

Questions re: HRC fashion

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- 1) Specific choices of what she wore during periods
of her life from Wellesley → today
- 2) Do you think she has important
- 3) Messages appearance telegraph
- 4) She has gained a physical sophistication
- Experience counts for a lot - in this realm
as well as most others
- 5) View that style is → "shape shifter" evil spirit

- Where do her clothes come from? Process
designers
stores

who pays?

My designers by name - (Oscar de la Renta.)
St. John - American designers -
Pamela Dennis -

Always purchases her own
Personal shoppers and stuff
hovers pant suits

Become more confident
(Diff role)

1st few yrs are abt yellow suit/novination -
Myer

Magazines

- 1) More magazine - h-care
- 2) Glamour - women + the political process
- 3) Redbook -
- 4) Back to school > Parenting magazine
Reading
Uniform rating
- 5) Essence / Susan Taylor
women's health
Interview / Q + A / by HRC
- 6) Health > Finney

Parents
Prevention > best demographics
Self

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Hillary reinvents her style for yet another campaign -- but this time it's hers;
By Catherine Fitzpatrick;
of the Journal Sentinel staff

BODY:

Awash in applause, she strode into the pool of light and beamed a megawatt smile. With a sprinkling of confetti and shower of balloons, the New York Democratic Party anointed her as its candidate for United States senator.

Thus did Hillary Rodham Clinton make history as the first American first lady to be a congressional aspirant. Her husband stood to the side, deferential. Powerhouse politicians in charcoal worsteds gathered in formation behind her.

After decades as "the spouse," Hillary Clinton is charting a future that may or may not vault her to Oval Office tenancy. Labeled everything from a visionary to a carpetbagger, she took on combative New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani and, upon his self-implosion, is now squaring off against Rep. Rick Lazio.

Television beamed her image worldwide. Among the weighty aspects noted, parsed, debated and adjudicated was the candidate's pantsuit.

Her pantsuit.

"She looked fabulous!" Hillary's press secretary, Lissa Muscatine, said in a phone interview afterward.

But nationally renowned image consultant Susan Bixler begs to differ.

The suit was not flattering, she says. Pockets at the hips. And that yellow. Canary.

The right yellow signifies optimism, energy, creativity, according to Bixler. Freedom, goodness, golden future.

Hillary's yellow was the wrong yellow, Bixler says. "It was a mistake."

For a candidate -- male or female -- poised at the summit of power, personal image matters.

Across the arc of her life, through passionate neglect or grudging attentiveness, Hillary has altered her appearance again and again. As she matured from bobby-soxer to wonky campus feminist, from inexperienced governor's

wife to ambitious presidential partner to adroit Senate candidate, the transformations in her wardrobe and grooming and the shape of her body have been as dramatic as they have been frequent.

Today, Hillary represents the most visible incarnation of the modern American woman. Her stature is unparalleled, open-ended.

Deciphering the shifting interplay between the private person and the public persona is more important than ever.

"When under siege, she rises early, dresses quickly, and cauterizes her emotions."

-- Gail Sheehy

Hillary Diane Rodham was born in 1947.

Her mother was a stay-at-home mom. Her father made draperies for corporations. Hers was an idyllic childhood, playing til dusk on the safe streets of Park Ridge in suburban Chicago.

In grammar school, she wore sailor dresses and saddle shoes. By high school, she had moved on to tightish sweaters and plaid skirts. Cosmetics and clothes were not Hillary's metier.

In 1965, she arrived at Wellesley, one of the "Seven Sisters" womens' colleges, a century-old bastion of achieving women with what author Miriam Horn calls "the lingering scent of a finishing school." Soon she was edging her way to the left, abandoning her box pleat skirts for granny dresses.

By junior year she was campaigning for Eugene McCarthy, viewing the world through the Coke-bottle glasses of a serious student who refused to compete on a fashion level with her Wellesley peers.

In a time of emerging civil rights, feminism and sexual revolution, Hillary was cloistered in academia, thriving on political discussion, living in sweater vests and awning-stripe bell-bottoms.

The young woman who arrived at Yale Law School might have been deliberately unattractive, but she caught the eye of a sunny Rhodes scholar with Elvis sideburns, high-water pants and corn-pone shoes: William Jefferson Clinton.

A clash between the steely, plain-faced Chicago girl and the other woman in Bill's life, his flamboyant mother, was inevitable. Virginia Kelley worked hard at being glamorous, rainbow-painting her eyelids, skunk-stripping her hair.

On the eve of Hillary and Bill's Arkansas wedding in 1975, Dorothy Rodham asked to see her daughter's bridal gown. There was none. Aghast, she hustled her daughter to the Fayetteville town square. Hillary pulled an ivory Jessica McClintock Victorian-style dress off a rack at Dillard's.

