

'96

DISPATCH FROM ARKANSAS

HOPE AGAINST HOPE

What could be dandier for a small town than to have one of its own become President of the United States?

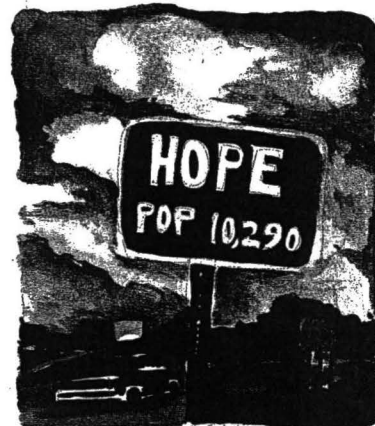
BY PETER J. BOYER

DURING a recent visit to Arkansas, I drove from Little Rock to Bill Clinton's birthplace, a hundred and ten miles away, passing the towns of Friendship and Amity before I reached the place called Hope. There is no Arkansas town called Ambivalence, but in regard to Bill Clinton, I learned, that name could describe the entire state.

In Hope, I talked to a retired newspaperman named C. M. (Pod) Rogers, Jr. A natural promoter, he had the lifelong (and perhaps overlarge) ambition that Hope (pop. 10,290) would someday reach the size of Little Rock (pop. 180,590). Long before the town became known as the place where the President was born, Pod Rogers had managed to make it famous as the home of the world's largest watermelons, with one reigning champion tilting the scale at two hundred and sixty pounds. Rogers is a dapper man in snakeskin boots and ascot-style tie, and one might suppose that he would express only delight at Hope's Presidential celebrity. But one of the first things he told me was that the town is vociferously divided on the subject of its illustrious son.

To the outsider's eye, Hope appears eager to exploit its Clinton connection. Cherry's Olde Tyme Soda Fountain has Clinton postcards and campaign buttons for sale in a glass case near the cash register. Preservation work is under way on various of the modest homes that Clinton occupied during his unsettled childhood: his first house; the house he lived in with his grandparents while his mother attended nursing school; and so on. But it is easy to find the doubts about Clinton, as I did when Rogers and I walked into the office of Keith N. Wood, a lawyer who

is about Clinton's age and has been Hope's representative in the state legislature for much of his adult life. Wood, a conservative Democrat, had a near-perfect record of opposition to Clinton when Clinton was governor,



"The only thing Arkansas has got out of the Clinton Presidency," the saying goes, "is a subpoena."

and believes that his own political philosophy is the common philosophy in Hope. "I haven't talked to anybody that's for sending these troops over to Bosnia," Wood said. "I think that your average working person, especially your white male adult, is not supporting Bill Clinton in Hope, Arkansas." He went on, "I don't know how he got elected in the first place, except that he has the charisma. Bill Clinton could sit in this room right here, and if we didn't know better he could talk Pod and me into just about anything."

A number of Hope natives followed Clinton to Washington, and the roll call of their names underscored the elegiac quality of my visit. "This little town of ten thousand plus had people from Hope ruling the world—have you

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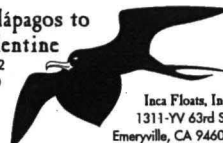
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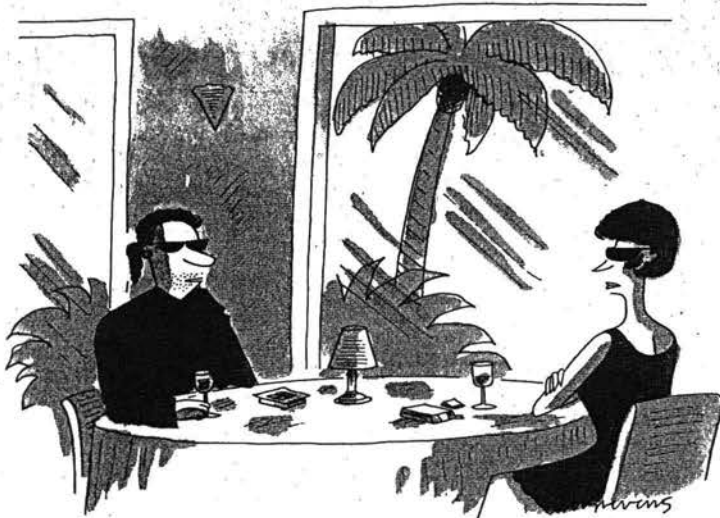
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"Face it—in this town, either you're a star or you're just another brown dwarf."

thought of that?" Rogers remarked. "They had President Clinton, they had Mack McLarty, they had Vincent Foster, they had Vincent's sister, Sheila Anthony, as an Associate Attorney General. Then, they had Davo Watkins—I coached of Davo in baseball. And then, on top of that—we don't brag about it too much, but Joycelyn Elders was born just in the next county. Now, this will never happen again, no matter if the world turns square, or stays round, or what."

With Rogers, I visited both of Hope's cemeteries: Rosehill, where Clinton's mother, Virginia Kelley, is buried beside the President's father, William Blythe, and where Mack McLarty recently buried his mother; and Memory Gardens, where Vince Foster is buried. His grave, situated next to his father's, at the edge of the cemetery near the woods, is marked by a stone bearing the simple inscription "Vincent Walker Foster, Jr. January 15, 1945–July 20, 1993." The day I visited, a fresh rose had been placed on his grave.

As we left, I remarked upon the obvious—that Clinton's ascent has brought a measure of sorrow to Hope. Foster, Clinton's deputy counsel, killed himself six months after leaving Arkansas.

McLarty, hired as the White House chief of staff, was criticized for playing out of his league and then was demoted. Watkins, the White House director of administration, was fired in May of 1994 after he took a Presidential helicopter on a golf outing. "It's a different ballgame up there," Rogers said, in reference to Washington. "When you're in state politics, well, you're with the home folks."

THERE is a sour observation in Arkansas about Bill Clinton's rise and its effect on the state. "The only thing Arkansas has got out of the Clinton Presidency," the saying goes, "is a subpoena." There is truth in that jest. In Little Rock, I met a woman named Mindy Stewart, who runs an expensive-gifts boutique, catering to the town's more prosperous citizens. Stewart, a friendly soul and a sharp-eyed businesswoman, is not particularly political, except on days when Mrs. Hugh Rodham (Hillary Clinton's mother) or some other member of the Clinton inner circle comes in to shop. "I'm a Democrat on those days, if you know what I mean," she told me.

While Stewart was working in the shop about a year ago, someone walked

in and handed her a subpoena from the office of Kenneth Starr, the independent counsel investigating the Whitewater affair. "I was surprised," she recalled, "and it scared me." Stewart couldn't think of any possible link she might have to Whitewater. It turned out that her connection was to former Associate Attorney General Webster Hubbell, who, being a member of Little Rock's established high caste, had shopped in Stewart's store. Starr's group was investigating charges that Hubbell, a friend and former partner of Hillary Clinton's in Little Rock's Rose Law Firm, had bilked his clients and firm out of nearly five hundred thousand dollars. Stewart's subpoena arrived at her busiest moment, and she had to hire an attorney to get a short extension because of the Christmas rush. Then she was obliged to comb through her records

for a seven-year period, so that the independent counsel could make a survey of Hubbell's spending habits. Hubbell, who pleaded guilty to two felonies in December of 1994, is serving time in a federal prison in Maryland, and Stewart still feels a bit shaken by the experience. "Certainly I did not enjoy having to dig through files back seven years, to come up with what I consider not very much at all on Webb Hubbell, in terms of his spending practices," she told me. "I mean, it was amazing that I still had the records."

Many Arkansans have been surprised by the breadth of Starr's inquiry. "They have just gone around putting pressure on a lot of people who are just functionaries, who had modestly paying jobs sorting out contribution checks, things like that, at Clinton campaign headquarters," one Little Rock defense lawyer told me. The investigation has been hardest on the circle known as the Friends of Bill and Hillary—people who just three years ago were celebrating the President-elect's triumph and who expected (and received) invitations to the White House. These people mostly belong to the Little Rock Country Club, eat in the same restau-

rants, and deal with one another in business: they define the insularity that is at the heart of Whitewater, a scandal that took its name from a land-development investment the Clintons made with a savings-and-loan wildcat named James McDougal. Still, the Whitewater affair is not about any particular land deal but about a kind of coziness that lent itself to rule-bending and even outright fraud. Most people among Little Rock's elite clearly play by the rules, but in such an inbred culture trouble for one person—especially if he happens to be the President—metastasizes into trouble for all.

Webb Hubbell might well have settled his problems at Rose within the firm if he hadn't been a visible member of the Clinton Administration. Jim Guy Tucker, who was a political rival of Clinton's in the state's Democratic Party, almost certainly wouldn't have been indicted for fraud by the Whitewater prosecutor if he hadn't been the governor who succeeded Bill Clinton. "If you were close to Clinton, and someone says your name, it's a real inquisition-type thing," I was told by one lawyer who has represented a client investigated by Starr.

The personal wreckage has become part of Little Rock's landscape—so broadly strewn about that it is difficult to avoid encountering people whose lives have been damaged by the Washington experience. Bill Kennedy, the former associate White House counsel, had no sooner arrived in Washington than he was at the center of a scandal—the so-called Travelgate affair. He received a reprimand for his part in the attempt to replace the White House travel-office staff with Arkansas cronies. Kennedy was divorced while he was in Washington, and was then demoted following a problem about paying taxes for his children's nanny. Once the managing partner of the Rose Law Firm, Kennedy is now of counsel to it, and is no longer a partner.

And Washington still bays at Kennedy. One portion of Whitewater has mutated into the far larger story: congressional investigations of a possible White House coverup of cronyism and

alleged misdeeds in Arkansas. In the weeks before Christmas, the Senate Whitewater committee, led by Alfonse D'Amato, sought Kennedy's notes of a 1993 White House meeting in which the scandal was discussed. A compromise was reached late on December 21st, but the demand nearly precipitated a constitutional showdown between Congress and the White House. "Unfortunately, I'm still caught in this madness and that's forcing me to take it a day at a time," Kennedy told me, adding that he was happy to be back in Little Rock and back at the Rose firm.

The Rose Law Firm has been thoroughly humbled by its Clinton association. It contributed to the Administration four of its star lawyers: Kennedy, Hubbell, Foster, and Hillary Clinton—a quartet whose fates were scandal, prison, suicide, and (in the case of Mrs. Clinton) an abiding suspicion of conflict of interest. The firm closed its Washington office late in 1994—having opened it less than a year earlier—and then endured an exodus of young associates amid rumors that the firm itself might dissolve. Rose has survived, but it remains an object of unwanted attention. In recent weeks, the Senate Whitewater committee has pursued two leads that portend more unpleasantness: the fact that some Rose documents relating to Madison Guaranty Savings & Loan—which is owned by James McDougal, Hillary Clinton's Whitewater partner, and is at the heart

of the Whitewater affair—were removed from the firm's files after the 1992 Presidential campaign and stored for several months in Hubbell's Washington basement; and the discovery that Rose's records detailing Mrs. Clinton's work for Madison had vanished, leaving her account of her relationship with the failed institution in doubt.

A particularly stark example of Arkansas's interconnections—and of the difficulties that may accompany ties to the Clintons—is that of Archie and Beverly Bassett Schaffer, of Fayetteville. Archie Schaffer is an executive at Tyson Foods, which is the largest poultry producer in the country and one of the state's leading businesses. Its support



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was important to Clinton as governor and in his run for President. Beverly Schaffer, who comes from a family of prominent lawyers in Fayetteville, was chairman of the Arkansas Securities Commission under Governor Clinton. The Starr investigation has questioned her involvement in the Whitewater affair because she made rulings affecting Madison Guaranty while she was securities commissioner and Hillary Clinton was representing Madison. Tyson Foods is being investigated by another independent counsel, Donald Smaltz: he is looking into the supposed misdeeds of Mike Espy, Clinton's former Secretary of Agriculture, who is alleged to have accepted football-playoff tickets and other favors from the company. The Schaffer household is a crossroads of federal investigations. "My house may be the only one in America with two special counsels going through it," Archie Schaffer remarked to me.

Schaffer also said, in reference to Arkansas's big businesses, "We all kind of feel like Bill Clinton's election has been anything but positive as far as our companies are concerned. Bill Clinton's election was the worst thing that could have happened. I'm not saying that Clinton has done anything to us, but he hasn't done anything for us, either—not that we've asked for anything."

ONE might guess, given Little Rock's small-town nature, that Kenneth Starr's band of federal prosecutors would be the loneliest group around. The staff, which has sixteen members, works out of a suite of offices in West Little Rock, away from downtown, the turf of the town's elite. Still, it is a measure of Starr's reach that he was one of the first in Little Rock last summer to know that Lisa Foster, Vince's widow, was planning to marry federal Judge James Moody on New Year's Day. All the people on the Starr team are outsiders, and most are from Washington. Starr himself—Solicitor General in the Bush Administration—is very much a creature of Washington, and is known for his intellect and his intense drive. A bookish man of forty-nine, he recruited his team from prominent private law firms and from among the Justice Department's most proven lawyers.

Yet far from feeling like an occupying army, Starr and his group have been

taken with the town. Half the members of the team are married. Some have moved their families to Little Rock and enrolled their children in schools there; others maintain apartments in Arkansas but keep their Washington homes, and still others live by sporadic commute. At least one child has been born to a member of Starr's team in Little Rock, and several members have joined churches or synagogues there. "I think people have enjoyed Little Rock and Arkansas," Starr told me recently. "It is honestly a warm and hospitable place. The quality of life is extremely high, and, no, we do not feel surrounded or embattled."

Starr speaks in formal, almost legal paragraphs. Surely, I suggested to him, the team members have encountered some word or gesture of inhospitality? "Never," he replied. "Not one time, ever. The people of Arkansas are very gracious, as you know. They're very friendly, they're very hospitable. There's a strong dimension of warm Southern hospitality. But, quite apart from that, Southern hospitality doesn't cause someone to come over to you and introduce themselves to you and say, 'We really appreciate what you're doing.' And that happens. These are just what I would call genuine, honest, law-abiding people who try to play by the rules, and they're anxious to know what happened, who did what, and to get out the truth."

In an interview with C-SPAN in late December, Starr said that "because of the vagaries of the legal process" the Whitewater affair might not be resolved until 1997. But, he continued, "Will the critical issues be addressed, will the facts be out far in advance of the election? My prediction is it will, they will." One important event—the trial of James and Susan McDougal, the proprietors of Madison Guaranty—will begin on March 4th. "I think that is kind of a pivotal time," Starr told me.

IN Arkansas, many people believe that America is going through the stages of Bill Clinton that Arkansas knows well. The sequence begins with bright hope, fades to disappointment, then settles into a strong ambivalence, implicit in which is a certain grudging support. And Arkansas may prove to be Clinton's salvation: the experience of

being an essentially liberal politician in an essentially conservative state was the perfect training ground for Clinton's experience in Washington.

Clinton has recently had a resurgence in popularity, but a poll conducted last spring by the Mason-Dixon Political Research Firm showed that sixty-four per cent of Arkansas respondents would either consider rejecting the President or outright vote against him. Among whites, the figure was seventy-two per cent. By summer, Clinton had suffered some significant defections by influential supporters in the state. Among them was Charles Murphy, Jr., the millionaire chairman of the Murphy Oil Corporation, in El Dorado. He is serving as Bob Dole's finance chairman in the state. Don Tyson, of Tyson Foods, has let it be known that he, too, supports Dole in 1996.

Yet there is something about Clinton that Arkansans cannot resist. In early December, I went to a Little Rock fundraising dinner in honor of Arkansas's outgoing Senator David Pryor, at which Clinton was the featured speaker. There was much joking, and the audience at the sold-out event gave its heartiest applause to a remark by Pryor that Bill Clinton was a President "who is going to be reelected."

"We like him," Bill Woodyard, a prominent attorney and a member of Clinton's social circle, told me that night. "There's a lot of things we don't agree with him on, but we're here because we like him."

Afterward, much of the crowd spilled into the bar at the Capital Hotel, a favorite spot among the ruling class. Among them was Don Tyson. When I told him I was surprised to see him at an event featuring Bill Clinton, he smiled, and said, "Hell, you've been with a guy for twenty-seven years, you don't leave him just because you're mad at him. It's like brothers sitting at the table together." ♦

ALL'S RIGHT WITH THE WORLD DEPARTMENT

[From the *Amherst (Mass.) Bulletin*]

The Lutherans know how to put on a potluck, and the feast to honor the Rev. John and Suzanne Standahl was an example. One spectacular dish was seven different layers of jello. There was no bleeding among the layers. It was perfect.

The New Yorker
1/8/1996

STATE VISIT : US First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton gave an address at Chiang Mai University on Monday. The following is an edited version.



Hillary Rodham Clinton shares a joke with two of the participants in a discussion at Chiang Mai's New Life Centre, a shelter for hilltribe women.

It is a great pleasure to be with you today and to speak at this university. It has been a lifelong dream of mine to come to Thailand. But it wasn't until I arrived in your country yesterday that I fully appreciated the special beauty of northern Thailand and the hospitality of the Thai people. These first images and impressions of Thailand will stay with me long after I return to Washington.

Being here in the year celebrating the 700th anniversary of Chiang Mai and the 50th anniversary of His Majesty the King's Accession to the Throne, and being here during the annual Festival of Lights — makes this visit even more memorable.

Last night, I was able to go down to the Ping river and watch the Loy Krathong festivities. I could see children and families gathered along the banks, launching beautiful banana-leaf and bamboo boats into the water.

As I put a float in the water, it occurred to me that, just as families across Thailand are coming together this week to celebrate the harvest and strengthen the bonds of family, Americans are now preparing for our Thanksgiving holiday. For us, it is a time to gather with loved ones and friends to give thanks for the many blessings we have enjoyed throughout the year.

While people in both our countries celebrate these traditional holidays, it is worth remembering that in the modern world, the economic transformation that has brought new prosperity to many people also brings with it new challenges and pressing social needs.

In Thailand and the United States, we are reaping the benefits of democracy and free market economies that are adapting to the rapid pace of global change. Our people have recently participated in free elections to choose their national leaders. More men and women within our borders are working at good jobs and earning higher wages. Some of the health problems that once plagued our communities have disappeared. And today, our nations are counted on around the world for the sanctuary they provide to those fleeing oppression and persecution.

Yet for all the progress and promise we sense at this moment in history, we are discovering that rapid economic expansion can also bring unintended consequences.

We see the income gap widening as those ill-equipped to compete in a high-tech, global economy lag farther and farther behind. We see development pressures override concerns about our air, water, and natural resources. We see a mass consumer culture fuel unrealistic fantasies for material goods, resulting in new pressures on families, government and social institutions. We see diseases we have conquered replaced by new and equally deadly versions. And we see women entering the labour force in greater numbers, only to find that they are still expected to raise their families, run their households, and

take care of their spouses — all with the radiance and grace of Ma Ploy.

This phenomenon is not unique to our countries or our time. One hundred years ago, America's transition to the Industrial Age ushered in social dislocations and unrest that threatened to disrupt our economic progress. Immigrants who streamed into our cities often ended up living in squalid tenements, working long hours and bringing home meagre wages. Children were recruited to work in factories and forced to labour in sub-human conditions. America's democratic values were put to the test.

In the past, the Thai-US partnership has led to tremendous successes in the fight against diseases such as malaria and leprosy, and in the expansion of education and family planning programmes. But just as economic progress seems to solve many problems related to our physical well-being, new and potentially devastating social and health problems threaten to undermine the advances we make together.

At a time of such momentous change on every continent, invest-

ments in people, especially women and children, are not luxuries. They are the key to sustaining our progress economically and socially. No country can move forward into the 21st century if half its population is left on the margins.

