



My Life

By Bill Clinton

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My Life By Bill Clinton

President Bill Clinton's *My Life* is the strikingly candid portrait of a global leader who decided early in life to devote his intellectual and political gifts, and his extraordinary capacity for hard work, to serving the public.

It shows us the progress of a remarkable American, who, through his own enormous energies and efforts, made the unlikely journey from Hope, Arkansas, to the White House—a journey fueled by an impassioned interest in the political process which manifested itself at every stage of his life: in college, working as an intern for Senator William Fulbright; at Oxford, becoming part of the Vietnam War protest movement; at Yale Law School, campaigning on the grassroots level for Democratic candidates; back in Arkansas, running for Congress, attorney general, and governor.

We see his career shaped by his resolute determination to improve the life of his fellow citizens, an unfaltering commitment to civil rights, and an exceptional understanding of the practicalities of political life.

We come to understand the emotional pressures of his youth—born after his father's death; caught in the dysfunctional relationship between his feisty, nurturing mother and his abusive stepfather, whom he never ceased to love and whose name he took; drawn to the brilliant, compelling Hillary Rodham, whom he was determined to marry; passionately devoted, from her infancy, to their daughter, Chelsea, and to the entire experience of fatherhood; slowly and painfully beginning to comprehend how his early denial of pain led him at times into damaging patterns of behavior.

President Clinton's book is also the fullest, most concretely detailed, most nuanced account of a presidency ever written—encompassing not only the high points and crises but the way the presidency actually works: the day-to-day bombardment of problems, personalities, conflicts, setbacks, achievements.

It is a testament to the positive impact on America and on the world of his work and his ideals.

It is the gripping account of a president under concerted and unrelenting assault orchestrated by his enemies on the Far Right, and how he survived and prevailed.

It is a treasury of moments caught alive, among them:

- The ten-year-old boy watching the national political conventions on his family's new (and first) television set.
- The young candidate looking for votes in the Arkansas hills and the local seer who tells him, "Anybody who would campaign at a beer joint in Joiner at midnight on Saturday night deserves to carry one box. . . . You'll win here. But it'll be the only damn place you win in this county." (He was right on both counts.)
- The roller-coaster ride of the 1992 campaign.
- The extraordinarily frank exchanges with Newt Gingrich and Bob Dole.
- The delicate manipulation needed to convince Rabin and Arafat to shake hands for the camera while keeping Arafat from kissing Rabin.
- The cost, both public and private, of the scandal that threatened the presidency.

Here is the life of a great national and international figure, revealed with all his talents and contradictions, told openly, directly, in his own completely recognizable voice. A unique book by a unique American.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

An exhaustive, soul-searching memoir, Bill Clinton's *My Life* is a refreshingly candid look at the former president as a son, brother, teacher, father, husband, and public figure. Clinton painstakingly outlines the history behind his greatest successes and failures, including his dedication to educational and economic reform, his war against a "vast right-wing operation" determined to destroy him, and the "morally indefensible" acts for which he was nearly impeached. *My Life* is autobiography as therapy--a personal history written by a man trying to face and banish his private demons.

Clinton approaches the story of his youth with gusto, sharing tales of giant watermelons, nine-pound tumors, a charging ram, famous mobsters and jazz musicians, and a BB gun standoff. He offers an equally energetic portrait of American history, pop culture, and the evolving political landscape, covering the historical events that shaped his early years (namely the deaths of Martin Luther King Jr. and JFK) and the events that shaped his presidency (Waco, Bosnia, Somalia). What makes *My Life* remarkable as a political memoir is how thoroughly it is infused with Clinton's unassuming, charmingly pithy voice:

I learned a lot from the stories my uncle, aunts, and grandparents told me: that no one is perfect but most people are good; that people can't be judged only by their worst or weakest moments; that harsh judgments can make hypocrites of us all; that a lot of life is just showing up and hanging on; that laughter is often the best, and sometimes the only, response to pain.

However, that same voice might tire readers as Clinton applies his penchant for minute details to a distractible laundry list of events, from his youth through the years of his presidency. Not wanting to forget a single detail that might help account for his actions, Clinton overdoes it--do we really need to know the name of his childhood barber? But when Clinton sticks to the meat of his story--recollections about Mother, his abusive stepfather, Hillary, the campaign trail, and Kenneth Starr--the veracity of emotion and *Kitchen Confidential*-type revelations about "what it is like to be President" make *My Life* impossible to put down.

To Clinton, "politics is a contact sport," and while he claims that *My Life* is not intended to make excuses or assign blame, it does portray him as a fighter whose strategy is to "take the first hit, then counterpunch as hard as I could." While *My Life* is primarily a stroll through Clinton's memories, it is also a scathing rebuke--a retaliation against his detractors, including Kenneth Starr, whose "mindless search for scandal" protected the guilty while "persecuting the innocent" and distracted his Administration from pressing international matters (including strikes on al Qaeda). Counterpunch indeed.

