfather, Richard Kelley, during a holiday trip to Hot Springs, Ark. last week. Associated Press

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE-MDC: January 8, 1994

Copyright 1994 The New York Times Company
The New York Times

January 7, 1994, Friday, Late Edition - Final

SECTION: Section A; Page 22; Column 1; National Desk

LENGTH: 1153 words

HEADLINE: Virginia Clinton Kelley, 70, President's Mother, Is Dead

BYLINE: By TODD S. PURDUM

BODY:

Virginia Clinton Kelley, an indomitable nurse and sometimes single mother who endured the deaths of three husbands, survived family drug and alcohol abuse and raised a firstborn son who became President of the United States, died of complications from breast cancer early yesterday at her home in Hot Springs, Ark. She was 70.

Mrs. Kelley, who underwent a mastectomy in 1990 and had suffered a recurrence of cancer last year, died in her sleep after watching the University of Arkansas-University of Mississippi basketball game on television, Clay Farrar, her husband's son-in-law, told The Associated Press. The Garland County coroner's office said the cause was complications from cancer.

The White House press secretary, Dee Dee Myers, said that Mrs. Kelley's husband, Richard, had telephoned President Clinton with the news shortly before 2:30 A.M., and that it had come as a shock. Mr. Clinton flew to Arkansas yesterday afternoon, and his wife, Hillary, plans to join him there today.

The Kelleys had spent Christmas at the White House, then played host to Mr. Clinton in Hot Springs, before flying to Las Vegas, Nev., for two Barbra Streisand concerts over the New Year's weekend.

Life Marked by Pain

"She had lunch with friends and literally, out of the blue, passed away in her sleep," Mr. Farrar said.

A descendant of Irish farmers and Cherokee Indians, Mrs. Kelley worked 35 years as a nurse-anesthetist, and her life was marked by pain. Her first husband, the President's father, died in a car crash three months before he was born. Her second husband was an abusive alcoholic, who sometimes beat her until the President, then a teen-ager, demanded that he stop. Her second son, Roger Clinton, went to prison for 18 months on drug

charges after an undercover investigation that his half brother authorized as Governor of Arkansas.

As she put it in an interview during the 1992 campaign, "You know, this is extremely complicated, this family."

Yet she remained undaunted, turned out in red-white-and blue campaign togs, her jet-black hair streaked with a frosted white swath, her fingers aglitter with five rings, one of them a row of graduated diamonds culled from her previous wedding bands.

She loved playing the horses at the Oak Lawn Jockey Club track in Hot Springs, and a sampler on the wall of her house declared: "A racetrack is a place where windows clean people." She worshiped Elvis Presley, whose bust she kept in a macrame planter in the dining room.

"I'm the world's greatest person to dismiss unpleasant things out of my mind," she once said, chuckling richly at the questions she faced as a candidate's mother. "You know, I get like, 'How did you feel when your husband shot at you?' Well, how does anybody feel when they get shot at?"

Defending Her Son

Family friends said Mrs. Kelley's resilience and courage had deeply influenced her oldest son, who became known for his own perseverance in the bruising New Hampshire primary. She stoutly defended him during campaign controversies, explaining in a television appearance the week of the Democratic National Convention that she believed his account of not having inhaled marijuana, since as a child he could never stand the smoke when she raked and burned leaves in the yard.

"Before there were spin doctors, there was Virginia," said Carolyn Staley, a friend of the President since high school.

Virginia Cassidy was born in the village of Bodcaw, Ark., about 12 miles from Hope, where her father, a grocer, later moved the family. As a student nurse in Shreveport, La., during World War II, she met her first husband, William Jefferson Blythe 3d, a traveling automotive-equipment salesman who married her shortly before going off to the service.

When he returned, he took a job in Chicago and had just moved the couple's belongings into a new house and was on his way back to Arkansas to pick up his pregnant wife in 1946 when a tire blew out on a rain-slicked road. He was thrown from his car and drowned in a ditch, three months before the future President was born.

Abusive Husband

Last year, The Washington Post reported that Mr. Blythe had fathered a son by a previous marriage, and other newspapers later reported that he had also fathered a daughter by a third woman, from whom he was not divorced until several months after he had already married the President's mother. Mrs. Kelley said she knew nothing of either marriage, though President Clinton eventually talked on the phone with his presumed half brother, Henry Leon Ritzenthaler, of Paradise, Calif.

As a young widow, Mrs. Kelley left her baby son in her parents' care to study anesthesiology in New Orleans, so that she could eventually earn more money. Returning to Arkansas, she married Roger Clinton, a Buick salesman whose name young Bill later took but whose alcoholism sometimes made him a menace to his wife. For more than 30 years, even the family's closest friends said they did not know of the elder Clinton's abuse, until the candidate raised it on the campaign trail as a sign of the burdens he had withstood.

After giving birth to her second son, Mrs. Kelley eventually divorced Roger Clinton Sr., but then remarried him because she said she felt sorry for him when he came around to sleep on her stoop. He died of cancer in 1968 and she married Jeff Dwire, a hairdresser, who died of diabetes in 1974. She married Mr. Kelley, a retired food broker, in 1982.

Mrs. Kelley retired in 1981, after her performance was questioned in the deaths of two patients during surgery and doctors tried to force her to work more closely under the supervision of anesthesiologists. In one case, the family of the patient sued Mrs. Kelley and a surgeon, but settled out of court; in the other, the state medical examiner, who had been appointed by her son, issued a ruling that cleared Mrs. Kelley. Mr. Clinton was between terms as Governor at the time, and both he and his mother said no influence was brought to bear.

Besides her husband, the President and her granddaughter, Chelsea, she is survived by her son Roger, now an aspiring singer in Marina del Ray, Calif. A funeral service is scheduled for tomorrow at 9 A.M. at the Hot Springs Convention Center Auditorium, with burial in Hope.

Mrs. Kelley relished the excitement of campaigning, and in 1992 often drove the hour from her home to Clinton headquarters in Little Rock, Ark., just to check in. She accepted the scrutiny of her extended family that came with politics, but distinctly did not approve of sensationalism, grimacing to a visitor as a commercial for one of Geraldo Rivera's programs popped up on her television screen one summer afternoon.

"Judas priest!" she exclaimed. "These people kill me. Thank heaven I have my mute button." Then, blushing, she turned to her interviewer and asked: "But you won't tell him I said that? Not before the election?"

GRAPHIC: Photo: Virginia Clinton Kelley. (Alan S. Weiner, 1992)

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE-MDC: January 7, 1994

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USA TODAY

March 5, 1993, Friday, FINAL EDITION

SECTION: LIFE; Jeannie Williams; Pg. 2D

LENGTH: 479 words

HEADLINE: Virginia Kelley's survival story

BYLINE: Jeannie Williams

BODY:

Bill Clinton's mom, Virginia Kelley, has a cute little beauty mark over her well-mascaraed left eye, and dyes her hair dark around that striking gray streak. And she couldn't be a better spokeswoman for breast-cancer survivors.

Kelley, 69, smiling and relaxed, made a rare public appearance Thursday in NYC to talk about her 1990 cancer treatment and to be honored by the National Alliance of Breast Cancer Organizations.

Her cancer "was discovered by my doctor in a routine examination, and they wanted to remove the lump immediately," said Kelley, who wore a red suit and dangly pearl earrings. "I asked for two or three days to let my children know. . . . I had a radical mastectomy, some X-ray treatment and chemotherapy. None of this has bothered me very much."

A retired nurse-anesthetist, Kelley said she knew of nobody in her family with the disease. "There's a certain amount of fear . . . but we get hold of ourselves. . . . I send my dog for the newspaper every morning, and as he comes back up the driveway I just look up at the sky and thank God for one more day."

Her son Bill "is a very stable person on the outside, but when it comes to his mother . . . it was a shock," she said. The president appeared in a video at the lunch, saying he'd never respected his mother more than with her handling of her illness.

Kelley also was due in Little Rock Thursday to see the Clintons receive the Arkansas Citizen of the Year Award. She's recently been to Churchill Downs and Laurel (Md.) racetracks her favorite hobby. She'll go to California for a tribute to a famed jockey, and to the big March 27 Gridiron Dinner in Washington. Las Vegas, another favorite spot? "No, but I'd like to!" ONE VOICE: Barry Manilow thrills 'em this week at Radio City Music Hall. TV's Kathie Lee Gifford and hubby Frank Gifford hit the opening; she told Regis Philbin she would have loved to sing on stage with Barry, like some lucky fans. But you know how shy

Kathie Lee is _ not! Frank also sang and swayed to Barry's greatest hits, and the Giffords went backstage, where Kathie Lee told Barry, "You got 8 1/2 standing ovations _ you're a hit!"

Barry does David Letterman tonight, and next hits London's Royal Albert Hall. His big hit Copacabana is being reissued over there as a dance single. OPENINGS: Carly Simon's new children's opera, Romulus Hunt, drew friends like Jacqueline Onassis, in dark striped pants and high heels, and Mike Nichols to its Manhattan premiere. Simon, her height swathed in a long coat, got hugs from hubby Jim

Hart, kids Ben Taylor, 16, and Sally Taylor, 19, sisters Joanna and Lucy, and her mom. "I love your work!" said Geoffrey Holder, whose wife, Carmen De Lavallade, choreographed the opera about a boy and his divorced parents.

