

Melanne Verveer

hiss →

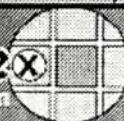
This is pretty
awful. It would
be good to have
some books on the
other side.

April 4, 2000

Search this site:

**SUDDENLY,
IT ALL CLICKS.**
EdificeRex

www.edificerex.com


NEW YORK
MAGAZINE

poll

trivia

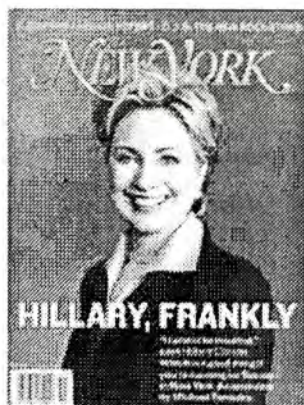
critics

columnists

current issue

table of contents

April 03, 2000



"Part of what I bring is that there is nothing anybody can say about me that will hurt my feelings. I *cannot* be insulted. You know? I just can't be."

-- Hillary Clinton, "Hillary Up Close"

[.commerce](#)

 New York Magazine's
Developer


SUBSCRIBE

[CUSTOMER SERVICE](#)
[HOME](#)

FEATURES

Hillary Up Close

BY MICHAEL TOMASKY

Shaking her image as the controversial wife of a controversial president and coming into her own as a New Yorker hasn't been easy. "I've had to learn from my mistakes," she says in an interview covering everything from the mayor to modern art. How is she preparing for the hard knocks of a New York race? Well, for one thing, she's a Three Stooges fan.

April 4, 2000

Search this site:

GO



IF YOU'RE NOT RECYCLING

New York
 NYMAG.COM

poll

trivia

critics

columnists

current issue

current issue

cover story

Hillary's Turn

Since 1992, Hillary Clinton has morphed from two-for-the-price-of-one partner to failed health-care czar to long-suffering wife and, now, New York Senate hopeful. In a freewheeling interview, she talks about the road she's been on -- and the one to come.

BY MICHAEL TOMASKY



Somehow, in New York more than most other places, campaigns are hammered into shape by events that happen outside them. And so, suddenly, with the alleged shooting by police of Patrick Dorismond and Mayor Giuliani's release of Dorismond's sealed juvenile record, boom, we have a campaign. For the first time, after months of fragile caution, Hillary Clinton tore into the mayor, who, as is his custom, tore back. The mayor's actions in the past week reinforced for New Yorkers just how well we know him -- in maintaining his barrage on Dorismond's character, Giuliani was not making elaborate political calculations beyond the understanding of others; he was just being himself. By contrast, Mrs. Clinton's verbal grenades showed a side of her we've never seen, more aggressive and direct than she's ever been since she started coming to the state last July. It underscored, her immense fame notwithstanding, how little we know about her -- as a candidate, to be sure, and simply as a person in her own right.

If nothing else, this improbable campaign will see to it that Hillary Clinton's frequently mutating image will receive one more makeover. Whether she's sincere or ambitious, distrustful of people or open to them, are among the questions about her that voters will answer in their own way come November. But what follows should shed some light on them. In her most extensive interview since coming to New York, she talks about her candidacy, her caution, her recent incaution, the press, the health-care failure, Bill's shadow, Trent Lott, archaeology, modern art, the Stanhope, even the Three Stooges and *The Flintstones*. However you feel about her, you'll find out something here you didn't know.

RELATED LINKS

[Archives](#)
[Table of Contents](#)
[Best Bets](#)

"I was told that New York's was the toughest political environment in the country. I think that's right. People offer me their opinions at the drop of a hat, but by and large, I feel very welcome."

New York Magazine: What grade would you give yourself so far as a candidate?

Hillary Rodham Clinton: I'd grade myself as Needs Improvement but Making an Effort and Getting Better [laughs].

e site exclusive

e ny mag, your today

e current issue

e cover story

e features

e gotham

e gotham style

e intelligencer

e table of contents

e critics

e trivia

e new york economists

e ny mag's guide

e ny mag's guide

e ny mag's guide

.commerce

New York Magazine's
Travelogue

SUBSCRIBE

CUSTOMER SERVICE

[HOME](#)

NYM: Okay. I'll put a grade on that, C-plus. Fair?

HRC: I don't think about it that way. It's been a learning experience. You know, I have a lot of sympathy for the vice-president, who, when I watched him start his campaign last spring, I could tell was really having a hard time making the transition. And I didn't realize how hard that would be until I tried to do it myself. To move out of saying we to I -- you know, it took some time to figure out how to do that.

