

JULY 1, 2001

# THE SUNDAY TIMES Magazine



## THE LAST SCANDAL

In the dying hours of his presidency, an embittered Bill Clinton plotted one final outrage



# SET MY PEOPLE FREE

In his final hours as  
president, Bill Clinton  
pardoned murderers,  
tax evaders, embezzlers  
and drug dealers.

Was money, malice or  
mercy behind this  
last scandalous act?

Christine Toomey reports



J. H. ALTSCHUL, JOE ANDERSON JR.,  
 WELAND VICTOR BABIN JR., CHRIS  
 BARBER, PEGGY ANN BARGON,  
 THUR BORDERS JR., ARTHUR DAVID  
 MON GLENN BRASWELL, LEONARD  
 SON, aka DELORES COX BURLESON,  
 MARIA, DENNIS SOBREVINAS CAPIA,  
 ALD KEITH CHAPMAN, FRANCISCO  
 ARRIS COHN, DAVID MARC COOPER,  
 TAM, RICHARD ANTHONY DE LABIO,  
 MARVIN DEAN DUDLEY, LARRY LEE  
 ALVAREZ FERROUILLET, WILLIAM  
 E GORDON, PINGUS GREEN, ROBERT  
 OLEY, JAY HOUSTON HARMON, JOHN  
 NALD RAY JAMES, STANLEY PRUET  
 ONE LOUISE LEWIS, SALIM BONNOR  
 JULIO LUACES, JAMES TIMOTHY  
 FRANK AYALA MARTINEZ, SILVIA  
 H McDUGAL, HOWARD LAWRENCE  
 AN III, SAMUEL LORING MORISON,  
 VERNON RAYMOND OBERMEIER,  
 LI ANNE PERHOSKY, RICHARD H  
 R, NORMAN LYLE PROUSE, WILLIE H  
 L, WILLIAM CLYDE RAY, ALFREDO  
 WARD WINFIELD RIDDLE, RICHARD  
 RIGUEZ, MICHAEL JAMES ROGERS,  
 E JUNE RUTHERFORD, GREGORY LEE  
 CAMPBELL HEARST SHAW, DENNIS  
 EN A SMITH, JIMMIE LEE SPEAKE,  
 COLLINS, JOHN FIFE SYMINGTON III,  
 EN THOMAS, LARRY WELDON TODD,  
 EERD, CHRISTOPHER V WADE, BILL  
 INA LYNN WEBB, DONALD WILLIAM  
 UR WILLIAMS, ROBERT MICHAEL  
 WINGATE, MITCHELL COUEY WOOD,  
 ALE, JOSEPH A YASAK, WILLIAM  
 S: BENJAMIN BERGER, RONALD  
 RGO, CHARLES F CAMPBELL, DAVID  
 ORETA DE-ANN COFFMAN, DERRICK  
 RETTA SHARON FISH, ANTOINETTE  
 BRAEL, KIMBERLY JOHNSON, BILLY  
 DONALD, KELLIE ANN MANN, PETER  
 ELVIN J REYNOLDS, PEDRO MIGUEL  
 N, CORY STRINGFELLOW, CARLOS  
 EY WEINIG, KIM ALLEN WILLIS

Left: the names of the 177 people who  
 had their sentences commuted or  
 their crimes pardoned by Bill Clinton  
 on his last night at the White House

S

outh Oak Street, Roanoke. January 20, 2001. It is early morning, and Alberta Lincecum, an 84-year-old former waitress, has not slept. Sitting on a sofa in her run-down clapboard house, she has been anxiously flicking through television channels for news of her son, from a man far removed from this small, one-time cattle-driving town in east Texas. The man has been awake all night too, sitting at his desk in the Oval Office of the White House. In the waning hours of his presidency, Bill Clinton has been consumed by his final exercise of executive power: granting clemency to criminals.

After eight years in office, Clinton is determined to correct his record of having granted one of the lowest numbers of presidential pardons. He wants to go out looking magnanimous. But he is in a dangerous mood. He is a man with a grudge. He is still deeply aggrieved by the humiliation of his impeachment, which in these final hours has come back to haunt him. He is incensed at what he sees as overzealous prosecutors. He is convinced the Justice Department has been sitting on deserving cases. So for months he has let it be known that he will also consider applications for clemency that bypass the department's normal vetting channels. Three days previously, he even wandered back to the press section of Air Force One, joking: "You got anybody you want to pardon?"

Had he known that this granting of 177 pardons and sentence commutations would destroy what credibility was left of one of the most controversial presidencies in US history, he might have been more circumspect.

