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CBS Anchorman Has Long Track Record of Cheerleading and Softball Questions for President Clinton

For Clinton, Dan Rather is Putty in His Hands

Why would Bill Clinton choose Dan Rather to be the first TV interviewer — in effect the master of ceremonies — for his book unveiling? Because Clinton knows that for him, Dan Rather is a soft touch, a powder puff, an apple polisher, a lapdog.

Look no further than Rather's thumbs-up book review in the *New York Observer*, "As presidential memoirs go, on a five-star scale, I give it five." Rather had the interview in the can, and he's still plugging Clinton's book.

Or recall how Rather greeted Clinton's well-wishing about his new pairing with co-anchor Connie Chung at a CBS affiliates meeting on May 27, 1993: "If we could be one-hundredth as great as you and Hillary Rodham Clinton have been in the White House, we'd take it right now and walk away winners."

Rather isn't always this easy. On January 25, 1988, Rather talked over and yelled at Vice President Bush over the Iran-Contra scandal: "You've made us hypocrites in the face of the world!" By contrast, note Rather's record of softball sit-downs with Clinton:

■ **December 19, 2000:** On *60 Minutes II*, Rather asked about Clinton's excellent record: "The country's still in the midst of an almost eight-year boom. The country's at peace. You've had by many measurements, if not most, a reasonably successful presidency. Why are we having a Republican President come in behind you?" And he pounded the Democratic line: "To those who are absolutely convinced that the Supreme Court had a Republican majority and wanted a Republican President and voted politics not the law, as an attorney, and as our President, you say what?" Rather asked about "personal failures" and Monicagate, but most questions were brief and open-ended.

■ **March 30, 1999:** In the first TV interview granted after Clinton's impeachment, Rather tip-toed into a question on family healing instead of Clinton's lying under oath: "Mr. President, you know Americans like to know that the First Family is okay, that they're doing all right. Given the year plus what you and our First Family have been through, tell us what you can about how the three of you are doing."

Rather's next toughie: "How about yourself? We're here in a room with pictures of Lincoln, Washington, Continental Congress. When you look back over this year plus, what's the moral of it? Does it have a moral?"

■ **August 19, 1996:** On the *Evening News*, Rather asked Clinton about Whitewater, without noting the felony convictions of his business partners, the McDougals: "Now, we have in the papers this man James McDougal. He is

helping the special prosecutor. Are you worried about that? Is he a truth-teller? Tell me how you feel about that?" He then turned to how liberals felt Clinton was too conservative: "This is their point, if you're going to preside like a Republican, why not have a Republican President, a real Republican?"

■ **March 24, 1993:** On *48 Hours*, Rather whimsically asked: "Mr. President, it's my unfortunate duty now to ask the tough questions you don't want to hear. Number one: do you have a favorite in the Oscar race for the Academy Awards? Have you seen these movies? Which one do you favor?" The next day, Rather raved to *CBS This Morning* host Harry Smith: "He's a very good historian....any viewer-listener who had been in that room would have been impressed with the breadth of his knowledge."

— Tim Graham

How Deep In the Tank is Dan?

"I think the fact that someone has told a lie, even a big lie or maybe several big lies over a lifetime, does not mean that they're an inherently dishonest person....I believe in redemption and that Bill Clinton. Is he an honest person? I think he is an honest person. Did he lie? Yes, he lied, and on those occasions he was dishonest." — Dan Rather on the February 7, 2002 "Imus in the Morning" radio show.

To schedule an interview with an MRC spokesman, please contact Katie Wright at (703) 683-5004