Romulus is in New York this weekend, and April 7-11 at the Washington, D.C., Kennedy Center.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO, b/w, Eileen Blass, USA TODAY

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

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October 4, 1992, Sunday, Final Edition

NAME: VIRGINIA KELLEY

SECTION: STYLE; PAGE F1

LENGTH: 3622 words

HEADLINE: Bill Clinton's Other Woman;
Protective Virginia Kelley, Betting on Her Son

SERIES: Occasional

BYLINE: Donnie Radcliffe, Washington Post Staff Writer

DATELINE: HOT SPRINGS, Ark.

BODY:

She's worn herself out going up and down the attic ladder to find pictures of Bill -- pictures the media have been clamoring for, showing Bill on a pony, Bill with his saxophone, Bill in cap and gown, Bill with JFK. There are pictures of Bill with her, with Hillary, with Chelsea. Other moments from Bill Clinton's life look out from bookcases and walls. "You can't look around this house that you don't see paraphernalia," says Virginia Kelley.

And you can't. Inside the front door is the framed copy of a letter that reads: "Dear Mr. President, I have seen the Sound of Music. The Nazis don't look like very nice people. Please don't go to the cemetery. (Signed) Chelsea Clinton." Seven years is a long time to stay outraged by a slight to one's granddaughter, but where Republican presidents are concerned, Virginia Kelley is uncommonly unforgiving. "Bill Clinton would have shut down the state government until he answered this child's letter," she twits. "They haven't heard a word from Reagan yet."

There's something of a self-sacrificing Stella Dallas about Virginia Kelley, but also the dazzle of an Auntie Mame sitting here in her royal blue jogging suit, her dangly donkey earrings, her ink-black hair with the shock streak of white and her Betty Boop eyelashes.

For all the adversities Bill Clinton's mother has endured -- the deaths of three husbands, the conviction of her younger son for drug trafficking, the loss of a breast to cancer -- she has done her share of playing too. She's known in these parts for her penchant for jazzy nightclubs. And she loves the ponies. Witness the framed needlepoint reminder hanging on a wall: "A Racetrack Is a Place Where Windows Clean People."

She saw her first horse race 40 years ago and has been placing \$ 2 bets ever since. "I never kept books, but I can promise you that I never win. That's why I bet so little. I get so amused at people who don't know anything about horse racing. To them this is just gambling," says this woman who knows every track between here and Maryland, to say nothing of jockeys, trainers and racing officials.

Before this election campaign, Kelley went to the track every day. Nowadays she limits her track time to weekends because if this is the race of George Bush's life, it is also the race of hers. She has believed Bill Clinton was "special" and could grow up to be president since he was a little boy, and has suspected he thought so, too, when as a teenager he met John Kennedy in the Rose Garden.

"I mean," she says, "you gotta get your races in priority, don't you?"

At 69, Kelley may be a character, but she is no Ozarks hick. Big-time journalists have been streaming in and out of her living room for months. They still don't faze her. She reportedly put Gail Sheehy in her place one Sunday when Sheehy called to say she would be late for their interview for Vanity Fair. Sunday is Kelley's praying and racing day. Kelley told her nothing doing. "That would have shot my whole day," she said later.

The quintessential Clinton groupie, she flaunts his campaign buttons, his T-shirts, his bumper stickers. She is a regular at Clinton-Gore headquarters here and in Little Rock, picking up the latest in campaign strategy and scuttlebutt, giving more interviews and signing autographs. Come 3:30 every afternoon, however, all that stops. Watching CNN's "Inside Politics" is a daily ritual, as sacred to her as the Birthday Club and the nine friends (ages 53 to 85) who belong.

Absolutely nothing preempts the Birthday Club. "When the committee wanted to meet on Bill's homecoming a couple of Fridays ago, Virginia said, 'I'm sorry, I can't do that,' " says Johnette Taylor, a Birthday Clubber and campaign volunteer who has known Kelley since she was Virginia Dwire two husbands ago. "She looked at me when she said it, and somebody else kicked me because we all knew why."

Kelley and a couple friends started the club about six years ago as a way to meet and greet one another regularly. They celebrate each other's birthdays but also lend moral support and sympathy when tragedy strikes. It may well be Hot Springs' most exclusive club. "We're not closed," says Taylor. "We don't blackball anybody, but nobody's ever come forward and said they wanted to join either."

At the moment their main interest is Bill Clinton. George Bush may think he can pull a Harry Truman in four weeks, but the Birthday Clubbers say don't count on it. Taylor is in charge of travel arrangements. She has already booked the membership's plane and hotel reservations for Clinton's inauguration.

If, indeed, Clinton does win -- "You got to coach yourself to say when that happens, not if that happens," Kelley is quick to scold people -- she and her fourth husband, retired food broker Richard Kelley, have no intention of moving to Washington. "I'm moving right out in the middle of Lake Hamilton and fish some more," she says.

"Virginia is a purist. She only fishes with live minnows," says Dick Kelley. "I catch more than she does, and that upsets her."

The Kelleys need only step out their front door and off the deck a few yards to hook a bass or a crappie, though what troubles Virginia is how much the lakefront has developed in the dozen or so years since she and Clinton bought the house as a retreat from the Governor's Mansion. A few years away from upscale -- the neighborhood still has the occasional mobile home with a pink flamingo out front -- it is nonetheless moving cautiously in that direction. Clinton never had time to use the house, she says, so he sold his share to his stepfather.

It is hardly a retreat for her anymore. The phone rings constantly. The campaign is relentless, but there is the need to maintain ties with friends and family. Roger Clinton, her younger son and "other favorite subject," checks in regularly. He is a production assistant on two TV sitcoms, CBS's "Evening Shade" and "Designing Women," whose producers are former Arkansans and close friends of the Clintons. He also has a band and, says his mother, "a real nice voice." Since July's Democratic convention, when he sang the national anthem, his star has been rising, with invitations to perform around the country.

Questions, Questions Her handshake is earthy. Her hug is uninhibited. Her name is Virginia, and that's what she wants you to call her. And she hasn't gotten over the fact that New York state delegates told her at the convention they've never been within a block of their governor, much less called him Mario. "I said this is not the way we do it in Arkansas. We're one big family."

She does not say "happy," which is just as well since some Arkansans clearly are not. Kelley dismisses them as Clinton's "enemies," the same ones who "dredge up" stories about his alleged philandering, how he may have evaded the draft during the Vietnam War or how, a decade ago, his political clout might have protected her -- a nurse-anesthetist at the time -- from legal action in a medical malpractice suit. "My conscience is clear,"

she says, "but it just broke my heart that they would do this to him."

Like others in this year of media-bashing, she scoffs: "You people have to have something to write about other than the economy or what's wrong with our world -- I'm asked all the time, 'Why does Saddam Hussein still have his job and I don't?' It really amuses me when I turn on the television, and they keep bringing up something that doesn't amount to anything as far as Bill's leadership is going to be."

She has no doubt that Clinton is sexy -- "gosh, yes! Judas priest!" -- but says he is too smart to have prepared himself all these years and then all of a sudden show "stupidity, especially with something ..." And here her face registers horror. "Did you see her?" she asks of her son's accuser, former lounge singer Gennifer Flowers.

On the draft issue, all she professes to remember is that Clinton "went down and registered for it," and that he was "opposed to the war because he thought it an illegal war."

Reports that her brother-in-law, Raymond Clinton, now dead, lobbied the Hot Springs draft board to delay inducting his step-nephew and to find him a Navy slot "didn't come from a very credible source," she says. What's more, "do you know everything your uncle does?" she asks. "We can't say Raymond did or didn't, but Bill says if there was any possible way to get a slot in the Navy, it would be the very best thing to have at that time. If he had had any idea that he had a chance at that, he certainly would have taken it."

"Heavens no," she adds, Raymond Clinton "didn't talk to me about it."

But if he had, would she have wanted him to succeed?

"I might have in my heart," she says, "but I would never have said so."

And then there is the matter of what happened 11 years ago in a Hot Springs operating room, and afterward. A Los Angeles Times article in May suggested that Bill Clinton for years protected from dismissal an allegedly incompetent state medical examiner whose ruling once may have helped Kelley avoid blame for a patient's death.

The case involved a 17-year-old woman who suffered severe facial injuries when a brick was thrown through her car windshield; she died on the operating table after Kelley had trouble transferring an oxygen tube from her nose into her throat. The medical examiner, Fahmy Malak, ruled the death a simple homicide, never questioning the competence of medical care. Though Malak was cited several times afterward for other

controversial rulings, and there were public calls for his dismissal, Clinton retained him for years -- until just before he announced for president. Then the governor reassigned Malak to the state Health Department, monitoring venereal diseases.

Clinton has denied knowing, until recently, that Malak had ruled in a case involving his mother.

Kelley says the issue is phony, that she had not been negligent in the operating room. Her son's "political enemies dredged that up," she says.

"In Bill's opinion, Dr. Malak had never done anything to be fired for. And that's Bill Clinton. You must do something to be fired for, or you're not going to be fired. And if he stands alone, he'll stand with you."

Filial Devotion

There is the inescapable impression that Clinton and his mother have been protecting each other all his life. As a child, a teenager or an adult, Kelley says, he always showed his concern for her -- calling home repeatedly, wherever he was.

"Who else in this world," she asks, "ever thought about their mother, for Christ's sake, when they were out on a date?"

The bonding of a young mother and her newborn son was rooted in tragedy. For Virginia Cassidy Blythe, there weren't many options in 1946 after learning her husband had been killed in a car crash. Other than teaching and nursing, women had few career choices in those days.