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

The problem with Clinton's final acts of clemency is rooted in the corruption that many ordinary Americans, such as Alberta Lincecum, came to believe lay at the core of a presidency that started with promise but became mired by numerous scandals. After Whitewater, Filegate, Travelgate, his lies about Monica Lewinsky, and the revelation that nights in the Lincoln bedroom had been virtually "sold" to big Democrat donors, it seemed fair for many to assume that presidential favours had a price. Alberta – a former Democrat supporter who once gave \$25 to the party at a chicken fry-up – certainly thought so.

When her eldest son was sentenced to seven years' jail for his role in a multi-million-dollar investment scam three years ago, Alberta was so convinced of his innocence she vowed she'd do anything to get him free. She was not wealthy, and had no political connections. But friends of her son had heard there was a way to persuade the president to grant a pardon. The FBI has visited her and warned her to keep quiet; an investigation into Clinton's final clemencies is under way. So Alberta is careful about what she says. But she is also very clear.

Shortly after Garland was convicted, Alberta says she heard Guy, her younger son, receiving assurances over the phone that a payment to CLM – a company in Little Rock, Arkansas, with which the caller claimed Clinton's half-brother Roger, was associated – would help get him out of jail. Alberta didn't hesitate. She drained her pension fund of \$100,000. Guy did the same, she says, and took two cheques to Little Rock made out to CLM for a total of \$200,000.

"I'm a country gal. I believe what people tell me," says Alberta. "I firmly believed Bill Clinton would do anything to help his younger brother. ➤➤➤



I guess I thought some of this money would end up in the president's pocket."

First the family was led to believe that clemency would come through quickly, then they were assured that Garland would be one of those pardoned in December. Alberta was so certain her son would be home for Christmas, she laid out presents for him under the tree. It didn't happen. By the night of January 19, Alberta was both agitated and excited. It had been widely reported that more pardons would be issued before the president left office on January 20. "I felt sure my Garland would be coming home," says Alberta.

Families of other convicts also had good reason to be confident of a pardon, including Horatio Vignali, the father of a convicted drug dealer and aspiring rap singer, Carlos Vignali. Vignali Jr, 29, had been sentenced to 15 years in jail in 1994 for his role in a scheme to ship \$5m of cocaine from his home in Los Angeles for sale as crack on the streets of Minneapolis. For years, Horatio Vignali had been lobbying heavily in political circles to free his son. He also made substantial political donations; a total of \$160,000 to two California governors and two contenders for the office of LA mayor. Several wrote letters supporting Vignali's appeal for a presidential pardon. It was refused.

But as the Clinton years wound down, Carlos Vignali told his father: "Word around prison is that it's the right time to approach the president" – by side-stepping the Justice Department and getting an application into the papers laid directly in the Oval Office. Who better to do this than another of the Clintons' close relatives, Hillary's younger brother, Hugh Rodham? The Florida-based lawyer, a regular golfing partner of the president, was known in certain circles to be willing to help. So Horatio Vignali sent off cheques totalling \$204,280.

Also waiting anxiously for news on January 20 was Denise Rich, the former wife of one of the most notorious fugitives from American justice, the multi-millionaire commodities trader Marc Rich. Rich and his partner, Pincus Green, had fled the US in 1983 after being indicted on 51 counts of avoiding \$48m in tax and "trading with the enemy" after a series of oil transactions with Iran. The pair renounced American citizenship, took up joint Israeli-Spanish nationality and fled to Switzerland. For nearly 20 years they thumbed their noses at federal investigators, and amassed a fortune as one of the world's largest commodity firms, based in the small Swiss lakeside town of Zug, near Zürich.

Denise Rich, a successful songwriter, had divorced her husband in 1996 after his affair with a glamorous Swiss widow, and returned to the US with an estimated settlement of \$200m. They didn't talk for years. Marc Rich tried to cut a deal with federal prosecutors in New York. When this failed he launched a bid to get a presidential pardon. He asked Denise, by now a close friend of the Clintons and a generous Democrats donor, for help. At first she refused, not wanting to compromise Clinton. But slowly she relented. The death of the Riches' daughter from leukaemia had, she said, "put forgiveness in her heart".

At a White House dinner shortly before Christmas last year, at which she was seated at the president's table, Denise Rich pulled Clinton to one side and told him how much it would mean to her if he reviewed her husband's case. She enlisted the support of a rich friend, Beth Dozoretz, a prominent Democrat fundraiser, to push for Rich to be pardoned. Both women were frequent guests of the Clintons, and on the last night of Clinton's presidency, January 19, were invited to the White House for a farewell party.