NYM: I was in Rochester, at the hotel, that morning the Village Voice story came out about Giuliani's letter accusing you of "hostility to America's religious traditions." When you walked through those double doors, you were quaking with rage. But then when you started to speak, the rhetoric was very soft and very careful.

HRC: Well, I was outraged. I thought it was a . . . misuse of campaign tactics and rhetoric, and it was insulting to me. But I understood why he did it, and why he will continue to do it --

NYM: Why is that?

HRC: It raises a lot of money. This isn't complicated. That's why he won't release his letters. He doesn't want us to see what else he's saying about me to open the pocketbooks of the far right and the people who respond to Ollie North and Jesse Helms and Richard Viguerie.

But I also believe that it's important when you're in a campaign to always remember that this is *not* about you. That if you become emotionally angry and say everything that's on your mind about how you feel, you lose a chance to communicate clearly that what you're really going to get up every day worrying about is not what your opponent says about you but what you're going to do for people.

I also believe that it is just more difficult for women candidates to express their strong feelings about things affecting them, as opposed to how I feel about gun control or the deteriorating public schools or stirring up racial hostility, which I can be as angry about and as determined to fix as I possibly can be. But I think you make a mistake if you let any campaign become about you. I know who I am. I know what I believe. I know what I would do in the Senate. And I know what my religious convictions are. There's nothing he can say, after I've calmed down, that will affect who I am.

NYM: Well, let me ask you about the Diallo verdict, and your response to that. Again, I felt it was soft, didn't really take a side, didn't really --

HRC: I did not want in any way to be a part of a reaction that could conceivably have resulted in any kind of disorder or violence. I did not have any official responsibility or job that would enable me to help control anything. And I thought it was very important to be measured and to be thoughtful about what I said. I carry a very heavy responsibility. I'm not the usual Senate candidate [laughs], for better or worse. I don't want anything I say or do to feed into the kind of, ah, climate in which people engage in insults.

NYM: Then, last week, after the Dorismond shooting, you really took the gloves off and went after the mayor. What made you do that?

HRC: It was wrong for the mayor to rush to judgment and release Patrick Dorismond's records. It was wrong for him to refuse to reach out, and it was wrong for him to make the situation worse by lashing out and losing control.

("Hillary's Turn" 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5)

From the April 3, 2000 issue of New York Magazine.



IF YOU'RE NOT RECYCLING

April 4, 2000

Search this site:



IF YOU'RE NOT RECYCLING

New York
NYMAG.COM

[poll](#)

[trivia](#)

[critics](#)

[columnists](#)

[current issue](#)

- [editors' special](#)
- [ny mag, nyc, nyc](#)
- [current issue](#)

[features](#)
[gotham](#)
[gotham style](#)
[intelligencer](#)
[table of contents](#)

- [critics](#)
- [columnists](#)
- [new york essentials](#)
- [ny mag visitor's guide](#)
- [ny mag's new](#)
- [ny mag's new](#)

[commerce](#)

[New York Magazine's Travelogue](#)



[CUSTOMER SERVICE](#)

[HOME](#)

cover story

("Hillary's Turn" [1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#) | [4](#) | [5](#))



NYM: How do you respond to the mayor's charge that you politicized this?

HRC: You know, when the incident occurred, the mayor and I both said New Yorkers should wait and reserve judgment until all the facts come out. I am still waiting. It was the mayor who politicized this and led the rush to judgment here.

NYM: Some people have observed that, while they may agree with you on the mayor's role, it sounds like you're getting into an argument about his mayoralty, and since you haven't lived here, that's an argument you can't ultimately win.

HRC: I'm talking about leadership here. I mean, if Rudy Giuliani won't represent all New Yorkers as mayor, then how is he going to represent the whole state in the Senate?

NYM: You describe yourself as a New Democrat. Many liberals spent eight years thinking and hoping you were sort of the liberal secret weapon in the White House. And then there's this other set of people who believe you have this secret radical agenda. How have your views changed since you were young?

HRC: Well, my gosh, I've gone from a Barry Goldwater Republican to a New Democrat, but I think my underlying values have remained pretty constant. Individual responsibility and community -- I don't see those as mutually inconsistent. I think our politics of the last 30 years has been fraught with false choices that I don't think reflect the common-sense, pragmatic progressive strain of American politics that I've always identified with.

NYM: Where would you put yourself on a continuum between Pat Moynihan and Chuck Schumer?

HRC: I know that people often talk about how there's a division between being the senator who fixes potholes and the senator who sees the big issues on the horizon. I don't think there has to be a contradiction there. If you're in the Senate, you have to do both. Oftentimes, what is most local and personal that the government can affect is the way you build trust and faith in government at the ground level. So I think it's important to help people with their Social Security problems or their disability problems or their potholes or their highway interchange or whatever it is that to them symbolizes the government.