When Virginia was a toddler, the family moved from a farm to Hope, Ark., where her father ran a grocery store. Her strong-willed and determined mother, believing that the only way up was out, had taken a correspondence course in practical nursing.

"I sometimes thought she was too strong, when my backside would get a little sore," says Kelley. "I laughed not long ago when somebody wondered if women would get a fair shake in Bill's administration. I said, 'For crying out loud, have you ever heard of his mother, his wife and his child?' Chelsea's strong too."

Virginia Cassidy was a student nurse when she met William Jefferson Blythe III in Shreveport, La. An auto equipment salesman from Sherman, Tex., he came to the hospital with a date who was suffering from an appendicitis attack. "It was truly love at first sight," Kelley says. "I was so ashamed because I thought that he was the woman's husband. I called him Mr. Whatever-her-name-was, and he said, 'Wait a minute, she's my friend. We're not married.' Then he asked me out to dinner."

They were married after a brief courtship, and he went off to the war in Europe. When he came home three years later he got a job in Chicago as a heavy equipment salesman, and they bought their first house. He was constantly on the road, sometimes 200 miles a day, but he always returned at night to make certain that Virginia, pregnant with Bill, was all right. It was a rigorous schedule for him, so while they waited to move into their house, she went back to Hope to stay with her parents. Blythe was on his way to pick her up when the accident occurred. A blowout sent his car into a rain-filled drainage ditch where Kelley believes he drowned. His son and namesake was born four months later.

For two years she and the baby continued to live with her parents. "Nobody thinks they'll ever get married again when they lose their husband -- it just doesn't occur to you. All I could see was this precious little boy and that I needed as much earning power as I could possibly muster," Kelley says. Figuring she could double that if she went back into training as a nurse-anesthetist, she decided to enroll in a two-year course in New Orleans.

"It was the hardest decision I ever had to make in my life," she recalls. It meant leaving Bill behind with her parents, a separation that even today she can only describe as "terrible, just terrible."

"I think I did the right thing. I hope I did," she says. "Sometimes, when a child is 2 or 3 years of age it does things to them. But I could never see this with Bill. And I think I had my parents to thank for that. They gave him the teaching and the nurturing he needed in my absence."

In his acceptance speech as the Democrats' presidential candidate, Clinton remembered those times "through the eyes of a 3-year-old, kneeling at the railroad station and weeping as she put me back on the train to Arkansas with my grandmother. She endured that pain because she knew her sacrifice was the only way she could support me and give me a better life."

She had taught him "about family and hard work and sacrifice," he said. "She held steady through tragedy after tragedy. And she held our family, my brother and I, together through tough times. As a child, I watched her go off to work each day at a time when it wasn't very easy to be a working mother. As an adult, I've watched her fight off breast cancer. And again she taught me a lesson in courage. And always, always she taught me to fight."

Then, pausing, he continued: "You want to know where I get my fighting spirit? It all started with my mother. Thank you, Mother, I love you."

Virginia Kelley's face was wet as she and her younger son, Roger, onstage at Madison Square Garden, heard Bill building to

that emotional moment. They had tried, but for the life of them couldn't choke back the tears.

"How many thousands of times in his life have I heard Bill say, 'I love you, Mother,' " she remembers. "But never like that, just never like that."

Indelible Memories There have been plenty of highs in the months since Clinton declared his candidacy, but there have also been some lows, not the least of these the pain reliving some of the past when Bill and Roger were growing up in a household with an alcoholic father. Returning to Hope as a nurse-anesthetist in 1950, Virginia married Roger Clinton. He was a kind and loving man -- until he started drinking, then he would turn ugly and abusive. Once he was arrested after firing a gun into a wall at home. Within a year, he, Virginia and Bill moved to Hot Springs, the hopping resort town where Roger's brother Raymond had a car dealership.

"We never mentioned it. Ever. We know about alcoholism now, but it was just something we didn't talk about then. We didn't even talk about it within our own family," she says.

What they did talk about was Roger Clinton's "drinking," the euphemism that wasn't the same thing as acknowledging that someone was an alcoholic. Alcoholism was something habitual and excessive and, like mental illness in their opinion then, hopeless, unfathomable, beyond explanation.

Her second son, Roger, born in 1956, has described a childhood of abuse from a father "so drunk he would lose total control. He'd take his belt off -- that was the signal -- hit my mother, jerk me around." Not infrequently, Roger told an interviewer, he, his mother and Bill were ordered out of the house, and they'd spend the night in a motel, a mile-long walk away. "I have no pleasant memories," he said, "just memories of pain, violence, confusion."

Virginia Kelley describes one night when "Big Roger" came home so drunk he could hardly stand. The only thing that kept him upright was that the long hall to the bedrooms wasn't very wide. Making his way along it he'd hit one wall, then the other. She remembers that he turned around, came back, faced her and said, "I am sick and tired of you telling these children that I drink."

Suddenly, she is laughing. "We can laugh about it now," Kelley says. "It wasn't so very funny at the time."

It wasn't funny at all to the boy who would become the governor of Arkansas by the time he was 32. One of the more riveting stories in the Bill Clinton Saga is how, around age 14, he ordered Roger Clinton, the only father he ever knew, never to strike his mother again.

Clinton has said he implored his mother not to remarry Big Roger after divorcing him in 1962. She remarried him anyway, two months later.

"She was old-fashioned," Clinton once told an interviewer, "and thought she must be to blame in some way; and she felt that Roger needed a father."

Kelley insists that Big Roger "never did strike me a lot." But to two children in another part of the house, the sounds of a rampaging father were seared forever in their memories. In 1984, busted on cocaine trafficking in a sting operation approved by his brother the governor, young Roger spent a year in federal prison. There, he has said, he considered suicide.

For Kelley, a grim prediction she made to Big Roger finally had come true. "You know, Roger," she says she once told him, "one of these days it won't be Bill who gets even with you. It'll be your own son."

(It was Bill Clinton, by then a student at Georgetown University, who would begin to make peace with his stepfather as he was dying of cancer. Roger Jr., 11 at the time, would later say he felt "neither sorrow nor pity. He had caused us such pain.")

The way Kelley sees it, the effect of Big Roger's violent behavior and repeated abuse made her older son "more determined than ever" to be in control of their lives.

What molds character, she thinks, is "not the strength you talk about but the strength you display in your everyday living."

She was a working woman in an era when most mothers didn't have to be. Rose Crane, Bill Clinton's neighbor and playmate, remembers Bill's mother setting off to work in her white starched scrub dresses "that stood up by themselves." She was "the smartest, most beautiful lady I ever knew. And much of my idea of what I could do with my life came from Virginia. She always said you can do anything, and she always had time to talk."

Kelley says she had to spend so much time away from her children that she turned into a "preacher" when she was with them. She remembers "drilling" them on such things as honesty. "I always thought that with total honesty comes the other important things: integrity, love and respect. If you have those four qualities, you don't need a lot more."

Homilies come as naturally to her as calling up Bill Clinton lore. Among the stories she tells this day is one about the time he brought home a C in conduct. It was a dramatic departure from his usual straight A's, and when he couldn't explain why, she

went to see the teacher. What she learned was that Bill hadn't misbehaved. His crime was leaping to his feet with the answer before any other children had had a chance. The nun -- the same one who had told her Bill could one day be president if he wanted to be -- had wracked her brain over what to do. Finally she came up with the idea of giving him a mediocre grade. "Believe me," the nun told her, "this young man will not tolerate a C in conduct."

"And sure enough," says Virginia Kelley, "that corrected him."

She still preaches at times. Take jealousy. When Bill and Roger were children, she preached to them and their friends that jealousy was "one of the biggest illnesses in this world." Nowadays, when she reads "these terrible things" about Bill and Hillary, she tells herself it's nothing but their jealous political enemies.

Just thinking about what's ahead for those enemies has her laughing again. "This is going to be the greatest team you've ever seen," she says of the Clintons. Arkansas saw that team when Clinton appointed Hillary to head his education reform team. "And I thought, 'Oh, my God, the man has lost his mind, not because it was Hillary but because it was in the family. I thought, 'Oh, my Lord, I don't know if this is going to work or not -- it would be like asking me to do it.' "

In retrospect, she thinks it turned out to be one of Gov. Clinton's smartest moves because "it gave Arkansas an opportunity to know Hillary." In Washington, "he wouldn't appoint her to a Cabinet post, but if it was a committee about children or something like that -- " She lets the idea hang there for a moment before adding, "But that's speculation on my part."

She realized how important Hillary Rodham would be in Bill Clinton's life when he was on his way back to Yale Law School after coming home for a visit. They were sitting in the car saying goodbye when he said one of those things she doesn't expect to forget as long as she lives:

" 'Mother, I want you to pray for me that it's Hillary because if it isn't Hillary,' he said, 'it's nobody.' "

GRAPHIC: PHOTO, VIRGINIA KELLEY. JEFF MITCHELL FOR TWP; PHOTO

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Bets Dark Horses. Raised One, Too.

BYLINE: By TODD S. PURDUM

DATELINE: HOT SPRINGS, Ark.

BODY:

VIRGINIA KELLEY will always remember Aug. 16, 1977, the day the King died. And she will never forget who told her: Her firstborn son, Bill Clinton.