Frumpy Hillary fell short of the prevailing standards of Southern fashion.

But her academic credentials were impeccable, and she was the wife of the state's new attorney general. Soon, she was invited to join Little Rock's prestigious Rose law firm.

In 1978, the young couple exploded on the political scene. At 32, Bill would be the youngest governor in Arkansas history, but Arkansans expected a decorative first lady.

Hillary Rodham refused to use makeup, peered out from behind glasses as big as sewer grates, drowned herself in fisherman's sweaters. She pursued her career, clung to her maiden name, would not be a submissive political wife content to contemplate china patterns.

At the time, she clearly realized she was residing in the land of beauty queens, wedded to a man attracted to that kind of woman, says Gil Troy, a history professor at McGill University in Montreal and author of "Mr. and Mrs. President, from the Trumans to the Clintons." Sticking with her eyesore look, Gill says, was a powerful statement.

In some ways, it backfired. For Bill's first gubernatorial inaugural, Hillary had ordered up an all-Arkansas gown of dusty rose velvet embellished with lace, beads, embroidery, tiers, puff sleeves and a brooch made of diamonds mined at an area quarry.

The dress ended up in a Little Rock museum. Its designer, Arkansan Connie Fails, remarked later she thought it should be burned.

The gaffe taught Hillary she must be decorative enough to be an asset. After Bill's disorienting gubernatorial loss in 1980, Hillary lightened her hair, tried out contact lenses, bought a new wardrobe.

"At the time, she was not at all interested in clothes," recalled Shirley Strauss, the Little Rock personal shopper called in to help Hillary switch from folksy frocks to the colorful suits of a Southern woman lawyer.

"I would show her things that were very high-styled, and her mother would say, 'Oh, Hillary, you really need that,' " Strauss said.

On the day of Bill's 1982 comeback victory, the Arkansas Democrat newspaper went into paroxysms of joy over her Chantilly lace gown.

The recasting of Hillary's image into perfect first lady had strengthened Bill's candidacy, a lesson the Clintons would remember on the road to the White House.

At their first rally as a Clinton/Gore foursome, Hillary emerged wearing a peony pink suit and white stockings. She had become Tipperized, Sheehy says.

A monumental act of submission.

From Grind to Glamour

"Who didn't look like a goofball in 1978?" says MSNBC's conservative political analyst Laura Ingraham, in a rare defense of Hillary Clinton. "She

might have been an extreme version of uncool, but polyester and bad hair were part of life back then."

The changes? Merely a Baby Boomer maturing over the years, says Neel Lattimore, the first lady's press liaison during her first half-dozen years in the White House.

But Hillary's evolution from mousy grind to chic blond beauty has gone well beyond what most women of her generation have exhibited.

"She went from a hippie to a happy homemaker, and then one day she's a co-president crusading for health care, and the next day presto-change-o! she's morphed into Nancy Reagan -- the perfect hair, the correct suits," says Troy.

By the presidential campaign of 1992, the neighborly help of small-town personal shoppers had given way to the counsel of political advisers and ultimately to the ministrations of Hollywood stylists and Seventh Avenue designers.

When Bill and Hill (Two for the price of one!) began to burn up the campaign trail, the spin doctors moved in fast, prescribing another head-to-toe makeover. Softer.

Those were the prim suit days. St. John knits with decorative buttons. Chiffon scarves twined at the neck. Pageboys, pert bangs, headbands.

She switched to pastels and promoted her chocolate chip recipe. "Hillary in an apron is like Michael Dukakis in a tank," Republican consultant Roger Ailes carped.

Political wives are like Hollywood celebrities, explains Beverly Hills style guru Patty Fox. "But starlets spend years refining there look, in contrast to female candidates and first ladies whose spouses hit front-runner status. All of a sudden, they hit the public view and are inundated with professional image makers. And the advice is as varied as A to Z."

With amazing speed, the outspoken co-candidate morphed into the dutiful wife proudly standing by her man.

By touching little more than a lettuce leaf during fund-raisers, Sheehy says, she whittled her figure down to a fighting size 8. But her long blond flip was doll-like. And her wardrobe still showed traces of "loving hands at home in Little Rock."

For the California primary in June of 1992, Hillary's Hollywood friends -- actress Mary Steenburgen and television producer Linda Bloodworth-Thomason -- brought in top stylists. Christophe for hair. Charlie Blackwell for makeup. "Designing Women" costumer Cliff Chally for wardrobe.