But at the same time, it's important to be a leader. When I'm upstate, I obviously talk about the upstate economy. But I also talk about it when I'm downstate. It matters to people in this city that there's been an exodus of people from upstate New York. And the result is, with the loss of population, New York's likely to lose two or three members of Congress in the 2000 redistricting. That's devastating for what I think we need to do for New York.

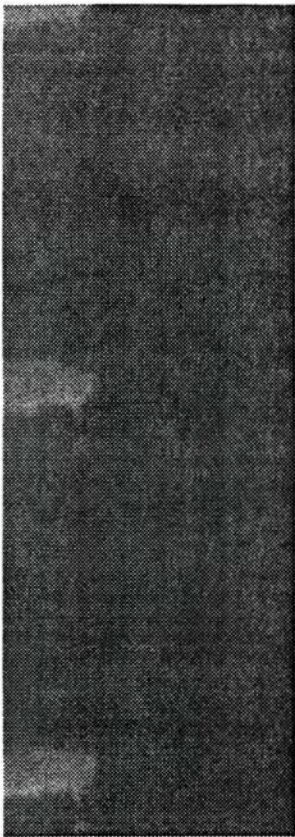
And then there are issues both nationally and internationally that New Yorkers are concerned about. And there are issues on the horizon that are not yet political issues. I don't have any New Yorkers coming up to me now except in the

current issue

RELATED LINKS

[Archives](#)
[Table of Contents](#)

[Best Bets](#)



most specialized circumstances who ask me what my opinion is about the human-genome project. I mean, that's not an issue that's on most New Yorkers' minds. And yet when we get the genome mapped by 2003, or earlier, that's going to have a huge effect on the life of New Yorkers. On teaching hospitals. On research. On insurability. So I want to be someone who is really grounded enough to respond to people's needs and help, and somebody who's going to be a leader in raising issues. So I'd like to be a combination of that.

NYM: *I've talked to some Capitol Hill staffers from 1994, and the picture they paint for me of the health-care situation is you, or the White House, insisting on an all-or-nothing package and not being willing to do the compromising and horse-trading that gets legislation passed.*

HRC: Well, I'd paint a very different picture. We did what we were asked to do by the leadership, which at that time was Democratic in both the House and the Senate. We had a lot of internal debates about how to proceed. And they wanted us to present a piece of legislation, not just a framework. In retrospect, knowing what I now know, I don't think that was the best way to proceed. But that's what we did. And it was drafted in the basement of the Cannon Building with Hill staffers involved with it every step of the way. It was reviewed and signed off on by the chairmen of the committees. And the plan was that the Republicans would put forth their version, which Senator [John] Chafee [of Rhode Island] was in charge of drafting. And Senator Chafee and I had numerous conversations about this. And the plan was that we would introduce our legislation, he would introduce his, and the Congress would, in an act of great, you know, bipartisan achievement, hammer out the differences and come out with whatever the atmosphere would permit.

("Hillary's Turn" 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5)

From the April 3, 2000 issue of New York Magazine.



IF YOU'RE NOT RECYCLING

April 4, 2000

Search this site:



IF YOU'RE NOT RECYCLING

NEW YORK
NYMAG.COM

[poll](#)

[trivia](#)

[critics](#)

[columnists](#)

[current issue](#)

[the magazine](#)

[ny mag's 2000 reading](#)

[clipping service](#)

[features](#)

[gotham](#)

[gotham style](#)

[intelligence](#)

[table of contents](#)

[criticism](#)

[columnists](#)

[new york essentials](#)

[nyer visitor's guide](#)

[entertainment](#)

[archive](#)

[.commerce](#)

New York Magazine's
Travelogue



[CUSTOMER SERVICE](#)

[HOME](#)

cover story

("Hillary's Turn" [1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#) | [4](#) | [5](#))



NYM: *Where did it collapse?*

HRC: Well, it collapsed at several points. It collapsed when Senator Dole decided that he was going to run for president. And he was advised by Republican strategists that they didn't want any kind of health-care bill. It collapsed also because the changes that both of us would have made were contrary to certain interests that were banded together.