Since the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women last year in Beijing and the forum of non-governmental organisations in Huairou, women around the world have been working to fulfill the goals of the conference and its Platform for Action.

Thailand was well represented at this important conference. And today, the National Commission on Women's Affairs, working with a growing NGO movement in Thailand is taking steps in various ways to improve the status of women through community action to help battered women and spare them from the enslavement of forced prostitution, to name a few.

The accomplishments of the Thai government, NGOs and individual citizens are impressive too.

The Prostitution Suppression Act passed this year specifies jail time for

Bangkok Post

11/28 / 1996

Bangkok Post
11/28/1996

the owners, agents, clients and families that are benefiting economically from the trade in child prostitution.

The government also has adopted a national policy and master plan for the prevention and eradication of commercial sex exploitation of women that allocates over \$160 million to this effort.

The continued cooperation between governments and NGOs is essential to the advancement of women in all aspects of political, economic, social and civic challenges.

That is why I am heartened that the Thai government and the NGO community here recognise that women and girls are keys to Thailand's continued progress and prosperity.

Expanding educational opportunities for children, curbing the spread of Aids, and ending the exploitation of young girls in the commercial sex industry will not only help individual girls and families, but the society as a whole.

Mrs Clinton visited Chiang Mai's New Life Centre, a shelter for prostitutes from poor ethnic hill-tribes, and gave her impressions of its

education programme.

"The programme is bringing hope to young women who are receiving education and training that will allow them to pursue their own life ambitions with confidence and dignity."

If the Thai government followed through on enforcement of its new law banning child prostitution and devoted the resources necessary to carry out its long-term government plan to deal with this tragic situation, urged Mrs Clinton, it would go far in sending a signal to the entire world in saving the lives of women and girls who are presently at risk.

The US First Lady was pleased that a strong partnership between the two nations helped support these and other efforts.

"I met Thai and American government officials and academics who are working together to curb the spread of Aids. Just as Thailand's successful population programme became a model for developing countries around the world and a contributor to economic progress, the Thai government's fight against Aids is equally critical to this nation's economic and

social stability.

"My country was your partner in promoting family planning. And we are joined in partnership with Thailand in the effort to fight Aids."

According to Mrs Clinton, American and Thai doctors and scientists are working together to test a vaccine that could provide protection against HIV, the virus that causes Aids.

She mentioned the American Federal Centre for Disease Control which is working with the Thai Ministry of Health and with doctors in several local hospitals on studies that could one day halt the transmission of HIV from infected mothers to their babies.

"And our National Institute of Health has awarded grants to Johns Hopkins and Harvard Universities to work with the Chiang Mai University on Aids research."

Also, a joint Thai-US research partnership in the Armed Forces Research Institute of Medical Sciences will enable Thai and American scientists to work together with the US pharmaceutical industry to begin testing a vaccine that could provide protection against HIV.

And its Agency for International Development is cooperating with NGOs in Bangkok on strategies for the prevention of Aids and ways to increase awareness about the disease.

Mrs Clinton also showed support for the expansion of compulsory education in Thailand.

"Education is also a vital piece of social development. The Thai government's commitment to raising the school grade for compulsory education will create new opportunities for many of your citizens. Investing in the education of girls in Thailand is doubly beneficial. It will enable young women to plan for their future, and seek and hold jobs that will earn them rising incomes."

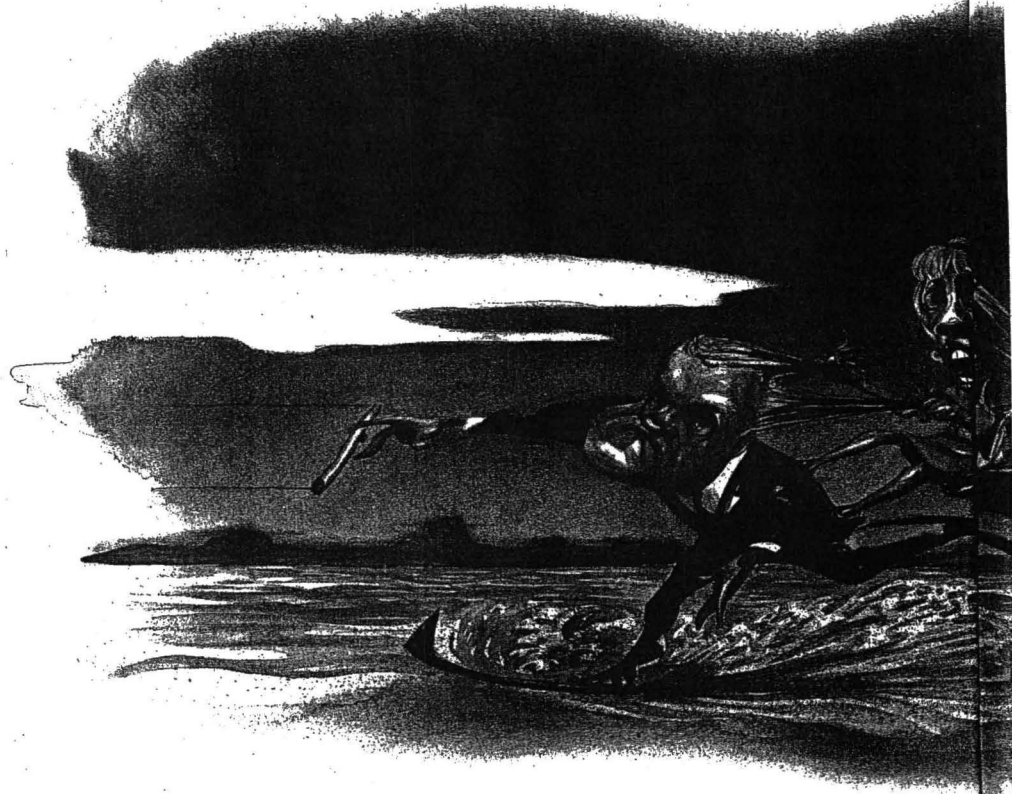
There was also an economic reason for investing in the education of girls, said Mrs Clinton.

During her visit to Chiang Rai, she was impressed with how a local businessman supported the Thai Women of Tomorrow programme financially.

"He got involved with the work out of sense of charity. But within months, he said, he was surprised to find out how hard-working they were; how quick to learn new skills, and how determined to make better lives for themselves."

"Now he has decided to open a factory in Chiang Rai that will employ girls from the school. This was proof that with access to education, girls can begin to lift themselves and their families out of poverty and contribute to the prosperity of their community — not just for a few years as a prostitute, but for a lifetime as a productive worker and citizen," said Mrs Clinton.

"Thailand has taken great strides in responding to a range of social problems that threaten to undermine economic progress. The American people are proud to support you in these efforts. Together we can bring about real change and improve the lives of our fellow citizens."



A REPORTER AT LARGE

A FEVER IN THE WHITE HOUSE

How, exactly, did members of the Clinton team lose it at the White House, where their bungling in the travel office led to a scandal that won't go away—and that only Vincent Foster saw coming?

BY PETER J. BOYER

THE series of events that has come to be known as Travelgate began on an October day in 1991, when a young woman named Catherine Cornelius walked into the converted paint store in Little Rock that was serving as the early headquarters of Bill Clinton's fledgling Presidential campaign. Cornelius, a twenty-three-year-old marketing major, had just graduated from Texas A. & M. and wasn't yet ready to

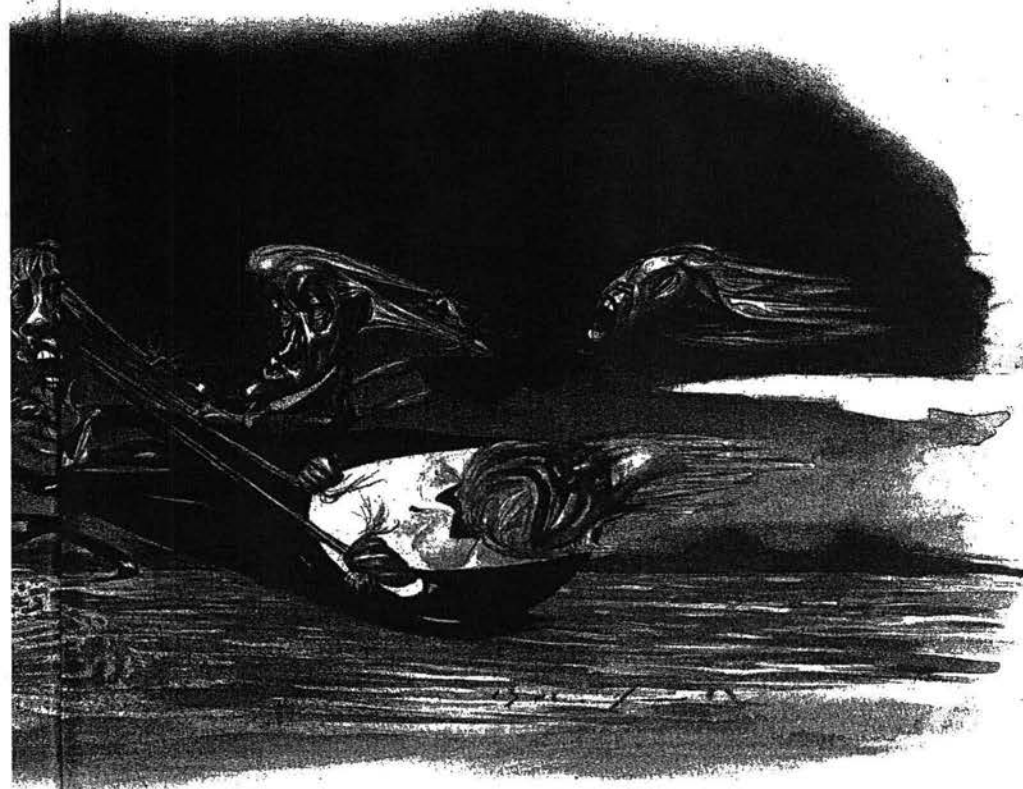
go home to Houston, so she decided to volunteer for Clinton. She had roots in Arkansas, but what was known to few at the time (and would subsequently loom large) was that those roots included a blood relationship to Bill Clinton: she is a distant cousin on his mother's side. The campaign was brand-new, but it was already attracting a group of young, eager volunteers like Cornelius—"muffins," in the parlance of "Primary Colors"—whose

job was to perform whatever tasks, most of them menial ones, needed doing. Cornelius got lucky right away: the man running the campaign in those early days put her on staff, in charge of the volunteers.

That man was David Watkins, who was in charge of the campaign headquarters. Watkins, like Clinton, was from Hope, Arkansas. Handsome and friendly, he'd been the quarterback of the football team at Hope High School and the student-body

STEVE BRONER

The New Yorker
4/15/1996



president, and then he had gone off to the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. After serving as a lieutenant in the Army, he entered the advertising business in Little Rock, starting his own agency, and soon made a success of it. But, unlike other members of the remarkable Hope cluster—Clinton, Thomas F. (Mack) McLarty III, Vincent Foster, Jr.—he wasn't part of the elite crowd. Foster was the chief litigator in the Rose Law Firm; McLarty ran Arkla, the powerful utility company; and Clinton was the bright comer in the Arkansas Democratic machine. Most of that crowd lived in a select Little Rock neighborhood called the Heights, adjacent to the exclusive Little Rock Country Club, membership in which was, for many, a life's ambition. But Watkins, then a bachelor who had never quite shed his suntanned-jock per-

sona, was of the town's entrepreneurial class: he belonged to the glimmering new Chenal Country Club, on the city's far west side, which was regarded by establishment Little Rock as a meeting house for the town's grasping nouveaux riches.

Watkins was never attentive to politics—was indifferent to it, really—until the Clinton era began in Arkansas. He later described Clinton as "the greatest seducer who ever lived," and he found himself so charmed that he gave Clinton his first-ever political donation—five hundred dollars—and then determined to work for him. After Clinton lost his first reelection attempt for governor, in 1980, he decided to put his next campaign in the hands of a local advertising agency, and Watkins got the job. It was a fruitful match all through the nineteen-eighties, earning for Watkins Clinton's lasting gratitude when he

helped rescue the Governor from a couple of electoral frights. On the Saturday night before the 1990 election, the campaign consultant Dick Morris gave Clinton some stomach-turning poll numbers: his opponent, Sheffield Nelson, had drawn within five percentage points. The Governor called Watkins, and, in an all-night session, they produced ads that countered Nelson's portrayal of Clinton as a tax-and-spend compulsive. Clinton beat Nelson by fifteen points.

A year later, Watkins became one of the first Arkansans in the Clinton-for-President campaign, joining before it officially began. By July of 1991, Senators Jay Rockefeller and Albert Gore had decided not to run, and a host of others were hesitating, leaving only Senator Bob Kerrey, of Nebraska, as a serious contender. Clinton was finding it increas-

The New Yorker

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Top: Vincent Foster, Hillary Clinton, David Watkins, Harry Thomason, and Catherine Cornelius. Strangely, Travelgate was rooted in their very efficiency.

ingly tempting to enter the race. Officially, he remained noncommittal, partly because he had promised Arkansans that he would serve his full four-year term, but that July the Clintons convened a secret planning session attended by the pollster Stanley Greenberg, the consultant Frank Greer, the Clinton aide Gloria Cabe, and Watkins; the meeting was held in Watkins's office, so as to avoid detection by statehouse reporters. The Clintons discussed the mechanics of establishing an exploratory committee, and by August they were ready to move. They asked Watkins to help gear up a campaign that could be ready when Clinton made the official announcement. Just before Labor Day, Watkins rented an office, had phones installed, hired operators, and coordinated volunteers. When the campaign began, Watkins was named deputy campaign manager and was put in charge of operations.

Though Clinton's candidacy may have seemed like a movable crisis with placards, the Clinton campaign was one of the best-run campaigns in history, disciplined and tightly efficient. At the low ebb of New Hampshire, when Clinton was reeling from Gennifer Flowers and equivocations about the draft, even some of the campaign aides who would one day become political stars were getting edgy, with money tight, some demanding payment for services rendered, but Watkins held them off, and the campaign stayed on track.

Every Presidential campaign leaks cash in gobs, and the biggest money hole is travel. "Travel is so expensive and so dangerous . . . it's the biggest risk to a campaign," one financial expert and veteran of a handful of Democratic Presidential campaigns says. "People just jump on jets, saying, 'Oh, I've gotta be in San Diego,' 'I've gotta go to Fargo,' 'Oh, my God, I've gotta go to New Hampshire.' And what you have is this phenomenon where everybody gets on a plane and goes to wherever the action is. And you find yourself paying these bills for people who never should have been on planes going to New Hampshire, or wherever. And, of course, once they get there they charge hotels and food, and it becomes a sink-hole of expense." This phenomenon posed an acute risk to the Clinton campaign, especially after it began to catch fire, because of the hordes of Clinton ad-

visers, pals, and hangers-on who insisted that their presence on the campaign trail was essential. The travel corner of the campaign coined the term F.O.B., for Friend of Bill. "Oh, the F.O.B.s!" one senior campaign staffer recalls. "We got so tired of these people calling up and saying, 'I was a roommate of his at Georgetown'—he must have had four hundred thousand roommates at Georgetown—and he really *wants* me to be with him at the Victory Night.'"

David Buxbaum, the Clinton campaign's budget director—"the budget Nazi," as Hillary Clinton called him—imposed strict limits on travel, devising a system that controlled costs up front by denying travel to nonessential campaign people. He and Watkins installed an on-site travel agency at campaign headquarters, and no plane ticket was issued until the agent got approval from a senior campaign staffer. Buxbaum was the no-man until things got too hectic, when he handed the crucial job to Catherine Cornelius, who proved quite able. "If somebody said, 'George Stephanopoulos wants me to go, I'm a very important person,' she'd sweetly say, 'Fine. I'll check George's office, and a ticket will be waiting for you, if everything's O.K.'," the senior staffer recalls. "What was good about Catherine is she had nerves of steel if people fought her. She would dig in."

The campaign also received invaluable help from a Clinton admirer named Betta Carney, an adopted Arkansan who had made her World Wide Travel Service, Inc., one of the biggest in the country. Gambling on Clinton's chances, she put agents in the campaign headquarters before there was enough business to warrant the expense, and then, later, when the campaign expanded and was in need of cash, she helped develop a billing system that is likely to become the model for all campaigns. By far the biggest expense in campaign travel is the cost of chartering planes. Media exposure is a candidate's oxygen, which means that transportation must be found for every news-media person asking to follow the candidate's completely irrational travel schedule. Accommodating that need means chartering an airplane, which, when the entourage reaches the stage requiring jets, can cost as much as half a million dollars a week. Charter services require that money in advance, and the standard procedure had the campaign

paying the cost and then trying to collect from the news organizations. A month's delay in payment could mean two million dollars out of the campaign treasury. But Buxbaum and Carney streamlined the payment system, by having Carney act as billing agent and requiring advance credit-card payment from reporters and TV-crew members before they stepped on the plane. The turnaround time practically vanished, and the press money flowed back to the campaign just a few days after each trip. This freed millions of dollars to be spent on TV ads in crucial primary states. As a Clinton supporter, Carney also gave the campaign corporate-account status, which meant, among other things, some slack time on payments for commercial-ticket purchases. (Travel agencies have been known to simply stop issuing tickets—effectively shutting down a campaign—if payment is late.)

Strangely, this very efficiency held the seeds of subsequent disaster. A key lesson of the campaign was that even so mundane a matter as arranging travel could yield enormous benefit to the larger cause. It was a lesson perhaps overlearned by some, who would later focus on travel efficiency as a way of helping President Clinton—and themselves, as well. This unlikely motif—travel management as a political asset—played itself out through the ambitions, misjudgments, and even the good intentions of several people in the Clinton sphere (some on its outer edge), and produced the political bungle that became Travelgate. Its unfolding was the stuff of farce, involving ham-handed covert sleuthing, rumormongering gone amok, and dumb decisions by a quaking White House staff fearful of disappointing Hillary Clinton. As a result, seven government workers of long standing lost their jobs and reputations, and that was only the beginning. The fiasco acquired a tragic aspect after landing in the lap of the deputy White House counsel, Vincent Foster, deepening the despair that finally led to his suicide.

But Travelgate didn't die with Vince Foster, or even with the advent of a more compelling Clinton controversy, Whitewater. Travelgate reasserted itself dramatically earlier this year, with the discovery of a lost memorandum written by one of the principal protagonists in the affair, the former top White House aide David Watkins. In the "soul cleansing" memo, as he described

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it, Watkins laid the blame for Travelgate directly at the feet of his "client," the First Lady. Any discrepancies between that account of her involvement and earlier accounts now fall within the purview of the Whitewater independent counsel, Kenneth W. Starr.

ANOTHER member of the Clinton campaign entourage, the television producer and director Harry Thomason, also had travel-related expertise. Thomason, an F.O.B. of the first order, was a lifelong flying buff who rented his own plane to the campaign. When the enterprise outgrew his small craft, Thomason suggested that the campaign use an aviation consulting company, TRM, Inc., in which he had a one-third interest, and this proved to be an arrangement of incalculable benefit to the campaign. Every campaign veteran has a horror story about chartering planes. (There is, for example, the one about Michael Dukakis's plane being grounded during a big Labor Day swing because a surprise Federal Aviation Administration inspection found, among other infractions, an inoperative exit light.) Staff members were concerned about such things as whether a charter service out of Texas might want to sabotage the Clinton campaign on the instructions of Ross Perot's son, who controls much of the aviation industry there. But one of Thomason's partners at TRM, Darnell Martens, handled the arrangements for the Clinton-Gore charter jet (nicknamed Air Elvis), and they were flawless.

