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KAY CLARK

Oral history interview concerning her friendship with Gerald and Betty Ford, her activities as head of the women's division of Ford's 1948 campaign, and her contacts with the Fords thereafter.

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I N T E R V I E W W I T H

Mrs. Collins C. Clark

BY

Dr. Thomas F. Soapes
Oral Historian

on

January 28, 1980

for

G E R A L D R. F O R D L I B R A R Y

This interview is being conducted with Mrs. Collins Clark in her home in Grand Rapids, Michigan on January 29, 1980. The interviewer is Dr. Thomas Soapes. Present for the interview are Dr. Soapes and Mrs. Clark.

SOAPES: Are you a native of Grand Rapids?

CLARK: No, I was born in Lake Forest, Illinois. But, yes, you might say I was a native of Grand Rapids because we came here when I was five and were here until I was a senior in high school, and then we left. I went on with my profession of dance teaching in Toledo, Ohio with the conservatory there, and then from there to Chicago. I was there for about ten years and then came back to Grand Rapids and took over the senior work at the Travis Studio from which I had graduated and also the office, business and so forth, for Miss Travis. And that's when I met Betty for the first time. She was a student at the studio and was my pupil.

SOAPES: This would have been during her high school years?

CLARK: This was during her high school years, yes. She had graduated the spring before I came back to take over the office and the senior work and also some of the graduates, of course, of which she was one. Most of her work with me was in ballroom dancing. Miss Travis had one of the officials from the program at Bennington College visit the studio, and she and one of the other students in the class were chosen to attend the summer sessions in dance. And that was where she became so interested in the Martha Graham system of dancing and went on to New York and procured a job there in modeling, and in that way paid for her lessons with Martha and

became part of the in-town company. So when she came back to Grand Rapids, she interested me in that form of dance. We had had a little of it here, but not to the extent that Martha went into it. We got together a group of gals who were also interested and Betty directed us, and we appeared several places here in town.

SOAPES: So you had a reversal of roles there: She became the teacher.

CLARK: She became the teacher, right - - and excellent, too. Of course, just being able to watch her do these things with such ease, I think it inspired everybody. So we had quite an interested group. In fact, we had several people who would have liked to have been in on the group, and we had to pick and choose.

SOAPES: When you first met her, what traits stood out?

CLARK: I think perhaps the fact that she was able to be mature inasmuch as she could make her own decisions, and yet at the same time she was every bit the eighteen year old, seventeen, eighteen year old that you would expect a young girl of her beauty and grace to be. I had had her in mind from the beginning of meeting her and seeing how she operated around the studio to take my place at this private camp in Wisconsin as the dancing instructor, which she did become after a short while.

SOAPES: What was the name of that camp?

CLARK: Camp Bryn Afon. It's a Welsh pronunciation. It's a private camp that was owned by a Detroit woman and extremely

exclusive, I might say. And Betty did a very beautiful job as an instructress up there for a couple of years, and then came back to Grand Rapids and became involved more and more with her fashion coordinating and that sort of thing. And, of course, it wasn't too long before she and Jerry were an item. From there on out you know the story.

SOAPES: Did you know her during her first marriage?

CLARK: Yes, I did. I knew her first husband also.

SOAPES: I know, of course, that the break up of a marriage is an unpleasant affair, but did she talk to you about her domestic problems?

CLARK: Yes, I was well aware of them. In fact I was with her a couple of times when there were some unfortunate things that had to be discussed and she wanted a little back up. It was just as she said in her book: They were very young and he was very ambitious and the sky was the limit as far as he was concerned. But not having the sky left Betty a great deal to do in order to support this ambition of his, which was not right for a young gal that wanted a family and a staid, dependable husband. But it was a friendly separation. It was for the best anyway you looked at it.

SOAPES: But you were the one around her to be a dry shoulder when it was necessary?

CLARK: Yes, right. The mother figure.

SOAPES: Did you participate in local politics?

CLARK: I did not until Betty asked me at this particular time if I would be interested or if I would, "Please do!" I don't believe she even bothered to ask me if I would be interested. She just said, "Please would you be the head of the women's division for Jerry's campaign." If was, of course, during that time of the year when I had no studio activities and I was able to do so. But I went in there like a complete novice; I had never been politically minded at all.

SOAPES: For the record, I'll note your name at that time was DeFreest.

CLARK: DeFreest, right.