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

The White House was in a frenzy that night. Most of its occupants were too busy to attend parties. Hillary Rodham Clinton and Chelsea Clinton were in the private residence at the heart of the building, packing. Rumours that the first couple had a wedding-list-style account to which supporters could make donations in their final months at the White House would later be vigorously denied. But the Clintons were subsequently asked to return \$28,000 worth of the items they took from the White House, after donors complained that the gifts had been intended for the presidential living quarters rather than as personal property, and would also pay \$86,000 for items they did not hand back.

Hillary's brother Hugh was also packing. He had spent so much time staying with his sister that he filled more crates even than Chelsea. Hugh, 50, and his younger brother, Tony, a former Miami private eye – known as "the Boys" by White House staff and regarded as "double trouble" by Clinton's advisers – were always hustling to make money out of their presidential connections, telling would-be business associates they could be reached at "the House".



**'I GUESS I THOUGHT SOME OF  
THIS MONEY WOULD END UP IN THE  
PRESIDENT'S POCKET'**



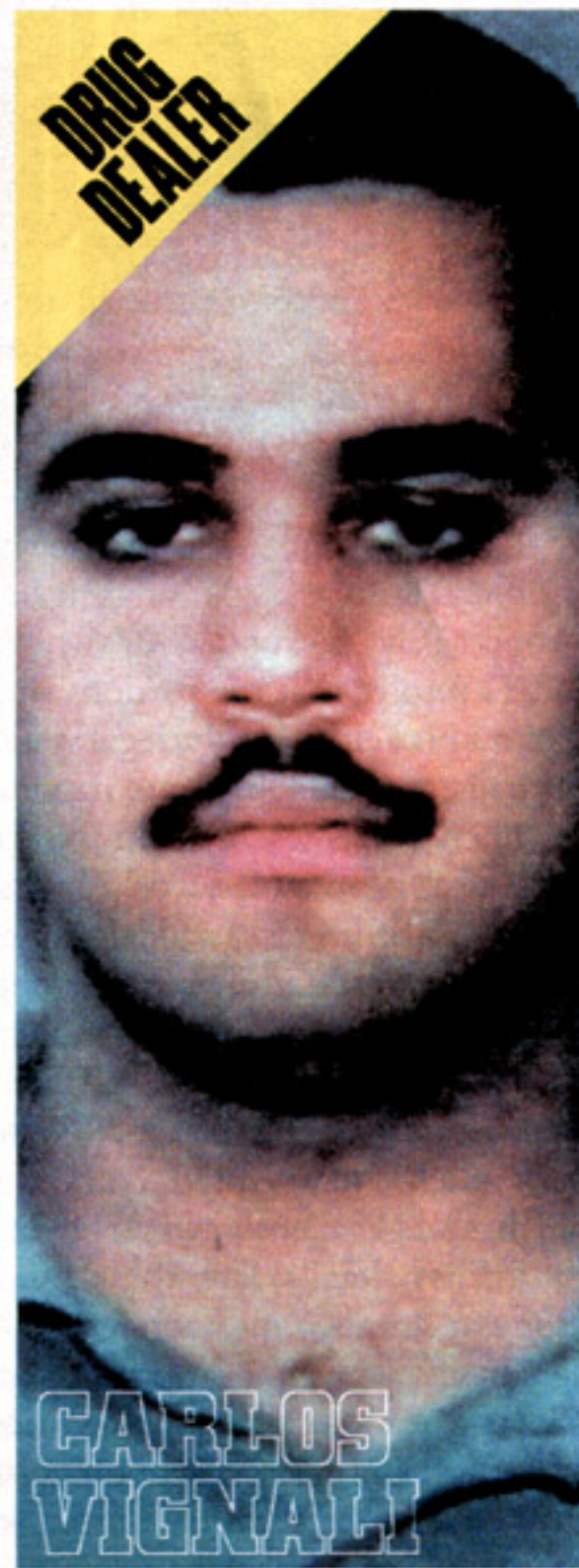