By the night of Bill's acceptance speech at Madison Square Garden, Christophe had cut five inches off her hair and colored it honey blond. Chally put her in a pastel silk suit. Her makeup glowed.

"There's always room for outside opinion, and she was receptive," Chally said

in a recent interview.

Fox, fashion stylist for the Academy Awards show, says this is one reason Hillary would make style mistakes -- she has all the style advice in the world, but "not the discretion to edit the list."

On the January day in 1993 when Bill took the oath of office, Hillary's cadet blue hat made an enduring impression.

The schoolgirlish chapeau was a creation of Connecticut milliner Darcy Creech. It matched a coat made by Arkansas designer Connie Fails. Underneath, a fusty suit.

The New York Daily News said the hat was a dead ringer for the one Paddington Bear wears. Others likened the look to "Our Miss Brooks."

That evening, Hillary found herself barely treading water in the fashion fishbowl. She was gowned in a puffy blue-violet confection created by little-known Arkansas designer Sarah Phillips.

Reaction was mixed but "overdone" was one of the kinder terms applied to the dress.

Bipartisan Blahs

Within weeks, as Hillary's tolerance for the tea party chores wore thin, Bill tapped her to revise America's health care system. Even as she took on that challenging public policy job, the wags and pundits were deconstructing her look.

"I figure that if we ever want to get Bosnia off the front page, all I have to do is change my hair," she joked.

But in Washington, anything much beyond an understated coif and a good little daytime suit is a fashion risk.

There is very little Spandex in Washington. No spike heels. No cleavage. In a city built on a swamp, no bare legs in July.

The Republican cloth coat of the Eisenhower and Nixon years has had lasting bipartisan appeal. Barbara Bush and Rosalynn Carter eschewed all things showy. When Nancy Reagan went too haute -- black satin knickers to a state dinner in Paris -- she was excoriated.

"We all have an expectation of what we want our first lady to look like," Lattimore says.

And there are many ways to get it wrong. The parameters within which a male politician chooses -- blue suit that looks gray, gray suit that looks blue -- are much narrower than the riotous range for women.

On top of that, notes communication expert Deborah Tannen, there are a dozen hair styles for men but literally thousands for women. Whichever she chooses is a statement.

It is not surprising that when Hillary's headband became a symbol of malevolence, she ditched it. But Fox thinks that was a mistake:

First ladies establish their visual legacy by establishing a personal style, Fox says. Envision Eleanor Roosevelt -- sensible '30s dresses, fox furs. Mamie Eisenhower -- big-skirted dresses, pert hats. Jacqueline Kennedy -- sleek sheaths, pillbox hats.

"The headband was Hillary's personal signature," Fox says.

A 'Stupid' Premise?

Is it valid to invest a headband with significance?

"I think the whole premise is stupid," said former Rep. Pat Schroeder (D-Colo.), currently president of the Washington-based Association of American Publishers. "Trying to read stuff into that is ridiculous."

Political women who have earned respect on the basis of brains are loathe to admit their look is of much consequence; the stereotype of a woman who cares about her appearance being shallow persists, as if an eye for fashion precludes the ability to address weightier issues.

If Hillary's wardrobe is within the bounds of taste and decency, Muscatine says, we should cut her some slack.

"I certainly hope we're not judging people's fitness for office based on whether they wear a lavender suit," she said.

When a reporter once asked Lattimore to comment on Attorney General Janet Reno's eyeglasses, he fired back: "When was the last time anybody said anything about Alan Greenspan's glasses?"

It's unfair, agrees Bixler, who advises powerhouses such as IBM and Rockwell International on executive image:

"We have had some hefty male senators, men not well-kempt. They don't get the unflattering ink Hillary does."

"References to her shape, that it's not perfectly symmetric, you don't hear that about Rep. (Henry) Hyde," says Betty Houchin Winfield, a University of Missouri journalism professor and expert on media and the White House. "It's ludicrous, the difference."

Repackaging The Contents

In politics today, a candidate must get his or her message across through instant visuals.

Within less than 30 seconds of laying eyes on someone for the first time, we make some kind of assessment about them, Bixler says. Studies have shown that 67% of those first impressions end up being accurate, and that our initial assessment tends to get reinforced over time.

That is why office-seekers heed advisers who admonish them to repackage their look.

"My goal was to help get them elected," Chally said. " That was what I was hired for. Styling, getting her camera-ready, it's important . . . We learned that during the Kennedy debates."

Gradually, Hillary came to understand that the choices she made rippled well beyond her own personal preferences.

In the fall of 1993, as she prepared for health care testimony on Capitol Hill -- that could establish her reputation as full partner to the president -- she was engaged in another important activity: polishing her image.