NYM: *How has that experience changed the approach you'll take if elected? And what Republicans in the Senate do you think you could establish good relations with?*

HRC: Depending upon the issue, I think I could work with a lot of them. That's been the pattern of the last seven years, and that's the only way to be successful in the Senate. We all learned a lot from the health-care experience. From my perspective, even though I thought we tried to reach out and involve a lot of people, we were not successful in creating an awareness of how much of that was going on. I also learned that it's very difficult for anyone to present a piece of legislation to the Congress. Even if you're asked to do that. Because just as Senator Bradley found out with the details of his health-care plan, you are then subject to it being nitpicked apart.

NYM: *How do you show that you're still there, in terms of leadership?*

HRC: One of the ways is not to end the story at the White House and health care. You'd think that after health care, I'd taken to my bed with vapors or something, you know? And so it's my obligation to go to you and say, "Well, if you care about the following 25 things, here's what I've done on them." The work I did *continued*. I immediately began to work on the Children's Health Insurance Program. I wrote a best-selling book and gave away a million dollars to children's charities. I was the point person on welfare reform with a lot of the advocates' groups, 'cause I had worked with them, and I had to persuade them, insofar as I was able, to go along with the concessions that were made to get a bill passed. I started the emphasis in the administration on women and women's needs around the world as part of our foreign-policy objectives. I worked on microcredit. I worked to change the foster-care and adoption system.

People don't know that because I made a very, for me, pragmatic decision. I realized that because of the role I was in -- I mean, I have worked all my life, ever since I was 13. All of a sudden, I'm in this full-time-volunteer position. And the health-care issue was very polarizing. So I had to make a decision: How do I get things done in the time that I have here in the White House? How do I show leadership even if I don't immediately get credit for it? So that was what I chose to do.

NYM: *One might suspect that Trent Lott would block something that has your name on it, simply because it has your name on it.*

HRC: I don't think that works in the Senate, because there are too many individual prerogatives that you have to balance off if you're the majority leader

[current issue](#)

RELATED LINKS

[Archives](#)

[Table of Contents](#)

[Best Bets](#)

of the Senate. I have no reason to believe that. Also, there are many ways of getting things done rather than [being] direct and confrontational. I will make alliances with people who you might not imagine that I could. Just a quick example: One of my great concerns in public life is the foster-care and adoption system. In the last seven years, we've been able to make changes that were never thought possible before. And we did that on a piece of legislation in this last Congress that meant a lot to me. Every year, 20,000 kids age out of the foster-care system. And usually what happens to those kids is that when they turn 18 or graduate from high school, whichever happens first, a social worker shows up in many jurisdictions with a black plastic garbage bag and says, "Put your stuff in, you're moving." And they have nowhere to move to.

So I worked with some members of Congress to change that. To provide some more support for these kids, to keep them on Medicaid, et cetera. I worked in the Senate with John Chafee. And in the House, I worked with somebody who's never had a good word to say about me or my husband -- Tom DeLay -- but who cares about foster care. I think he was as surprised as he could be that we invited him to the White House, that he was part of the team that we put together. He was very helpful in getting the legislation through.

NYM: *Even people who really feel connected to you and don't feel connected to Rudy emotionally at all still see him as this guy who has tremendous executive ability. How do you compete with that force-of-nature kind of executive ability that the mayor conveys?*

HRC: Well, the first thing I would say is that I don't deny that some good things have happened in the city. I love New York, you know, and the fact that many people who live here and work here are feeling better about this city I think is great. And I'm glad that he was mayor during a great economic boom that was contributed to in some great measure by the president's economic policies, and was given additional tools to fight crime. So he used the time well. And I applaud him for that. And he's a very tough opponent. He's gonna run a very hard campaign, I'm well aware of that.

But I think there are three major differences that people have to ask themselves about us when they're going to make their decision about voting. First, I don't think we need another Republican in the Senate. That's the first thing I'd ask New Yorkers to look at.

Second, there are significant differences between us on the issues. I think his support for the Republican budget plan, his support for George Bush, means that he would support the kinds of fiscal policies that would undermine the economic prosperity of New York and the country. I think if you look at public education, his whole policy is vouchers. Poverty has gone down around the nation; it has *not* gone down in New York City. New York now has the distinction of having the second-highest rate of poverty in the country and the biggest gap between the rich and the poor. I don't think that's acceptable.

And then, finally, there's a real contrast in leadership styles. Willingness to listen to people and actually learn from people. In the Senate, I would look for every possible way to work with my colleagues to try to get things done for New York. And I wouldn't expect if I disagreed with them, I could sue them or fire them.

But part of what I bring is that there is nothing anybody can say about me that will hurt my feelings. I *cannot* be insulted. You know? I just can't be. And so whatever comes in this campaign, or whatever will come in the future, my goal is as it was after health care: What can I do to help people and get things done?

("Hillary's Turn" 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5)

From the April 3, 2000 issue of New York Magazine.



