

By KATE ANDERSEN BROWER April 07, 2015

Usher Skip Allen admits that it was easier to serve the families he liked than it was to pretend.

“But we pretend very well,” he said.

Allen cannot hide his reservations about the Clintons. Over lunch by the pool at his large home in rural Pennsylvania, he fondly recalled how Mrs. Clinton always asked him to help her by tying bows on her outfits, something she couldn’t do herself. But he said the Clintons never fully trusted the residence staff and were particularly suspicious of the Usher’s Office. “They were about the most paranoid people I’d ever seen in my life.”

Allen isn’t the only one with bitter memories of the Clinton White House. Usher **Chris Emery**, who had been close with the Bushes, remembers feeling unduly scrutinized by the Clintons. In the 14 months he served them, he says, he was subjected to three drug tests and a background check that he was not due to have for several years. He says that some of the questions he was asked—including what church he belonged to—were unusually personal, so he refused to answer them. “I think they were just trying to find something to make it easier [to fire me].” He sighed. And, indeed, when Emery was fired from the White House in 1994, it was in part because of a favor he had done for former first lady Barbara Bush.

During the first Bush administration, Emery had been very helpful to Mrs. Bush. “We were very close. Chris taught me how to use a computer,” she told me. After leaving the White House, she was working on her memoir when she lost a chapter, so she called on Emery for help. Emery was happy to oblige—but the favor fueled the Clintons’ suspicion that the staff was too attached to the Bush family. When the Clintons saw the usher’s call logs, Emery said, they “came to the conclusion that I was sharing deep, dark secrets with the Bushes in Houston. Which I wasn’t.”

A short time later, Chief Usher Gary Walters called Emery into his office.

“Mrs. Clinton is not comfortable with you,” Walters told him. “What does that mean?” Emery asked, stunned. “It means tomorrow is your last day.” Barbara Bush admits that her phone calls to Chris “caused trouble.” Emery was scolded in public for “an amazing lack of discretion,” in the words of Hillary’s spokesman Neel Lattimore. “We believe the position that he had, as a member of the residence staff, requires the utmost respect for the first family’s privacy.”

Kate Andersen Brower spent four years covering the Obama White House for Bloomberg News and is a former CBS News staffer and Fox News producer. This article has been adapted from

her book, [The Residence: Inside the Private World of the White House](#) (Harper Collins), which is out April 7, 2015.

Read more: http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/04/clinton-white-house-the-residence-excerpt-116706_Page3.html#ixzz4lh25jH5s

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