Bill Clinton Was Expelled from Oxford Over a Rape Incident?

Claim

Bill Clinton was expelled from Oxford University for raping a British classmate named Eileen Wellstone.

Unproven

Origin

As the 2016 presidential campaign closed in on the finish line, the Washington Post published an eleven-year-old tape of Republican nominee Donald Trump’s making controversial remarks about women. The inevitable partisan rancor that ensued largely targeted the behavior Bill Clinton, husband of Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton, including the repetition of rumors that he had been expelled from Oxford University in 1969 for raping classmate Eileen Wellstone.
The allegations weren’t new — Republican opposition research strategist Roger Stone had tweeted about them a year earlier:

In 1969, Bill Clinton was expelled from Oxford for raping nineteen-year-old Eileen Wellstone….


The backdrop for these rumors was that just prior to his graduation from Georgetown University, Bill Clinton won a prestigious Rhodes Scholarship to study at University College, Oxford, for two years and headed off to England for the 1968-69 academic term — but he returned to the United States before finishing out the full two-year course of study.

In October 1992, during Bill Clinton’s first presidential campaign, a British news report included interviews with a number of Clinton’s Oxford classmates. The article described Clinton’s truncated study trajectory at Oxford as one that was disrupted by the Vietnam-era draft, not by penalties for misbehavior. Had Clinton left Oxford under dubious circumstances, reporting on such a scoop just prior to the presidential election of 1992 would have been irresistible for the British (and American) press. But Clinton’s classmates made absolutely no mention of his departing abruptly or in disgrace:

Clinton never completed his degree. In part this was due to his worry about the draft. According to one contemporary, he thought his first year would be his last and so there was little point in doing the work for a two-year degree; in his second year it was too late to start. This was not seen to matter. Many American Rhodes scholars treated their time at Oxford as a version of the Grand Tour. They had their degree and planned to go to law school when they returned to the US; Oxford was an interesting interlude.

Clinton’s non-completion of the scholar program at Oxford was public knowledge more than 20 years prior to the origination of rumors that he had been expelled from that university for sexual misconduct. And as documented in a separate article on this site, Clinton’s efforts to avoid the military draft (ostensibly by joining the ROTC at the University of Arkansas) were the likely reason behind the timing of his movements between the U.S. and England.

Nonetheless, by June 2004 the Eileen Wellstone rape allegation had appeared in the Washington Times, published in an article that lacked an author, a citation, or any other information supporting the claim:

Bill Clinton calls his sexual encounters with White House intern Monica Lewinsky “immoral and foolish” and said his “relationship” with Gennifer Flowers was one he “should not have had.” But in his autobiography flying out of bookstores, he doesn’t mention several other women whose names were linked in scandal with his … He is less forthcoming about, or does not mention, other women who say they were either sexually involved with him, or that they had been sexually harassed or assaulted. These include:

– Eileen Wellstone, an English woman who said Mr. Clinton sexually assaulted her after she met him at a pub near Oxford University where Mr. Clinton was a student in 1969.

Although often unattributed, the claim appears to have originated with a February 1999 article on Capitol Hill Blue (a web site known for publishing dubious information at that time). That primary iteration (since deleted) mentioned nothing about Clinton’s having
been expelled from Oxford, but it alleged — based on a second-hand report from an anonymous source — that Wellstone had accused Clinton of sexually assaulting her during his time at Oxford:

Eileen Wellstone, 19-year-old English woman, said Clinton sexually assaulted her after she met him at a pub near the Oxford where the future President was a student in 1969. A retired State Department employee, who asked not to be identified, confirmed that he spoke with the family of the girl and filed a report with his superiors. Clinton admitted having sex with the girl, but claimed it was consensual. The victim’s family declined to pursue the case.

In an interview with Capitol Hill Blue, the retired State Department employee said he believed the story Miss Wellstone, the young English woman who said Clinton raped her in 1969.

“There was no doubt in my mind that this young woman had suffered severe emotional trauma,” he said. “But we were under tremendous pressure to avoid the embarrassment of having a Rhodes Scholar charged with rape. I filed a report with my superiors and that was the last I heard of it.”

Miss Wellstone, who is now married and lives near London, confirmed the incident when contacted, but refused to discuss the matter further. She said she would not go public with further details of the attack. Afterwards, she changed her phone number and hired a barrister who warned a reporter to stay away from his client.

In his book, Unlimited Access, former FBI agent Gary Aldrich reported that Clinton left Oxford University for a “European Tour” in 1969 and was told by University officials that he was no longer welcome there. Aldrich said Clinton’s academic record at Oxford was lackluster. Clinton later accepted a scholarship for Yale Law School and did not complete his studies at Oxford.

Oxford officials refused comment. The State Department also refused to comment on the incident. A Freedom of Information request filed by Capitol Hill Blue failed to turn up any records of the incident.

This account doesn’t jibe with the timeline established in our own research and stated elsewhere, which has Clinton in the United States (not on a “European tour”) during the summer of 1969, and then returning to England for his second year at Oxford (rather than being told “he was no longer welcome there”) where he remained at least as late as January 1970:

In his second year at Oxford, Clinton shared a house at 46 Leckford Road with Aller, Strobe Talbot, now an editor at Time, and David Satter, now a judge in Massachusetts.

Mandy Merck, now lecturing on feminist writing in New York, arrived at Oxford as an American graduate student in 1969. She met Clinton in her second term and recalls going with him and Sara Maitland, in January 1970, to hear Germaine Greer deliver a lecture on women in literature.