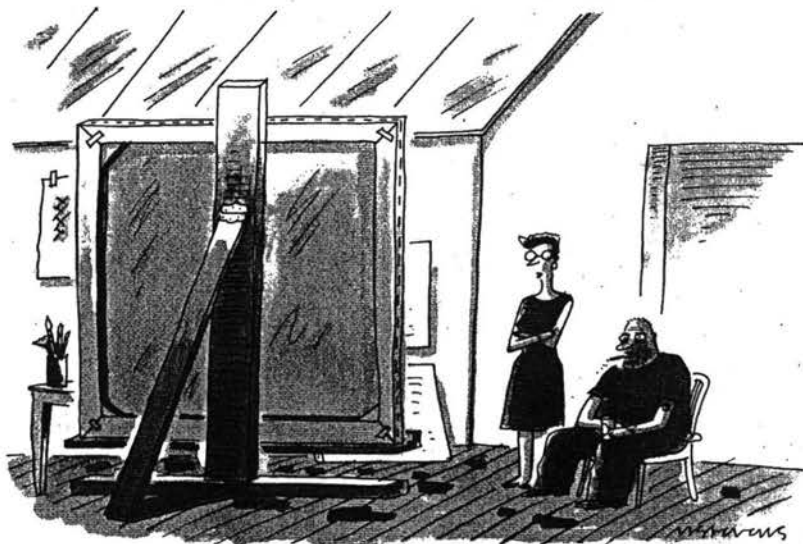
Thomason became a free-floating presence in the Clinton campaign—a sort of roving adviser who dropped into and out of the schedule at will. A native of Hampton, Arkansas, he and his wife, Linda Bloodworth-Thomason, were at the peak of their lucrative television-production careers, producing three sitcoms on the CBS roster. The Thomasons had known the Clintons for twenty years, and, in the vast concentric circles of

Clinton acquaintances, they travelled in the very nearest orbit. After Clinton's disastrous nominating speech at the 1988 Democratic Convention, Harry and Linda arranged for Clinton to make an appearance on Johnny Carson's "Tonight Show," where he won the crowd by playing "Summertime" on the sax and telling self-deprecating jokes, written by Linda. In the hope of heading off any possible Billy Carter problems with Clinton's free-spirited half brother, Roger, the Thomasons acted as his minders, getting him work at their production company.

Thomason brought to the campaign his true expertise, which was staging. At Clinton's bleakest moment, Thomason flew to New Hampshire and threw himself into what was beginning to seem a lost cause. He quickly identified the TV-call-in-show format as Clinton's natural métier; he picked out the chairs used in the debate with other candidates, and even helped lay the carpet. Mostly, Thomason was an uplifting presence for Clinton, who invariably brightened when he showed up. He seemed to have an instinct for what would make Clinton comfortable, as when the candidate had grown fat after gorging away his despair on late-night junk-food runs and looked as if he were bursting out of his clothes; Harry caused new suits to appear. He was a producer, he made things happen; Clinton was the talent.

The Thomasons' greatest campaign triumph was the Democratic National Convention, which Harry helped stage, culminating in the showing of Linda's twenty-minute paean to her friend, "The Man from Hope." After Clinton won, Harry also produced the Inauguration. The Thomasons were now the First Friends, and they were the Clintons' first overnight guests at the White House. Linda was so exhilarated that she jumped up and down on the bed in the Lincoln Bedroom.

Thomason returned to California, but in a couple of weeks he was back, this time to help out with Clinton's first speech to Congress. The high profile of First Friendship inevitably subjected the couple from Hollywood to some caricature (Maureen Dowd and Frank Rich, writing in the *Times*, referred to Linda as "the neo-Dogpatch sitcom tycoon"), but the Thomasons worked hard at nurturing an anti-Hollywood image. They lived in the San Fernando Valley, not Beverly Hills, and eschewed the show-biz money-worship culture, spending lavishly on charity projects. Harry, in particular, would have denied getting any special thrill from the nearness to power. Still, he did keep a hand in. He could often be seen around the White House, popping his head into the offices of senior staffers, passing ideas to this or that



"It's very male."

The New Yorker
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aide. Once, Watkins asked the chief of staff, Mack McLarty, what, exactly, it was that Harry did at the White House, and McLarty, after pausing, had to allow, "I don't know."

One of the things Thomason did was act as a conduit between his partner Darnell Martens at TRM and top people in the White House, including the President. Thomason had met Martens when he went shopping for a plane, and Martens, an aviation expert, helped him find the right one. Thomason liked the younger man; when Martens told him that his mother was an enthusiastic fan of Thomason's "Designing Women," Harry arranged for her to see the show and meet the cast. Darnell was hungry, and Thomason, a millionaire, was plainly able to help a young man with ambitions, and he did. In 1991, Thomason invested twenty-five thousand dollars and induced his agent, Dan Richland, to do the same. Martens set up T(homason) R(ichland) M(artens), Inc., the aviation consulting company that proved so useful in the campaign.

Martens knew that he had helped the campaign and, now that Clinton was in

the White House, he apparently believed that, with Thomason's help, Clinton could help him. On January 29, 1993, nine days after Clinton's Inauguration, Martens sent Thomason a memorandum outlining ways that TRM could "pursue Washington opportunities." He suggested a name change for the company, to Harry Thomason & Associates, in order to "capitalize on 'Thomason' name recognition." Then, to get a foot in the door, he suggested that TRM should "obtain some form of official status as advisors to the White House for general aviation policy matters," and he also proposed a TRM review of all nonmilitary government aircraft, as a way of identifying possible cost savings. He suggested that TRM be empowered to determine who controlled scheduling of White House press aircraft, and noted, "This can be done by TRM much as the campaign aircraft were handled."

Two weeks later, in a Cabinet meeting that was televised, President Clinton said that a "staff member" had told him there were big savings to be had in a review of government aircraft. Encouraged, Martens sent another memo to Thoma-

son describing his latest research. Now that the President seemed to him to be on board, Martens pointed out that TRM had coordinated all the Clinton-Gore travel and was perfectly suited to the job of auditing the government fleet, which operated on budgets totalling hundreds of millions of dollars. "This is the project for which I have trained for nineteen years," Martens wrote his partner. "I know the aircraft—I understand the budgets. Put me in front of the right person at the White House and I will prove the value of both the project and Thomason's capabilities."

Martens sent that memorandum on February 11th. Five days later, Thomason had a meeting with the President, went bowling with him in the White House bowling alley, and spent the night. The next day, Martens's "Put me in front of the right person" memo was stamped "The President has seen" and was sent to senior staff for "action," with a handwritten note from the President in the margin: "These guys are sharp."

DAVID WATKINS had been rewarded for his role in the campaign with the offer of a top White House job—assistant to the President for management and administration—which roughly paralleled his job in the campaign: running operations. The position not only would give him something to tell his grandchildren one day but could lead, it was easy to imagine, to something quite rewarding after he left government service. He and his wife, Ilene, talked it over, and quickly decided to accept. "Gosh, we had so much promise," he recalls. "I wanted to be part of history."

Just as Watkins had been one of the first in the campaign, he was one of the first to arrive in Washington. During the transition, while hundreds of other job aspirants were going to Little Rock, Watkins set up in the Old Executive Office Building and began to organize the new Clinton White House—planning office space, assessing the communications system, and so on. It was a particularly challenging task, for Clinton had promised in the campaign—rashly, many staffers later came to believe—to cut White House staff by twenty-five per cent, and it was a promise he meant to keep. Part of Watkins's job was to discover places to make those cuts.

Soon after Watkins arrived, he got



"You'll find our Boulevardier Department on six, the Dandy's Department on seven, and our Fop's Corner on eight!"

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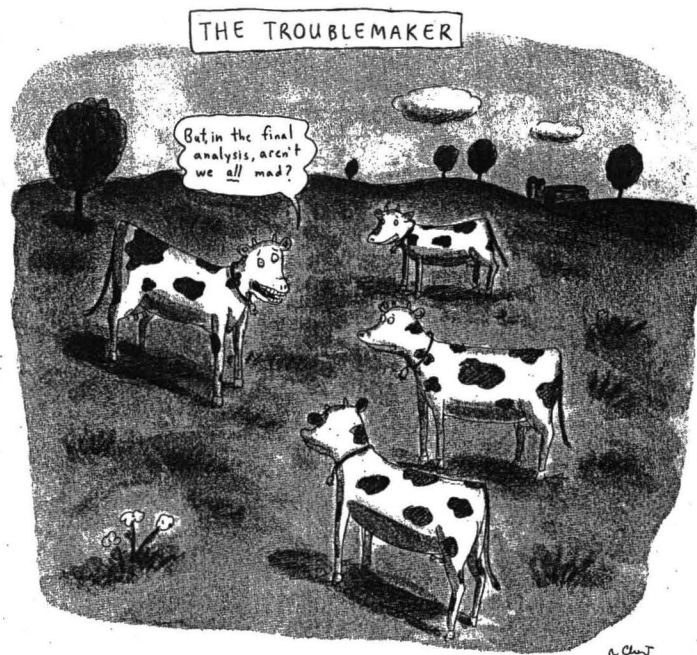
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a call from Little Rock on behalf of Catherine Cornelius. It seemed that she had been left out of the patronage distribution. Cornelius believed she had done a good job in the campaign, and she now had a particular expertise—managing travel—that she was not inclined to keep hidden. Even before the Inauguration, she wrote a memo to Watkins suggesting ways that the White House travel office, which fell under Watkins's range of responsibilities, could be better managed. Indeed, she met twice with Watkins in Little Rock to discuss the matter, and at the second meeting, with Betta Carney present, the idea of "outsourcing" White House press travel was discussed. (Carney's World Wide Travel was an obvious choice to receive the business.) Watkins listened without making a commitment. But, because of Cornelius's help in the campaign, he felt obliged to find a slot for her in the White House. It wouldn't be the travel office, he told her, but, if she would agree to work as his assistant ("an awful job . . . not a big paying job") for six months, he would find her a more accommodating position. Cornelius agreed, and went to Washington on Watkins's terms. Within a week, she made a move on the travel office.

To Cornelius, the White House travel office must have seemed—as it would have to any of the others who had served on the tight ship of the campaign's travel operation—an appallingly inept, if not malfasant, operation. The office had a staff of seven, and was run by a man named Billy R. Dale—a personable, soft-spoken Virginian who had been there for nearly thirty-two years—in a casual manner that approached recklessness. Dale had no particular accounting system, he kept no general ledger, and he guessed at the cost of each White House press journey, adding to or taking from the office's reserve of funds as needed, depending upon the accuracy of his estimate. Money collected from the press for Presidential trips—hundreds of thousands of dollars—was sometimes kept in drawers (or even, it turned out, in his personal checking account, if that happened to be convenient). Cornelius had no specific knowledge of any of this yet, but she seemed to have a strong notion that the office was sloppily managed. She may have picked up the notion from a man with whom she was involved in a personal relationship: Jeff Eller, a lawyer



working with the press (he eventually became director of media affairs at the Clinton White House), who had heard tales of Dale's laxity. In December, Eller had gone as far as to tell a reporter that there were problems at the White House travel office.

Watkins planned to make changes in travel as part of Clinton's mandate for twenty-five-per-cent cuts. However, he didn't intend to address the issue until the summer of 1993, and he certainly didn't expect to put Cornelius in charge of the office. He considered her bright and hardworking, but he also thought her naïve and too inexperienced for a management position. So when, after a week as his assistant, Cornelius sent him a memorandum about the travel office, Watkins paid it little regard, and when he wanted a travel-office report shortly thereafter he assigned the task to another of his aides, Matthew Moore. This angered Cornelius, and she said so; Watkins, relenting, invited Cornelius and another assistant, Clarissa Cerda, to prepare their own travel-office report. In mid-February, Cornelius gave Watkins an eight-page "Briefing Book and Proposal"—a blueprint for com-

pletely reorganizing the travel office, with Cornelius and Cerda installed as co-directors. Watkins skimmed the document until he reached the organizational chart, with his two young assistants at the top, whereupon he put it aside and forgot about it.

Cornelius, after being on the White House payroll for little more than a month, pronounced her assignment unbearably menial, even "abusive," and asked Watkins for a better job. He tried to transfer her to the White House military office, but that fell through, and in April, relenting again, he transferred Cornelius to the travel office.

Watkins told Cornelius to keep her eyes open in her new assignment. She then began an undercover investigation. In her first several weeks at the travel office, Cornelius spent her spare time sleuthing, which is to say snatching files and copying records and eavesdropping on office chatter. Detecting was not one of her talents, however. While she was secretly copying checks, she managed to jam the duplicating machine, and on another occasion she found herself locked out of a filing cabinet when she tried to return some documents she had

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"The wrangler within wants pancakes."

Watkins, and told him that the travel-office employees were crooks and should be fired, and that it would make a good story. Watkins had known Harry Thomason since the days when both men were just starting their careers—Watkins as a young advertising executive, Thomason as a striving filmmaker who would occasionally come by looking for film work. More significant, Watkins knew how close Thomason was to the President and the First Lady, so his call registered with him.

The week of May 10th was a particularly busy one for Thomason at the White House. On the tenth, which was a Monday, he arrived before nine-thirty and stayed all day. He asked Martens to fax his memorandum to the White House, and he also dropped in on Watkins and chatted about the travel office. He asked Watkins if he had done anything about the problem, and Watkins said yes—he had assigned Catherine Cornelius to the office with instructions to observe the staff. Watkins suggested that Thomason should meet with Cornelius, and he set up the meeting. Thomason left the White House at six-twenty that evening.

On May 12th, Thomason began his day at the White House with a meeting with President Clinton at eight-thirty. Later that morning, he went to see Vince Foster, the deputy White House coun-

sel, in his office. Thomason had called Foster saying that he wanted to see him about "family issues," which turned out to involve the President's mother and his brother, Roger. Thomason made a good impression. Foster didn't know precisely what Thomason was doing at the White House, but he wrote in his notebook, "He is obviously motivated to pick up morale, keep up advance team, even train." At the end of their conversation, Foster also noted, Thomason mentioned that he "may have learned of some graft," and promised to let Foster know when he learned more.

On leaving Foster, Thomason walked to the East Wing to see Catherine Cornelius. They talked about the travel office for the better part of an hour, and Cornelius showed Thomason some of her copied documents. Fired up, they headed for Watkins's office, where they were joined by Darnell Martens (who that day received his own White House pass) for a session on the alleged wrongdoing in the travel office. According to a chronology put together by the congressional committee investigating Travelgate, Thomason said, "These guys are ripping us off," and he suggested again that decisive action would be "a great press story, Bill Clinton cleaning house." The meeting turned to Watkins. He hesitated. "Well, let me think about what to do," he said, and the meeting broke up.

Thomason then stopped in to see the First Lady, and here, too, one subject was the travel office. Bill Clinton had promised that his relationship with Mrs. Clinton would be "an unprecedented partnership," and although she had no formal authority over the travel office, she did wield great authority in White House operational and personnel decisions. Mrs. Clinton is said to have urged Thomason to "stay ahead of this," and agreed that uprooting corruption in the travel office would generate some positive press. By now, all these converging voices had pushed the travel-office issue from a matter of efficiency to one of wrongdoing; the seven employees had become suspects, and no one had yet asked any of them for an explanation.

After lunch, Thomason returned to Watkins's office, popped his head in, and, according to Watkins, said he had seen Mrs. Clinton "and she's ready to fire them all."

THAT decided it for Watkins, but he was not about to act on his own. He felt he had to see Vince Foster. Foster was Hillary Clinton's close friend and adviser. If anyone could read her, Foster could; he would know what to do.

When Watkins called, at about two-forty, asking for an urgent meeting, Foster said, "I don't have long," and explained that he had a barber's appointment outside the White House at three-thirty. "Let's get started," Watkins said. He gathered Cornelius and Thomason, and they headed for Foster's office, on the floor above the Oval Office.

Knowing that Foster was pressed for time, Watkins gave a quick overview of the situation. He told Foster he had planned a reorganization of the travel office eventually as part of his long-term review of White House operations, and he introduced Cornelius. She said that she had been "isolated" by the travel staff, and that that move had prompted her covert investigation and the discovery of, among other things, checks totalling seventy-two thousand dollars made out to "Cash." Thomason said he had heard from a source in the aviation business that the travel office solicited kickbacks from charter companies wanting White House business, though Foster, apparently, didn't

find the allegation convincing. ("HT related very vague conversation relating to friend," he later noted, and in fact nothing ever came of it.) Watkins asked Foster for his advice. The White House lawyer wanted to know if Watkins had the capacity to audit the travel office, and Watkins said no. Foster could see that further discussion was required, and before leaving for his haircut he asked Cornelius to fetch her file and for everyone to meet again later that afternoon.

After his appointment, Foster met up with the White House associate counsel, William H. Kennedy III—another Rose Law Firm hand—and asked him to sit in on the second meeting. Cornelius showed Foster her copies of travel records and the checks made out to "Cash," and told how she had been "isolated" in a "sound-proof room." She said that the men in the office "used racist and sexist language" (but noted that they had not sexually harassed her), and that some of them seemed to be living well beyond their means. They owned racehorses and lakefront vacation homes—things that she couldn't see how they could afford on their salaries. Watkins had heard this before from Cornelius, and had discounted it as youthful speculation. Foster, too, seemed dubious, noting later that Cornelius had made these observations "despite the fact she'd been isolated."

Significantly, Thomason, who had impressed Foster that morning as being keen on improving the President's image, offered his opinion that "it would be a great story to replace the old staff with new staff who could save money." Watkins noted that the travel staffers could be fired "at will" without cause, because they served at the pleasure of the President. But firing people of long service without cause could be dangerous public relations, devaluing the "great story," and, as someone in the meeting pointed out, Billy Dale and his staff seemed to have good relations with the press. (Dale was, in fact, beloved by the travelling press corps, although the president of the White House Correspondents' Association had recently complained about the rising costs of press travel.) Foster conceded that he and Kennedy couldn't ignore such serious charges, but he later noted, "There could be nothing there." How to find out? With no auditing capability, there was the problem of getting information that "will show cause and

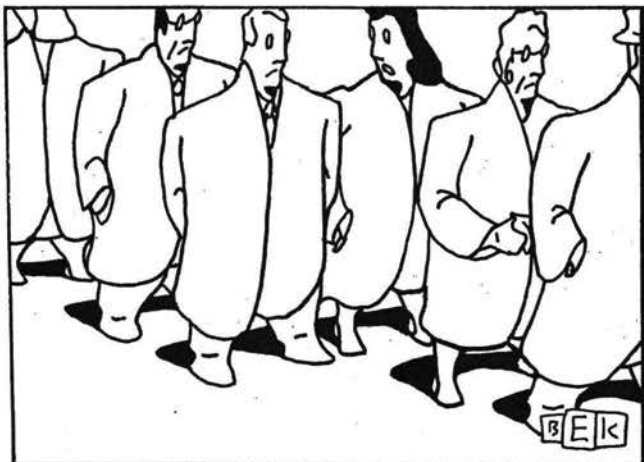
possibly criminal conduct," Foster noted. But Kennedy, who handled White House security issues, said that he regularly spoke with someone at the F.B.I., and would seek the Bureau's advice on how to proceed—an impulsive decision that would prove extremely unfortunate for the Administration.

The issue was now clearly posed. On the basis of the speculations of a young former campaign worker (none of the people at the meeting yet knew she was the President's cousin), which she had deduced from her amateurish investigation, and the vague allegations of a Hollywood pal of the President's, whatever his good intentions, should the White House senior staff, under the direction of its counsel's office, seek to establish wrongdoing on the part of the in-house travel agents in order to produce a "great story"? Everything about Vince Foster—his instinct for caution, his innate decency—dictated a course of thoughtful restraint. But the move to act against the travel staff already had powerful momentum, and it soon gained more.