IF YOU'RE NOT RECYCLING

April 4, 2000

Search this site:

(84)



IF YOU'RE NOT RECYCLING

NEW YORK
MAGAZINE
ny2612.com

[poll](#)

[trivia](#)

[critics](#)

[columnists](#)

[current issue](#)

[current issue](#)

cover story

("Hillary's Turn" [1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#) | [4](#) | [5](#))



NYM: *Aside from politics and policy, what are your intellectual interests and passions? Who's your favorite novelist? What about art? Or music?*

HRC: Wow [pauses]. How much time do we have? I have fairly catholic tastes. I'm very interested in archaeology. And I'm interested in prehistory as well as what we think of as the periods of history that there's a record of.

One of the highlights of my last seven years in the White House was on my first African trip, when I went to East Africa, the Olduvai Gorge, where the Leakeys made a lot of their discoveries, and walked the gorge with some of the paleoanthropologists and archaeologists who worked there, and just talked about the transition to *Homo sapiens* and then to historic man. I was in a rain forest in Australia, and Bill and I were being guided around by an aboriginal guide. We're walking through this rain forest, and he was saying things like, "You see that tree over there? The bark of that tree, if you boil it, and then you leave the pulp in the sun, it cures gangrene, our people tell us." There were so many examples of that. And I'm sitting there thinking, you know, modern man has no understanding of what we owe to the people of the last million years. Because we're so impressed with ourselves and what we've learned in the last hundred years, especially with the speed of knowledge and the Internet. But think how many generations it took to figure out what you boiled and put in the sun to cure a dread disease.

RELATED LINKS

[Archives](#)

[Table of Contents](#)

[Best Bets](#)

[commerce](#)

New York Magazine's
[Travelogue](#)



[CUSTOMER SERVICE](#)

[HOME](#)

"I carry a very heavy responsibility. I'm not the usual Senate candidate, for better or worse. I don't want anything I say or do to feed into the kind of, ah, climate in which people engage in insults."

NYM: *And that's from college, or --*

HRC: No, it's just been an interest of mine. I subscribe to *Archaeology* magazine because I love reading about it. So going to Egypt was a lifelong desire of mine, to be able to go and see the tombs and be guided around by Egyptologists who've spent their lives studying this. If I were to have an interest that I were to go back to school and study and think about and spend time on, or go on an archaeological dig, that would be at the top of my list.

Also, I really love art of all kinds. One of the things I'm happiest about in my time at the White House is that I was able to bring twentieth-century American art and sculpture to the White House, which has always been a particular love of mine. The de Kooning family lent us a big piece for the second floor of the White House. We added a [Henry Ossawa] Tanner, the first African-American artist in the collection, and we added an O'Keeffe in the permanent collection. And I started a sculpture exhibition in what's called the First Lady's Garden. Bill and I had our first date at the Yale University Art Museum in New Haven. We've

always loved modern sculpture.

And I like a lot of modern Expressionist and abstract work. But as I say, I'm very catholic. Literature, I'm a big fan of Dostoevsky. As I get older, I appreciate Shakespeare even more. I like Thomas Hardy; I like Dickens. Most recently, I've been reading a lot of American literature, particularly modern works by women. I think the best book I read last year was *The Poisonwood Bible*, by Barbara Kingsolver. I thought that was brilliant.

NYM: *Have you had a chance, on the subject of art, to go to the Met or moma?*

HRC: When I was a private citizen, I used to go all the time. The Stanhope is now a very fancy place, but back in the early eighties, it was not yet there. And it was in a pretty great location, right across from the Met. I used to go and stay there all the time. It was inexpensive, if you can believe it, very friendly, and there was an Irish-American bellman by the name of Pat who used to greet me. And I felt very much at home there. Toward the end of the eighties, it was taken over, and it was gentrified and really made into a beautiful place. The last time I went there, Pat met me, and he said to me, 'Ah, Mrs. Clinton, this place will no longer be for the likes of us.' " [Laughs.]

NYM: *Because New Yorkers love people who love New York, you know, why can't you just sort of stop the car and go into Saks or something?*

HRC: Well, because I'm mobbed. I went to the supermarket in Chappaqua, which is, you know, hardly a heavily populated area, and I could not get up and down the aisles. I loved it. I talked with a lot of people, and they came up and asked me questions and said things to me. I can't seem to get anywhere without drawing so much attention that I can't really do what I came to do. I suppose I could go to the theater, because the lights go out. But I don't know how to do this. I'm having a really hard time. I find that people are really interested in talking to me. I'm hoping that I'll be able to get back and do some of the things that I like to do. What's ironic is that if I go someplace with my husband, who obviously travels with a huge entourage, he draws all the attention, so I can kind of go and look at things or visit with people and feel like I'm actually out there enjoying the experience. But now that I do it on my own, I find that people are really interested in talking to me and seeing me, and wish me well and ask me questions. I'm hoping that I'll be able to get back and do some of the things that I like to do.