SOAPES: Those who will see your name on letterheads will know that your name is now Clark, and that you are the same person. What kind of work did you do? You became head of the women's committee.

CLARK: I gathered together all the female population that I could lay my hands on, Republican, that I could coerce or otherwise interest in working for Jerry, such as sending out letters. And we did sort of, I don't know what they call that offhand, where you write to ten of your firends in town or surrounding area that would be supporting Jerry in the campaign and they write to ten of theirs. So it was a sort of an on-going affair.

SOAPES: Sort of a political chain letter.

CLARK: Right, that's exactly it. Jack Stiles, who was the head of the entire campaign, the overall head, had ten ideas a day.

And we'd get in the office and immediately Jack would sit down and away we'd go. He bounced ideas off of us. Of course, my being such a novice I thought that everything he said was, "Oh, yes this is exactly what we're going to do," until somebody said, "Just listen. You'll find out that one or two of those things will come true. The rest of them you can just bury, or forget." But, as time went on, I became, of course, most interested, most particularly because of Jerry's character. There wasn't anyway that you could look at that young man and not know that every word he said came right from his heart. There was no falsifying or no putting on of any false front. Anything he talked on he knew about -- it was either through personal contact or through extensive reading and studying all angles of government. And the very fact that Arthur Vandenberg had chosen him above quite a number of young promising politicians, already politicians, to get into the fifth district, representative in Congress, it meant a lot. And I think that most of the people who worked for him -- I would say all of the people -- felt the same way about Jerry: there was no pretense there. We were most pleased to do anything we could to further his career, and did.

SOAPES: As you were directing the work of the women's committee and you were finding these ten friends here and ten friends there, were you looking for any particular type of person to work with you?

CLARK: Well, of course, we wanted those who were interested enough to not just hit a one time setup that we might have advanced through the office and those who were more or less women of note in

the town or towns that would be listened to if they sent out any form of letter or in telephone calls or anything of the sort, they wouldn't be ignored. It wouldn't be one of those, "Oh, yes, um-hum, yes," and forget it. So that they were more or less the women of the town who were well-known. But the one who really went on with it and did the most and is still doing it was a young married woman that came here to town with her husband and hadn't been here more than just a few months. We had run into them, my husband and myself, through our love of boats, and they had purchased a boat knowing little or nothing about how to operate it. And through our stepping in there and helping them out I was asked by Carol Josephson if she couldn't do something down there in Jerry's campaign in the hut, someday or other. And I said, "Surely, come on down. You can start out by stuffing envelopes. Everybody starts out that way." She now is the head of the state Federation of Republican Women. So you can see through all of these years, the years 1948 to 1980 and on, Carol has kept it up. So that anything that she asks me to do I feel obligated, more or less, and I'm very happy to do it for her.

SOAPES: You mentioned the famous Quonset hut. Can you describe the interior of that, how it was set up, what it looked like when you stepped in the door?

CLARK: We had a couple of card tables in the front there with some chairs around, and I was usually stationed more or less just inside the door, so that anybody stepping in that we didn't know personally, that came in with wide eyes and wonderment, I could introduce myself

and welcome them to the place, get their names and so forth and find out what they were particularly interested in - - if it was helping us out or they wanted to meet Jerry or Jack or whoever was in there or just wandered in to look it over. We had a permanent secretary and several phones. Jerry had a cubicle for his office, and Jack had one for his. It was just set up in very light furniture, you know, typical Quonset hut, just exactly as you remember the appearance of a Quonset hut. It was a small building.

SOAPES: About how big was it on the interior?

CLARK: Well, truthfully I couldn't give you the dimensions, but it wasn't exactly - - oh, I don't know, what we say, twenty feet long. And, I believe, it looked like about twenty feet wide, too.

SOAPES: It was very plainly furnished.

CLARK: Oh, yes, yes. There was no attempt to do any fanciness.

Jerry's picture was painted on the front of the building, and it was done very nicely. Then it said, "FORD FOR CONGRESS" on the side. It was after he had been in Congress that he had the buses and so forth and used to take off out in the county. One day during the campaign I drove somebody else's car with a blaring horn and the record going and a live promoter sitting next to me all around the downtown area of Grand Rapids. This was towards the end, towards the fatal day of the voting. That was the way we used to get around. Of course, any of the county people that wanted him to come out and

speaking, which was constantly, we'd see that transportation was furnished. But we had everything at our finger tips as far as volunteering of material and that sort of thing was concerned, and we were very happy with our help through donations also. Of course, we had quite a number of people who had known Jerry's mother and father, and they had known Jerry since he was knee-high, and all of his brothers. So they were very happy to chip in a few dollars here and there. It did help a great deal.