# I BEG YOUR PARDON



DOROTHY RIVERS



MARC RICH

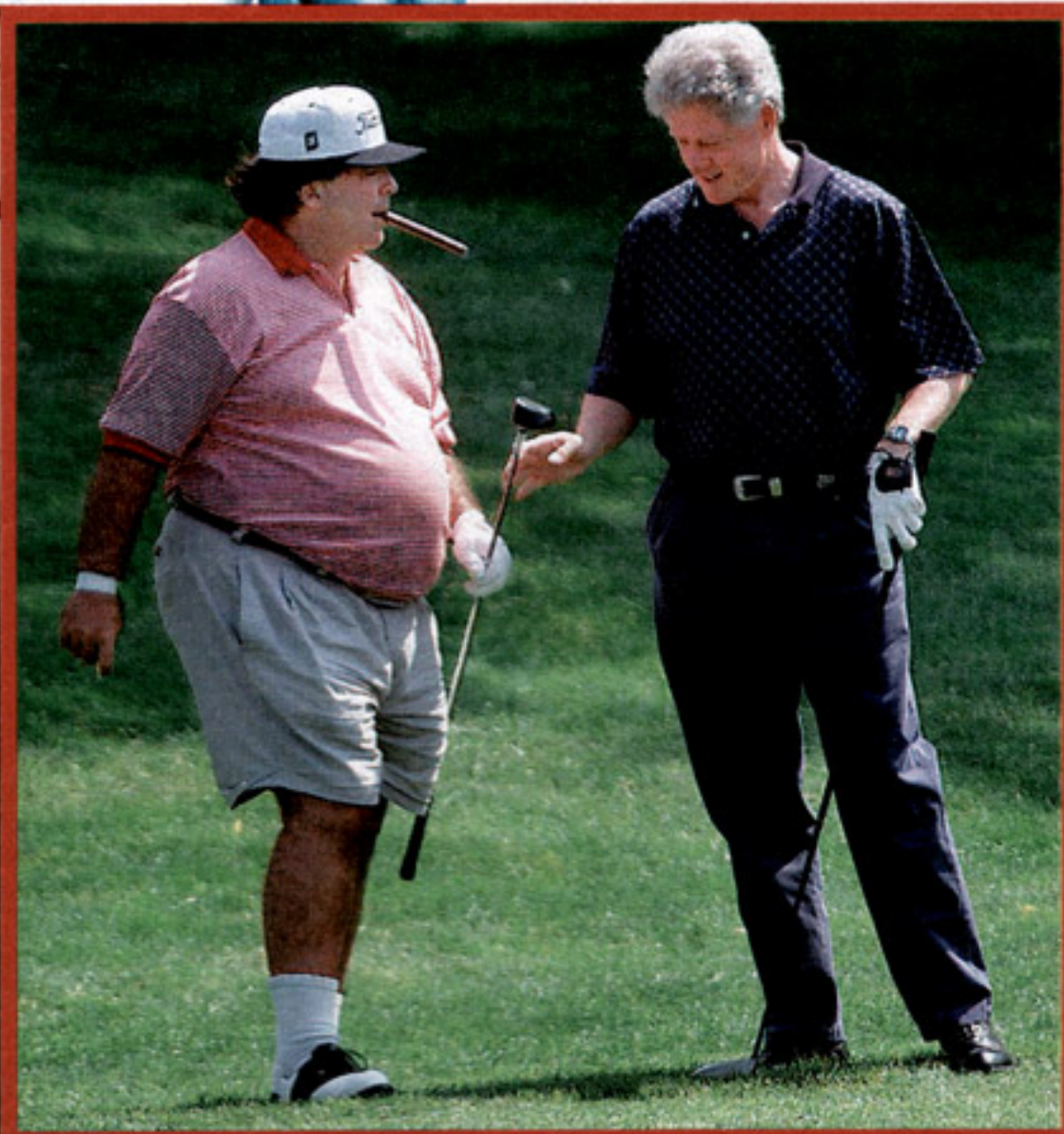


CARLOS VIGNALI



GLENN BRASWELL

**Left: Denise Rich (here with Sarah Ferguson), gave more than \$1.5m to the Clintons' political causes before her husband, Marc Rich, was pardoned. Below: Clinton with his brother-in-law Hugh Rodham, who is said to have been given over \$400,000 for lobbying for Vignali's and Braswell's pardons. The pardon of Dorothy Rivers, who stole \$1.2m worth of grants to buy personal luxuries, also caused outrage**



Bill Clinton's half-brother, Roger, a reformed drug addict and actor in the film *Pumpkinhead II*, had also been a frequent visitor. Code-named "Headache" by the Secret Service, he'd moved to California. No records have been released confirming if he was in the White House on this last night or not. Clinton himself, wearing jeans, sweatshirt and baseball cap, spent part of that evening tossing personal effects into crates bound either for the Clintons' new home in Chappaqua, New York, for their \$2.8m house near Washington's Embassy Row, or for his \$200m presidential library project on the banks of the Arkansas river in Little Rock. White House stewards, hurrying to get the building ready for George W Bush, worried that Clinton would never get out in time.

