

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

---

## Overview of the Collection

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

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

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

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

Retiring from government service in 1984, Currie volunteered for Operation Rescue, the United Way, the Commission on the Status of Women, and Rainbow Christian Services. Currie also volunteered for the failed Democratic presidential campaigns of Mondale/Ferraro in 1984 and the Dukakis/Bentsen ticket of 1988. She hesitantly joined the Clinton/Gore campaign in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1991, where she served with James Carville in the “war room”.

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

journalist and colleagues as truthful, she still retains her association with the Clinton family.

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

---

# Scope and Content

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

---

# Restrictions

## Restrictions on Access

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

## Restrictions on Use

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

---

# Related Material

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

---

# Controlled Access Terms

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

## Persons:

Currie, Betty

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Lane, Edgar Carey (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Currie, Betty--Interviews

---

Presidents--United States--Staff--Interviews

---

Clinton, Bill, 1946-

---

Social secretaries--United States--Interviews

---

African Americans--Genealogy

---

African American families--Waukegan--Illinois

---

Television broadcasting--United States--History

---

Navy Public Works Center (Great Lakes, Ill.)

---

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

---

Presidents--United States--Election--1984

---

Mondale, Walter F., 1928-

---

Carville, James

---

Presidents--United States--Election--1992

---

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

---

Presidents--United States--Election--1996

---

Clinton, Hillary Rodham

---

Lewinsky, Monica S. (Monica Samille),--1973-

---

Political corruption--United States

---

Canada. Treaties, etc. 1992 Oct. 7.

---

National Civilian Community Corps (AmeriCorps)

---

Waco Branch Davidian Disaster, Tex., 1993

---

Starr, Kenneth

---

Presidents--United States--Election--2000

---

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

---

## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

United States. Executive Office of the President.

---

## Occupations:

Presidential Secretary

---

## HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

---

## Administrative Information

### Custodial History

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

### Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Betty Currie, June 8, 2004. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

---

## Other Finding Aid

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

---

## Detailed Description of the Collection

## Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Betty Currie, Section A2004\_066\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:49 ?

Presidential secretary Betty W. Currie begins by describing her family background and sharing stories passed down from her ancestors. She tells of her mother, father, grandparents, and siblings, and explains how her parents met. Currie then shares memories of her childhood and family life growing up in Waukegan, Illinois. Currie also discusses her high school years and remembers the mass media's shift from radio to television in the 1950s.

Presidents--United States--Staff--Interviews.

Clinton, Bill, 1946-.

Social secretaries--United States--Interviews.

African Americans--Genealogy.

African American families--Illinois--Waukegan.

Television broadcasting--United States--History.

Navy Public Works Center (Great Lakes, Ill.).

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

Presidents--United States--Election--1984.

Mondale, Walter F., 1928-.

Carville, James.

Presidents--United States--Election--1992.

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

Presidents--United States--Election--1996.

Clinton, Hillary Rodham.

Lewinsky, Monica S. (Monica Samille),--1973-.

Political corruption--United States.

Canada. Treaties, etc. 1992 Oct. 7.

National Civilian Community Corps (AmeriCorps).

Waco Branch Davidian Disaster, Tex., 1993.

Starr, Kenneth.

Presidents--United States--Election--2000.

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

Video Oral History Interview with Betty Currie, Section A2004\_066\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:25 ?

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

Video Oral History Interview with Betty Currie, Section A2004\_066\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:34 ?

Betty W. Currie recalls her work for the 1992 Bill Clinton presidential campaign, describing life in the "war room" with campaign director James Carville and describing the thrill of victory. Currie then discusses her transition to becoming Clinton's personal secretary. She shares anecdotes from behind the scenes, describing everyday life at the Oval Office during Clinton's presidency.

Video Oral History Interview with Betty Currie, Section A2004\_066\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Betty W. Currie recalls President Bill Clinton's first term in office, talking about

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

Video Oral History Interview with Betty Currie, Section A2004\_066\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:33 ?

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

Video Oral History Interview with Betty Currie, Section A2004\_066\_001\_006, TRT: 0:27:37 ?

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