"I was right in the middle of an anesthetic," recalled Mrs. Kelley, a nurse-anesthetist for 35 years. "My children never, ever called me in the operating room. They were just cautioned it was not the place to call me ever, unless it was an emergency.

"And so Bill called, and he said: 'Please take the phone to Mother. I have something to say to her that I don't want anybody else to tell her.' And he told me Elvis was dead. Oh, what a shock, what a shock."

So now, in her lakeside living room in this racy old resort, she is reminiscing about her favorite singer, whose bust hangs in a macrame planter in the dining room, and her favorite saxophonist, whose own affinity for Elvis is legend. It seems only fitting that her favorite song is "Heartbreak Hotel": she has been married five times to four husbands, and has buried three of them, the first one four months before their son was born. The second was an abusive alcoholic whose name that son took, and made famous.

At the age of 69, this descendant of Irish farmers and Cherokee Indians has survived a mastectomy and controversies over the death of two patients in her care, and has seen her younger son, Roger, go to prison for a year and a half on drug charges, after an undercover investigation that Bill Clinton approved as the Governor of Arkansas. As she puts it in her pungent Arkansas twang, "You know, this is extremely complicated, this family."

But to spend a long afternoon on the sofa beside her, as she nestles on a hot pad to soothe an old bulging disk, is to find a woman needing no sympathy, and asking none, thank you. From the

frosted white swath sweeping through her India-ink hair to her 10 pink-tipped fingers, she's one stylish survivor. She wears five rings, one of them set with a row of graduated diamonds from her previous wedding rings.

Anyone wondering how her son survived the New Hampshire primary should sit a spell with her.

"I'm the world's greatest person to dismiss unpleasant things out of my mind," she said. It was one of several variations on that Scarlett O'Hara sentiment uttered in the space of three hours, this one reflecting on the questions she faces as the mother of a man who would be President. "You know, I get, like, 'How did you feel when your husband shot at you?' "

A rich contralto chuckle rumbles up. "Well, how does anybody feel when they get shot at?"

During the winter thoroughbred racing season here, she holds court in her box on the Carousel Terrace of the Oaklawn Jockey Club, and in summer, when the track carries broadcasts of races from other parks, she still keeps the \$2 window busy. (A sampler on her wall reads, "A race track is a place where windows clean people.") Another of her rings is a gold horseshoe circling a horse's head, inset with pave diamonds, a gift from her son.

"Funny thing," she muses, fingering it softly. "What does Bill know about gambling? These tiny little diamonds? I got the magnifying glass and I counted them and there was 13! And I said 'Oh, my goodness!' So I took it to the jeweler and said, 'Would you please put a little diamond in this horse's eye,' so I wouldn't have 13."

Such resourcefulness is typical of a woman whose friends say she simply won't be stopped.

"Before there were spin doctors, there was Virginia," said Carolyn Staley, a longtime family friend. "She just puts on a very positive spin. It's not that she even has to work on it."

Ms. Staley, a Baptist minister's daughter who grew up next to the Clintons' house in Hot Springs, remembers Virginia as a figure of glamour, who would come home from a hard day's work and pull on shorts and a strapless tube top to show off a perfect tan. "Somewhere she decided that you can either make excuses and go through life feeling victimized, or you can say, 'Damn it, I've still got my health!' She counts the assets and not the debits, and she remembers the good and not the bad."

Like her son, Mrs. Kelley is a master of self-regeneration, but there has clearly been plenty of bad. Bill Clinton may come from a place called Hope, but she was born 12 miles from there, outside the village of Bodcaw. The family moved to Hope, population 10,000, where her father, Eldridge Cassidy, worked as

a sawmill watchman, delivered ice and later owned a small grocery store that served a largely black neighborhood.

She met her first husband, a strapping automotive-equipment salesman named William Jefferson Blythe 3d, during World War II when she was a student nurse in Shreveport, La. As she tells it, he arrived at the hospital late one night with his date, who had acute appendicitis.

"And you know, it was truly love at first sight, and I was so ashamed because at first I thought that they were married," she said. "And so I called him by her last name, just to see if they were married. And he said: 'Excuse me. That isn't my name.' And so he asked me out."

Two months later, they were married. Then he went off to war for 36 months, came back and had just moved their belongings into a new house in Chicago and was on his way to pick her up in Hope when he was thrown from his car and killed.

"He was going around a curve and had a blowout," she said, her gray eyes misty. "You know, we didn't have radial tires then. And it was after a big flood, and all the ditches on each side of the highway were overflowed. And the only mark he had on him was a little bruise on his head, and I'm sure it just knocked him out long enough to drown him."

The young widow left her baby, Bill, with her parents and went off to New Orleans for a year's training in anesthesiology, so she could earn more money. She returned home and married Roger Clinton, a likable Buick salesman whose weakness for bourbon routinely made him a menace. They moved to Hot Springs, a piney redoubt that drew people with arthritis to its soothing waters, gamblers to its illegal casinos and singers like Patti Page to Virginia Clinton's favorite nightclub, the Vapors.

When Bill was 4, his stepfather drunkenly fired a shot into a wall when Virginia said she was going to visit her dying grandmother. Ten years later, after one too many loud fights, Bill faced Roger, who was slumped over a table, helped him to his feet and warned him never to strike his mother again.

For more than 30 years, even the family's closest friends knew none of this, learning of it only when the candidate raised it in campaign interviews as a sign of the burdens he had borne. Mother and son have each told the story on national television, but she said they have never discussed it with each other.

"Well, we haven't had time," she said. "We haven't had time. And what good would it do to talk? It wouldn't do any good to talk. Bill did what he thought was fair for the public to know. Now I back him 100 percent."

Growing up, Bill and his half-brother, Roger, were on their own a lot. "We could never plan anything for sure," Mrs. Kelley said. "I always had to preface anything I told Bill or Roger, 'We will do this if . . . if I don't have to go to work. Now, of course, that's distressing to a mother. All their lives, it was prefaced with 'if.' "

She eventually divorced Roger Sr., but remarried him because she felt sorry for him: he kept coming around at night to sleep on the family's stoop. He died of cancer in 1968, and she married Jeff Dwire, a hairdresser who died of complications from diabetes in 1974. Ten years ago, she married her current husband, Richard W. Kelley, a 77-year-old retired food broker. ("He sees that Wal-Mart never runs out of Star-Kist tuna.")

Just as her life has not been without pain, so her work was not without controversy. She retired in 1981, after her performance was questioned in the deaths of two patients during surgery and doctors tried to force her to work under closer supervision of anesthesiologists. The family of the first patient sued a surgeon and her, but the suit was settled out of court. In the second case, involving a teen-age girl, the state medical examiner, who had been appointed by her son, issued a ruling that cleared her.

Mr. Clinton, who was between gubernatorial terms at the time of the ruling, and Mrs. Kelley have both said that no influence was brought to bear, though some of his critics in Arkansas have suggested otherwise. "I had a very clear conscience about this girl," she said.

These days, Mrs. Kelley is too busy to worry about anything much but the campaign. "I can't get my mind on horse racing to save my soul," she said. "It's hard for me to win a \$2 bet!" She drives the hour to national campaign headquarters in Little Rock, Ark., at least once a week to check in, explaining, "I can't let them put anything over on me."

After all their troubles, her bonds with her sons are deep. Indeed, the family is linked in an astrological wonder: Bill's birthday is the same as his grandfather Cassidy's (Aug. 19); Roger Jr. shares Roger Sr.'s (July 25), and Bill's daughter Chelsea's is the same as his own father's (Feb. 27).

"You know what my father said about that?" Mrs. Kelley said. "He said, 'You'll do anything to avoid making but one cake.' "

She talks regularly to Roger, who says he is now drug free and works as a production assistant on the "Designing Women" television show, produced by old Arkansas friends. She attends support group meetings, to better understand his problems.

To keep up with Bill, she need only turn to her television, which she leaves on all night, to her husband's chagrin. Whenever she hears Bill's voice, she wakes up.

"It's just like when he was a little boy," she said.

GRAPHIC: Photos: Virginia Kelley, the mother of Gov. Bill Clinton, outside her home in Hot Springs, Ark., with her dog, Champ (pg. C1); For Virginia Kelley, there's no escaping the Clinton campaign, even at lunch with friends. (pg. C6) (Alan S. Weiner for The New York Times)

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■ OBITUARY

To Exit Laughing

More than anyone else, Bill Clinton's mother Virginia Kelley served as his model of joy amid adversity

By MARGARET CARLSON WASHINGTON

THE HEART THAT STOPPED EARLY LAST Thursday morning had been given over many years ago to the fatherless son who is now President of the U.S. It was his mother's indomitable ways, her ledger that listed credits and not debits, her capacity for friendship that exceeded even his

mother and radiation treatments that had severely thinned the black mane with the silver streak. But she was a survivor. She had buried three husbands, one a sweet-talking salesman who died before her son was born and another with a weakness for bourbon and beating her up. She was a working mother before it



Never discouraged by setbacks: the President's mother near her home in Hot Springs during the 1992 campaign; in a family photo with her sons Bill and Roger

own—all this accounted for Bill Clinton's ability to get up off the mat just as the count was about to reach 10. He didn't respond like most candidates do when the campaign hits the ropes. If Gary Hart was a sulker, Paul Tsongas a whiner, Jerry Brown an out-of-body existentialist, Clinton was the sunny optimist, emerging on the coldest, darkest days of New Hampshire to pump hands at a V.F.W. hall as if he were 20 points ahead in the polls. As he accepted the nomination most of the press had predicted would not be his, he said the fighting spirit people remarked upon had one source. On the podium, he turned to Virginia Kelley and said, "Thank you, Mother. I love you."