Red-eyed and puffy-faced, Clinton had been "running on empty" for days. John Podesta, his fourth and final chief of staff, says that although "there was some nostalgia... in general, people, including the president, were in a pretty good mood". But others have reported that Clinton, though genial and animated one minute, was reflective, misty-eyed and short-tempered the next.

At the height of the Monica Lewinsky affair, on the day of his impeachment in December 1998, he had vowed to serve the American people "until the last hour of the last day" of his term. Determined to keep his word, in his last few months in office he signed 29,000 pages of orders ranging from new testing procedures for bacteria in hot dogs, to regulations governing chicken feed and levels of arsenic in drinking water. He nominated eight new national monuments. He also continued until the very last day working to further peace negotiations in Northern Ireland and the Middle East.

There had been a string of farewell parties, the largest in a marquee on the south lawn. Clinton had arrived aboard his 1992 campaign bus, as Fleetwood Mac struck up his old theme song, *Don't Stop Thinking about Tomorrow*. By the last night, however, Clinton spent no more than a few minutes at the several farewell gatherings in different parts of the White House. There were others also too busy for parties. A few disappointed members of failed presidential candidate Al Gore's staff were determined to show their anger at the outcome of the election through mindless acts of vandalism. But most aides had been busy that day clearing desks, and settling phone bills and accounts in the canteen. They tossed their passes and beepers into crates, convinced their job was done. But by mid-afternoon, Jake Siewart, Clinton's press secretary, was scrambling for his beeper. News had leaked that the president had been pressed into cutting a last-minute deal with the independent counsel Robert Ray, successor to Kenneth Starr, Clinton's nemesis in the Lewinsky scandal. He would ➤

OPPOSITE: LAURA WALTERS/GETTY IMAGES. THIS PAGE, LEFT: EPA PHOTO AFP/TIM SLOANE. TOP, SECOND FROM LEFT: AP. TOP LEFT: CHICAGO TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO



# ACADEMICS CONDEMNED THE PRESIDENT'S USE OF THE PRIVILEGE AS 'REVOLTING' AND 'SORDID'

avoid indictment after leaving office in return for acknowledging that he "knowingly gave evasive and misleading answers" in a deposition during the Lewinsky affair. But his law licence would be suspended for five years and he'd have to pay a fine of \$25,000. The timing of the deal was, says Podesta, "cheap".

It put Clinton in a defiant frame of mind – and it set the scene for the fiasco that followed. Later that night, Clinton shut himself in the Oval Office for his last piece of official business: finalising his list of pardons and sentence commutations. Robert Ray had rubbed raw wounds left by Starr, and stiffened the outgoing leader's resolve that the pardons should send a powerful message to prosecutors about his belief that the legal system was fundamentally unfair.

The media had expected Clinton to make an announcement about the pardons at 5pm. Then it was rescheduled for 9pm. As both deadlines came and went, it became clear he intended working into the night. With him for part of that time were some of his closest aides: Podesta, Beth Nolan, a former White House counsel, and Bruce Lindsey, former deputy White House counsel and a trusted troubleshooter. Their job was to guide Clinton on the merits of various pardon applications. For months, Nolan had been lobbied by those seeking pardons. She gave up attending parties: "Nobody wanted to know how I was, thank you very much. They wanted to know about a pardon." Nolan now says she was aware that Roger Clinton was lobbying for certain pardons, though she will give no further details. But she denies she knew anything of Hugh Rodham's lobbying. Lindsey, meanwhile, admits he knew about Rodham's lobbying for Vignali but says he knew nothing about Roger Clinton's involvement.

The number of heavyweights lobbying on behalf of Marc Rich, however, was never in doubt. On his last day in office, Clinton says he received a phone call from Ehud Barak to wish him well, thank him for his efforts on behalf of

the peace process and to press the president to pardon both Jonathan Pollard, the American convicted of spying for Israel, and Rich, a generous supporter of Israeli causes. Dozens of other Israeli dignitaries had already written to Clinton advocating a pardon for Rich, including the former Israeli prime minister Shimon Peres. King Juan Carlos of Spain was another supporter – Rich had made generous donations to Spanish charities too. The former White House counsel Jack Quinn, a close friend of Clinton's, had also joined the team of international lawyers trying to get Rich pardoned.

