



THE CLINTON HAT

He could never be a Presidential father figure. But Clinton's vulnerability has to do with more than being a boomer. Nearly half the electorate polled last November said they questioned the President's truthfulness. An independent prosecutor has gained convictions in the Whitewater scandal, and while the President himself has not been implicated, there may be more indictments on the way. The matter of Paula Jones has moved in the last six months from the newsletters and Web sites of the Clinton crazies to the Supreme Court and the media mainstream. And who can dispute that Bill Clinton's Arkansas was a poor rural state where a network of bigwigs and politicians at times looked the other way while friends cut deals?

The White House report argues that much of the Clinton scandal-mongering is ideologically driven and that there is right-wing money behind the fanatics, which is true. But it is hard to imagine, even with the money that Richard M. Scaife, a right-wing publisher, has provided to disseminate some of the more alarming accusations, such scandals visiting Al Gore or Bill Bradley or even someone to their left like Paul Wellstone.

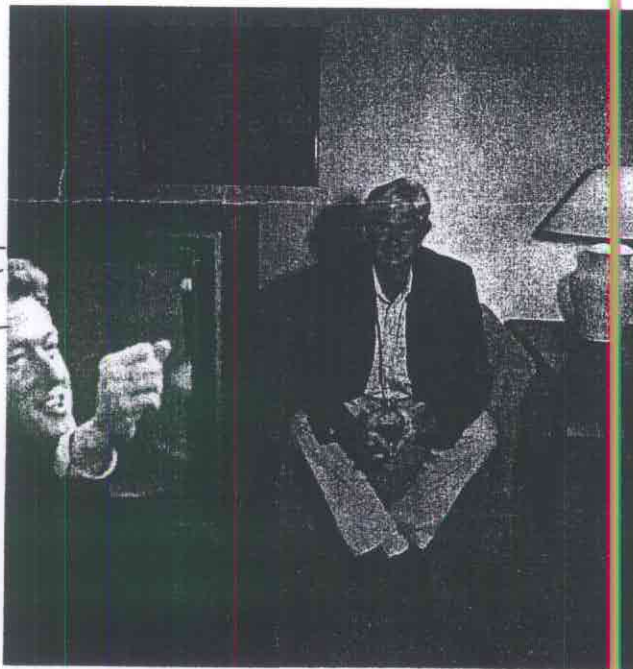
Still, in America now, paranoia runs deep, and the Clinton crazies' influence taps into that climate. Nearly half the population believes the C.I.A. was involved in the assassination of President Kennedy; 1 in 10 adults thinks the moon landing was a hoax. The lines have been blurred by Oliver Stone's historical visions, docudramas and "The X-Files." The claim that friendly fire brought down TWA Flight 800 last summer thrived on the Internet for weeks before Pierre Salinger spoke out about it.

"No matter what you decide about Whitewater," says Gene Lyons, a columnist for The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette and a well-known defender of the Clintons, "I don't think you should conclude that Bill Clinton has done anything to merit this hatred, other than to be a symbol of everything some people fear and despise about the modern world. These are tales from the fundamentalist apocrypha. He's been accused of everything but devil worship."

People seem to want to believe the worst. They don't trust the networks, the newspapers, the Government. They're ready to hear what Larry Nichols has to say.

"I didn't take on a President," Nichols said as he got up to let the dog out. "I started fighting a

WHO: Pat Matrisciana. WHAT: The Clinton haters' favorite film maker. WHY: A producer of Christian-right videos, Matrisciana arrived in Arkansas early in 1994, hot on the heels of Troopergate. He eventually made 'The Clinton Chronicles,' which includes interviews with many of the better-known Clinton conspiracy spinners. An estimated 300,000 copies of the video (retail: \$19.95) are said to be in circulation.



two-bit tinhorn politician in Arkansas." When the dog hesitated, Nichols shook his head and said, "Even my dogs don't believe me."

We set off into town. Nichols, a former jingle writer, slipped in a tape of himself playing in a soft-rock band, and he said his wife and daughter urge him to drop his obsession with the President. "Leave this alone, get a regular job, leave Clinton alone. They're just going to kill you. They'll try to put you in jail," he said they told him. "I'm telling you, smart says do that but I can't."

We passed the yellow-stone Faulkner Courthouse.

"I've been in that jail right there — When?" I said.

"Which time? They trumped up a deal had failed to yield at a yield sign. Then I up by two guys furloughed from prison weekend pass. I broke one of them's first tie tool. I said, Who sent you? Clinton Sisan McDougal, the former Friend was then being held in the jail for failure testify before the Whitewater grand jury.

"She's treated like a queen," Nichols said. "She'll get pardoned after the election. has to pardon her or he will be led out White House in handcuffs."

"Devil With a Blue Dress On" came cassette player. "That's me on guitar," said turning it up. "Not bad for an huh?"

Larry Nichols turned on wrong about Susan Mc being pardoned, just as he w when he told me that Senate liam Fulbright was a hard who met his downfall with per Fanne Foxe. (That wa sentative Wilbur Mills.)

On election night I call Nichols from my Little Ro He'd already done eight shows. "Tonight's a pretty bumper for me," Nichols said. "There go morals. In the bac heart you've still got this fe when they go into that boot not going to pull that darn s a criminal. At least I can say my part."

MARTYRS AND MURDER THE BODY COUNT

NICHOLS GAVE ME COM rections to a "brick" house some from Little Rock that invol ing up to the base of a mour

taking a turn. I was in the bind that the far right find themselves in: Nichol rilous and vengeful, but his informatio useful. The directions were good, and knocked on the door of the speckled rugged, dark-haired man with soft gre wearing shorts and a designer baseb came out and we stood talking in the next to a motorcycle. Gary Parks smoked Marlboros and tossed the but wooden box. A dog came up — Zeus, a had taken in a month before — and P.