Roger Stone was a primary catalyst of the rumor’s spread. But while he maintained in 2014 that Clinton was expelled from Oxford over a sexual assault incident, he said
in 2015 that little to no action was taken. His later reference didn’t involve Clinton’s expulsion and hinged on what Stone “believed” may have taken place:

Ironically, Bill Clinton’s first alleged rape was of a 19-year-old coed named Eileen Wellstone. We believe that he was not prosecuted because the State Department did not want a Rhodes Scholar charged with rape.

Stone also made two mentions of Wellstone in his 2015 book *The Clintons’ War on Women*, co-authored by Robert Morrow, who was the subject of a 2008 *Tampa Bay Times* profile which didn’t imply an overabundance of credibility or tendency toward critical examination of Clinton conspiracies:

Robert Morrow is on a roll, talking loud enough to draw wary glances from two women lunching nearby at Macaroni Grill.

“Chelsea is the seed of Web Hubbell and not Bill Clinton. Would I bet my life on it? No. I would bet my pickup truck,” he declares between bites of salmon. “Hillary Clinton was sleeping with both of her law partners, Webb Hubbell and Vince Foster. And she’s a lesbian, too.”

Morrow, a perpetually indignant, single 43-year-old, pretty much devotes his life to hating the Clintons and spreading wild, unsubstantiated allegations about them. With no job except occasional day trading of stocks, Morrow spends anywhere from one to 10 hours a day researching Clinton dirt or e-mailing and phoning reporters across the country about his conclusions.

“I’ve got other aspects of my life when I’m not, you know, stopping Clinton pond scum,” insists Morrow, who has no steady job but enjoys a family inheritance. Lack of proof means nothing to Morrow.

Morrow started his anti-Clinton crusade about three years ago, when he decided he needed to devote himself to making sure Hillary Clinton never wins the White House. He can’t pinpoint what set him on this path beyond his conviction that the Clintons are ruthless “sociopaths that need to be crushed and defeated.”

Stone and Morrow’s book contained two passages about Wellstone which appeared be be based on second- or third-hand information. Moreover, those passages contained contradictory information: in one, the authors said Clinton’s expulsion or coerced departure from Oxford “could not be confirmed”; in another, the authors plainly asserted without qualification that Clinton had been expelled. And all of the cited information traced back to the single questionable 1999 *Capitol Hill Blue* report:
The University of Oxford and the State Department, in fear of a scandal, covered up the Wellstone assault, and Clinton promptly disappeared from the prestigious institution. Even though he had an opportunity that many Americans would have killed for, he squandered it. The sexual assaults were his most damning offense, but also, according to Capitol Hill Blue, he was far from a good student: “The State Department official who investigated the incident said Clinton’s interests appeared to be drinking, drugs and sex, not studies. ‘I came away from the incident with the clear impression that this was a young man who was there to party, not study,’ he said.”

In his book Unlimited Access: An FBI Agent Inside the Clinton White House, FBI agent Gary Aldrich stated that his investigation of Clinton “reveals that after the winter of 1969, Mr. Clinton embarked on a tour of Europe, and there are suggestions that [University of Oxford] school officials told Mr. Clinton that he was no longer welcome on campus, but that could not be confirmed.”

The authors of this historically significant piece, Daniel J. Harris and Theresa Hampton, dug further back—to the behavior of Clinton at the University of Oxford.

Indeed, Clinton is one of the few Rhodes Scholars without a degree from Oxford. That is because at age twenty-three, Clinton was expelled from the oldest university in the English-speaking world for sexually assaulting a nineteen-year-old coed named Eileen Wellstone. Harris and Hampton discovered that Wellstone was assaulted after she “met [Clinton] at a pub near Oxford where the future President was a student in 1969. A retired State Department employee, who asked not to be identified, confirmed that he spoke with the family of the girl and filed a report with his superiors. Clinton admitted having sex with the girl, but claimed it was consensual. The victim’s family declined to pursue the case.”

The original Capitol Hill Blue piece included several instances that all followed the same pattern: A young woman whom no one had ever heard of (in most cases the women weren’t even identified by name) had supposedly accused Bill Clinton of sexual assault decades earlier but had declined to pursue any charges against him at the time. Capitol Hill Blue somehow managed to track all these women down, and all of them allegedly “confirmed” their experiences — yet none of them was directly quoted, and all of them declined to go on record or discuss the matter any further. Moreover all of these incidents were coincidentally also “confirmed” by other people (e.g., government officials, retired policemen, former students), none of whom was identified by name or directly quoted either.

Even more curiously, as far as we know no one else has ever located, talked to, or interviewed Eileen Wellstone or any of the other women referenced in Capitol Hill Blue who were supposedly the victim of sexual assaults by Bill Clinton between 1969 and 1974. Nor
has anyone else ever identified, located, talked to, or interviewed the anonymous State Department official and others who purportedly “confirmed” these rumors.

All in all, the rumors about Bill Clinton’s having been expelled from Oxford over a rape allegation appear to have stemmed from a single uncorroborated, anonymous second-hand report published on a web site of dubious repute in 1999, combined with mere speculation about Clinton’s having departed Oxford prior to the completion of a full two-year course of study. We haven’t yet turned up anything that would counter the notion that the “Eileen Wellstone” claim was simply a fabrication made up in 1999.

Sources


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