NYM: *Any plans for your husband to come up anytime soon?*

HRC: There aren't any plans right now. We have a long way to go between now and the election, but I do anticipate him campaigning for me.

NYM: *I was thinking about the way the vice-president took pains to distance himself from the president. Do you feel that you have to do anything like that?*

HRC: You know, I think my job is to demonstrate my own record and qualifications, but I'm also very proud of the record and progress the administration has made. I say that in nearly every speech I make. We've done a lot of things I'd like to see continued, and there are other areas I'd like to work on that have not been as high a priority up until now. It's important for people to know what I'd do, but I don't see that that's in any way inconsistent with having been supportive of what the president has done.

NYM: *What did you least expect about New York that you've found? What has surprised you most, or taken you aback?*

HRC: I don't know that I'm surprised by anything yet. I was always told it was the toughest political atmosphere in the country. I think that's right. I don't think that's a surprise. People offer me their opinion at the drop of a hat, but by and large, I feel very welcome, and very much at home.

NYM: *How would you compare this press corps to Washington's? You've had a pretty tough time of it so far.*

HRC: But I don't view it as tough times as much as I've had to learn how to be a candidate. I don't think the press here -- with maybe one or two exceptions, as



we know [*laughing*] -- I don't think it's been unusually tough on me. I think it's just got a certain way of doing business with the people that it covers. And I've had to learn, as I said when I started on Senator Moynihan's farm, how to be a candidate. I had to learn from my own mistakes. All in all, I think the press has been pretty fair to me.

("Hillary's Turn" [1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#) | [4](#) | [5](#))

From the April 3, 2000 issue of New York Magazine.



IF YOU'RE NOT RECYCLING

April 4, 2000

Search this site:



IF YOU'RE NOT RECYCLING



[poll](#)

[trivia](#)

[critics](#)

[columnists](#)

[current issue](#)

current issue

cover story

("Hillary's Turn" [1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#) | [4](#) | [5](#))



NYM: What are the specific burdens, then, of being both First Lady and candidate?

HRC: Well, I don't know any person who runs for Senate who gets as much attention as I do at this point in the race. Adding to my high visibility is the fact that because I do come from the White

House, I think it's appropriate that people would be weighing what I say and trying to understand whether what I'm saying is in some way related to the administration, or to the president, or to the Justice Department, or to somebody else. So I think I have that extra caution, to be as clear as I can and not to raise any extraneous issues. And that's what I'm trying to do.

NYM: That might be a particular liability in New York, which is a place that likes its politicians -- well, to mouth off, really. Ed Koch is the archetype of this.

HRC: He is. And I think as the campaign goes on, that becomes more of an option for me. I have a lot to say. I have a lot of, you know, irreverent mouthing-off to do. Which I fully intend to be able to do. But I don't think that this far out from an election, when I'm still getting to know people and people are still getting to know me, that that's the best way for me to spend whatever time I can have getting into people's living rooms.

There's a rhythm to any campaign, and in this campaign, people are intensely interested, and while they're interested about me, I want them to get to see me talking about what they care about, and how I'd go about the business of the Senate. There'll be plenty of time for one-liners and retorts, but it's not now.

NYM: Okay, I asked you about serious things like literature. What silly things do you like? I, for example, have a soft spot for *The Flintstones*.

HRC: Well . . . it's funny you should mention *The Flintstones*. My family were big *Flintstones* fans, too. And I can't carry a tune, but I could in an off-key way join my brothers in the humming of the *Flintstones* theme song. My father *hated* *The Flintstones*. My father had this devastating stroke and was in intensive care. And we're all in there with him. It's shortly before he died. The doctors had said, "He's not going to come out of it." And my brother said, "Yeah, but, you know, if he wanted to, maybe he could. And what always gets a rise out of him is the theme from *The Flintstones*." So there we are in intensive care singing and humming -- and carrying on, with tears coming down our faces -- *The Flintstones*. And my mother's saying, "Oh, God, he's always hated that, don't do that!" My brothers to this day swear that they saw a slight flicker of distaste on his face.