SOAPES: So getting volunteer help wasn't a problem?

CLARK: No, it truly wasn't. We had a cross-section of every area of the town and the county, and we really felt that we were well represented in every field of business and arts so forth and so on.

SOAPES: What about representation from the ethnic groups of the town?

CLARK: We had great representation. The black community was behind Jerry one hundred percent. And we had some very wonderful people that used to offer their help and did help us. Another thing about Jerry, a plus, there was no color line and there never had been from the time he was in school right straight through. In fact, one of his friends in school during, as I understand, I didn't know him at that time, but during his primary grades was a black boy, and he was very close.

SOAPES: I wasn't aware of that. What about some of the other

ethnic groups here in Grand Rapids, the Polish community and the Lithuanian community that were supposedly under the thumb of [Frank D.] McKay?

CLARK: Well, McKay didn't figure into this setup really as much as you might imagine, knowing a little of the history of Grand Rapids and how in future years there would be some trouble. But in that instance, no. They seemed to all get behind Jerry. I think because they all realized that here was an honest, true-speaking young man that was going to do something in Congress for this area. And it wasn't that Mr. [Bartel J.] Jonkman had not done things in former years, but it was time for a change. And it couldn't have come at a better time than when Jerry was able to step forward and offer himself.

SOAPES: So it is your recollection that the McKay image was not a dominate one in this campaign?

CLARK: No, no, not at all. I don't recall even discussing that with anyone, truthfully. Because whatever axe McKay had to grind didn't seem to come into what Jerry was representing. It might have later, I don't know. As I say, I didn't go on. The only thing I did do after Jerry was elected to Congress was take out his petitions and have them signed as he was re-elected. But outside of that, politics was out of my life. I just stuck to my dancing, my teaching.

SOAPES: We were talking about well-known people in the community. Of course, the Ford family was reasonably well-known, weren't they?

CLARK: Very well-known, I should say. Dorothy and Gerald, Senior were very active. Gerald, Senior had a group that I worked for that got volunteers for various businesses here in town. Of course, this being during the war, some of their people had long gone or there was not money available and they needed people to help. So we had typists and telephone operators and various types of people in the business world that could offer some time. He started this office going. I frankly can't remember the name of it at the present time, but I became interested in that and went down and supervised under this one gal who was the head of the whole thing and did my stint on that for a few years while it was going. But Dorothy, of course, was very active in many charitable organizations and adored the children and most particularly would spend her time with the children's organizations to help in whatever way she could. And her dear darling grandchildren were the apple of her eye.

SOAPES: The activities on election day, can you recall how you spent that election day? I'm talking about the primary when he defeated Jonkman.

CLARK: Yes, very well. We were, of course, sitting on edge. The first part of the day - - just get over there and vote and try to help out all you could. Be down at the hut and any calls that were coming in, anyone that called and wanted transportation to their voting place, we would see that they received it. We did

some phoning to various and sundry people just to jack them up, be sure that there were no stones left unturned. And then that evening we started to assemble over at Jack and Phoebe Stiles because that was where we were going to hear all of the results. It was all going to be the big gathering of all the people who had worked so hard and had been living in each other's mouths all those months. Of course, our spirits were way up there: we were just sure, there wasn't any doubt - - that, of course, he was going to be elected. Even though there was no doubt, naturally we were all waiting for the final words. And when they came, there was one wonderful roar of happiness. Right up to the last minute, Jerry was out smiling and campaigning.

SOAPES: You mentioned Jack Stiles as somebody who had ten ideas a day. That suggests to me an individual who was very energetic and was at the job, himself, all day long.

CLARK: Yes, he was. I don't believe Jack ate, slept, drank or lived anything but the Ford campaign for Congress during the whole while he was involved, which was from the very beginning. And he firmly believed in every angle and was coming up with new ones, as I say, ten new ones everyday, which was smart. It was a good way to work, because as he bounced them off our ears, if anyone had any addition to some particular thing that he had thought might be a good way to go or if someone said, "Oh, no, that isn't going to work out," because of this, that or the

other, he would listen. It would end up that we would be promoting something that was instrumental and being of some help.