At that moment, Kelley was suffering from breast cancer. A radical mastectomy in 1990 had slowed the disease, as had che-

was cool, leaving her infant with her parents to finish nursing school in Shreveport, Louisiana, and pulling long hours as a nurse anesthetologist at the local hospital when she graduated. All the while, she acted as if she had no cause to complain and led a life that would never please the lifestyle police: she liked to take a drink, eat red meat, play the horses, stay up too late and exercise too little. "She wasn't one," says a friend, "to worry about a high-fiber diet." She preferred to win like her son but was never discouraged by defeat. Political columnist Jack Germond, who went along on her last visit to Laurel Race Course outside Washington, said she lost money that day. "But she had the same attitude I do. If you can't have a winning day at the track, the next best thing is a losing day."

Last Wednesday evening, after a day out lunching with friends and an evening cheering on the University of Arkansas basketball team, she turned to her fourth husband Dick Kelley, a retired food broker. "I have a chill," she said. "I think I'll go to bed." When he looked in on her a few hours later, he told the President, she was dead.

All deaths are shocking to the survivors, even those of the terminally ill, and the President was stunned by the call, which came at 2:30 a.m. Washington time. The week before, Clinton had given a routine hug to his mother on the porch of her modest lakefront home in Hot Springs, Arkansas, as he headed off to Hilton Head,

South Carolina, and she to Las Vegas for New Year's weekend. The only sense that Kelley, 70, might be counting her days came when she appealed to her son to have the whole family together for Christmas. That included his half-brother Roger, who was deep in the doghouse for being as yet unmarried to his five-months-pregnant girlfriend.

At the President's behest, Harry Thomason, the television producer and an old Arkansas friend, took Kelley six months ago to a prestigious bone-marrow transplant clinic at the University of Colorado, where she could have had surgery. When she found out the treatment might have extended her life but not necessarily its quality, she decided against it. She preferred to exit laughing. Her son's first Christmas in the White House was her last but, she told a friend, her best. She slept in the Queen's bedroom, watched a screening of *A Perfect World* and helped her granddaughter Chelsea wrap gifts. She brought in the New Year playing the slot machines at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas and sitting transfixed at Barbra Streisand's first concert in 22 years. Back home, she took care of unfinished business: she went with Roger to the local jewelry store and bought rings for the wedding he promised would take place before her second grandchild was born.

With the death of the First Lady's father in April and the suicide of Vincent Foster in July, this is the third loss in a year for the Clintons. The couple seemed limp with sadness in a rare public embrace on the South Lawn, as the President boarded Marine One bound for Little Rock. The funeral on Saturday was private. Even so, Virginia Kelley's son ordered up the 3,700-seat Hot Springs Convention Auditorium for the crowd he expected. The acorn does not fall far from the tree. ■



"She never whined, she never felt sorry for herself. . . . She didn't waste one minute."

— David Leopoulos, Bill Clinton's friend since boyhood, about Virginia Kelley

Mom and mentor

'Remarkable life' of Kelley

By Bill Nichols
USA TODAY

Her son the president-to-be told the Democratic Convention in 1992 that the indomitable Virginia Kelley had lived "a remarkable life."

And even in the rambunctious world of Arkansas politics, where many would argue with Bill Clinton on whether the sun was up or down, that is one thing on which all agree.

Kelley, 70, died in the pre-dawn hours Thursday morning in her house by the lake in Hot Springs, Ark., finally succumbing to breast cancer and leaving Clinton without his role model and, in many ways, his political mentor.

Kelley battled breast cancer for years, undergoing a mastectomy and chemotherapy, but seemed in good spirits in recent weeks, going to the White House for Christmas and to Las Vegas for two Barbra Streisand concerts.

Friends say she had finally consented to a wheelchair — but held court at a pre-Christmas White House party perched on a couch, surrounded by eager listeners.

"She worked until she just dropped," said David Leopoulos, Clinton's friend since boyhood who had lunch with Kelley just two weeks ago. "She never whined, she never felt sorry for herself. . . . She didn't waste one minute."

In the campaign, some Clinton aides tried to shield Kelley, with the white streak in her hair, huge false eyelashes and a passion for \$2 bets at the horse track, for fear the media would paint her as a hillbilly eccentric, a new Billy Carter.

Instead, in a campaign world filled with artifice, those who traveled to Kelley's kitchen table for some of her industrial strength coffee found the real article, a hardy survivor of decades of hardship who, at that same table, helped kindle her son's progressive views on civil rights — although they didn't always match her own.

No one had more confidence in Clinton, even in the campaign's darkest days. "He's so competitive . . . and he doesn't want anything given to him," Kelley told USA TODAY in April 1992. "A lot of that comes from me, it sure does. I don't give up easily. Like never."

Kelley's life reads like a Southern Gothic novel, its heroine a farm girl, Virginia Cassidy, born 12 miles outside Hope, Ark., who somehow



PROUD MOMENT: Virginia Kelley gives son Bill Clinton a hug at the Arkansas inaugural ball in 1993. Kelley helped mold Clinton's progressive views — even if they didn't match her own. AP



FAMILY PORTRAIT: In 1959, Virginia Kelley with sons Bill, left, and Roger Clinton Jr. Kelley survived decades of hardship. By Jeff Mitchell, Reuters

seemed to rise to every challenge of a tumultuous life.

Her first husband, Clinton's father, William Blythe, died while she was pregnant, and after the baby was born Kelley left him with her parents in Hope while she got a nursing degree in New Orleans.

She then, very much the belle of Hot Springs jazz club and resort society, married Roger Clinton, whose name the future president would take, and with whom Kelley had her other son, Roger Jr.

But Roger Clinton was an abusive alcoholic who beat her until she divorced him, then remarried him, and never stopped caring for him. "This was not a bad man. He

was a good man. He just had an illness," she said.

Roger Clinton died of cancer in 1968. Kelley's third husband, Hot Springs hairdresser Jeff Dwire, died of diabetes complications in 1974.

Her marriage to retired food broker Dick Kelley endured until her death. But Kelley, a retired nurse anesthetist, not only had to fight cancer in her later years, but had to weather son Roger's 1985 arrest on drug charges, for which he served 1½ years in prison.

The effect on Clinton of his mother's death, coming on the eve of a delicate eight-day foreign tour, is almost certain to be devastating, friends and

longtime observers say.

As he left for Arkansas Thursday afternoon, Clinton walked hand-in-hand with his wife, Hillary, to his helicopter on the White House lawn, his shoulders slumped and head down.

His first year as president has already seen the death of his father-in-law, Hugh Rodham, and that of the Clintons' close friend Vince Foster, the deputy White House counsel who apparently committed suicide last July.

"I'm sure it will affect him strongly," says *Arkansas Times* columnist John Brummett. "I mean, you have to consider what a remarkable woman this was, strong and tough, widowed while she was pregnant . . . who worked and raised a brilliant politician who became president of the United States."

But White House officials say Clinton will largely stick to his schedule for the European trip. In so doing, Virginia Kelley's admirers say, her son offers a fitting tribute to his mother's example.

"To live the very difficult life that she had and be so successful at it by just doing the right thing, it's a lesson all of us can learn," said Leopoulos. "You just have to think about what she accomplished with her bare hands. There was no silver spoon. You just dig it out and go."

► Clinton's schedule, 1A

OCTOBER 3, 1993

Arkansas Democrat & Gazette

"I just think the secret to doing well is to stay busy. I don't care what kind of problems you have. Get your mind on other people and off of yourself."





Virginia Cassidy Clinton Kelley

No woman is immune to breast cancer, not even the mother of the president of the United States. One in nine will get it. Virginia Kelley talks candidly about her personal "horse race" to help others increase their stakes.

BY PHYLLIS D. BRANDON
Democrat-Gazette High Profile Editor

HOT SPRINGS — Everyone knows Virginia Kelley has a hobby — besides her sons. She keeps busy playing the ponies. "Weekend before last I was in Saratoga, and last weekend I was in Del Mar," she said.

New York to California, that's coast-to-coast sport of kings on anybody's racing form.

But there's another race she has been thrust into and all bets are on her. With that competitive spirit she obviously passed on to her son, she's determined to win.

That's her personal race against death from cancer of the breast.

Kelley, now 70, received the dreaded diagnosis during a routine physical examination in August 1990.

"I had a radical mastectomy. After that I was treated with chemotherapy and I had some radiation therapy. Those treatments lasted six months," she explained.

Kelley used medical terminology to describe what the doctors did to her to remove the cancer. They removed the entire breast and also removed underlying chest wall muscle and lymph nodes on that side of her chest.

"I've always been able to face anything in the world I've had to face. Certainly it was not a pleasant thing," said this survivor whose life's low points and high points have been more than well documented.

"I made up my mind I was going to be well. I joked with my doctor that I would be here until they found a cure for this. And he said he believed me.

"I had no problem at all with treatment. I lost some hair, not a lot. I've been very fortunate, I really have."

On this day, a welcome rain is imminent at the Kelley home beside Lake Hamilton, with moist gray air hanging heavy over the spacious deck with its view of the lake and docked fishing boat. Husband Dick Kelley and Champ, short for Champion, a German shepherd, and a neighbor dog greet the nonthreatening visitors — in lieu of Secret Service.