I happen to be more of a Three Stooges fan. I walked into -- oh, I know where we were, we were doing an event at C.W. Post with Chuck Schumer on making college tuition tax-deductible, and we had a family who was sort of representing what this would mean to them. And I walked in, and the man who was going to be on the program and his wife -- he had on a Three Stooges tie. Which I've never seen! And I mean, all their faces in big relief coming down his chest, you know? And so I go up to the man, and I go [*she leans forward, puts her hands right in front of my face, and, à la Curly, starts snapping her fingers and rapping her knuckles*], and he looks at me like [*laughs, imitates man's shock*], you know.

RELATED LINKS

[Archives](#)

[Table of Contents](#)

[Best Bets](#)

[features](#)
[gotham](#)
[gotham style](#)
[intelligencer](#)
[table of contents](#)

[critics](#)

[columnists](#)

[new york essentials](#)

[new yorker's guide](#)

[participations](#)

[archives](#)

[commerce](#)

[New York Magazine's Travelogue](#)



[CUSTOMER SERVICE](#)

[HOME](#)



her knuckles], and he looks at me like [*laughs, imitates man's shock*], you know . . . and I say, "Hi, I want to be your senator!"

("Hillary's Turn" [1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#) | [4](#) | [5](#))

From the April 3, 2000 issue of New York Magazine.



IF YOU'RE NOT RECYCLING

Deconstructing Hillary

Latest batch of books portrays Clinton as consistent in her inconsistency

By Cheryl Lavin
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

Take the name: Even after she married, she insisted on Hillary Rodham. Then, at a low point in her husband's political career, she became Mrs. Bill Clinton. Once he was president, she asked to be called Hillary Rodham Clinton. Now that she's the candidate, she's Hillary Clinton.

There's something slippery about the first lady. Five hard-cover books published in the last year have tried to pin her down. Here are just some of her inconsistencies, as laid out by the authors:

She's a feminist, yet her power comes from a man, and her response to her husband's infidelities is always a misogynistic attack on the victim.

She's potently ambitious—"most likely to succeed" in high school, graduation speaker in college—yet she waited until she was in her 50s to strike out on her own.

She's a spiritual woman, but she has been involved in every White House scandal, built her nest egg through a shady commodities investment and was the administration's go-to person when it was time to play hardball.

She's a Midwesterner with an occasional Southern drawl who soon may develop a New York accent.

As first lady, she is both revered and reviled. Among her many firsts are: first to head a major program (health care); first to run for the Senate; first to be subpoenaed; and first to almost face a

SEE HILLARY, PAGE 8



5 WORKS THAT SPEAK VOLUMES

■ **"Bill and Hillary: The Marriage"** (cover photo of the two nuzzling) by Christopher Andersen (biographer of Princess Diana and Jackie Onassis).

■ **"Hillary's Choice"** (cover photo of in-focus Hillary and blurred Bill) by Gail Sheehy ("Passages" author, psychological profiler of many political figures).

■ **"Hell to Pay: The Unfolding Story of Hillary Rodham Clinton"** (cover photo of Hillary looking like she has just sucked a lemon) by Barbara Olson (a federal investigator into the Clinton scandals).

■ **"The First Partner: Hillary Rodham Clinton"** (cover shot of Hillary floating over the White House) by Joyce Milton (biographer of the Rosenbergs and the Lindberghs).

■ **"The Case Against Hillary Clinton"** (cover photo of Hillary Nancy-gazing at off-camera Bill) by Peggy Noonan (the Reagan-Bush speechwriter famous for "a thousand points of light").

Illustration by Lana Baum

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION



AP photo

Hillary Rodham Clinton is all smiles at a news conference in Huntington, N.Y.

Hillary

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

criminal indictment.

Some of the questions still asked about her: Why would a woman with any self-respect marry a man who was cheating on her—and why would she stay married to him when he continued to stray? When she said her husband was innocent in the Monica Lewinsky affair—the target of a “vast right wing conspiracy”—was she lying to us? Or to herself?

She’s brilliant, but is she as smart as she thinks she is? And are we as stupid? Did she think we’d fall for the dancing-on-the-beach photo op or the A+ on David Letterman’s pop quiz?

And, most basic, who is she? Here are some answers we’ve drawn from the latest batch of books about her:

Christopher Andersen is famous for titillating details, and he doesn’t disappoint in “Bill and Hillary” (William Morrow and Company Inc., September 1999).

Among the many he notes are: Hillary never shaved her legs or used deodorant when she and Bill were dating and she had body odor. When asked by a campaign worker if she was gay, she said, “It’s nobody’s [expletive] business.” In the late 1980s, she demanded that Bill take an AIDS test. When she heard the tape of Clinton saying, “Good bye, baby,” to Gennifer Flowers, she flinched “as if she had been struck in the face.”