SOAPES: So the campaign was run on sort of a consensus of those who were in the leadership positions.

CLARK: Yes, right, with Jack being the head of the whole thing, and then Jerry, of course. None of this was ever done without it all being presented to Jerry first, because he had his ideas too. He didn't want to have some high-flying idea go out and traverse the town and then it not be a success or have a lot of flack over it and have it come back and sit in his lap, which was understandable. Because a bunch of eager beavers such as we were could get into a sticky situation that we might not realize at the time, step on somebody's toes and they'd shriek and yell. Jerry, as I say, had the final say so. But there were very few things that were ever presented that Jerry objected to. He went on his way doing things that he could do best, which was speaking before the various groups that were gotten together throughout the county, not only Kent County, of course, but Ottawa too at that time. Then we went on our way doing our own jobs.

SOAPES: Did he ever attend these morning sessions?

CLARK: Yes. We had several meetings where he would talk to us and a little encouragement was given. If somebody looked as though they weren't getting their particular job done or they were getting some flack from some angle. Yes, we were always able to get to Jerry,

too, if in anyway we were worried about any particular thing or an overall subject. But, no, it wasn't a case where he was hiding in the back room or letting Jack handle everything.

SOAPES: But generally the suggestions coming from your group would go through Jack Stiles to him.

CLARK: Right.

SOAPES: Do you remember any ideas that you as a group decided to do that just failed miserably?

CLARK: Not off hand, truly, because these were hashed over so well and everybody had their two cents worth to put in that I think it got to that point, knowing Jerry and Jerry's character and so forth, there wasn't very much that you could come up with that would be far out or something that would be knocked down by presenting it to the public in general. You knew just about how far we could go, and we knew that principally because Jerry being the man that he was. None of us that worked for him and worked for this campaign were interested in doing any far-out little tricks.

SOAPES: There was no dirty tricks or - -

CLARK: No, no way. He wouldn't have stood for a second of that in the first place, and none of us that worked for him were interested in doing that. And if there was anyone in that group you can bet they didn't last very long. And I can't recall anybody offhand, myself - - of course that's so many years back. No, everyone that was there was determined that this was the way that things

were going to go - - on an honest basis.

SOAPES: One of the things that frequently happens in any organization is that there are sometimes some personality conflicts or somebody gets mad and has to leave. Did you have any episodes of that in this campaign?

CLARK: No, I don't remember a single one. If they came in to work and they found out that they couldn't put in that much time or they weren't that interested politically and they might have thought - - they don't need me, they've got all of these other people and there's no doubt in the world that Jerry's going to be elected - - then they would just step out. But I never had any occasion to witness any anger, any disgust, or any disagreement with our policy. Perhaps there might have been something, but if there was I'm not aware of it, and it certainly couldn't have been very important if I didn't hear about it.

SOAPES: One of the criticisms that was leveled at Ford after he was well-known on the national scene was that he was such a lousy speechmaker. Did this ever come up in the campaign for Congress?

CLARK: Well, the one thing that we used to keep saying to him, and whenever we sat and listened to him speak, we kept praying he wouldn't use his hands. He was a great one for emphasizing everything with his hand motions. We used to suggest all kinds of things to keep his hands quiet - - clasp them in the back; grab hold of the lecturn or whatever it is you are speaking before; stick them

in your pockets but not obviously so that they can tell you're standing there with your hands in your pockets. But keep your hands out of the action. Let them concentrate on your speech, your mouth and your general appearance in that fashion. And he did, as time went on, which was natural, and as all of us saw when he got into the presidency, as time went on and he spoke so frequently and you would see him so frequently, he did learn to keep those hands quiet. He learned a little bit in the beginning but not as much as we -- we hopped on him so often the poor fellow, I think he got a little annoyed after a while -- "What are hands made for?"

SOAPES: Did you ever just flat rehearse him on a speech?

CLARK: I didn't. I don't know whether Jack did or not, it could have been, could easily have been. Probably Betts [Betty Ford] might have -- he might have rehearsed in front of her for all I know. Because, of course, she being a fashion co-ordinator, she knew how to teach movement. She had to speak, announce fashions that were being shown during the shows, and she might have, I don't know. We never discussed that, but, could be. Somebody might have stepped in there and said, "Jerry, how would you like to have a little coaching?" One of the ones who could have done it very nicely would have been Cal [Mrs. Paul] Goebel because of course, she spoke, she wrote a column, and she gave book reviews and so forth. She could have helped out there and was a very close friend

of Dorothy and Jerry Sr., both she and Paul, I mean Senior. But as far as I know, no I don't recall that there was anyone just willy nilly sitting down there saying, "Jerry, keep your hands quiet." He always had a very forceful manner of speaking, and I think it has just grown with his experience.