THE next day—Thursday, May 13th—Foster had a late lunch and then went to see the First Lady. They discussed her health-care project—an operation over which she did have formal authority—and then she brought up the travel office. "Are you on top of it?" she asked. Later, trying to describe her mood, Foster wrote

"general impatience" and then, seeking a better word, chose "general frustration." As for his answer to her question, he wrote, "I responded we just heard about it yesterday," and he assured the First Lady that Kennedy was already looking into it.

There is little doubt that Mrs. Clinton's interest intensified the sense of urgency that was now driving the travel-office matter. Dealing with the wishes of a First Lady is a tricky matter for any White House staff, and Mrs. Clinton's power was not merely inferred. She had been an influential adviser to her husband throughout his political life, but in Arkansas she had had a separate career, practicing law at the Rose firm. She wasn't in and around the Governor's Mansion all day, involving herself in daily business, which some Clinton people thought was just as well. As patently smart as she was, and as much as her discipline and fierce will to prevail made her an asset, the pure political talent in the family belonged almost entirely to Bill. Hillary was infinitely less apt than her husband at sensing what the public would countenance, as she showed in the image she projected during Clinton's first term as governor, when she insisted on keeping her maiden name and was studiously indifferent to such trivial matters as personal style. John Brummett, an Arkansas journalist who covered the Clinton era in the state, says, "She has no willingness to adapt to circumstances. It's her way or no



"I forget—did we decide to see something life-affirming or something mind-numbing?"

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way. You're either for her or against her."

If in Little Rock Mrs. Clinton did not routinely involve herself in everyday management matters, in the White House she not only was in charge of her husband's biggest policy initiative—health care—but also exerted a presence that had to be reckoned with on other matters. This had been demonstrated very early, in the matter of the White House press corps. Mrs. Clinton was deeply distrustful of the news media, and shortly after the Inauguration she was behind the decision to end reporters' access to certain parts of the White House press office—a move that naturally created considerable resentment among the reporters. It was a bad start with the White House press, and it may have exacerbated an extremely awkward situation that had developed with the First Family in the early weeks of their life in the White House—the famous incident in February in which she was alleged to have smashed a lamp (or, in some media reports, to have thrown a Bible at the President). Mrs. Clinton, feeling beleaguered, assumed that the story, which she has said was false, had been leaked to the press by one of the Secret Service agents assigned to guard her and her family, and she was not entirely surprised, for she had been warned that potential trouble lay in the permanent staff assigned to the White House, whose loyalties were suspect. Prior to the leak, the First Lady had expressed particular discomfort with the Secret Service detail assigned to her family, and had asked Foster and Watkins to have it removed in favor of the detail that had been assigned to them during the campaign and the transition. Foster and Watkins went to see the Secret Service chief for the President's private security, John McGaw, who told them that he thought the Clintons were overreacting.

When the lamp story appeared in the press, Foster, Watkins, and McLarty were called in to a meeting in the Oval Office with the President and his wife and other senior staffers, at which Mrs. Clinton suggested that they had not been responsive enough to the First Family's wishes, and that their Arkansas manners and reserve were not suited to the alley fight that Washington presented. "You are too nice, too naïve," she told them. Later, Watkins, in a draft of his "soul cleansing" memorandum, which was written to McLarty but was never sent, specifically cited that incident as a motivat-

ing factor in the travel-office affair: "I was convinced that failure to take immediate action in this case would have been directly contrary to the wishes of the First Lady, something that would not have been tolerated in light of the Secret Service incident earlier in the year."

Mrs. Clinton was pained by all the bad publicity. What's more, her father, Hugh Rodham, who had suffered a stroke two months after the Inauguration, died in April. Those family concerns forced delays on the health-care plan, which had been promised for early May. She was not one to conceal her frustrations, and Vince Foster was particularly sensitive to her mood. Once her protector and closest friend inside the Rose firm, he was now her employee, and bore perhaps more than his share of her expressed frustration. "Vince took the brunt of the Hillary stuff," one Arkansan in the Clinton circle says. "Hillary would say things to Vince about others in the White House that she would not say to them directly. I will tell you that, for every chilling that Watkins or Mack got, Vince probably got about six. If she was mad at anyone—it didn't matter who it was—Vince got it." Another Arkansan who knew the Vince-Hillary relationship well says of those difficult months, "She yelled at him all the time."

When Mrs. Clinton asked Foster if he was "on top of" the travel-office matter, on May 13th, that in itself would have motivated him to see it resolved. He and the First Lady had a second meeting that afternoon, and she again brought up the subject. Foster wrote in his notes that Mrs. Clinton conveyed "general frustration with management drift" and, later, that "HRC generally appeared less than satisfied with timeliness of decision-making, i.e. cloture." Apparently, Foster relayed those concerns more forcefully to Watkins, for Watkins's own notes covering this time mention "periodic reports from Vince Foster that First Lady had inquired about travel office + why wasn't action being taken—Report was that they should be fired immediately + out of here by the end of the day."

When, in the second meeting, Mrs. Clinton asked Foster about the travel office, he was able to give her news of some progress. Watkins had told Foster

that he'd found an auditor, Larry Herman, of the firm KPMG Peat Marwick, which was already in the White House, working with Vice-President Gore on the "reinventing government" project, and that the management-review team had agreed to take a look at the travel office. "[We] will use outside auditors," Foster told her. "Let's see what's there."

Watkins's news about Peat Marwick was a welcome development, perhaps obviating the need for the F.B.I. investigation that Kennedy had been considering. The F.B.I.'s integrity resides in its independence from political pressures. Foster hadn't stopped Kennedy from making contact with the F.B.I., but Kennedy had said he meant only to seek "guidance." However, Kennedy may have been overemphatic in seeking the Bureau's help. According to the agents Kennedy first spoke to, he told them that "he was being directed at the highest level of the White House," and that if the F.B.I. couldn't help perhaps he could approach another agency, such as the Internal Revenue Service. (Kennedy disputes those agents' reports.) In any case, Foster met with two F.B.I. agents and told them, "We might have a better way"—a reference to the Peat Marwick audit—and asked them to hold off on their investigation.

By this time, travel-office fever had spread through the senior staff of the White House, and the debate was not over whether the staff should be dismissed but how, and when. Jeff Eller argued vigorously in favor of firing the staff immediately. He had been one of the proponents of the theory that the dismissals would make a good story, but he also cautioned that delay could backfire if the staff got wise and launched a counter-offensive with its friends in the press. Eller urged that the firings be announced Friday, May 14th, at 5 P.M. McLarty said that he didn't want to act precipitately—that he wanted things done "in a businesslike way"—and instructed that action be delayed until word from Peat Marwick was in.

The management review (it was not strictly an audit) began that Friday, under the pretense that the inspection was part of the reinventing-government project. Through the weekend, reports from the review team were awaited like dispatches from the battlefield. Watkins had flown South for his stepdaughter's college graduation, but he stayed in touch with the auditors. Watkins's notes record that



Foster "says he's getting more pressure from First Lady to act." From Little Rock, and then from Memphis (where his stepdaughter's school was), Watkins checked with his deputy, Patsy Thomason, nearly a dozen times for progress reports. She reported that the review team was finding sloppy records, missing cash that was unaccounted for, and general disarray—just the news that Watkins and the others expected. (The written report eventually produced by Peat Marwick was rather less dramatic in its tone than the reports that Watkins received that weekend, but all the allegations of wrongdoing were repeated in it.)

In a phone call from the White House on Friday evening, Foster had asked Watkins to report what he'd learned directly to the First Lady. As Watkins recounts the conversation, he began, "Vince has asked me to call you and tell you what's going on with regard to this review by Peat Marwick," and went on to tell the First Lady that the review team's reports were finding more than anyone expected. He said he would be in his office on Monday and would take "whatever action is necessary."

"Harry says his people can run things better," the First Lady said, according to Watkins. She said she had been told that it was a mistake to keep people held over from another Administration, and added, "We need to get those people out. We need our people in." Mrs. Clinton denies saying this. Recently, she issued a statement that read, in part, "I did not direct that any particular action should be taken, nor did I make particular comments about what should be done . . . e.g., that I thought the Travel Office people 'should be out.'"

Watkins was already working on a strategy for keeping the travel office functioning once the staff was gone—an outcome that by this point no one involved in the matter doubted. The travel staff's work would be temporarily "outsourced" to World Wide Travel, and the office would be run by Catherine Cornelius. (Additionally, Darnell Martens had arranged for charter planes to be standing by. "Aircraft are being reviewed for Sun., if needed," Martens faxed to Harry Thomason. "I can be at the White House to assist 'C' as needed to begin operations.") Foster, meanwhile, had asked Thomason if he would benefit by the new arrangement, and Thomason assured him that he would not.



"Must you blue-pencil everything I say?"

By Sunday night, the preliminary report was in from Peat Marwick, showing serious mismanagement, as had been expected. Although the final written report was not yet in, Watkins decided that he would fire the employees that week. (Vince Foster later wrote that the possibility of waiting for the final report was not discussed.) The seven travel-office staff members had still not been confronted with any accusations.

That night, May 16th, Mack McLarty had dinner with the President and the First Lady. She had spoken to him a few days earlier about the travel office, and it was discussed again at supper. McLarty summarized the essence of the conversation in a handwritten note: "HRC pressure."

The next morning, while Watkins was in his office reviewing the Peat Marwick report, McLarty stopped by. He talked about his dinner with the President and the First Lady the night before, and said that the travel office was on the First Lady's "radar screen." Watkins went to work on a memorandum for McLarty (which he dutifully cc'd to the First Lady), outlining the dismissals and lay-

ing out his temporary plan for running the travel office. At midday, Watkins received word that Billy Dale wanted to speak with him; when the two men did speak, around 5 P.M., Dale offered to resign. Watkins put him off, and explained that he would be holding a meeting for all travel-office employees two days later.

The quest for favorable news seemed particularly urgent that week, for the President was again caught in the vortex of a bad spin. The Belgian-born hair stylist Christophe (who had been introduced to Clinton by the Thomasons) had given the President a two-hundred-dollar haircut aboard Air Force One in Los Angeles, triggering another round of unfavorable news stories. On Wednesday, Watkins, citing the President's efficiency mandate, dismissed the seven employees of the White House travel office. They were given until the end of the day to gather their belongings and be gone.

As it turned out, those who had advocated the firings because they would be a good story were right in thinking that Billy Dale and his colleagues had friends in the press. Dale had

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somehow obtained a copy of Catherine Cornelius's eight-page memorandum to Watkins in which she proposed a reorganized travel office with herself at the top, as well as the Martens memo pitching TRM for White House business; both memos were leaked to the *Washington Post* (Dale denies personal involvement in the leak), and the travel-office story became deliciously clear—the White House had sacked seven career employees without notice in order to benefit a Hollywood pal and a Clinton cousin. (The relationship was revealed on May 19th.) The fact that the employees served at the pleasure of the President and that there had been some dramatic mishandling of office records and funds was not unreported, but it paled next to the accusation of naked cronyism. Making matters worse was the emerging picture that the White House may have manipulated the F.B.I. in order to provide cover for the firings.

The F.B.I.'s involvement became part of the controversy through a disastrous misjudgment by David Watkins. On the day of the firings, Watkins prepared a set of "talking points" highlighting key issues to be referred to in dealings with the press—the White House line. The briefing paper posed the firings as part of the reinventing-government project, and also mentioned an F.B.I. audit, reflecting Watkins's belief that it would bolster the White House's case for the firings and

generate the great story about how Bill Clinton was cleaning house. In reality, of course, the F.B.I. had become involved only at William Kennedy's insistence, and, far from having begun an investigation, it had not even participated—at Foster's request—in the Peat Marwick review. Watkins gave a copy of his "talking points" to Dee Dee Myers, the press secretary, and sent another copy to Foster. When Foster saw the reference to the F.B.I., he recognized a land mine and instructed Watkins to delete it. Watkins did, but he couldn't find Myers, who had gone to Capitol Hill and, as it turned out, had already told a reporter about the F.B.I. "audit."

Just the fact of revealing an ongoing Bureau inquiry was bad enough—such a revelation is strictly against Bureau rules—but the intimation of a White House-F.B.I. collaboration was about to become painful. When reporters inevitably began asking about the justification for the firings, the White House and the Bureau seemed to be saying two different things. The F.B.I.'s first press response said only that the Bureau was awaiting the final Peat Marwick report and "will analyze their findings and conduct appropriate investigation." That was not exactly language mandating the drastic action of firing the office workers, or even of announcing that they were F.B.I. suspects. The Bureau's spokesman, John Collingwood, was summoned to a meet-

ing in the office of George Stephanopoulos, the White House communications director. At the meeting, which Foster attended, the White House communications people asked if the F.B.I. couldn't use stronger language, and Collingwood agreed to their request. Word of that White House meeting and the change it produced soon got out, and the result, predictably, was disastrous. The "great story" had become another sign of a White House not up to the task of governing. Editorialists scolded, and Republicans clamored for a congressional investigation.

One unforeseen consequence of all this ineptitude was the devastation of Vince Foster. He alone appeared to realize the scope of the management failure, and its potential consequences. His wife, Lisa, couldn't comprehend his reaction to what she saw as a minor dustup, especially since the firings weren't his doing anyway. "It's not your fault," she kept telling him, but Foster—so determined always to do the right thing—took the disaster personally: he had been in charge, and he surely knew that his effort to be responsive to the wishes of his "client" might now lead to her exposure.

The White House geared up for damage control. Watkins was instructed to fire Betta Carney's staff. Stephanopoulos announced that five dismissed travel-office workers, who had not handled the accounts—but had been tainted as F.B.I. suspects—would be put on administrative leave and that new government jobs would be found for them. And the White House announced that it would conduct its own thorough review of the lamentable blunder. The inquiry would be led by John Podesta, the White House staff secretary, and his assistant, Todd Stern, who were both lawyers. The First Lady's involvement was an extremely sensitive issue in the White House, raising again the matter of the famous Clinton "twoferism." Like so many of the distresses vexing the Clintons, it would seem in retrospect a puzzling case of their trying to cover up something that wasn't really much more than an embarrassment. Even if Mrs. Clinton, believing that there was incompetence or worse in the travel office, had instigated the firings, what was she guilty of? Meddling? The fact is, though, that that was precisely the perception the White House wanted to avoid. Mrs. Clinton's shared, though un-



"Hi! I'm the Bluebird of Happiness. Can I get your ex-wife's new address?"

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secretly taken away for study. On being discovered, she was isolated by the rest of the travel-office staff—a fact that became another indictment in the “case” she was building against the seven travel workers.

Cornelius’s hapless career as a whistleblower might have played itself out harmlessly if her preoccupation with the travel office hadn’t intersected with Harry Thomason. But it had, momentarily.

FOR the Clintons, the first months of the Administration had been disastrous, what with the dispute over gays in the military, the failed nominations of the President’s first two choices for Attorney General, the Waco disaster, and a number of lesser missteps. Clinton seemed a rudderless, and even a confused, leader, and his approval rating reflected it, plunging from seventy-one per cent to fifty-six per cent during his first hundred days. The President had an image problem, and Thomason was there to help. Rahm Emmanuel, the White House political director, put Thomason in charge of something called the White House Project, advising staff members on ways to better stage Presidential events, among them little things like positioning the President in photo ops in a manner that didn’t make it seem that houseplants were growing out of his head. After an urgent directive from the First Lady’s office, Thomason was given a White House pass, with wide-ranging access, and was allowed temporary use of an office in the East Wing. But his broader purpose was to lift morale, to try to raise the Presidential spirits, just as he had during the campaign.

Meanwhile, Darnell Martens, Thomason’s aviation partner, had been continuing his effort to land some government business. In February, Thomason had told Martens to talk to the White House press secretary, Dee Dee Myers, about having TRM determine who controlled the scheduling of White House press aircraft. Myers had suggested that Martens speak with Billy Dale. Martens had telephoned Dale but found him much less accommodating than the other White House people he had met through Thomason’s good name. According to Martens, Dale told him stiffly that there was no combination of prices and service which could earn White House business for TRM, and

advised him not to “waste his time discussing the matter.” Martens said that when he tried to persuade Dale that TRM could provide much more efficient air travel for the White House press, Dale had responded, “I have been here thirty-one years and no one has seen fit to replace me with a commercial operation yet. So until they do I will continue to handle this without your help.”

In a March 5th memorandum to Thomason—marked “Confidential”—Martens reported this apparent lack of interest in opening the travel office to competitive bidding, and suggested that he might have uncovered a disturbing circumstance that could explain Billy Dale’s hostility: the White House travel office did business primarily with “a Republican-operated charter airline” that was motivated by “a decidedly anti-Clinton philosophy . . . inconsistent with the current Administration.” Billy Dale, Martens wrote, had full knowledge of this supposed political bias—indeed, had been a party to it. (The political charges have never been verified.)

Martens’s report apparently had the desired effect: it excited Thomason’s outrage, and he remarked to someone that “this guy at the travel office is the most arrogant guy I have ever encountered.” Thomason determined to do something about this unacceptable situation, as a good deed for his friends in the White House, where he appeared more and more frequently throughout the spring.

While Martens pursued his personal investigation, Thomason mentioned in a conversation with the President that there was trouble in the White House travel office. Thomason also called David

A SLAVE TO LUST

Nathan Lane, as the Roman denizen Pseudolus, stands surrounded by courtesans in the revival of “A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum,” the Sondheim-Gelbart-Shevelove musical opening April 18th at Broadway’s St. James Theatre. The temptresses are: the Geminæ (Susan Misner and Lori Werner), Gymnasia (Stephanie Pope), Tintanabula (Pamela Everett), Vibrata (Mary Ann Lamb), and Panacea (Leigh Zimmerman).

Photographed by Chris Callis, New York City, April 2, 1996.



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THE BOLT

That girl so long ago walked, as they all did, shopgirls,
Little cousins, and church friends, to the unflattering
Hack of the hem just where the calf begins to swell,
Felt ruchings of the bodice's stiff panels
Gall the flesh beside the flattening ornate
Armature of underwear (like pads and straps
For livestock, fretted by tooling and bright studs),
So she must yank her knees against
Pounds of rigid drapery in the storm of heat,

Trailing through the pestering, gray heads
Of Queen Anne's lace, wind ravelling
Her hair and sweeping through prolific
Jagged-bladed grass—a wind that pressed down
There like God with both His hands, mashing the air,
Darkening the hole where the dry mouth of the wood
Yawned to drink the stumbling travellers already touched
By the heavy sacs of rain that broke and ran
In gouts down saturated pleats of serge...

Here that girl ran last, so long ago, to be run through
By one long lightning thread that entered, through
A slender purple bruise, the creamy skin of her temple.

The instant that it happened, nobody remembered
How she looked or spoke, so quickly had she blended
With this evocation of her having been.

This was the past: a stroke of imagery stare-
Frozen, finished in suspension.

—MARY KINZIE

elected, power had come to be seen as a political liability. As Bill Clinton began to define his Presidency—with executive orders protecting abortion rights and gays in the military, and with the selection of a Cabinet that "looked like America," and so on—there was a growing sense that the so-called New Democrat centrist had ceded primacy to his wife's liberal agenda. It was a partisan assumption, and, while it was only partly true, it was powerful nonetheless. (The conservative syndicated columnist Tony Snow soon picked up on the theme of Mrs. Clinton, unappointed and unelected, exercising administrative power in the travel-office matter.) The last thing the Clintons needed was Travelgate as evidence of Hillary Clinton's sway.