At its core, *My Life* is a charming and intriguing if flawed book by an equally intriguing and flawed man who had his worst failures and humiliations made public. Ultimately, the man who left office in the shadow of scandal offers an honest and open account of his life, allowing readers to witness his struggle to "drain the most out of every moment" while maintaining the character with which he was raised. It is a remarkably intimate, persuasive look at the boy he was, the President he became, and man he is today. --*Daphne Durham*

From Publishers Weekly

Former President William Jefferson Clinton's hotly anticipated 957-page doorstep of a memoir is much like its author-charismatic, longwinded, and, many might say, deeply flawed. The first Democratic president to be elected to a second term since FDR in 1936, Clinton has lived what is by any account an eventful,

inspiring life. As explained in early passages notable for their frankness and humanity, Clinton, born to humble Arkansas roots, never knew his father. William Jefferson Blythe was killed in an automobile accident just months before his son's birth. Clinton adored his mother, Virginia, a nurse with a large, loving family and a harmless penchant for the racetrack. Difficulties began when Virginia married Roger Clinton, who struggled with alcohol and a violent temper. A turbulent home life and the vagaries of a segregated South, however, only pushed the gregarious Clinton to achieve. He became interested in politics at an early age. He wrote, debated, played the saxophone, and eventually made it to Georgetown and Oxford universities, a law practice, then to Little Rock and the governor's mansion, and eventually to the White House. Clinton's administration was equally dramatic. Domestically, he fought to balance the federal budget, presided over a government shutdown, and beat back a conservative cultural backlash. Diplomatically, Clinton skirmished with a bellicose Saddam Hussein, ended a genocidal crisis in Bosnia, accelerated the Mideast peace process until its eventual collapse, and began to deal with the budding threat posed by Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda. To top that off, he left office in 2000 amid the bizarre Bush/Gore electoral crisis. Of course, what Clinton is also remembered for are the scandals that plagued his efforts. Beginning with Gennifer Flowers in the 1992 campaign, to Whitewater, Travelgate, the FBI file scandal, Paula Jones and ultimately the Monica Lewinsky affair that led to his historic impeachment, Clinton endured what then First Lady Hillary Clinton termed a "vast right-wing conspiracy" to push him from office. The most interesting passages of Clinton's memoir reveal a simmering, deep animosity toward special prosecutor Ken Starr. Clinton defiantly blisters Starr as an unethical, overreaching partisan who illegally leaked details of his investigations to the press; exceeded his authority; humiliated, bankrupted and jailed innocent people for not playing ball; and served only to ring up huge legal bills for the Clintons, their staff and supporters. Certainly, Clinton's memoir has the raw material for a blockbuster book. But the sheer deluge of information is mind-numbing. Rather than expose the hurricane's eye of a remarkable life and an eventful presidency, the book instead blurs into an unrelenting blizzard of names, dates, campaigns, speeches, events, handshakes, tangential observations, memories, meetings, cities and towns, and anecdotes. The result is a narrative that obscures any meaningful measure of Clinton's true character and values. Save for his strong feelings about Starr, Clinton offers only brief personal assessments of the colorful personalities with whom he crossed paths, including his wife, Hillary Clinton, Al Gore and James Carville, opponents like George Bush, Bob Dole and Ross Perot, or world leaders such as Boris Yeltsin, and Yasser Arafat. Monica Lewinsky also escapes any meaningful scrutiny. Most frustratingly, Clinton, while admitting mistakes, offers no deep personal introspection. In an excerpt from a high school essay, Clinton wrote that he was a "living paradox," who "detests selfishness but sees it in the mirror everyday." That passage marks the most insightful stroke of self-analysis in the book. Yet while lacking immediacy, the book nevertheless manages a certain gravitas, if only for being a painstakingly thorough act of recollection. Given the fevered "tell-all" anticipation surrounding the book's publication, however, it is certain to disappoint many readers even as it sells an astonishing number of copies. Some of that disappointment, however, was inevitable. After all, *My Life* is a presidential memoir, a historically self-serving category of autobiography alone unto itself and very much an extension of presidential politics--a profession that is never "tell-all." Even more tricky, Clinton's wife, Hillary, now the junior Senator from New York, is very much still in politics. When matched against other presidential memoirs, though, Clinton's scores favorably, certainly exceeding the flaccid efforts of his most recent predecessors, Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush. Still, Clinton, a popular, gifted orator with a clear mastery of public policy, has missed, or, perhaps, passed on, a golden opportunity to offer a truly resonant portrait of his embattled presidency or an enduring political vision.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

"It sure is a good story," Clinton writes in his prologue. Really, it is. You just need to wade through the myriad names, dates, and details of this "big puffy plum cake of an autobiography" to make sense of his panoramic story (*New York Times Book Review*). As *The New York Times* points out, *My Life* is "part policy

primer, part 12-step confessional, part stump speech and part presidential archive.” Despite his serious lack of focus, Clinton is characteristically charming and fascinating throughout. Critics agree that the best parts center on his poignant descriptions of his Arkansas childhood, sympathetic look at his alcoholic stepfather, and controversial treatment of the “character issue.” As for Monica? You’ll just have to wait and see.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Gina Hill:

The book My Life gives you the sense of being enjoy for your spare time. You should use to make your capable considerably more increase. Book can to get your best friend when you getting stress or having big problem along with your subject. If you can make reading a book My Life to get your habit, you can get more advantages, like add your own capable, increase your knowledge about some or all subjects. It is possible to know everything if you like wide open and read a e-book My Life. Kinds of book are a lot of. It means that, science reserve or encyclopedia or other individuals. So , how do you think about this e-book?

David Marx:

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Kelly McDowell:

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Alejandro Wisdom:

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