Inside, workmen make repairs caused by a recent wind-storm surrounded by the stuff a mother finds special. Around the rooms are framed photos and more pictures in albums of her sons, Bill and Roger; Hillary, the daughter-in-law; and the one granddaughter, Chelsea.

After worried looks at flowers she has been too busy to take care of, she poses for the High Profile photographer, readily accepting a suggestion to hold a photograph taken of her with Chelsea, one of Chelsea's Christmas gifts to her grandmother.

Kelley

• Continued from Page 1D

But the topic for conversation taken outside to the deck and away from the hammering is centered on the matriarch.

How's Virginia Kelley feeling? "I feel good," she said.

As she goes on to describe her health she speaks with the candor of a woman of the '90s, often unusual for a woman of her generation. Having worked as a nurse anesthetist, she is more familiar than most women about health care.

Her last chemotherapy treatment was "about a month ago." For four or five months now, she has had a single treatment each month from which she has had no side effects.

There has been no recurrence of the malignancy, she said, but her doctors at the Arkansas Cancer Research Center recommended that she resume treatment.

"It's my understanding that this is more insurance than anything else," she said. "They feel it has not metastasized to the vital organs, like the uterus, stomach, pancreas, liver. And they don't want it to metastasize."

This is a fear of cancer pa-

tients, that the cancer will spread to other organs, but treatment often prevents that.

Kelley has tolerated the treatments "just fine." Fortunately, they don't slow her down or confine her to weekend simulcasts from Arlington Park and Louisiana Downs shown at Hot Springs' Oaklawn Park.

She says she has no idea how much longer she will have to continue treatments. "I don't ask any questions at all, I really do not. I just want to get well and I know that they're the very best (doctors) in this world for me. It wouldn't do me any good to ask questions. I don't see how I could do any better, just doing what they tell me to do."

Kelley heaped praise on the program at the Arkansas Cancer Research Center. "They have to expand it, there's such a demand on them. ... I just can't say enough for them, that staff is so wonderful."

After surgery, Kelley said she walked the halls of the hospital the next day and "a week after surgery I was back in campaign headquarters." That summer her son was conducting a winning campaign for re-election as Arkansas' 42nd governor.

Kelley didn't have plastic surgery to replace the breast

after the surgery. "If I'd been younger I might have," she said, smiling.

"I just think the secret to doing well is to stay busy. I don't care what kind of problems you have. Get your mind on other people and off of yourself." A campaign for governor followed by a successful presidential race will certainly do that.

How could such a dreadful thing happen to this woman? "Why should I be any different from anybody else? It's such a prevalent disease.

"I'm an only child. Most people can tell that," she said, with a laugh. Kelley's mother died of a stroke at age 67. She believes, however, that the cause of breast cancer is genetic.

Depending on the expert being quoted, 70 percent to 85 percent of women who get breast cancer have no known risk factors, according to an article by Susan Ferraro in the Aug. 18 issue of *The New York Times Magazine*. Only 5 percent of all breast cancers are linked to heredity.

Although women who smoke cigarettes have a higher incidence of breast cancer, Kelley hasn't smoked in five years, she said. "I quit smoking two years before it was discovered. I was very, very glad."

The cure will come some day in the form of prevention, said Lisa Block, education and communications director of the Arkansas Division of the American Cancer Society. Some day, probably soon, doctors will be able to find and remove the breast cancer gene.

Block praised Kelley's "intelligent perspective."

"I'm going to do everything that I can, especially for research. I just happen to think we're just about that far from a cure. Anything I can do to help I'm going to," said Kelley, who also has plans to start making speeches in which she'll include a pitch to help find the cure.

Breast cancer when first diagnosed is categorized in four stages, Block said, noting there are many kinds of breast cancer. If the tumor is found when it is still in the first stage (less than 0.78 inch), there is a 92 percent cure rate, the highest success rate of all cancers. The longer the cells are in your body, the worse they get, she said.

This, of course, is why the Cancer Society urges screening mammographies by age 40, one every year or two between ages 40 and 49 and annual mammograms for women over 50 plus monthly self-examination. Three-quarters of all

breast cancers occur in women over 50.

Although most women are not, women need to be as familiar with their breasts and how they change as much as they notice every blemish on their faces, Block added. By the time cancer is detected by a mammogram, it could have existed for eight years, Ferraro's article said.

The Cancer Society says more than 182,000 cases of breast cancer will be diagnosed this year and, as a result, 46,000 women will die.

The overall mortality rate has remained the same for 50 years, according to Ferraro. Of the 2.6 million women in the United States who have breast cancer, 1.6 million know it and 1 million don't.

In stage two the tumor is larger and may or may not have spread to the lymph nodes; in the third stage the tumor has spread to the lymph nodes, or spread and attached to other structures, or tissues near the breast (chest wall, including the ribs and muscles of the chest), or the lymph nodes under the sternum; in stage four, the cancer has spread to other organs, such as the bones, lungs, liver or brain.

The treatment of breast cancer, according to the American

Cancer Society, may include surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, hormone therapy, biological therapy and bone marrow transplants.

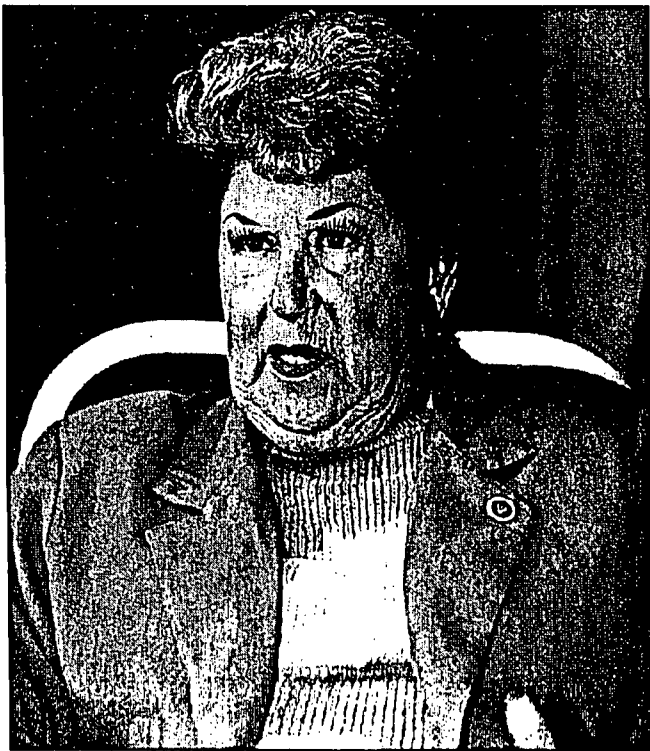
Although she says she has never lobbied her son, the president, for anything, Kelley said he's certainly aware of her case.

"I heard Hillary's speech to the American Medical Association; she mentioned me twice." The breast cancer movement began when prominent women, coincidentally all of them figures in Republican politics (Shirley Temple Black, Betty Ford and Happy Rockefeller, according to Ferraro), went public about the disease.

"I think it's genetic, but I sure don't think it's political," Kelley said. "This is one thing we can swear is bipartisan. This is a cause for all women in public life."

Kelley appeared on an ABC special about breast cancer Sept. 14 featuring four other survivors, and will be honorary chairman of an educational program, "The Challenge of Breast Cancer," sponsored by the National Cancer Institute and the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation on Oct. 15 at Second Presbyterian Church.

"We're going to whip it, we will," she said.



"I'm going to do everything that I can, especially for research. I just happen to think we're just about that far from a cure. Anything I can do to help I'm going to."



"I think it's genetic, but I sure don't think it's political. ... This is one thing we can swear is bipartisan. This is a cause for all women in public life."



Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/Staton Breidenthal

'I joked with my doctor that I would be here until they found a cure for this.'

AT HOME WITH
Virginia Kelley

Bets Dark Horses. Raised One, Too.

By TODD S. PURDUM

VIRGINIA KELLEY will always remember Aug. 16, 1977, the day the King died. And she will never forget who told her: Her firstborn son, Bill Clinton.

"I was right in the middle of an anesthetic," recalled Mrs. Kelley, a nurse-anesthetist for 35 years. "My children never, ever called me in the operating room. They were just cautioned it was not the place to call me ever, unless it was an emergency."

"And so Bill called, and he said: 'Please take the phone to Mother. I have something to say to her that I don't want anybody else to tell her.' And he told me Elvis was dead. Oh, what a shock, what a shock."

So now, in her lakeside living room in this racy old resort, she is reminiscing about her favorite singer, whose bust hangs in a macramé planter in the dining room, and her favorite saxophonist, whose own affinity for Elvis is legend. It seems only fitting that her favorite song is "Heartbreak Hotel": she has been married five times to four husbands, and has buried three of them, the first one four months before their son was born. The second was an abusive alcoholic whose name that son took, and made famous.

At the age of 69, this descendant of Irish farmers and Cherokee Indians has survived a mastectomy and controversies over the death of two patients in her care, and has seen her younger son, Roger, go to prison for a year and a half on drug charges, after an undercover investigation that Bill Clinton approved as the Governor of Arkansas. As she puts it in her pungent Arkansas twang, "You know, this is extremely complicated, this family."