Foster was determined not to let that happen. When his turn came to be in-

terviewed by Podesta and Stern, he told them, "I assume many of the conversations I had were privileged." In the interview that followed, it is plain which conversations Foster deemed privileged—those he had with his "client." He gave the interviewers a chronology of events, including even his barber's appointment, but he did not mention the First Lady. Toward the end of the session, Todd Stern seemed to be edging toward the issue of Mrs. Clinton by asking Foster if "anyone else" was "involved." Foster cut Stern off with "I think that's all I should say about that."

Watkins also tried, though less determinedly, to protect the First Lady. In his session in Podesta's office, he was asked if he had anything to say about Mrs. Clinton, and he replied "No." Later, Foster asked him about the interview, and

Watkins, the former Army officer, said, "I fell on my sword"—a line he also used with Mack McLarty. In a note written at the time, Watkins mused, "Is the real story to be told?"

But Podesta was able to discern the First Lady's involvement anyway—the fact that Watkins had c'd Mrs. Clinton on his memo outlining the firings was a pretty good hint—and it was evident that the issue would have to be addressed. Podesta went to Foster for another session. They met on June 30th in Foster's office, and this time Foster, pressed, gave a grudging sketch of Mrs. Clinton's role. He told of the two meetings he had had with her, in which she asked what was being done about the travel office, and, in a strikingly qualified concession, he admitted that "I may have had a few short, incidental, non-substantive discussions subsequently" with the First Lady.

Even at the outset of the inquiry, Stern sensed that Mrs. Clinton's role might have been significant. In handwritten notes dated May 27th, he considered the problem facing him and his colleague: "If we do any kind of report & fail to address these [question]s, press jumps on you wanting to know answers; while if you give answers that aren't fully honest (e.g., nothing re HRC) you risk hugely compounding the problem by getting caught in half-truths. You run risk of turning this into a 'coverup.'" Stern noted almost hopefully that there was a chance that the whole thing would merely be blamed on incompetence, but he lamented that the press "will want to get to the bottom of it. It's their nature." He also posed the possibility of simply telling the truth. "We need to think seriously about whether or not it won't be better to come clean, even to point of conceding that HRC had some interest."

THE "White House Travel Office Management Review," issued by Podesta just before the July 4th weekend, was a strikingly harsh criticism of the management process that had led to the travel-office firings. Kennedy, Cornelius, Eller, and Watkins were singled out for reprimands, and the reviewers concluded that "Thomason should have avoided continued involvement in a matter... in which there was an appearance of financial conflict of interest," and blamed "lax procedures" for his "continued participation" and free-ranging influence. As it

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happened, Foster's and Watkins's wives played tennis together on the day the report came out, and when they heard the news Lisa Foster was astonished that Vince hadn't been one of those reprimanded. He had accepted blame, and had fully expected to shoulder it. Watkins, in contrast, was bitterly angry over the report, which seemed to blame him even for Harry Thomason's role. When McLarty told him about the reprimand, he sarcastically asked, "Does this mean I don't get to work in government anymore?" Watkins felt that he had done the bidding of his client, the First Lady, that he had protected her from exposure, and that his reward was a public rebuke. He stewed for a time, and finally decided to put down in writing what he called "a soul cleansing, carefully detailing the surrounding circumstances and the pressures that demanded that action be taken immediately." In it, using words he later came to regret, Watkins wrote, "It is my first attempt to be sure the record is straight, something I have not done in previous conversations with investigators—where I have been as protective and vague as possible." In the memo, Watkins also attempted to answer the offending findings of the Podesta report point by point, and recalled the Secret Service incident, noting that "the First Lady in particular was extremely upset with the delayed action in that case." He proceeded to draw a picture of her involvement in Travelgate, beginning with Harry Thomason's conversations and continuing all the way through—to "her insistence that the situation be resolved immediately by replacing the Travel Office staff." He and McLarty, he went on, "both knew there would be hell to pay if, after our failure in the Secret Service situation earlier, we failed to take swift and decisive action in conformity with the First Lady's wishes." The memorandum became public on January 3rd of this year, after it was discovered by the White House and released to the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee.

Vince Foster, for his part, had reason to find comfort in the Podesta report. He had not been reprimanded, and, more important, the First Lady had been mentioned only in passing. However, he was not comforted; instead, he slipped into a crippling depression, seized by anxiety over what might still lie ahead. His family and his close friends knew that he was

deeply worried about a congressional hearing, but they couldn't fathom the depth of his despair, and their efforts to lift it were unavailing. Foster seemed obsessed with the issue, urging that the Clintons hire outside lawyers, and searching for legal representation for himself. How would he respond to a partisan probe into the matter, he asked himself. How would he answer questions about Mrs. Clinton's involvement?

Foster was gripped by a deepening emotional illness, yet among the Clinton inner circle he alone seemed able to picture the circumstances with clarity. The evidence suggests that it is likely that he glimpsed in advance the scenario that did in fact occur—the ceaseless inquiries that have placed David Watkins under investigation and led to Hillary Clinton's being hounded by congressional committees. Indeed, in addition to hearings by the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee and Senator Alfonse D'Amato's special committee investigating Whitewater, four separate organizations—the White House, the F.B.I., the General Accounting Office, and the Department of Justice—have all produced detailed reports on Travelgate.

In a spiral notebook Foster laid out the particulars of the case, and, whether he intended to do so or not, he sketched the defense that the White House has followed in regard to the First Lady: "Defend management decision, thereby defend HRC role whatever it was in fact or might have been misperceived to be."

EIGHT months after Foster's death, an official from the General Accounting Office put the issue of Mrs. Clinton's influence on the travel-office matter directly to the First Lady: "How would you describe and to whom would you attribute the origin of the decision to remove the Travel Office employees? How would you characterize your role in that decision?"

Mrs. Clinton gave her response, in April of 1994, through a White House lawyer, Neil Eggleston. "Mrs. Clinton does not know the origin of the decision to remove the White House Travel Office employees," the response said. "Mrs. Clinton was aware that Mr. Watkins was undertaking a review of the situation in the Travel Office, but she had no role in the decision to terminate the employees."

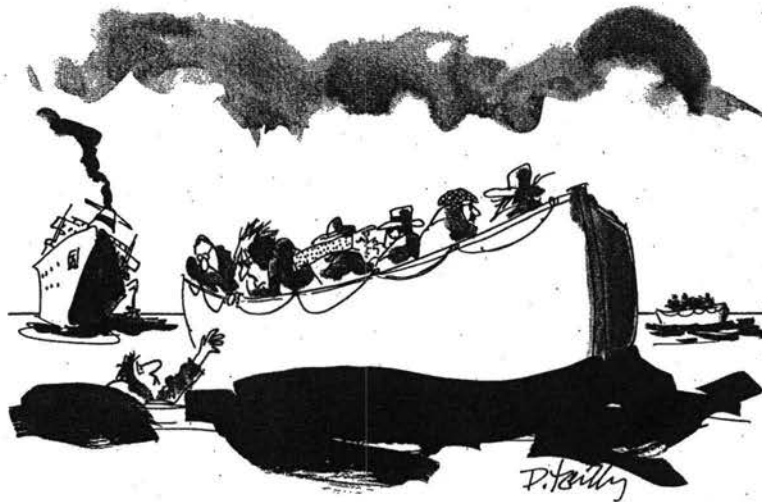
That statement served as Mrs. Clin-

ton's final word on the subject until the revelation of the Watkins memorandum made it plain that either Watkins had lied—in a memo he never sent—or Mrs. Clinton had been less than forthcoming. The House Government Reform and Oversight Committee, now controlled by Republicans, seized on the opening and went after Mrs. Clinton again, serving her with a twenty-six-question interrogatory about her role in the travel-office firings and pointedly asking about her earlier statements to the G.A.O. The questions carried an ominous subtext—that knowingly giving false answers could be criminal. This time, Mrs. Clinton's answers, on March 21st of this year, came in a sworn statement. She stood by her answers to the G.A.O. but elaborated on them. She contradicted Watkins's account, denying that she had told him to fire the travel staff, but conceded, in lawyerly phrasing, "Although I had no decision-making role with regard to the removal of the Travel Office employees . . . I expressed my concern . . . that if there were fiscal mismanagement in the Travel Office or in any part of the White House it should be addressed promptly. I am sure I felt such action could include, if necessary and justified, appropriate personnel actions so that this Administration would not be blamed for condoning any existing fiscal mismanagement problems."

As scandal, Travelgate lends itself to the argument of Clinton supporters that there is nothing to be got at there, no blatant crimes or misdemeanors. But that is what makes it the perfect emblem of the distresses that have visited the Clintons from the start—the discovery of low impulses in high-minded people. As with the cattle-futures windfall, or with the misbegotten Whitewater alliance with Jim McDougal, the travel-office affair began as a relatively petty embarrassment, and was exponentially magnified by a determined reluctance subsequently to own up.

TRAVELGATE revealed to Harry and Linda Thomason the downside of First Friendship, and they exchanged their high-profile Washington presence for the relative calm of Hollywood. Harry's role regarding the travel office had been prominently cited in the Podesta report, and had prompted new rules controlling White House access. Before

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"Sorry, we're all cat people. The dog people are in that boat over there."

leaving town, however, the Thomasons held forth in a series of interviews, in which they meant to make clear their take on the Washington experience. Any suggestion that the Thomasons would use their friendship with the Clintons for business gain was ludicrous, Linda said, for, "given our salaries, setting our sights on the White House travel office would be the financial equivalent of us taking over someone's lemonade stand." She declared Washington an "incestuous insane asylum," and said that if well-meaning people like them met with such inhospitality "Mother Teresa better stay out of town." And then they left. (Thomason has since been hit with an eighty-million-dollar libel suit by the former C.E.O. of a company accused of paying kickbacks to the travel office. A motion to dismiss is pending.)

The Travelgate fallout was even more traumatic for Billy Dale, whose laxity in handling travel-office funds had included parking some of the money in his own checking account. That led to his indictment in 1994 on charges of embezzlement. Although Dale never denied putting the travel-office money in his own account, he strenuously maintained that he was not a thief but merely a sloppy manager. As his legal bills mounted, he even agreed to plead guilty to putting the funds in his own account, which is,

strictly defined, criminal embezzlement, but he insisted upon a statement in the plea agreement acknowledging that he had never spent a dime of the money on himself. The government refused the deal, and pressed the case to trial. A line of prominent Washington journalists testified that Billy Dale was no crook, and the prosecution was unable to establish that Dale had used any of the travel money for himself. The jury acquitted him after deliberating for less than two hours.

Catherine Cornelius was reassigned, to the White House personnel office; she is now its deputy director. According to Watkins's notes, she said that no one could ask her "to leave or be transferred" except Mack McLarty or the President. Jeff Eller later resigned as the White House director of media affairs and is currently working as a political consultant in Texas.

For David Watkins, the travel-office affair began a long, untidy process of separation from the Clintons. After reprimanding him for Travelgate, the White House had signalled that his future as a senior aide was uncertain at best, and in the summer of 1993 he began looking for a job. The White House, meanwhile, was edging him toward the door, but with some caution. Watkins presented the Clintons with a particu-

lar problem. He had been dutifully "protective and vague" in recounting his story to investigators. He had not gone public with his story—he hadn't even sent his memo to McLarty although he had given a copy to Patsy Thomason, in whose files the memo was eventually found). But Watkins's protectiveness had its limits. In July of 1993, Watkins sketched some elements of his story for F.B.I. agents who were investigating Billy Dale, and in December he mentioned the First Lady's involvement in a session with interviewers from the G.A.O. while Neil Eggleston, the White House lawyer, was in attendance.

In January of 1994, Watkins was moved out of the White House and back into the Old Executive Office Building. Still he tarried, believing himself a faithful member of the team. Then, on May 2nd, the General Accounting Office issued its report on Travelgate, citing Watkins's account of his conversation with the First Lady in which "she urged that action be taken to get 'our people' into the Travel Office." In her written responses to the G.A.O.'s questions about that conversation, Mrs. Clinton said she did "not recall this conversation with the same level of detail as Mr. Watkins" and "had no role" in the decision to fire the employees. The First Lady and Watkins had now issued conflicting stories, and Watkins attempted to repair the damage. Perhaps hoping to reassure Mrs. Clinton of his continuing loyalty, he wrote a "Dear Hillary" note to the First Lady, saying that his memo had been misconstrued by the G.A.O. reviewers. "The G.A.O. erred in stating that I said you urged me to replace members of the travel office with 'our people.' 'Urge' is not a word I commonly use. Additionally, as I know you have experienced many times, the statement was reported out of context without my complete response to their questions being reported." Watkins said he regretted the attempts to tie Mrs. Clinton in to the travel-office affair, and ended his note.

with a final declaration of loyalty: "I have always *known* who my 'client' is."

Shortly afterward, Watkins was forced to leave the Clinton circle, after another incident that embarrassed the White House: his use of a Presidential helicopter to check out a country club (he was Clinton's unofficial golf adviser) near the President's retreat at Camp David, Maryland.

Nevertheless, for nine months Watkins maintained his ties with the Clintons. He was paid a consulting fee of three thousand dollars a month by the Clinton-Gore campaign to help settle its financial accounts. In the summer of 1994, Watkins took a job in investor relations with Calloway Golf, and last fall he and his wife returned to Washington, and he is scouting new business acquisitions for a direct-marketing firm there. After his memo became public and Watkins was questioned again, this time by the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee, he again assumed his "protective and vague" posture. The apparent contradictions between his public and private statements annoyed Republican inquisitors and prompted the Whitewater independent counsel, Kenneth W. Starr, to investigate Watkins for possible false statement. Now, therefore, Watkins finds himself in the untenable role of unwilling whistleblower, his credibility squeezed between the interests of the Clintons and the interests of those who would facilitate their undoing. He is, at bottom, an advertising man who tried to please his client, and in doing so he grossly diserved her. A more able manager might have contained the travel-office issue before it heated up into a frenzy; a less self-serving aide would never have written the infamous "soul cleansing" memorandum. Now he is stuck, irretrievably outside the Clinton circle yet subject to criminal punishment for his attempts, however feeble, to demonstrate his loyalty. "I have really got into a lose-lose situation," he says. "I'm looked upon as a guy who, instead of being standup and protective, is a whiner and

wrote a cover-your-ass memo. . . . I want it to go away. You can't believe what it costs"—in legal fees. "And this should have been a nothing story."

THE fact of Travelgate's relative triviality, made large in the hothouse of partisan Washington, lay at the core of Vince Foster's despair. He even told his wife, Lisa, that he meant to resign over the issue, though the thought of returning to Arkansas in disgrace deeply offended his high sense of honor. On the last weekend of his life, he took a short vacation with Lisa to Maryland's Eastern Shore, where they ran into Webster Hubbell, Foster's best friend. Hubbell thought that the outing did Foster some good—that he'd actually managed to get his mind off Travelgate—but one of the first things he did when he and Lisa got home on Sunday night, July 18th, was to telephone the Denver attorney Jim Lyons, whose assistance Foster had urgently sought for the congressional investigation that he was certain would come. They talked about the travel office for half an hour.

Many people have found it difficult to believe that something as banal as the White House travel office could have played the central role in the high drama of a top aide's suicide. The event itself came to be referred to as a "scandal," in

quotes, to denote its lesser importance beside the Clinton controversy of tangled finance and a long-ago land investment called Whitewater. But Foster himself had been quite clear on the subject, repeatedly expressing his distress over Travelgate to his family and friends, and, most pointedly, in his famous "suicide note." "I made mistakes from ignorance, inexperience and overwork," he wrote. "I did not knowingly violate any law or standard of conduct. No one in the White House, to my knowledge, violated any law or standard of conduct, including any action in the travel office. There was no intent to benefit any individual or specific group. The press is covering up the illegal benefits they received from the travel staff."

The particular investigation by the House Judiciary Committee that was so worrying Foster in the last days of his life never took place; it was killed by the Democratic majority that then ruled Congress. But Foster knew that in the feral culture of politics the issue would not go away, and he said so to Hubbell. It turned out, of course, that Foster was right. There would be investigations, and the hounding would never end. On July 20, 1993, after eating lunch at his desk, Foster slung his suit jacket over his shoulder, got into his car in the White House parking lot, and drove to Fort Marcy Park. ♦



"Ralph has his own little microbrewery."

4/15/1996
The New Yorker

WHAT HILLARY WANTS

The most controversial figure of the election year so far has been a woman, Hillary Clinton, and she isn't even running for office. Or is she? Whether she loves the boy in Bill Clinton as much as the man or whether she is simply unwilling to forfeit her sixteen years' investment in their political partnership, Hillary is determined to seize the national stage. GAIL SHEEHY reports



POWER SURGE
Bill and Hillary Clinton
share the spotlight.



Vanity
Fair
5/1992

Vanity Fair 5/1992

In May of 1990, Bill Clinton was running for his fifth term as governor of Arkansas. While he was conveniently out of town, a challenger in the Democratic primary, Tom McCrae, called a press conference in the echo chamber of the capitol rotunda. He was in the middle of telling everyone who would listen that Bill Clinton was a chicken—"and since the governor will not debate..."—when all at once another voice chewed into his sound bite. "Tom, who was the one person who didn't show up in Springdale? Give me a break! I mean, I think that we oughta get the record straight..."

The camera swung around to a small, yellow-haired woman in a houndstooth-check suit—literally *in his face*. Having crashed McCrae's photo op, she planted herself directly opposite him, just spoiling for a fight. She looked quite pale without studio makeup, but her eyes flashed in the lights of the television camera. "Many of the reports you issued," she charged, "not only praised the governor on his environmental record, but his education record *and* his economic record!"

The camera spun again to reveal the hapless man's grit-eating smile, his eyes bobbling around in his head as if he'd just been zapped by a stun gun. His stammering response was trampled by the woman ticking off her points, reading embarrassing passages from the candidate's own earlier handouts. "You now turn around and as a candidate have a very short memory," she finished. As they say in Arkansas, *she ate his lunch*.

The Eyewitness News man wound up his thrilled coverage with the tag line "Hillary Clinton showed again that she may be the best debater in the family."

It is the Year of the Political Woman. Paul Tsongas, whose least appealing quality was his mopey personality, said with a grateful nod to his attorney wife, Niki, "If you don't have charisma, you marry it." Ruth Harkin, a former prosecutor, assumed the role of her husband's unofficial political adviser for his six-month run. Marilyn Quayle, who told *The Washington Post* through

clenched teeth that politicians in the past never acknowledged that "your little wifey... helps you," commands entry into the Office of the Vice President from a six-office suite across the hall, passing judgment on lobbyists and other supplicants. (Marilyn says she raises a subject with the vice president "if I think it's important enough." Otherwise, staffers "let me make the decision instead.") President Bush, who often leans on his vastly more popular wife at public appearances, has recently brought on board his rudderless re-election team wordsmith Peggy Noonan.



RULES OF ATTRACTION

"I loved being with her," says Bill, "but I had very ambivalent feelings about getting involved with her."

Her job description: "Message development." Even bullyboy Pat Buchanan, Beltway pundits say, wouldn't have run if it hadn't been for his sister—who is also his campaign chairwoman.

And it is Hillary Rodham Clinton, lawyer-activist-teacher-author-corporate boardwoman—mother and wife of Billsomething, who is the diesel engine powering the front-running Democratic campaign. In the space of one week in late January, Hillary fast-forwarded from being introduced as "wife of" (*60 Minutes*) to the victim of "the other woman" (*PrimeTime Live*) to "Trapped in a Spotlight, Hillary Clinton Uses It" (*The New York Times*), the last illustrated by a picture which said it all: Hillary with her arm thrust in the air and wearing a big campaign smile, out in front of her husband.