Hillary has thrown various objects at the president, and when he told her about Monica, she slapped him and said, “You stupid, stupid, stupid bastard.”

“Still the crucial questions main,” writes Andersen. “Do Bill and Hillary love each other, or has it always been a calculated arrangement based on power? Yes and yes ... Bill is in awe of Hillary’s intelligence, grit and unwavering loyalty. To her he represents not only an avenue to power—and by extension a means of accomplishing great things—but above all else, a figure of historical importance. Hillary’s fatal flaw is Bill, and Bill’s fatal flaw is—and likely always will be—himself.”

Gail Sheehy, known for getting under the skin of her subjects, says everything Hillary does stems from a decision she made many years ago: “Not to know what she knew.” That is “Hillary’s Choice” (Random House, November 1999).

At some level she knew everything, but she “kept building walls, blocking off the doubts beneath her carefully controlled life strategy. ... The dark side of her husband’s soul was not a territory she cared to explore any more closely than was absolutely necessary for their political survival.”

As a young woman, writes Sheehy, Hillary had an “exaggerated sense of responsibility for others less fortunate, but she really didn’t like people all that much.” Friends call her “aloof,” “hard to know” and “tough as nails.” When she first met Clinton, she “sensed something childlike and needy” about him that appealed to her “mature den mother persona.” When, while dating Clinton, she found out he was cheating on her, she blamed those around him for not keeping the women away. “She never turns her fury on Bill,” according to Sheehy.

Sheehy says Clinton actually fell in love with one of his mistresses.

In the late 1980s, he would phone Marilyn Jo Jenkins up to 18 times a day. They had a rendezvous the morning he left for his first inauguration. Yet Hillary stayed with him. Why? Sheehy says she’s addicted to him.

“He is her only rebellion, the one thing she can’t logically explain.”

In “Hell to Pay” (Regnery Publishing Inc., November 1999), Barbara Olson, a rabid conservative who frequently spars with Geraldo and John McLaughlin, calls Hillary “angry, bitter, obsessive, and even dangerous.” Olson says Hillary was a rabble-rousing radical in the ‘60s with ties to the Black Panthers and the Communist Party and has “a lifetime record of support for the Palestine Liberation Organization.”

Hillary is motivated by “a lifelong ambition,” says Olson, “to make the world accept the ideas she embraced in the sanctuaries of the liberation theology, radical feminism, and the hard left ... a politician who ... learned to mask her true feelings and intentions. She became a master manipulator of the press, the public, her staff, and—likely—even the president.”

“The First Partner” (William Morrow and Co. Inc., May 1999) is Joyce Milton’s second book about Hillary Clinton. The first is for children, a flattering biography; this one is decidedly less so. Milton says Hillary’s mother taught her to keep her emotions in check and that her father was never satisfied with her. When Hillary brought home a straight-A report card, he said she must go to “a pretty easy school.” “She did everything he asked, and he would respond by raising the bar a few inches higher.” Hillary reacted by expecting much of herself.

“No one can doubt that Hillary Clinton is a very hard worker who strives to do good, consistent with her own ambitions,” writes Milton. “But she had also been a victim of that great delusion of the 1960s—namely that it’s possible to continually reinvent oneself, rewriting the rules to suit whatever role one happens to be playing at the moment.”

Peggy Noonan, a New York Republican, sees Hillary’s Senate run as an act of “Boomer selfishness and narcissism ... a thing of utter and breathtaking gall.” Still, the first lady may be elected, she writes in “The Case Against Hillary Clinton” (ReganBooks, HarperCollins Publishers, April 2000), because women see aspects of themselves in her.

“There’s something for almost everyone. Women who have been abused and humiliated by a man ... see her as a fellow survivor. ... Feminists see her as a woman operating in the world against the odds.” Noonan sees her as a brown-noser who used to snitch on the girls smoking in the lavatory.

Noonan’s most outrageous charge is that Hillary “appears to be disturbed.” “Multifaceted, but only in the sense that Sybil, or Eve in ‘The Three Faces of Eve’ were multifaceted.” There’s Tak Charge Hillary wowing Congress sobbing Hillary complaining to her staff about how alone she is, Hillary hiring private eyes to spy on her husband, Victim Hillary leaking her troubles, Tradition Hillary encouraging children to read, Hollywood Hillary glamming it up in gowns and jewels, Yankee Fan Hillary, Jewish Hillary ...

Perhaps the reason biographers have such a hard time understanding Hillary Clinton is because there are so many of her.

PHOTOCOPY
REPRODUCTION