SOAPES: Do you remember any feeling of frustration on the part of the campaign management that his speaking was not turning on a crowd, wasn't getting the job done?

CLARK: As far as the campaign was concerned, no, I don't think so, because they were so delighted to see this young, honest, open-faced, intelligent man stepping into this position where he had a chance to be elected fifth district representative in Congress. I don't believe there was anything derogatory in their acceptance of him, thinking that he was a poor speaker. I think that was sort of as time went on after he got into Congress or perhaps not so much when he was just a congressman but as he became more prominent and then the vice-presidency came up and then the presidency. I think that those who were not Ford backers who were inclined to say, "He is no speaker." Well, I'd rather listen to Jerry hesitate and give a speech than listen to the most oily tongued politician get up there and know every word and never miss a beat and then wonder afterwards, what was that he said?

SOAPES: How did the local press react to his campaign?

CLARK: Very well, very well. He got very good coverage, both on the radio and in the paper. We had two papers at that time, we had the Grand Rapids Herald and the Grand Rapids Press. So he had a chance, two shots, plus, of course, the small-town papers in the surrounding areas that were interested in his campaign. And they all were, naturally, because Jonkman had been in for some while and here at last was something to look forward to and they could delve into it, and they did. They didn't hesitate in the least. They got every inch of publicity they could out of that.

SOAPES: Then after Ford was elected, he had the job of keeping his ties back here. How do you recall him doing that?

CLARK: He used to come home every once in a while. And, of course, during the recess of Congress, he and Betty would come in and stay here. They would be here during the recess, and he would travel out into the counties and kept in touch with everybody. He had a phenomenal memory for people and their names; it was astounding. He had evidently made up his mind that he wasn't going to be one of those kind that would meet somebody and the name would go in one ear and out the other. He had ways of remembering. I don't know how he did it. But they would be around for the time of the congressional recess. Those were the times when he would go out in the county or go visit groups. And he had this bus that they would man; so he was able to meet all of those engagements. There were many people who were most interested in hearing what he had to say, what was going on

up there in Washington. And that was the one thing about Jerry that I've always said and everyone else that I know of that favors him, and they are of course legion here in this area. He was there at the sessions of Congress, and if he by any chance could not be there he saw to it that he knew exactly what went on in every session. He was an avid reader - - took all the newspapers. I swear, I don't know how he got through them all. And he had a staff that would cut out and reserve the papers for him so that he could read anything. There was no phase of government that he didn't get into and at least be able to know, and if he didn't know he didn't hesitate to say, "I don't know all about that that I should, but I certainly will look into it and see that you get your answers." You could write to him and ask him to do anything for you, and he was right on it. You'd get a letter back in very short order. Occasionally, when they would find out in later years that I had been the campaign women's committee head, during his initial voting into Congress, I would get some snide remark passed. I would always say, "If you want to know how he stands on that particular subject that you are interested in and you think that he is against that, or whatever your thoughts are on him, you don't know him, so why don't you write him a letter and I'll assure you, you will get the answer just exactly as he thinks it out." And I had several people come to me and say, "I was dumbfounded - - such a wonderful letter and he explained things that I actually didn't know were true, and I was blaming him because

he wasn't representing this particular thing that I was interested in. So that always made me feel good.

SOAPES: Getting back to the campaign for a minute. Did he make any special pitch to women or to women's issues? I know they weren't as prominent then as they are now but was there any effort then?

CLARK: No, not other than hoping that we would be interested and in continuing to support things that would include women. He was always most interested in seeing that women played a role in government. Of course in later years it was, as you say, much more prominent a question and an issue. But Jerry never pooh-poohed any of that and was very anxious, as I say, that women find a part in government because there was much that a woman could do that might be even more appealing, naturally, to the rest of the women than anyone would, offhand, think about.

SOAPES: Were you the only woman who was on the campaign committee?

CLARK: Yes, as far as membership was concerned, I was it. It didn't mean that there weren't gals in there working, but there was never anybody that was officially women's committee except myself. And as I said, Carol Josephson was the one that turned out to be the prize possession that we had.