The forty-four-year-old wife and

mother still shows flashes of the sweet ingenue smile of her college years, and has maintained her size 8 by touching little more than a lettuce leaf and water during campaign fund-raisers (her less disciplined husband has put on twenty-five pounds). When the cameras dolly in, however, one can detect the calculation in the f-stop click of Hillary's eyes. Lips pulled back over her slightly jutting teeth, the public smile is practiced; the small frown establishes an air of superiority; her hair looks lifelessly doll-like.

But there is no mistaking the passion in her words or the impact of her presence. "The *instant* she came in the door of the ballroom, I knew it," said a savvy pol, Patricia Derian, an assistant secretary of state under Jimmy Carter, who saw Hillary sway a big-ticket Washington crowd at a benefit in March. There was no fanfare, no spotlight, the lady isn't even much taller than a podium microphone. "But there was no missing her," said Derian, "and that's really rare. She's a spectacular candidate in her own right. She's got my vote."

In Los Angeles, at a March 26 salmon-and-spinach luncheon hosted by Hollywood producer Dawn Steel and television producer Linda Bloodworth-Thomason (among others), Hillary dazzled an audience that is usually ho-hum about stars and plenty impressed with themselves. "We need to be against brain-dead politics wherever we find it!" she thundered, looking fierce in a fire-engine-red suit. "We need to forge a new consensus about [our] new political direction... that doesn't jerk us to the right, jerk us to the left, prey on our emotions, engender paranoia and insecurity... but instead moves us forward together." Producer Sherry Lansing pronounced it "an extraordinary speech, *extraordinary*."

The sold-out luncheon—her most successful of the season, raising \$50,000—came off in the heat of the controversy over Hillary's role in her husband's campaign. Her snappish response to Jerry Brown's broadside on her career—"I suppose I could have stayed home and baked cookies and had teas"—had offended millions of wom-

en who have chosen to be full-time homemakers, reinvoking the arrogance of the Tammy Wynette quote that so irritated the country-music vote. That very morning, *New York Times* columnist William Safire had written about what he called "the Hillary problem," describing her as a "political bumbler" who suffers from "foot-in-mouth disease."

In a private interview after the luncheon, I asked Hillary how she felt about being labeled "the problem." Uncharacteristically, she squirmed and stammered. "I don't know how to feel about it. . . . I think I'll just have to be more . . . careful in the way I express my feelings, so I don't inadvertently hurt anybody."

"I think the only legitimate concern is around the misconstruction of what I said about baking cookies and having tea. I can understand why some people thought that I was criticizing women who made different choices than the one I had—in fact, criticizing the choice that my mother and a lot of dear friends have made. Nothing could be further from what I believe."

Did she, then, agree with Barbara Bush, who stirred up a hornet's nest at Hillary's alma mater, Wellesley College, when she told students that a working mother should always put family before career? "For me, I believe that," Hillary replied fervently. "Personally, I believe that a woman should put her family and her relationships—which are really at the root of who you are and how you relate to the world—at the top of your priority list." She hastened to add, "But I don't believe that I, or Barbara Bush, should tell all women that's what *they* have to put first. . . . What we have to get away from is the idea that there's only one right choice."

Hillary seems to understand why she has become a lightning rod in her husband's presidential campaign. "What they're trying to figure out is 'How will she be able to influence him? Who is this person?' Well, Bill Clinton is the kind of person who asks advice from literally dozens of people. If you look at George Bush, he's advised by a coterie of men . . . who are, frankly, all of one mind, a very narrow, all-white coterie of, exclusively, men."

The president is one of Hillary's fa-

vorite targets, and she pillories him mercilessly in her speeches. "When it's all stripped away," she told the L.A. crowd, "at bottom what we see is a failure of leadership, rooted in a very hollow sense of what politics is and can be." As one listener put it, "She's unbelievably articulate and connects with her audience with a message that hits home." Then she joined the buzz heard all over the room: "You can't help but think, Why isn't *she* the candidate?"

She almost was. Two years ago, when Bill Clinton considered forgoing his fifth gubernatorial contest in order to

"If I get elected president," Bill Clinton vows, "it will be an unprecedented partnership."

build an early base for his lifelong presidential ambitions, Hillary called up a friend and former newspaper publisher in the state, Dorothy Stuck, and asked, "What would happen if I ran for governor?"

"After all this time Bill's been in office, you'd be hung with his baggage," answered the veteran newspaperwoman. She pledged her support, but advised Hillary to wait a few more years. "She thought she had a good chance," remembers Stuck, who adds that Hillary Clinton is revered by many women in Arkansas. Hillary's closest confidante, Carolyn Huber, confirms, "She got very enthusiastic about the prospect of running for governor." Hushing her voice, as if telling a little tale out of school, Huber says, "I think she'd like to be governor, but she wasn't about to try if Bill wanted to again."

"Some say the wrong Clinton is in

the statehouse," the governor himself drawled at a charity roast of Hillary four years ago, "and I wouldn't disagree with them." On February 7, when I asked if he was concerned about being upstaged by his wife, Clinton was unfazed. "I've always liked strong women. . . . It doesn't bother me for people to see her and get excited and say she could be president. I always say she could be president, too." At his own fund-raisers he has often quipped, "Buy one, get one free!"

In fact, fewer people seem to have negative feelings toward Hillary than toward her husband. According to a national survey conducted from March 27 to 29 by Yankelovich Clancy Shulman for *Vanity Fair*, 41 percent of those surveyed have a generally favorable impression of Hillary, while 24 percent have an unfavorable one. Fifty-five percent think she is an asset to her husband's campaign; 24 percent think she's a liability. A whopping 84 percent say they would not object to a First Lady with a separate career. Those surveyed use the following descriptions of Hillary: intelligent (75 percent); tough-minded (65 percent); a good role model for women (48 percent); a feminist in the best possible sense (44 percent). The negatives: power-hungry (44 percent); too intense (36 percent); a wife who dominates her husband (28 percent). Most disturbing for the Clintons, however, is the skepticism over their relationship: 53 percent think it is more a "professional arrangement" than a "real marriage" (22 percent).

The raised eyebrows are due in part to the way Hillary has seized the stage at certain public appearances. Even the normally unflappable Tom Brokaw was startled when, in the triumphal glow of the southern stomp on Super Tuesday, she shot past her husband to man the microphone. "What I would like to do, in introducing . . . *someone* . . ." she began, while her husband danced in the background like a prizefighter trying to stay warm. Soon she was booming, "We believe *passionately* in this country and we cannot stand by for ONE MORE YEAR and watch what is happening to it!" Over the applause, Brokaw observed dryly, "Not just an introduction, this is a *speech* by Mrs. Clinton."

Hillary barely referred to her hus-

band—and then only as “the messenger.” If he is the messenger, she may be the message. Those who keep asking “Why isn’t *she* running?” miss the point. Hillary Clinton *is* running. She and her husband have been a political team for more than twenty years. And now they are, despite protestations to the contrary, *co-candidates* for president of the United States. Asked at the L.A. luncheon if she wanted to be her husband’s vice president, Hillary brushed off the question. “I’m not interested in attending a lot of funerals around the world,” she cracked. She

got a laugh, but when she continued it was with serious intent. “I want maneuverability... I want to get deeply involved in solving problems.” She later told me that she doesn’t see herself as a Cabinet officer but as an all-around adviser. And she doesn’t see what all the fuss is about. “No one gives George Bush a hard time when he gets advice from Jim Baker,” she’d complained to me earlier in the campaign.

Before he was forced to retreat on the subject of Hillary’s possible role in a Clinton administration on NBC’s *Meet the Press*, Bill told me, “If I get elected president, it will be an unprecedented partnership, far more than Franklin Roosevelt and Eleanor. They were two great people, but on different tracks. If I get elected, we’ll do things together like we always have.”

Which would make Hillary Clinton one of the most formidable women in the world, a model of a full partner in public life. Friends go even further, touting Hillary as the next attorney general by pointing out that she would be better qualified than Robert Kennedy was when his brother named him to the post. Hillary’s own brother Hugh Rodham, a public defender in Dade County, Florida, foresees even higher callings. “Attorney general is only local lawmaking,” he says dismissively. “There’s treaty negotiations she could do. There’s labor stuff. There’s secretary of state...”

The Clinton camp had planned “a slow build for Hillary,” according to her campaign manager, Richard Mintz. That was until all hell broke loose—until the day Bill Clinton was “deflowered” by a cabaret singer who once headlined at the Pinnacle Lounge in Little Rock.

The candidate’s strategists huddled in panicky planning sessions. One significant piece of information: polls showed that 39 percent of voters would have reservations about voting for a candi-

date who had been unfaithful—but that the number diminishes if the wife knows about it and accepts it. The clear conclusion was that Gennifer’s unforgettable slot-machine eyes and hydraulic lips and indelible black roots required an immediate visual challenge: the apple-cheeked, moon-eyed wife of the governor, staggeringly poised, effortlessly articulate, primly silk-scarved. Blonde too—in fact, Hillary looked like a *Town & Country* version of Gennifer Flowers, but not with a G, with a good little Wellesley girl’s hair band covering her brown roots.

Hillary rendezvoused with Bill in Boston the night before the Clintons’ extraordinary “Checkers speech” on *60 Minutes*. She conferred with the television crew on colors and camera angles. “You can quote me as saying that my sense of it was that she was in control,” says Steve Kroft, the interviewer. “We fiddled around with who should sit on which side, and they fiddled around with chair heights and things like that. You didn’t know she was his wife, you’d have thought she was a media consultant. She didn’t do it in a dictatorial sort of way... She was very delightful and charming. When they left the room, everybody pretty much said, ‘Boy, she’s terrific.’”

The next day, before airtime, tension was reportedly running high in the control room, with producer Don Hewitt ranting to Clinton advisers George Stephanopoulos and Harold Ickes, “He’s gotta come clean! He’s got to say yes!” Once Bill and Hillary were seated, Mrs. Clinton stared intently at Bill as he responded to the grilling. This was no Nancy Reagan glaze—this was the look of the *consigliere* sitting vigil over a member of the family.

Kroft’s impression was that Hillary was “tougher and more disciplined than he is. And analytical. Among his faults, he has a tendency not to think of the consequences of the things he says. I think she knows. She’s got a ten-second delay. If something comes to her mind she doesn’t



The Valkyries—Maidens of Odin, awful and beautiful, hover over the field of battle, choosing those to be slain and conducting the worthy to Valhalla.

SAVING GRACES

In an unpublished mid-eighties cartoon, Bill Clinton is rescued by three female guardians: Hillary, press secretary Joan Roberts, and chief of staff Betsey Wright.

**“It’s hurting so bad,”
Hillary said.
“The press doesn’t
believe you
have any feelings.”**



think will play right, she cuts it off before anybody knows she's thinking it."

"I have acknowledged wrongdoing," Bill offered when the cameras were rolling. "I have acknowledged causing pain in my marriage." At another point when Kroft pressed him—"I am assuming from your answer that you're categorically denying that you ever had an affair with Gennifer Flowers"—he took the bait. "I've said that before," he replied quickly. "And so has she..."

In jumped Hillary the litigator: "I don't want to be any more specific. I don't think being any more specific about what's happened in the privacy of our life together is relevant to anybody besides us."

It was a signal for her husband to button up. "Having made the mistake of denying Gennifer Flowers, he was undoing what they had decided to do," explains senior campaign adviser Susan Thomases. "So she was reminding him, 'Hey, buddy, remember our strategy: if you say you're not going to talk about any specific case, and then you talk about one case, you're blowing the strategy.'"

Hillary's presence was so strong, in

STATE OF THE UNION

The Clintons enjoy breakfast in the Arkansas governor's mansion the morning after his first inauguration.

fact, that, according to Kroft, "we found ourselves rationing her sound bites to keep her from becoming the dominant force in the interview."

But some people think it has become obvious that Hillary is the dominant force in the Clinton campaign. Even those awed by her commented after her Super Tuesday speech, "There's something a little scary, a little Al Haig-ish about her." Her closest counterparts, high-striving professional women, often react viscerally: she's "too intense," they say, or she's "missing something feminine"—as if they can't forgive her for appearing to have it all.

The slings and arrows never seem to pierce Hillary's armor-plated determination. "Hillary is convinced the way she does things is the right way," attests her brother Hugh. Carolyn Huber, the woman who may know her best, having served as Hillary's "mansion administrator," day-to-day logistical helper, and surrogate grandmother to her child, affirms that Hillary will simply not be deterred. "She wants to win as bad

as he does." Is she tougher than he is? "I think so," laughs Huber. "She's more clear about what she wants and the way she wants it done. I don't think there's ever been a time when Hillary set her mind to something she wanted to happen that it hasn't happened."

Hillary is widely regarded by their closest associates as the tougher, cooler, and more intellectually tart of the two. Her favorite recreation is standing with friends and talking ideas around the kitchen counter in the governor's mansion, one long *Big Chill* party, people helping themselves out of the fridge. (Hillary rarely cooks, and the state dining room is scarcely used.) She might mimic one of her hillbilly witnesses spitting tobacco from the stand while she cross-examines him. Or she'll burst into a high-pitched Ozark honk—hee hee hee—over one of her husband's Bubba lines. But come 10:30 she'll announce, "That's it for me, I'm goin' to bed." Bill is the night owl, the eternal schmoozer; Hillary is the emotionally disciplined one.

Sometimes this causes dissonance. "Hillary's hard to know," concedes a close family friend, Carolyn Y. Staley.

Another family friend, assured she wouldn't be identified, is more candid: "I never know from one day to the next how I'm going to be received by Hillary. She's very busy, she knows exactly where she wants to go and how to get there. You're either useful or extraneous to her." Finally she blurts, "Look, Hillary's tough as nails. *Bill has always deferred to women to fight his battles.*"

Indeed, throughout his career Bill Clinton has surrounded himself with exceptionally strong-willed, capable women. Following his first and only loss as governor, he drafted the rough-and-tumble George McGovern operative Betsey Wright as his campaign manager; she devoted the next ten years of her life to protecting and re-electing him. (Wright, who quit as Arkansas Democratic Party chair just before Clinton announced, says that she was "fried" by the time this presidential race came around.) He persuaded the flinty Susan Thomases, who had cut her teeth on Bill Bradley's first Senate campaign, to join his current brain trust. And his top staff in the Arkansas statehouse has been predominantly female. "The only two men I know in American politics who are capable of treating women as real equals," says Thomases, "are Bill Bradley and Bill Clinton."

Part of Clinton's dependence on his wife is financial. As one of the chief litigating partners in the Rose Law Firm and a director on five corporate boards (including a position as the only woman on the board of Wal-Mart) Hillary earned—based on her own figures—an estimated \$160,000 in 1990. Twice voted one of the hundred most influential lawyers in America by *The National Law Journal*, "she could command the top salary for a litigator in any law firm in New York or Los Angeles," claims her partner Herb Rule. (The going rate is \$500,000 and up.) Instead, she has committed much of her energy to pro bono work, such as chairing the Children's Defense Fund, and serving on the boards of nearly a dozen other educational and social-justice organizations.

"If Hillary were doing what she

most wanted to do in this world, she would not be a partner in a corporate law firm," confides her close friend and former Wellesley dormmate Jan Piercey. "That's what she's had to do—she's responsible for the revenue in the family." (Bill has increased his salary from \$25,000 at the age of twenty-nine to the princely sum of \$35,000 almost twenty years later.)

Bill Clinton is the *puer aeternus*, suggests one of their older, wiser friends—the eternal boy, a Jungian archetype, who remains stuck in an adolescent ori-

"The mutual admiration that creates the closeness in their marriage also produced difficulties."

entation toward life, often prompted by an exaggerated dependence on his mother. Seductive to men as well as women, the prototypical eternal boy often hopes to redeem mankind; in the archetype he is meant to replace the old king as a symbol of the renewal of life. But the "winged youth" often falls, psychologically, and in crisis turns to strong female figures to raise him up again. "Bill has achieved enormous success, but he's still reaching," says an Arkansas friend. "It's the young man who's been a star and who is, I hope, not locked in adolescence. We don't know that yet—he's only forty-five."

George Fisher cartooned Bill Clinton in the guise of a boy for fourteen years at the old *Arkansas Gazette*, starting

him off in his first term in a baby buggy, later graduating him to a tricycle and a ten-speed bike. (In real life Bill Clinton plays with a '64 Mustang—Hillary calls it his "boy's toy.") In the mid-eighties Fisher penned a striking drawing that captures Bill Clinton's dependence on his delivering angels. The cartoon, which was never published, shows three winged, spear-carrying women—Hillary, Betsey, and Clinton's former press secretary—lifting their barefoot boy from the battlefield. They are meant to be Valkyries, "awful and beautiful," who gather up the worthy and fly them to Valhalla.

Isaw Fisher's cartoon come to life during what the campaign calls "the incredible week" after the *60 Minutes* appearance, a week I referred to once as a "crisis" only to have Hillary correct me: "This is not a crisis, not a *personal* crisis anyway." Flying with her, knee-to-knee, I watched while she fashioned the strategy to bring her husband "back from the dead," as he now describes it.

It was in a nondescript motel in Pierre, South Dakota, where she had twenty minutes of downtime, that Hillary flipped on the TV on Monday, January 27, and caught the end of Jennifer Flowers on CNN playing tapes of her phone conversations with the governor. They were devastating.

"Let's get Bill on the phone," Hillary coolly directed her campaign manager, Mintz, who was himself fighting back tears. According to Hillary, Clinton told his wife he wasn't concerned—after all, who was going to believe this woman? "Everybody knows you can be paid to do anything," the governor said.

"Everybody *doesn't* know that," she insisted. "Bill, people who don't know you are going to say, 'Why were you even talking to this person?'"

At 6:25 P.M. Central time, Hillary was pressing the flesh at a Pork Producers Rib Feed in Pierre when her campaign manager whispered in her ear, "All three nets led with the Flowers press conference." She excused herself and made a beeline for the one pay phone in the hall, pursued by a camera

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crew from *PrimeTime Live*. Mintz appealed to them not to shoot her. "I promise I'll give you a shot of her on the phone, but this is not the time."

I watched as a terrible shrug went down Hillary's face. Little Rock was telling her about the latest deal—a young woman had been offered half a million dollars to say she'd had a one-night stand with Bill Clinton. Where would it stop?

Back in her six-seat charter plane, Hillary vented her frustration above the grinding hum: "If we'd been in front of a jury I'd say, 'Miss Flowers, isn't it true you were asked this by A.P. in June of 1990 and you said no? Weren't you asked by the *Arkansas Democrat* and you said no?' I mean, I would crucify her."

Hillary boils over at what she perceives as a double standard—that the press has shied away from investigating long-standing rumors about George Bush. "I had tea with Anne Cox Chambers [the heiress who is chairwoman of her media empire's Atlanta newspaper group]," Hillary recalled to me in a later interview, "and she's sittin' there in her sun-room saying, 'You know, I just don't understand why they think they can get away with this—everybody knows about George Bush,' and then launches into this long description of, you know, Bush and his carrying on, all of which is apparently well known in Washington. But I'm convinced part of it is that the Establishment—regardless of party—sticks together. They're gonna circle the wagons on Jennifer — and all these other people." (Anne Cox Chambers remembers telling Hillary, "I don't understand why nothing's ever been said about a George Bush girlfriend—I understand he has a Jennifer, too.")

The reference is to a decade-long Bush staffer who now enjoys a senior State Department position. She has been persistently linked with the president in rumors that have never been proved. When I interviewed her in 1987 in Bush's Senate office, the amply built middle-aged woman, a born-again Christian, was discreet about her work and travel with Bush. (In June of 1987, George Bush Jr. told *Newsweek* that when he asked his father if he'd ever committed adultery he replied, "The answer to the Big A question is N.O.")