Podesta, Nolan and Lindsey unanimously advised Clinton against pardoning Rich, a fugitive who had shown no remorse for his alleged crimes. As the night wore on, Podesta left the White House for a television interview and Clinton called Quinn. He wanted to discuss possible terms of a clemency deal for Rich. When Nolan realised Clinton was still considering pardoning Rich, she warned him that there had been allegations that Rich had been involved in arms trading. Clinton dismissed her concerns.

"It was 2.30 in the morning. My eyes were officially stuck together," Nolan explained. "I think, frankly, because this came up so late we didn't do the kind of checks we'd have done if we had more time." She describes how Clinton spent the night demanding that the FBI, already engaged in carrying out checks on Bush appointees, furnish him with complete criminal records of others he was considering pardoning. It was an impossible task; he wanted answers within hours to a process that normally takes weeks or months.

Everyone was exhausted. Ultimately Clinton made his own decision. When Podesta came back to the White House in the morning, he found the president putting signatures to the executive orders for each grant of clemency. Only one computer remained connected to a printer, so it took some time to print the list of pardons and sentence commutations for release to the press. In just over an hour, Clinton was due to welcome his successor. He sat in the Oval Office writing a letter of welcome to Bush, and at 10am on January 20 he walked out of the Oval Office for the last time, his arm around Podesta, who was in tears with the poignancy of the moment. While Podesta went to check on the list of pardons, Bill and Hillary danced one last waltz in the White House foyer. He welcomed his successor, and the men joined their wives for coffee while workmen started ripping up the Oval Office carpet to fit a new one with Bush's seal.

Thousands lined the route to the inauguration ceremony at Capitol Hill, some cheering, a few jeering. A while later, the Clinton motorcade swept off to Andrews air force base, where they would board the familiar blue Boeing 747

## Dad racer.

Conventional wisdom suggests starting a family means the end of powerful cars. We disagree. Take the Saab 9-5 Estate for example. Its 2.3 litre turbocharged engine can produce 230bhp and go from 0 to 60 in 6.9 seconds. Yet its boot is one of the most generous and versatile in its class. So now even the most responsible parents never really have to grow up.

[www.saab.co.uk](http://www.saab.co.uk)

Call 0800 626 556 or visit our website to request your 24 hour test drive.



for the last time to fly to New York. After signing autographs, kissing babies and giving a rambling speech praising his own achievements, Clinton strode across the tarmac, waving. "You gave me the ride of my life," he had earlier told well-wishers. "I tried to give as good as I got." But the ride was far from over.

Even before Clinton touched down at Kennedy airport, the first rumblings of discontent surrounding his last-minute pardons were being heard. The first to attract attention were those to four former associates in the Whitewater case, among them Susan McDougal, who served 18 months in jail for refusing to testify against the Clintons. There were those to Henry Cisneros, the former housing secretary, convicted of making secret payments to a mistress, and to the former CIA director John Deutch, accused of mishandling classified information. All, however, fell in line with the way previous presidents had exercised their power to sweep scandals under the carpet; George Bush Sr, for instance, pardoned his former defence secretary, Casper Weinberger, who it was widely believed was about to implicate him in the Iran-Contra scandal.

But a storm of protest erupted when it became known that Clinton had pardoned Marc Rich and Pincus Green. To prosecutors and FBI agents it was an outrage. Academics condemned Clinton's use of the privilege as "revolting" and "sordid". America's founding fathers had included a president's power to pardon in the constitution, they stressed, as the ultimate legal redemption for individuals deemed to have been punished too harshly. Both Rich and Green had fled the country rather than face punishment at all.

Then questions about money started to be asked. Details were disclosed of the substantial political donations Denise Rich had made in the months before Clinton left office. These included \$1m to the Democratic party, \$450,000 to Bill Clinton's presidential library project, \$10,000 to his legal defence fund and \$70,000 to Hillary Clinton's Senate campaign. Denise Rich's friend Beth Dozoretz, it was revealed, had pledged also to raise \$1m for the library.

Clinton didn't seem to understand why people were upset. He resorted to calling the radio talk-show host Geraldo Rivera to protest that there was "not a single, solitary shred of evidence that I did anything wrong, or that his [Rich's] money changed hands. And there's certainly no evidence that I took any of it". He then wrote an article for The New York Times, arguing that the president should have "the freedom to do what he deemed to be the right thing, regardless of how unpopular a decision might be", concluding with self-pity: "The accusations made against me... have been particularly painful because for eight years I have worked hard to make good decisions for the American people."