SOAPES: Even though your portfolio was the women's committee, you were involved in a great many other things in the campaign, other

than just the women's activities.

CLARK: Oh, yes. For instance, there were letters written by various prominent local citizens and of town people and so on, and I would take care of that end of things often times and see to it that the whole thing was put together into a package and then perhaps all mailed out to whomever they were to go. But anything that came up that had to do with the Quonset hut, because I was down there from early morning, sometimes we'd open the place, until whatever time we decided to cut out.

SOAPES: So in addition to being head of the women's committee, you were really running the Quonset hut in its routine operations.

CLARK: That's right, that's right, yes. I was always there. And if I wasn't, it was somebody that I had seen to it would be in my place, because, of course the secretary is busier than a one-armed paper hanger with a typewriter.

SOAPES: How did your relationship with the Fords progress after he went to Congress?

CLARK: Well, of course, their first child Michael, who is now the minister, I am his godmother. We kept in touch through letters and phone calls and when they would come home we'd be together. And then when Jack was born, of course, just two years later, it was as though they were twins. And so I treated them as though they were twins - - when one got something the other one got

the very same thing. I sent them a play set, I remember one time, one of these outdoor play sets, the swings, and the bars, and the slides and so forth. And I had written and told Betty to be sure and tell the boys to be watching for the delivery man, and I guess the poor kids sat out there on the curb expecting them to arrive any minute. And, oh, they were thrilled to death. They had all the children in the neighborhood over there and I guess that poor thing really saw a lot of work. But Betty, of course, was always interested when I put on my spring shows from the dancing school. Once in a while she would manage to get home for it. And anything that I was working on, choreographing or something of the sort for my students for the show, and if she could help out in anyway through Washington, pictures or things of the sort, little articles and ideas, she would send them on to me. So I kept in touch with everything in general and all of them. And they'd come here and Jerry would come along and we would manage to shriek at each other and wish tender love and care to the rest of the family. It's been a very close association all these years and I've been very proud of the progress that Jerry has made and that Betty has been such a wonderful mother to those children. And it hasn't been easy with her illnesses.

SOAPES: I was going to ask if you were able to watch how she was able to adapt and react.

CLARK: In the beginning when Jerry was away so much, you know. And she was raising the children and she had that pinched

nerve that developed in the back of her neck, I said that I knew exactly how that happened - - in a moment of anger probably - - heaven knows what had gotten in there at that point to make her angry. But all dancers feel that they can conquer anything, nothing is too much for a dancer. If you wish to raise a window, the window will raise, and if it doesn't raise you better watch out - - it's liable to get kicked out. But I said, "I knew exactly what was in your mind when you tried to raise that window. It wouldn't at first so you gave it all you had and it was too much. It really threw you because you were tightened up in the first place and that's what snapped the old nerve." So the poor kid really had a dreadful time, having to cope with the vagaries of the teenagers - - I mean they were beautifully behaved children, but still they were human. It wasn't easy; it wasn't easy at all. Betty and Jerry were so close, and she needed that encouragement and that hand on her shoulder, and it wasn't possible for him to be there all the while. She was fortunate that she had help. Clara [Powell] was a marvelous person who stayed on there through thick and thin, and she had some very fine neighbors who were like godparents almost, in some respects. And then of course, Tom's wife, Janet Ford, was very, very close to Betty and was there a good bit of the time too - - she traveled back and forth. But I'd always get the birth announcements and the pictures of the gathering of the clan and all of the cute little things that happened and once in a while a childish scrawl. Mike

always introduces me as, "This is my godmother who gave me a check every birthday and every Christmas all those years." And he used to tote up the years and say the exact number. Now he and Gayle have a daughter and Gayle wrote me at Christmas and said, "Now does it mean because Mike is your godson that Sarah is your great goddaughter?" [Laughter]

SOAPES: One thing you were telling before we started recording was that this house has a history in Betty Ford's family.

CLARK: Yes, right. Arthur Godwin, who formerly owned the home, had married Betty's mother, Hortense Bloomer. So Betty was living here before she married Jerry -- so it has a lot of history. And it was just out of the blue that my husband bought the place. He wasn't aware particularly at that time -- though he knew Betty and Jerry, but not as well, of course, as I had -- of the connection with the Fords.

SOAPES: That's very interesting.