On the tiny plane, Hillary focused on the problem at hand. "I'm just not go-

ing to sit by anymore and say, 'Well, it's the press's responsibility.' If we can destroy people with paid stories, what's next? . . . I don't think Bill appreciates how TV really doesn't give the other side. It's like negative advertising." A light bulb switched on behind her eyes. "That's what I should have told him. In 1980 the Republicans started the negative advertising; in 1992 we have paid political character assassination. What Bill doesn't understand is you've gotta do the same thing in response as you do with negative advertising—Dukakis

didn't understand that." Suddenly, a brainstorm. "This is the daughter of Willie Horton!" Now she had the outlines of a proactive, not reactive, strategy: pound the "Republican attack machine" and run against the press.

Just before landing, she recited a prayer she says often: *Dear Lord, be good to me. The sea is so wide and my boat is so small.* Thump, bump, the plane skated through the blackness toward a shack with the sign RAPID CITY. Within minutes, Hillary was clicking across the (Continued on page 212)

POLITICAL FORCES

"She's more clear about what she wants and the way she wants it done," says one friend.



The Virgin King

ful lot of stupid laws, and the Establishment knows they're stupid. For example, I think brothels should be legalized and the girls properly checked to see that they're not H.I.V.-positive or have V.D., to see that they have a ready supply of condoms." Since 1968, the Branson-sponsored Help Advisory Centre has offered free counseling on birth control and sexually transmitted diseases. Five years ago, Branson created the Healthcare Foundation in response to the AIDS crisis.

The ability to act on his sense of mission is a luxury Branson is aware of as

never before. "If you talk to a number of M.P.'s privately they'll agree" about the need for services such as those the foundation offers, he says. "But they won't dare get up and say it."

Two days after closing the Virgin Records deal, it was clear that Branson had survived the safe's "morning after." Within a week, he hired Robert Beckman, the American attorney who had filed an anti-trust suit against B.A. for Freddie Laker, to consider legal action on behalf of Virgin in the United States. A few days later, on March 20, Virgin began libel proceedings against B.A. and Lord King in Britain.

Now that he had enough money to wage his air war for as long as he wanted, Branson was trying hard to be diplomatic rather than gloat. After all, this is serious business, and, as his latest deal proved, he is one of the world's most serious entrepreneurs. "British Airways has spent the last two years trying to push us into the abyss," he said sternly. "Now it's time for them to accept that there'll be two British airlines for the next fifty years."

But Branson couldn't quite pull it off; he just couldn't play the sober captain of industry. "You know," he chortled, "I'm trying very hard to resist saying 'Up yours, Lord King!'" □

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(Continued from page 147) concrete airfield, coatless, eager to coach her husband and rev up the campaign staff on a conference call. "Who's getting information on the Star?" she demanded. "Who's tracking down all the research on Gennifer? Where is our surrogate program? Who's going to be out there speaking for us?" She let the fragile young staffers who had not experienced a Hiroshima in a campaign know that she and Bill were going to be out there fighting, "and I want you all to be putting this stuff together."

"It was," says deputy campaign manager George Stephanopoulos, "inspirational."

To Hillary Clinton, the stories of her husband's sexual infidelities seem to register, consciously at least, as having nothing to do with her, or with their marriage, but rather as evidence of the depths of degradation to which the hit men behind George Bush will stoop. Rarely does anyone in her audiences dare to bring up the question of infidelity, and when someone does, Hillary usually knocks it out of the park, leaving people cheering. Her refrain has become something of a mantra, protecting her from ever seeming to take the whole ugly business personally: "This is a much bigger issue than just Bill and me—I just hope for the sake of the country we'll set some boundaries for others coming along."

Not only is her altruistic defense politically astute, it also serves to buffer her psychologically from the feelings that would send most women off on an emotional roller coaster. "It doesn't make any difference what people say about her," says her friend Stuck, "whatever criticism or belittling, she doesn't take it personally,

because the cause is always more important. It may very well be the way she insulates herself from hurt. And I think in the past ten or twelve years with Bill she may have done that, to protect her sanity."

In all the time I traveled with Hillary, and in sixty interviews with her friends, family, and associates, there was just one hint of a deep emotional reaction. "She never shows her personal feelings on the surface," attests Carolyn Huber, but that week, when the governor's wife phoned her confidante and Huber broke into sobs, a fissure opened in the protective coating of equanimity. "I know, Carolyn, it's hurting so bad," Hillary said. "The press doesn't believe you have any feelings. They sure don't believe in the Bible."

But Hillary is also an avowed pragmatist, accustomed to life in the political fishbowl. "She knew this day would come," says Jan Piercey, her former college dormmate, "and she wasn't going to put anybody in the position of lying." Another friend says of the media frenzy over Clinton's nocturnal peccadilloes, "None of this came as a surprise to her."

I asked Hillary if she thought her husband had told her everything she needed to know. "Yes. I have absolutely no doubt about that," she replied, her light-blue eyes unblinking beneath the dark hedgerow of brows. "I don't think I could be sitting here otherwise. That's been, over years, part of the development of trust."

I asked if she thought Gary Hart was qualified to be president, or did she think his problems revealed something disturbing about his character? "He was not yet at a point where he could be honest with himself, that's my perception," she said. "People in his campaign said they con-

fronted him and said, 'Have you ever?' and he said 'No.'"

She praised Bill Clinton for being honest with the people he loves, admitting his problems, and declaring he wanted to do better. "I think as he got older, as he became a father, he began to let his breath out a little bit," observes Hillary. Her husband believes that trauma and mistakes are all tests that help one grow. For him, says Hillary, "it's a constant coming to grips with who you are and what stage of life you can grow beyond."

The Clintons' friends fiercely idealize their marriage, seeing in it a remarkable integration of strong personalities and sheer guts. "Most of us have thrown in the towel," says one friend, the thoughtful actress Mary Steenburgen. "These people didn't. It's exciting to be around them and to see how it *can* be to be a married couple." Another member of the "Arkansas diaspora" in L.A., television producer Linda Bloodworth-Thomason, is one of Hillary's most loyal intimates. "Look, this isn't Lurleen Wallace," says Bloodworth-Thomason. "Hillary doesn't have to stay with Bill Clinton. She could get to the Senate or possibly the White House on her own—and she knows it. . . . But these two people are intertwined on every level, as a man and woman, as friends, as lovers, as parents, as politicians. . . . This is a love story." Huber agrees, describing how "Bill and Hillary are always smooching." Their pals call the Clintons "soul mates," saying they confide fully in nobody, not even family, only in each other.

"She also has an investment in this marriage and his career," points out the practical Wright, who says Hillary never

considered divorce. "It absolutely was not an alternative that she gave him."

The only area of vulnerability friends spot in Hillary is her daughter, Chelsea. The longest periods of silence she maintains are in hotel rooms, a phone cradled to her ear, often dead tired but listening without interruption to the stream-of-consciousness account of the twelve-year-old's day. Before the campaign, Hillary was out of town on law or board work two or three nights a week. She does homework with Chelsea by fax.

"Whenever Hillary was there, she always sat with Chelsea while she had dinner," recalls Melinda Martin, the resident baby-sitter from '85 to '87. (Most of the Clintons' baby-sitters are fresh out of the University of Arkansas, with names like Melinda, Melissa, and Michelle.)

I asked Melinda how often Bill and Hillary went out together. "Just the two of them? Very, very seldom. . . . Hillary took Chelsea on vacations. Bill would promise to catch up, but usually he'd come a couple of days late, or not at all."

Hillary's protectiveness of her daughter took precedence one evening, at the peak of the bimbomania, when she was facing a command performance as the "candidate's wife" before a backbiting Washington audience at a roast of Ron Brown, chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Bill was scheduled to take Chelsea to a father-daughter dance at the Little Rock Y.W.C.A. Their friend Linda Bloodworth-Thomason had an inspiration: "Let's do a live remote to Little Rock—it will be a nice image for them to see Bill dancing with his daughter."

Hillary didn't think twice. "No," she said. "This is Chelsea's night."

It is one of Hillary's philosophical tenets that children should be spoken to just like adults. This explains how Hillary is able to pass the supermarket checkout counter in the company of her adored daughter without gagging. Indeed, Hillary is the first to point out the lurid tabloid headlines screaming about multiple affairs or a love child, instructing Chelsea that "this is what's to be expected in a political campaign." Chelsea follows the political horse race avidly, but "when they talk bad about my daddy" on TV, she leaves the room.

For women who have been betrayed by unfaithful husbands, Hillary Clinton is a Rorschach test. Some grimace at the prospect of having their hearts broken by a man whose story you never know whether to believe: "I don't want another charmer." Others admire her stoicism and buy the strength-through-adversity story.

Still, any wife subjected to embarrassing, detailed reports of infidelity must register searing pain at some level. It is quite possible that Hillary is so focused on power agendas that she is disconnected from her feelings, able to compartmentalize her pain: she codes it, labels it, and puts it away in the deep freeze. What does that leave? An unresolved hurt so profound that it may not surface until all the sound and fury of campaigning is over.

The secret behind Hillary's boldness goes back to the torch passed from a silent generation of mothers to the daughters of the feminist movement. "I was determined that no daughter of mine was going to have to go through the agony of being afraid to say what she had on her mind," says Dorothy Rodham, Hillary's mother, who hadn't finished college before marrying Hugh Rodham, a rough-edged Chicago salesman and later owner of a small textile business. Mrs. Rodham made raising her three children her full-time occupation. They played endless word games and rarely watched television. Thus, Hillary was an especially sheltered four-year-old when the Welsh-English family moved to Park Ridge, a middle-class, white-collar suburb out near O'Hare airport.

The new neighborhood was dominated by a family with a daughter, Suzy, who regularly decked the beribboned little Hillary, watching in triumph as she ran home sobbing.

"There's no room in this house for cowards," Hillary's mother announced one day. "You're going to have to stand up to her. The next time she hits you, I want you to hit her back."

Out trudged the trembling four-year-old. A circle of scowling boys and the pugilistic girl closed around her. Suddenly, Hillary threw out her fist, knocking Suzy off her pins. The boys' mouths dropped open. Flushed with victory, Hillary ran home to exclaim to her proud mother, "I can play with the boys now!"

The lesson sank in deep. "Boys responded well to Hillary," clucks her mother. "She just took charge, and they let her." Even as a child she thought in terms of mobilizing constituents for her causes, organizing neighborhood carnivals or clothing drives for migrant workers. As a young teen she helped her youth minister, the Reverend Don Jones, in counseling black and Hispanic teens from the South Side. "She would think things through to see what would be appealing to the group," recalls her brother Hugh. "We would just follow along as little brothers."

The other formative experience for Hil-

lary was competitive sports. A keen though terminally mediocre athlete, Hillary now appreciates having learned the lesson few girls did in those days: "You win one day, you lose the next day, you don't take it personally. You get up every day and you go on." It became the pattern of her life, a pattern that has fortified her in the topsy-turvy days of the current campaign.

To go east in 1965 to Wellesley College—"all very rich and fancy and very intimidating to my way of thinking"—was a big stretch. She started out a Goldwater Girl. Though instant conversions to radicalism were common at the time, Hillary had a slower, more thoughtful evolution in her political views, working her way through the moderate Rockefeller wing of the Republican Party to campaigning for Eugene McCarthy by '68.

Jeff Shields, her Harvard boyfriend in those days, who is now a Chicago lawyer, fell in love with her earnestness. "The thing that I remember most were the conversations," he recalls. "She would rather sit around and talk about current events or politics or ideas than to go bicycle riding or to a football game."

Hillary's charisma was strong enough to attract a half-dozen girls to move into the Gothic dorm, Stone Davis, to be near her. They all ate together in a cloistered stone-and-glass gazebo. "You were surrounded by role models," remembers Jan Piercey of the all-female college. "We came away just assuming that everyone had serious aspirations." Hillary became president of her college government and graduated with high honors.

Coming to political consciousness in the late 1960s, Hillary saw these as "years dominated by men with dreams, men in the civil-rights movement and the Peace Corps, the space program." As an ambitious fourteen-year-old Hillary had written to NASA asking what it took to be an astronaut. She was told girls need not apply. Still, "growing up in the fifties, a lot of us sensed that we could redefine what women do." Her mother had hoped Hillary would be the first woman on the Supreme Court, "but Sandra Day O'Connor beat her to it," she jokes. Friends along the way have told her what Dorothy Stuck says today: "Regardless of what happens to Bill, the nation will be exposed to Hillary Clinton, and Hillary could—and should—be our first woman president."

Bill Clinton's childhood, as tumultuous as Hillary's was stable, helps illuminate his complicated relationship with his wife and the mistakes that have tested

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their political and personal partnerships.

Three months prior to his birth, his mother, a high-spirited, part-Native American, part-Irish woman by the maiden name of Virginia Cassidy, lost Bill's father, the first of her four husbands. William Jefferson Blythe III, a traveling salesman, swerved across the highway driving home from Chicago and drowned in a rain-filled ditch at the age of twenty-nine. The tragedy meant that Bill was left with his grandparents in the tiny town of Hope, Arkansas, for his first four years while his mother went off to New Orleans to pursue nurse's training in anesthesiology. Young Billy adored his grandfather, a six-day-a-week storekeeper who died when the boy was eleven. From then on he was bereft of family male role models.

When I asked Bill Clinton who was the first man who endorsed him as worthwhile, there was a very long pause. He stared out the plane window at the bleak, snow-blistered New England terrain. After mentioning his grandfather, he spoke stiffly of his stepfather Roger Clinton. "He took me to St. Louis in a train once, I remember that." He dredged up one family vacation, one fishing trip. "Literally, all those years and I can count on one hand—there just weren't many times. It was sort of sad. . . . I missed it."

When Bill was seven, the family moved to Hot Springs, a tingly place notorious for its racetrack, illegal gambling clubs, whorehouses, and gangster glamour. Every winter the high rollers would come from New York and Chicago and Miami Beach, looking for action. "The Clintons fit in with all that," says Carolyn Staley, the local preacher's daughter, who introduced herself to me at Clinton headquarters as "Bill's 'girl next door.'" Staley says Virginia Clinton was at the races every day—still is—she has her own box. "She loves it, it's in her blood. She wrote her own rules."

Clinton's mother also worked at being glamorous. With a silver streak dyed down the middle of her dark hair and three shades of eye shadow, "she'd put on tailored men's pajamas and mules and hang around with a cigarette in her hand, real Hollywood," says Staley. "She was a good-lookin' lady and hilarious. . . . One-liners are her trademark, like a walking female Will Rogers."

Virginia Clinton remained emotionally stoic through the abuse of Bill's alcoholic stepfather, who went on rampages that sometimes ended with a bullet hole shot in

the wall or a beating of Bill's mother or younger brother. Finally, at fourteen, Clinton put an end to the violence in a shocking confrontation that marked the turning point of his adolescence. Hearing a fight, he broke down the door of his parents' bedroom. "[I] told him that I was bigger than him now, and there would never be any more of this while I was there," Clinton recalled to political writer Joe Klein.

Virginia Clinton temporarily threw Roger out of the house—a brief divorce—and began taking her teenage son along to a nightclub she frequented called the Vapors. During racing season the club ran fast and loose with lusty Vegas entertainers singing over the raucous *chi-ching* of slot machines and the squeals at the blackjack tables—an experience which seems to have simultaneously intrigued and repelled the boy. "It was fascinating," Bill told me. But he added, "I didn't like to be around dark smoky places where people were drinking too much. . . . I had a real negative association with alcoholism. I think subconsciously I was afraid it would happen to me." Bill later became president of his Baptist Sunday-school class.

"Some of the mistakes I made later in life were rooted in all those things that were unsaid or unexplored when we were growing up," Bill told me. Virginia Clinton made no attempt to explain or analyze behavior. "My mother was trying to keep peace and survive in an explosive situation," Bill never rebelled, adds Staley. "He had to be the shining light in his mother's life."

The fact that his reality as a child was completely defined by a woman may explain his later dependence on Hillary and other strong women. Young Bill also developed the pleasing style of many children from alcoholic homes, who reason, as Betsey Wright describes it, "If I'm really nice, and I make this person feel better, then maybe this [behavior] will stop." Wright adds, "I can see that in Bill now. He sees it."

Another common result in families where parents are weak, narcissistic, or alcoholic is that the growing child either copies the immature habits he sees at home or leaps ahead to become a premature grown-up. The missed childhood can later trigger immature behavior as an adult. "I always wondered if I'd want to be sixteen when I was forty because I never felt like I got to complete my childhood," Bill Clinton has said.

Carolyn Staley confides that "Virginia and Bill and Hillary have taken what might otherwise have been made out to be a debilitating background and they've

carefully developed a spin to their lives to make Bill the conquering hero."

Bill Clinton first laid eyes on Hillary Rodham at Yale Law School in a class they shared in political and civil liberties. He thought she was "the greatest thing on two legs," but there was more to the attraction. They belonged to a new generation, where everything was supposed to be equitable between the sexes. Hillary had come to Yale already a star, renowned as a multiple winner on the TV quiz show *College Bowl*, and as the college senior who delivered an extraordinary counter-commencement speech at Wellesley College in 1969. The address, which earned her national publicity, including her picture in *Life*, had struck a very sixties tone: "We feel that our prevailing, acquisitive and competitive corporate life. . . is not the way of life for us. We're searching for more immediate, ecstatic. . . modes of living."

What does Hillary remember as the most ecstatic experience of her twenties? She ponders, then laughs, conjuring up the sunny southerner with Elvis sideburns who entered Yale Law School a year after she did. "Falling in love with Bill Clinton," she answers.

What attracted her to him? "He wasn't afraid of me," says Hillary.

"But I was afraid of us, I tell you that," admits Bill.

He trailed her out of the class they shared, following her so close he could smell her hair, and then he stopped dead in his tracks. *No, this is nothing but trouble*, he told himself. "I could just look at her and tell that she was interesting and deep." He walked away. For the next couple of weeks he stared at her, he stalked her, but he couldn't bring himself to make the first move.

One night, huddled at the end of the library, he watched the object of his gaze stand up and march the full length of the Yale Law School library until she stood face-to-face with him. "Look, if you're going to keep staring at me, then I'm going to keep looking back," Hillary said, "and I think we ought to know each other's names. I'm Hillary Rodham."

"I was dumbstruck," says Bill Clinton. "I couldn't think of my name."

They have been looking at each other with mixed feelings of fascination and apprehension ever since.

Studious, solemn, dynamic, substantive—these are the adjectives her classmates use to describe Hillary Rodham at Yale Law School. Hillary gave no

thought to "getting herself up," and was in fact mousy-haired, makeupless, and somewhat intimidating behind her oversized, Steinem-like glasses. Big Bill Clinton, by contrast, was "Mr. Aura"—a good time, funny, intense, a very quick study. Bill shared a famous beach house for the first two years with an African-American from a family of Philadelphia Republicans, Bill Coleman. He remembers Clinton partying, reading Camus, dating several women (including an African-American classmate). But he spent most of his time working on political campaigns. "He did not spend lots of time trying to master *Marbury v. Madison*," snickers Coleman.

Professor Burke Marshall remembers Hillary vividly. "She was even then forceful, very smart, very articulate. Some very good lawyers ramble, but that's not Hillary. Her mind is an organized mind." Of Bill Clinton he says, "He was a very good student, he's very, very smart. But I'd never have thought Bill Clinton was law-firm material. He was obviously going to be a candidate."

To Clinton, law school was just a credential. He had a single-track focus. Even when he and Hillary took a house together, a baby Colonial, and "he was totally consumed by somebody else's being," as Coleman recalls, Clinton did not take his eye off his soaring political ambitions. As a result, doubts about the match lingered for Bill and Hillary. "I loved being with her, but I had very ambivalent feelings about getting involved with her," Bill admits. He insists he warned Hillary from their earliest dates, "You know, I'm really worried about falling in love with you, because you're a great person, you could have a great life. If you wanted to run for public office you could be elected, but I've got to go home. It's just who I am."