But to spend a long afternoon on the sofa beside her, as she nestles on a hot pad to soothe an old bulging disk, is to find a woman needing no sympathy, and asking none, thank you. From the frosted white swath sweeping through her India-ink hair to her 10 pink-tipped fingers, she's one stylish survivor. She wears five rings, one of them set with a row of graduated diamonds from her previous wedding rings.

Anyone wondering how her son survived the New Hampshire primary should sit a spell with her.

"I'm the world's greatest person to dismiss unpleasant things out of my mind," she said. It was one of several variations on that Scarlett O'Hara sentiment uttered in the space of three hours, this one reflecting on the questions she faces as the mother of a man who would be President. "You know, I get, like, 'How did you feel when your husband shot at you?'"

A rich contralto chuckle rumbles up. "Well, how does anybody feel when they get shot at?"

During the winter thoroughbred racing season here, she holds court in her box on the Carousel Terrace of the Oaklawn Jockey Club, and in summer, when the track carries broadcasts of races from other parks, she still keeps the \$2 window busy. (A sampler on her wall reads, "A race track is a place where windows clean people.") Another of her rings is a gold horseshoe circling a horse's head, inset with pavé diamonds, a gift from her son.

"Funny thing," she muses, fingering it softly. "What does Bill know about gambling? These tiny little diamonds? I got the magnifying glass and I counted them and there was 13! And I said 'Oh, my goodness!' So I took it to the jeweler and said, 'Would you please put a little diamond in this horse's eye,' so I wouldn't have 13."

Such resourcefulness is typical of a woman whose friends say she simply won't be stopped.

"Before there were spin doctors, there was Virginia," said Carolyn Staley, a longtime family friend. "She just puts on a very positive spin. It's not that she even has to work on it."

Ms. Staley, a Baptist minister's daughter who grew up next to the Clintons' house in Hot Springs, remembers Virginia as a figure of glamour, who would come home from

a hard day's work and pull on shorts and a strapless tube top to show off a perfect tan. "Somewhere she decided that you can either make excuses and go through life feeling victimized, or you can say, 'Damn it, I've still got my health!' She counts the assets and not the debits, and she remembers the good and not the bad."

Like her son, Mrs. Kelley is a master of self-regeneration, but there has clearly been plenty of bad. Bill Clinton may come from a place called Hope, but she was born 12 miles from there, outside the village of Bodcaw. The family moved to Hope, population 10,000, where her father, Eldridge Cassidy, worked as a sawmill watchman, delivered ice and later owned a small grocery store that served a largely black neighborhood.

She met her first husband, a strapping automotive-equipment salesman named William Jefferson Blythe 3d, during World War II when she was a student nurse in Shreveport, La. As she tells it, he arrived at the hospital late one night with his date, who had acute appendicitis.

"And you know, it was truly love at first sight, and I was so ashamed because at first I thought that they were married," she said. "And so I called him by her last name, just to see if they were married. And he said: 'Excuse me. That isn't my name.' And so he asked me out."

Two months later, they were married. Then he went off to war for 36 months, came back and had just moved their belongings into a new house in Chicago and was on his way to pick her up in Hope when he was thrown from his car and killed.

"He was going around a curve and had a blowout," she said, her gray eyes misty. "You know, we didn't have radial tires then. And it was after a big flood, and all the ditches on each side of the highway were overflowed. And the only mark he had on him was a little bruise on his head, and I'm sure it just knocked him out long enough to drown him."

The young widow left her baby, Bill, with her parents and went off to New Orleans for a year's training in anesthesiology, so she could earn more money. She returned home and married Roger Clinton, a likable Buick salesman whose weakness for bourbon routinely made him a menace. They moved to Hot Springs, a piney redoubt that drew people with arthritis to its soothing waters, gamblers to its illegal casinos and singers like Patti Page to Virginia Clinton's favorite nightclub, the Vapors.

When Bill was 4, his stepfather drunkenly fired a shot into a wall when Virginia said she was going to visit her dying grandmother. Ten years later, after one too many loud fights, Bill faced Roger, who was slumped over a table, helped him to his feet and warned him never to strike his mother again.

For more than 30 years, even the family's closest friends knew none of this, learning of it only when the candidate raised it in campaign interviews as a sign of the burdens he had borne. Mother and son have each told the story on national television, but she said they have never discussed it with each other.

"Well, we haven't had time," she said. "We haven't had time. And what good would it do to talk? It wouldn't do any good to talk. Bill did what he thought was fair for the public to know. Now I back him 100 percent."

Growing up, Bill and his half-brother, Roger, were on their own a lot. "We could never plan anything for sure," Mrs. Kelley said. "I always had to preface anything I told Bill or

Roger, 'We will do this if... if I don't have to go to work. Now, of course, that's distressing to a mother. All their lives, it was prefaced with 'if.'"

She eventually divorced Roger Sr., but remarried him because she felt sorry for him: he kept coming around at night to sleep on the family's stoop. He died of cancer in 1968, and she married Jeff Dwire, a hairdresser who died of complications from diabetes in 1974. Ten years ago, she married her current husband, Richard W. Kelley, a 77-year-old retired food broker. ("He sees that Wal-Mart never runs out of Star-Kist tuna.")

Just as her life has not been without pain, so her work was not without controversy. She retired in 1981, after her performance was questioned in the deaths of two patients during surgery and doctors tried to force her to work under closer supervision of anesthesiologists. The family of the first patient sued a surgeon and her, but the suit was settled out of court. In the second case, involving a teen-age girl, the state medical examiner, who had been appointed by her son, issued a ruling that cleared her.

Mr. Clinton, who was between gubernatorial terms at the time of the ruling, and Mrs. Kelley have both said that no influence was brought to bear, though some of his critics in Arkansas have suggested otherwise. "I had a very clear conscience about this girl," she said.

These days, Mrs. Kelley is too busy to worry about anything much but the campaign. "I can't get my mind on horse racing to save my soul," she said. "It's hard for me to win a \$2 bet!" She drives the hour to national campaign headquarters in Little Rock, Ark., at least once a week to check in, explaining, "I can't let them put anything over on me."

After all their troubles, her bonds with her sons are deep. Indeed, the family is linked in an astrological wonder: Bill's birthday is the same as his grandfather Cassidy's (Aug. 19); Roger Jr. shares Roger Sr.'s (July 25), and Bill's daughter Chelsea's is the same as his own father's (Feb. 27).

"You know what my father said about that?" Mrs. Kelley said. "He said, 'You'll do anything to avoid making but one cake.'"

She talks regularly to Roger, who says he is now drug free and works as a production assistant on the "Designing Women" television show, produced by old Arkansas friends. She attends support group meetings, to better understand his problems.

To keep up with Bill, she need only turn to her television, which she leaves on all night, to her husband's chagrin. Whenever she hears Bill's voice, she wakes up.

"It's just like when he was a little boy," she said.



STEADFAST: Virginia Kelley, mother of Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton, says she refused to let setbacks in her son's campaign discourage her or his staff. 'I don't give up easily.'

By Eileen Blass, USA TODAY

COVER STORY

Straight talk, love of racing, a life of trials

'This too shall pass' became way of life for both mother and son

By Bill Nichols
USA TODAY

HOT SPRINGS, Ark. — Any mother's heart would nearly crack at the thought of what Virginia Kelley has endured the last four months. Her first-born son: Bill Clinton.

Yet she chuckles, a throaty, infectious laugh, and says, yes, it's been rough — she managed to get to the Oaklawn

Park horse track only on the weekends instead of daily, to sit in her usual seat, talk some politics and place \$2 bets.

"To me, these things are so ridiculous," she says of the charges of womanizing, draft dodging and political hijinks dogging her son. "I don't spend much time thinking about it, I really don't. I just think he's done beautifully."

Kelley, 68, with a frosted white streak slicing through her black hair and huge false eyelashes always aflutter, has buried three husbands — one of whom was an abusive alcoholic who beat her — watched her younger son, Roger, go to prison on drug charges and survived a mastectomy.

She is, in Southern parlance, a character. But she is also, in any vocabulary, a straight-talking survivor whose no surrender view of life and politics has been the primary influence on the man national pundits now call "Slick Willie."

"This too shall pass" has become a way of life for Kelley. And if voters wonder how her son has managed to stagger,

Please see COVER STORY next page ►

Relics of universe's birth 'It's like looking at God,' says astrophysicist

By Paul Hoversten
USA TODAY

Scientists say they've found relics of the "big bang" in which the universe is generally accepted to have been created about 15 billion years ago.

They struggled to describe the enormous impact of the findings, presented Thursday:

► "If you're religious, it's like looking at God," says astrophysicist George Smoot, Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory and University of California.

► "This is a picture of creation," says physicist Alan Kogut of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Md.

► "They have found the Holy Grail of cosmology," says Michael Turner, University of Chicago physicist.

Smoot's research team used data from NASA's Cosmic Background Explorer satellite, launched in 1989, to make a microwave map of the sky.

It reveals the oldest, largest structures in the universe, huge cloud regions whose incredibly small temperature fluctuations show on the map like a magenta and blue Easter egg.

The rippled clouds were formed only about 300,000 years after the big bang itself.

President Bush has regained a key measure of political strength: Voters now say he, not Bill Clinton, would do a better job handling the economy.

A new USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup poll shows Bush benefits from doubts about Clinton.

A month ago, 49% said Clinton could better handle the economy. Now that's only 36%.

Still, 73% disapprove of Bush's economic management.

That isn't all good news for Clinton. "With Republicans in power and the economy sour," says Everett Ladd of the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, "Clinton still didn't get any mileage."