Then the background to other dubious pardons began to emerge. Among the most controversial were commutations for Harvey Weinig, a lawyer convicted of laundering \$100m of drugs money, and for two friends of Jesse Jackson. One was for Dorothy Rivers, nicknamed "the Duchess", who stole \$1.2m of government grants intended for the poor and needy, using it to throw lavish parties, buy a fur coat and a Mercedes-Benz. The other was for a former congressman, Melvin Reynolds, convicted of illegally diverting campaign funds for personal use and of having sex with an underage campaign worker. Another friend of Jackson's, convicted of stealing money from the estate of a dying woman, was also pardoned.

Questions were then asked about grants of clemency for four Hassidic Jews from New York – Kalmen Stern, David Goldstein, Jacob Elbaum, Benjamin Berger – whose prison sentences were reduced by Clinton even though they'd been convicted of massive fraud after swindling the government of \$40m in grants for a fictitious school. Another pardon that came under scrutiny was that granted to Glenn Braswell, a manufacturer of dubious herbal remedies for baldness, obesity and breast enlargement, who was still under investigation ➤➤➤



The Saab 9-5 range starts from £19,995.







**On top of the millions she has donated to his party and political causes, Denise Rich presents Clinton with a saxophone at a gala in New York in November**

for tax evasion. It quickly became apparent that behind these acts of clemency, a web of personal connections, political influence and money was at work. For instance, in addition to taking \$204,280 to press for a pardon for Carlo Vignali – his sentence was commuted by Clinton to time served – Hugh Rodham had taken a payment of \$230,000 from Braswell to press for a pardon for a previous conviction on fraud charges. “It was a surprise... a very sad matter to me personally,” Hillary Clinton declared when news of both payments leaked out. “I love my brother. I’m just extremely disappointed in this terrible misjudgment that he made,” she said, ordering him to repay the fee immediately. There is no evidence that he has done so.

Within weeks, congressional hearings into the pardons were convened on Capitol Hill. A procession of witnesses were called, including Podesta, Nolan and Lindsey, and Denise Rich and Beth Dozoretz, both of whom invoked their Fifth Amendment right not to testify and risk incriminating themselves. The picture that emerged of Bill Clinton was damning. He was portrayed as a man who not only didn’t listen to his advisers, but who seemed sure – as he had throughout his presidency – he would not be held accountable for his actions. Others were determined he would be. On February 15 the Justice Department instructed a New York federal prosecutor to begin a criminal investigation into all of Clinton’s 177 last-minute pardons and sentence commutations.

More than a dozen FBI agents were dispatched to interview potential witnesses, a confidential list of donors to Clinton’s presidential library was scrutinised, and telephone and e-mail records, particularly those relating to the Rich pardon, were subpoenaed. Just how much Clinton knew about his half-brother, Roger, and Hugh Rodham’s involvement in lobbying for criminals is unclear. Both he and Hillary claim they knew nothing. Yet Podesta talks of how much time Rodham spent in the White House in the final weeks. He also stresses that Clinton is “very, very close to his brother Roger”. If both men had received money to help gain pardons for people they did not know, it is hard to believe they would not have used their unique access to promote them personally with the president. It is equally hard to believe that Clinton would have thought his relatives were presenting the cases of criminals for altruistic reasons. The truth of who knew what and when is now the subject of the criminal investigation.

Clinton’s supporters condemned the investigation as the final attempt by his enemies to discredit him. Henry Waxman, Democratic minority leader with the congressional committee investigating the pardons, said: “It is a fact of life that the rich and powerful do get more access to decision makers.” But even he concedes that Clinton’s last-minute pardons showed a “shameful lack of judgment”. He says: “Issuing pardons is one of the most profound powers given to the president. At a minimum the decision-making process must be careful and above reproach. It’s clear that President Clinton’s efforts weren’t... The failures in this pardon process should embarrass every Democrat and every American.”

Other former Clinton loyalists who have spoken out against him include the former president Jimmy Carter, who says he was “outraged”, Al Gore, who says he was “shocked”, and Terry McCauliffe, one of Clinton’s closest friends, who describes the pardoning of Rich as “a mistake”. Clinton is said by friends to be devastated by the torrent of criticism. Already disoriented at having to come to

terms with ordinary existence, he has alternated between bouts of intense activity travelling abroad – India, South Africa, China, Britain – and periods of isolation in New York. With Hillary consumed by her duties as a newly elected senator in Washington and penning her \$8m memoirs, neighbours in Chappaqua report that Clinton regularly sends his Secret Service minders to the local delicatessen for his favourite takeaway food, which he then eats in the company of his former White House valet, a marine called Oscar.