When Hillary and Bill joined the Barriers' Union, to put on a competitive trial before a real jury, she whipped him into shape as her partner. Alan Bersin, a fellow student, now a partner at Munger, Tolles & Olson in L.A., chuckles as he remembers Bill, "who was superb at presenting. But Hillary was definitely the serious one about getting work done and thinking through the position." They did not, however, win the prize trial. "I just had a bad day," Bill told me sheepishly, adding that it didn't help when "Hillary wore this bright-orange outfit."

But the dynamic duo made a lasting impression on one of the judges, John Doar, a hero of the civil-rights movement. Six months after they graduated, Doar was shopping for crack young lawyers to staff

the House Judiciary Committee inquiry that would prepare the impeachment case against President Richard Nixon. Bill excused himself; he was already geared up for his 1974 congressional race. But what about Hillary? "If he hadn't suggested her, I would have called her anyway," says Doar.

The work was thrilling and grueling, twenty hours a day for six months. In August, tired by the committee's work and public opinion, Nixon resigned. By the end of her first year out of law school, Hillary Rodham had become part of history.

Why would she marry him? That was what her Wellesley classmates and the feminists who knew Hillary from the McGovern campaign demanded to know. Most thought Bill was terrific. *But move to Arkansas? You gotta be kidding*, the subtext clearly being *buncha redneck racists*.

"I kept struggling between my head and my heart," Hillary remembers. Head said: gold-plated law firm in New York or Washington, public-interest law, or government. Heart won. Later in the summer of 1974, she "took a leap of faith" and moved to Fayetteville. "I just knew I wanted to be part of changing the world," she says now. "Bill's desire to be in public life was much more specific than my desire to do good."

Hillary and Bill taught at the University of Arkansas Law School, eschewing living together "because of the local mores." After a year of trying on Arkansas life, Hillary decided to see what all her friends were doing that she might be missing. "I went to Boston, New York, Washington, Chicago," she recalls. "I didn't see anything out there that I thought was more exciting or challenging than what I had in front of me."

When Bill picked her up at the midjet airport, he was ebullient. "You know that house you liked?" Hillary looked blank. "What house?"

As Bill tells the story, she'd made a passing comment about a pretty little glazed-brick house. He'd gone out and bought it, feathering the nest with an antique bed and flowered sheets from Wal-Mart. "So you're going to have to marry me," he declared, winding up his pitch as he pulled into the driveway of the house. Two months later she did.

"I was disappointed when they married," admits Betsey Wright, who had met the dating couple when they came to her home state of Texas to work for the McGovern campaign in 1972. "She has been absolutely critical to Bill's success but, then, I had images in my mind that

she could be the first woman president."

Mack McLarty, a childhood friend of Bill's who now serves with Hillary on the board of the yogurt giant TCBY Enterprises, adds candidly, "I married above myself in terms of intellect, like Bill did."

For Hillary, Arkansas was a different world. Even in Little Rock, where they moved in 1976 when Bill became attorney general, women were expected to be content with curling their eyelashes and selecting china patterns—especially political wives.

Instead, Hillary was recruited as one of the first women in the state to join a mainline law practice, the Rose Law Firm, after several partners were impressed by the way she set up the University of Arkansas's legal-aid clinic. "I think initially there were some [clients] who might put her into a stereotype... the pushy, Yankee female," says her law partner Webb Hubbell, "but I don't think anybody after fifteen minutes with Hillary would think that.... She can tell if the client is very nervous or concerned about something and can put them at ease."

In 1978 the Clintons swept into the governor's office with the promise of youth and purity. "Arrogant" was the outcry of the Establishment, and the governor's spouse became the lightning rod for people's resentment. To southerners expecting a more decorative First Lady, Hillary Rodham was almost an eyesore. She rejected makeup, glared through thick glasses, drowned herself in big shapeless fisherman's sweaters, and adamantly stuck to her maiden name.

Two years later, at the age of thirty-two, Hillary produced her "one perfect child" the same month she made law partner. According to Carolyn Huber, Hillary believed the baby came three weeks early because she was under the emotional stress of litigating a tough child-custody case. There were harrowing hours until Hillary underwent a cesarean. Finally, Bill emerged from the delivery room in green scrubs, cradling a seven-pound baby, saying he was "bonding" with his new daughter, and generally acting "like he'd invented fatherhood," says Diane Blair, a political-science professor in Fayetteville.

But it was also an election year. When the newspapers reported that "Governor Bill Clinton and Hillary Rodham had a daughter," the voters were outraged at their First Lady's blatant feminism.

His defeat that November was devastating for the wunderkind governor, who was written off as having no political future. "There are a couple of periods in my adult life that were pretty tough," says

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Bill, and this was the first one. Observant friends think Bill also felt as if he had failed Hillary. "The mutual admiration that creates the closeness in their marriage also produced difficulties," says Piercey.

At the time of his disorienting loss, Hillary's own career was soaring. "Subconsciously, that's hard for all of us," sympathizes Herb Rule, another of Hillary's partners. "You always want your friends and spouse to do well. But not at a time when you're failing."

For the next six months, according to friends, the governor "went a little crazy." They suggest that the Clintons' marital problems began around this time, and lasted until a few years ago. Before the couple purchased a small house, Betsey Wright was summoned to move into the mansion and see what was salvageable of Bill's career and his political records. "He got crazy in the incessant quest for understanding what he did wrong, which was masochistic," remembers Wright.

The ousted governor stalked around the state apologizing for himself—and seeking solace. "The frustrations I went through in the seven years of being his chief of staff," moans Wright, "of watching the groupie girls hanging around and the fawning all over him. But I always laughed at them on the inside, because I knew no dumb bimbo was ever going to be able to provide to him all of the dimensions that Hillary does."

According to Wright, Clinton resisted the aphrodisiac effect of his powerful position more than many men. But, she admits, "Bill was always very careless, out of an unbelievable naïveté. He has a defective shit detector about personal relationships sometimes. He just thinks everyone is wonderful. He is also careless about appearances."

Bill remembers during this dark period being so haunted by a sense of imminent death, "I would seize everything." Hillary thinks he "viewed his father's death as so irrational—so out of the blue—that it really did set a tone for his own sense of mortality.... Not just in his political career. It was reading everything he could read, talking to everybody he could talk to, staying up all night, because life was passing him by." Uncharacteristically, her narrative begins to skip at this juncture: "I mean it was... it was an intense sense of... what he might miss at any moment."

Some say Hillary took the political de-

feat harder than her husband did. When she gets down for brief periods, she withdraws into reading, playing dress-up with Chelsea, or trudging off to the Y to work out. She also prays. "Hillary has an unbelievable ability to control her personality and her moods," marvels Wright. Sometimes, she pops off, not often, but stingingly. "The person on the receiving end never gets over it," says Huber.

Hillary determined to do whatever it took to put her husband back in power. So, without a word from Bill, she shed her name for his. She also dyed her hair, traded her thick glasses for contacts, and feigned an interest in fashion.

The Clintons campaigned nonstop those next two years—on top of their jobs at respective law firms. The first of a series of baby-sitters was hired to live on the premises and be on twenty-four-hour call. Once their daughter began speaking, at age two, "Chelsea would say, 'I want my mama,'" recalls Huber, but she soon learned to answer her own question: "Mommy go make 'peech."

Commonly, a chief of staff and willful wife are natural enemies, but "Hillary made herself absolutely indispensable," says Betsey Wright. She sat in on their strategy sessions. "Her own performance in selling and implementing his government programs was extraordinary. There were so many ways he needed her."

Hillary also acted as his conscience. "I think that there have been many times when he would have liked to go home and turn on the TV and escape or just read a book," concedes Wright, "and she would be in with a list of things people had called her about that day or that had to be done. He would be 'Ah, couldn't you just be a sweet little wife?' instead of being this person helping me be what I'm supposed to be."

"Between Hillary at home and me at the office, pushing and pushing him, I know there was a point where he felt, *These people need to leave me alone. I just want to do what I want to do.* It was a rebellion."

By the time voters returned the Clintons to the governor's mansion in 1982, Hillary was ready with her beaded inauguration gown, Chantilly lace over charmeuse silk. And for Easter she made sure to pick out the sort of cartwheel-brimmed hat that would stir whispers of "Very nice" and "Just right." As Jan Piercey puts it, "Hillary made her trade-offs early on, and I think she steeled herself not to look back."

The Clintons marched straight into the

heat of public censure in '83 when the governor appointed Hillary to chair the state committee on educational standards. She spearheaded a requirement for a one-time teacher examination. "Lower than a snake's belly," one school librarian called her. It was typical of the insults she faced for the next several years.

Hillary pushed on to introduce a consumer-rights approach to education, and the concept of continuing education for educators. She barnstormed around the state for hearings, stopping in all seventy-five counties. Her husband massaged his legislature until Arkansas was eventually funneling seventy cents out of every tax dollar into education programs. These improvements—plus the governor's timely hike last year in teachers' salaries—won over the teachers' union, which had been their bitterest foe. It was typical of the way their political partnership worked.

Hillary also injected her ideals into her corporate-board work. As a sort of resident sociologist on the board of Wal-Mart, a nonunion company with 380,000 employees, she contributed to the retailing giant's ranking in *The 100 Best Companies to Work for in America*. Named head of Wal-Mart's environmental committee, she reframed the question from waste disposal to education and launched the company on a recycling program. She "saved us from a false start on environmental policy," says Rob Walton, son of the company's founder.

The Clintons' partnership looked perfect, at least from the outside. And then Bill stepped on another land mine from his past.

He was thirty-seven when he went through the worst year of his life. It was 1984, during his second term as governor, when a colonel of the state police phoned Betsey Wright, who dashed out to track down Hillary in a nearby restaurant and tell her, "We need to talk to Bill." His twenty-seven-year-old half-brother, Roger, had been spotted selling cocaine. The state police wanted to inform Clinton about their undercover surveillance. Though he was pained by it, he told them to proceed. "It was," says Hillary, "a much greater crisis than anything we've had in this presidential campaign."

Bill's half-brother did more than a year in prison, then came out only to discover that he was cross-addicted to alcohol. A drug counselor rounded up Bill, Roger, their mother, and even occasionally Hillary for intense family therapy. She led them through discussions on co-dependency. Clinton says the process helped him to learn things he never knew about

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himself. The counselor told them that the line between wanting to be a rock star—Roger's dream—and a governor is a very thin one.

During "the next two or three years of discovery... they all came to grips with having grown up in the home of an abusive stepfather," says Wright.

"After my brother got into trouble in 1984, it really had a profound impact on me," explains Clinton. "I just couldn't imagine... I kept asking myself, How could I not have known this?"

The unfinished business of his past threw him again into a period of disequilibrium. He feared he might not be able to live up to the great expectations of his political life and his life partner. The soul-searching, which coincided with Bill's mid-life passage from the age of thirty-seven to forty, also sparked a revival of the behavior that had earlier put strains on their marriage.

In the summer of 1987 forty-year-old Bill Clinton was poised to launch his candidacy for the presidency. Political big shots flew into Little Rock for the announcement luncheon. Everything was ready.

But moments before the scheduled start, Bill backed out. He and Hillary had had a heart-to-heart talk about the long-standing rumors of his zipper problem. Chelsea was only seven. It was too soon. The press that July day caught a rare glimpse of Hillary Rodham Clinton spilling emotion: she stood behind Bill and wept.

The period that followed the climb-down from their joint national aspirations may have been the nadir of their marriage. A clue slipped out during the *60 Minutes* confessional. Bill told Steve Kroft humbly, "If we had given up on our marriage... three years ago, four years ago, you know... If we were divorced, I wouldn't be half the man I am today, without her and Chelsea."

So it was that Hillary Clinton woke up one morning last August in the Arkansas governor's mansion, looked over at her husband's sleepy face, and told him, "You almost have to do it," meaning run for president.

"Do you have any idea what we're getting into?" he asked.

"I know, it'll be tough," she replied. But she was ready to take her own platform national, as a campaign letter described it. And she was bored with the politics of Arkansas, where her husband has put in a full decade as governor.

"She doesn't like all the duties of First Lady," confirmed her brother Hugh Rodham. "It's tiresome and too local."

Reflecting back on the personal journey he has made over the last four years, Bill says the fear of life running out at any moment has subsided. "It's all different now. I think—in the aftermath of my brother's encounter and all the stuff that Hillary and I went through, and where we are together now, and Chelsea—I'm so much more relaxed. I got into this race because I really felt I was strong enough and ready to be president... and because the things that Hillary and I have worked on together were more relevant to what has to be done in the country than anybody else."

"Every life has challenges," Hillary told me philosophically. "Life has become very unpredictable and scary for people. And the only insurance policy you've got against whatever comes down the pike is to be as ready as you personally can be. I think that's part of what the voters have been saying to me: Nobody could have predicted that all this would happen to you. You didn't ask for it. But you were ready. And, boy, we're glad you were."

If he loses, Hillary predicts, "Bill and I have great opportunities, we'll always be able to make a good living, we've got a wonderful daughter—we'll be fine." It doesn't usually work that way, however, particularly not for two driven people whose every axon and dendrite have been tingling for months as they crisscross the country in matching campaign planes, eager to deliver political redemption to the masses. If suddenly they land, SPLAT, back in Little Rock, and they wake up to the concern that their child has been necessarily neglected, and perhaps Hillary begins to thaw out the small, excruciatingly painful little package in the deep freeze labeled "Bill's Marital Mistakes," this could be a very difficult period.

But Hillary Clinton also has developed her own form and substance, her survival instincts and resilience. Maybe the next gubernatorial election the other Clinton will run. There could be a role switch: Bill might find rewards in replicating his childhood—supporting the woman who defines and controls his existence.

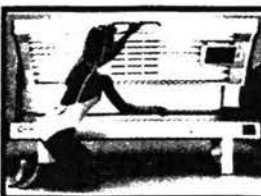
And maybe the next presidential election, or several more down the line, the other Clinton will be on the ticket. As Hillary told a Los Angeles audience recently, "We'll have a woman president by 2010."

Would she consider running? she was pressed.

"We'll talk later." □

Cover: Dress from Saks Fifth Avenue, N.Y.C., and Jimmy's, Brooklyn; stockings from Fogal of Switzerland, N.Y.C.; shoes from Susan Bennis Warren Edwards, N.Y.C.; earrings from Barneys New York and Charivari, N.Y.C.; sunglasses from all Henri Bendel stores and from Ultimo, Chicago. **Page 4:** Photographs, top to bottom, by Brooks Kraft/Sigma, James Hamilton, George Lange. **Page 8:** Photographs, bottom left, both by Marina Schiano. **Page 12:** Photographs by Christopher Little (Clurman) and Sara Barrett (Sheehy). **Page 60:** Photographs, left to right, by Larry Barns, Albert Ferreira/DML, John S. Abbott. **Page 68:** Photograph from New York Times Pictures. **Page 84:** Photograph from Sigma. **Page 88:** Photograph from Contact Press Images. **Page 106:** Painting from a private collection, courtesy of the Curt Marcus Gallery. **Page 108:** Painting from the Whitney Museum of American Art, a promised gift of Robert M. Kaye, courtesy of the Curt Marcus Gallery. **Page 118:** Photograph from Topham/The Image Works. **Page 123:** Styled by Venetia Scott; makeup by Linda de Vetta. **Page 124:** Photographs, top left, by Alex Waterhouse-Hayward; bottom, hair and makeup by Ricki Quesada for Pix. **Page 126:** Photographs: Top, hair and makeup by Mathu Andersen for Marek & Assoc.; shot at the Pyramid Club, N.Y.C. Bottom, grooming by Pascal Lewis for Pix. **Page 130:** Photographs: Top, hair, makeup, and grooming by Pascal Lewis for Pix; women's cashmere turtlenecks from Cashmere Cashmere, N.Y.C.; his cashmere turtleneck from Barneys New York and Bergdorf Goodman, N.Y.C. Bottom left, courtesy of WFMF, Inc. Bottom right, grooming by Yolanda Moran. **Page 132:** Photographs, top, hair by Honor Farrens, makeup by Claude Thompson; bottom, left to right, courtesy of the Canadian Space Agency, by James Smeal/Ron Gallella Ltd., courtesy of Fran Weissler. **Pages 134–35:** Dress from Bergdorf Goodman, N.Y.C., and Charles Galloway, Beverly Hills; stockings from Fogal of Switzerland, N.Y.C.; shoes from the Maud Frizon Boutique, N.Y.C.; earrings from Mariko, N.Y.C., and all Neiman Marcus stores; flat bracelet by Marie Ferré at Topper & Lowell, from Bergdorf Goodman, N.Y.C., and all Neiman Marcus stores; other bracelets by Eric Beamon at Showroom Seven, from Barneys New York and Charivari, N.Y.C. **Page 136:** Gloves by Ken & D from Saks Fifth Avenue, N.Y.C.; jewelry at Topper & Lowell, from Bergdorf Goodman, N.Y.C., Ultimo, Chicago, and all Neiman Marcus stores; ski poles by Scott U.S.A., customized by Marie Ferré. **Page 137:** Photographs, top to bottom, by Otto Dlabala/Rex U.S.A., Oscar Abolafia/Gamma-Liaison, Danny Chin/Star File. **Page 138:** Photographs, top, by Milos Hayduck/Gamma-Liaison; bottom, by Daniel Simon/Gamma-Liaison. **Page 139:** Dress from the Valentino Boutique, N.Y.C. and Beverly Hills; hat, made to order, from Saks Fifth Avenue, N.Y.C.; stockings from Fogal of Switzerland, N.Y.C.; shoes from Susan Bennis Warren Edwards, N.Y.C.; earrings and bracelet from Bergdorf Goodman, N.Y.C., and all Neiman Marcus stores. **Pages 140–41 and 147:** Photographs from Sigma. **Pages 148–49:** Dress from Vera Wang Bridal House Ltd., N.Y.C., by appointment only, 212-879-1700; earrings from Bergdorf Goodman, N.Y.C.; his clothes from the Giorgio Armani boutiques, N.Y.C. and Beverly Hills. **Page 151:** Styled by Elyan Metzner; grooming by Maria Verel; shirt by Giorgio Armani from the Giorgio Armani boutiques, N.Y.C. and Beverly Hills; jeans by Levi's. **Page 152:** Hair, makeup, and grooming by Maria Verel; his shirt and blazer by Giorgio Armani from the Giorgio Armani boutiques, N.Y.C. and Beverly Hills; her top by Calvin Klein from Saks Fifth Avenue and Bloomingdale's, both in N.Y.C.; her skirt by Perry Ellis from Bloomingdale's, N.Y.C.; her shoes, Susan Bennis Warren Edwards, N.Y.C. **Page 155:** Grooming by Pascal Lewis for Pix. **Page 164:** Photograph from A.P./Wide World Photos. **Page 165:** Photographs, top to bottom, by G. Maillard Kessler, courtesy of Carol Matthau; from U.P.I./Bettmann; from A.P./Wide World Photos; courtesy of Carol Matthau. **Pages 168–69:** Photograph by Zade Rosenthal, courtesy of TMs; © 1992 by DC Comics, Inc. **Pages 170–71:** Photograph from Rex U.S.A. **Page 173:** Photograph from Katz/Saba. **Page 174:** Photograph from Alpha/Globe Photos.

Editor's note: On page 12 of the April issue, the photograph of Marie Brenner was taken by Firooz Zahedi, that of Ken Auletta by Thomas Victor. The photographs on page 114 of the April issue were from U.P.I./Bettmann (top) and The Sporting News (bottom).



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