Says Bush campaign chief Robert Mosbacher: "We don't want to jump up and down and say there's nothing to worry about anymore, but it's moving in the right direction."

Clinton aide Dee Dee Myers says the poll reflects the brutal New York primary. "But we've now sort of turned the corner."

... We're beginning to define this as a Bush-Clinton race."

Other findings from the poll of 1,004 registered voters:

► Bush held a lead over Clinton, and in a three-way race, with Ross Perot. Perot got 25%, drawing support almost equally from Bush and Clinton.

► Opinions about Bush improved slightly, from 44% unfavorable a month ago to 41% now; Clinton's unfavorable rating rose 9 points to 49%.

Scientists believe they are the seeds that gravity eventually pulled together into galaxies.

The findings appear to confirm the big-bang theory of an expanding universe, first suggested in the 1940s.

"The pattern predicted is confirmed by what we've

Butterfly barrages

By Robert Davis
USA TODAY

The biggest butterfly migration in years — billions of 'em — is brightening Western skies but making a mess for motorists.

"It's like somebody threw some mustard at you," says trucker Robert Maya of Fresno, Calif.

The painted ladies — orange, black and white — move north after hatching in Southern California and northern Mexico.

But this year they are flitting



Contra Costa

Continued from 1A

bloodied but unbent, through an uncommonly brutal primary season, all of Clinton's old friends agree:

If you want to understand Bill, start with Virginia.

She agrees. "He's so competitive ... and he doesn't want anything given to him. A lot of that comes from me, it sure does. I don't give up easily. Like never."

If Clinton is the Democratic nominee, you can bet someone will compare Kelley to Lillian or Billy Carter, the mother and brother of former President Jimmy Carter who, to some, became caricatures of Southern culture.

Her appearance is, well, striking. In years past, she cut a dashing figure in the racy milieu of Hot Springs resort society, dancing in jazz clubs, smoking, always speaking her mind.

"I'd never met anyone like Virginia," says Carolyn Staley, Clinton's longtime friend and next-door neighbor and the daughter of a Baptist preacher. With her tube tops and quick-witted one-liners, Kelley "seemed so ... exotic," Staley says.

But reporters had best understand that this is no one's hillbilly. Kelley recently turned a cold shoulder to reporter/author Gail Sheehy, claiming Sheehy pressured her for an interview on a Sunday — her day for church and racing — then called the day of the appointment to say she'd be late.

"No sir," says Kelley. "That would have shot my whole day."

Other journalists have returned from their trips to Hot Springs and wondered how this plain-spoken woman with painted eyebrows could have raised a Rhodes scholar. "I tell them, you totally missed the point," says Betsey Wright, Clinton's former chief of staff. "If someone feels that way about Virginia, they didn't bother to listen to one word she said."

Born in the country 12 miles outside Hope, Ark. — where Clinton was born — Kelley grew up poor and determined to get enough education to offer her children a better life.

She married William Blythe, a likeable salesman who was killed in a car wreck when she was five months pregnant with Clinton. Kelley went to New Orleans for two years to get her nursing degree, leaving Clinton with her parents.

In 1950, she married Roger Clinton, a Hot Springs Buick dealer. But he was also an alcoholic who beat Kelley, until one night 14-year-old Bill Clinton told his stepfather that he had hit his mother for the last time without getting hit back.

"It hurt and it still hurts," Kelley says of her years with Roger Clinton, whom she divorced and remarried before he died of cancer in 1968. "But this was not a bad man. He was a good man. He just had an illness."

Tempering the sting of bad times was Kelley's devotion to her work as a nurse anesthetist and her growing certainty that young Billy Blythe, who later took Roger Clinton's name, was a special child. Clinton started reading at 3 or 4, Kelley says, devoured books, excelled in school and won every school election he ever ran in save one, in grade school, when he failed to vote for himself and lost by one vote.

"He knew better than that by the time he got to junior high school," Kelley says. "I taught him that lesson."

She remembers Clinton's outrage at Arkansas' desegregation crisis in 1957. He was 11. Federal troops had been called in to integrate Little Rock's Central High, and Clinton, Kelley says, patiently tried to change her segregationist views, forged in the small-town South.

"We talked and talked and talked and I told him, 'Bill, you have to be patient with me now. You have to understand I wasn't brought up this way.' But I tried and I succeeded ... you see, Bill has been an education to me."

Yet even as her son's political star ascended, Kelley's personal trials continued. Her third husband, a Hot Springs hairdresser, died of complications from diabetes in 1974.

Kelley's other child, Roger, was convicted of cocaine trafficking in 1985 — arrested in a sting operation that Bill Clinton, as governor, had to OK — and served 1½ years in prison.

Today, Roger, 35, lives in Hollywood, says he's drug-free and works as a production assistant for *Designing Women*.

Kelley lost a breast to cancer recently, though she says her health is fine except for a troublesome bulging disk in her back. And then there have been the charges and countercharges that have engulfed Clinton's campaign and left severe doubts with many voters about his character.

Kelley, now married to Richard Kelley, a retired food broker, admits she has had rough periods. She canceled a planned trip to New Hampshire at least partly because Clinton and wife Hillary did not want her subjected to questioning about Jennifer Flowers' allegations of a 12-year affair.

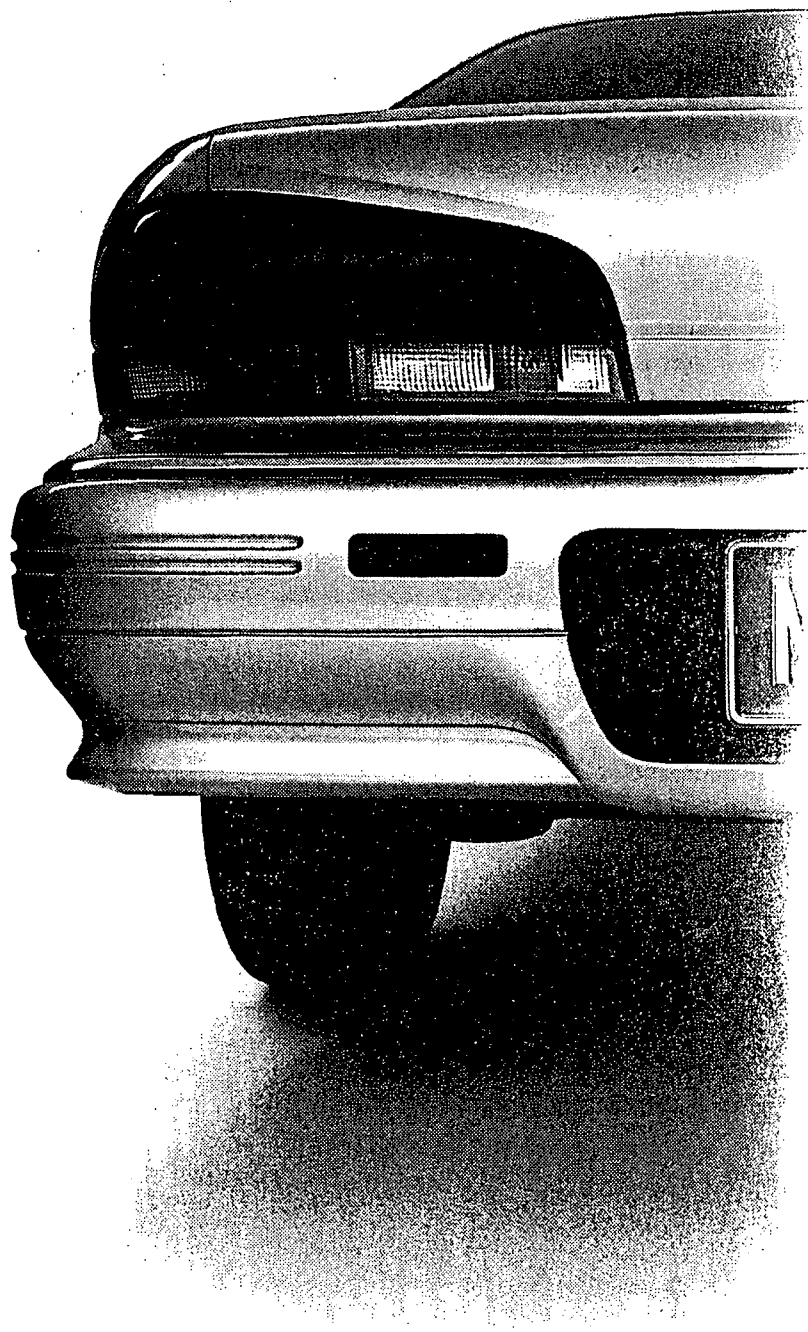
But mostly she stays confident, upbeat. In the days after the Flowers bombshell hit, it was Kelley, Clinton staffers say, who marched into the Little Rock campaign headquarters and announced there was no need for a wake, there was work to do.

"I refuse to let it discourage me," Kelley says. "You know you've just got to believe that what's right is right and in the long run it's going to win. I believe that with all my heart."

For Kelley, adversity has been a familiar companion. The moment she was proudest of her son, the five-term governor and prospective Democratic nominee? His 1980 re-election bid, which he lost in a shocking upset that stunned the state.

"I knew how hard he'd worked, and I was just crushed," Kelley says. "But he just kept on going. And you know that no one really perceived him as a loser?"

The friends of Virginia Kelley, and they are legion in Arkansas, would say like mother, like son.



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