Clinton’s first venture onto the lecture circuit ended in ignominy when Morgan Stanley, the brokerage company hosting the event, received so many complaints about the choice of speaker that it was forced to publicly apologise. But Clinton is not short of lucrative business offers, however, including one from a Chinese textile company that invited him to act as an “image ambassador” for a fee of \$2m. Clinton is extremely popular in China, where his affair with Monica Lewinsky was taken as a sign of good health. Podesta reports that in his regular telephone conversations with the former president, Clinton seems “upbeat... a pretty happy guy... looking for a new role”. Others, however, portray him as lonely and prone to intense mood swings.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

When FBI agents first called on Alberta Lincecum to question her about the money she paid to help get a pardon for her son Garland, she might have been expected to keep a low profile. Not Alberta. She marched straight over to the town hall opposite her home and asked if she could borrow the photocopier, explaining she had to make copies of documentation for federal investigators. “I have nothing to be embarrassed about. I did nothing wrong,” says Alberta, who has a plaque on her wall nominating her as a model citizen in Roanoke.

Roger Clinton, meanwhile, has denied receiving any money from Alberta or Guy Lincecum, although he has admitted he had some dealings with CLM. One partner in the Little Rock company has claimed that the money paid to the firm by the Lincecums had nothing to do with obtaining a pardon. It was, he says, payment for financial advice on an investment scheme involving tax-exempt bonds. “Just how much financial advice do you need if you are 84 years old, living in a \$50,000 house and receiving social security payments?” asks Ed Hayes, the Lincecums’ New York lawyer. “I absolutely and totally deny that the brother and mother of Garland Lincecum gave money for anything other than a pardon,” says Hayes.

Another lawyer also came forward claiming his client was offered help in obtaining a pardon in return for a payment of \$30,000 to Roger Clinton. The lawyer says he warned his client that this would be illegal and might jeopardise the man’s chances of clemency if it was found out. The man, a restaurateur convicted of violating wildlife laws, was among those pardoned by Bill Clinton on January 20. So too was Roger Clinton, who had his previous conviction for conspiracy to distribute cocaine wiped from his record by his brother.

Garland Lincecum, however, was not pardoned. Bill Clinton did not pardon any of the six criminals for whom his half-brother had lobbied – among them, men Roger Clinton had spent time with in jail when serving a year’s sentence on drug charges. No explanation for this has been given. It seems Roger Clinton simply failed to make convincing cases for the men. When he heard that none of the pardons had been granted, Roger Clinton says he “cried for a couple of days. I was in an emotional funk”. He didn’t speak to his brother for two weeks. “It sort of caused a rift,” he said. “My feelings were hurt.”

Alberta Lincecum has far greater reason to be galled. When it became clear on the morning Clinton left office that her son was not going to be given clemency, she says she was “heartbroken”. It is unlikely that either she or Guy will recover any of the money they paid to obtain a pardon for her son.

Legal experts believe it will prove very difficult for prosecutors to bring any criminal charges against either Bill Clinton or Hugh Rodham. Denise Rich is believed to have been granted immunity from prosecution in recent weeks in return for her testimony. Despite the generally perceived impropriety, Hugh Rodham argues that, as a lawyer, he was entitled to charge criminals for lobbying his brother-in-law on their behalf. Roger Clinton looks more vulnerable.

One outcome of the congressional inquiry and criminal investigation is expected to be the stipulation that all pardon applications in future must go through proper legal channels of review by the Justice Department. But the real legacy of the fiasco is that it will remain as a permanent stain on Clinton’s reputation. While opinion polls show many Americans will forgive Clinton anything – he is still riding higher in some polls than his successor – what is most important to a president once he leaves office is his place in history. This seems doomed. “The manner of Clinton’s leave-taking has defined who he was as a president, much more so than Monica Lewinsky,” argues Larry Sabato, politics professor at the University of Virginia. “I believe history will record that he was a person of great ability, but that he had a much less successful presidency than anyone would have thought possible because of his very deep flaws.”

Like the corrupt Pardoner in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, who preaches against sin but indulges in vice and deception, Bill Clinton can continue to profess his innocence. But he is the engineer of his slow self-destruction ■

**ANOTHER PARDON WAS GRANTED TO  
A MANUFACTURER OF DUBIOUS  
HERBAL REMEDIES FOR BALDNESS**