Legendary magazine fashion photographer Annie Leibovitz, shooting for Vogue, and a gaggle of assistants arrived at the White House that October. Hillary was meticulously coifed, swathed in black velvet, flatteringly lighted, and dramatically posed. When Vogue hit the newsstands in December, she looked chic and stylish as a fashion model.

But what was crucial to her, the health care initiative, ultimately failed. And the first lady was morphing again.

"We're talking about makeovers. Not just one, but a series of makeovers, looks that seesawed back and forth, back and forth," Troy says.

"We got a ton of calls and mail saying, 'Is she trying to change her image again?' " Lattimore acknowledged.

Collared

In the summer of 1996, Sheehy writes in her biography "Hillary's Choice," presidential aide Dick Morris had a chat with the first lady about her falling approval rating. Her blouses were all wrong, he said. Too uptight. Women who wear open-collar shirts are seen as more open, or so the psycho-babble went.

Hillary sent the message, loud and clear: she gets colds. If Bill couldn't get himself re- elected with her dressing as she wanted, then he just wasn't going to get re- elected.

By then, on trips to New York, Hillary was meeting with Oscar de la Renta, and benefiting from the tutelage of Vogue editor Anna Wintour.

Eventually, the dark, dominatrix eyebrows were plucked. The barrel-bottomed pant legs retired. Treacly pastels gave way to sophisticated neutrals.

Hillary regards her "self" as she would any political asset, biographers say. The transformations in her appearance serve as proof of her unemotional and analytical approach to politics.

And during times of stress, she makes sure she looks her best.

Just days after the Monica Lewinsky story surfaced, on the weekend Bill took

Chelsea to Camp David to explain himself, Hillary was speaking to an economic forum in Switzerland. Her black power suit and presidential eagle brooch telegraphed supreme control.

As the Lewinsky repercussions swirled, Vogue came calling again. In the fall of 1998, Hollywood hairstylist Sally Hershberger got the nod for the now-famous cover shot. Hillary was in good hands: Hershberger has styled Meg Ryan, Michelle Pfeiffer and Tom Cruise.

At the nadir of Bill's presidency, Hillary is glowing on the cover of Vogue.

"That's just mind-blowing for the kind of feminist person she wanted to be," Troy says. The look that is least authentic, least rooted in who she's tried to be throughout her years, is the most popular look with her public.

After Vogue hit the newsstands that December, Hillary's popularity numbers hit her all-time high -- a 67% favorability rating.

Ambitious Designs

Out of the wreckage of the Lewinsky scandal, Hillary emerged with a sophisticated new haircut, a fashionable new wardrobe and the notion of running for U.S. Senate.

Today, she is keeping things simple, wearing a lot of black. "It transmits confidence," Bixler says.

As a seasoned politician, Hillary knows her image sends messages. But Hillary is a lightning rod, and the reception is conflicting.

"She's trying to speak visual shorthand," Troy says. And the shorthand is -- last time I checked, and who knows if it's changed, I haven't seen a photo yet today -- "I am Jane Fonda, Gloria Steinem, modern, powerful, put-together, sexy, a mature woman ready to seize my moment."

For those who either revere or revile her, the series of physical transformations in Hillary Clinton have only reinforced their viewpoints.

"Did I call it inauthenticity? I'm being polite," Troy says. "It's dishonesty."

The Clintons are "shape-shifters," several observers contend, changing their form in response to their environment.

"Shape-shifter, what is that?" Muscatine asks. "Anybody who would say that has absolutely no knowledge of her record of public service over 30 years."

No single stylist, spin doctor or designer is responsible for her wardrobe. "There are occasions when (her staff will) chime in and say 'that suit looks great,'" Muscatine says. "It's sort of like a sorority."

Unlike Jackie Kennedy, who snuck European creations into her closet, Hillary is committed to showcasing American designers, Muscatine says. Unlike Nancy Reagan, Hillary does not accept expensive garments "loaned" to her by designers:

"She pays for all her clothes."

Through the years, Americans have watched as Hillary Clinton altered her appearance. Now, charting a career of her own, the woman who wants to be admired for her political vision -- not her beautifully bound buttonholes -- has a better sense of the importance of both.

Log on for more

To read several reminiscences of Hillary Clinton by people who have worked with her over the years on wardrobe and image issues, visit www.jsonline.com/lifestyle.

Worth a look

Here's a reading list for those who want to know more about Hillary Clinton:

"Hillary Rodham Clinton, a First Lady for Our Time" by Donnie Radcliffe (Warner Books, 1999, \$14)

"Rebels in White Gloves" by Miriam Horn (Anchor Books, 2000, \$14)

"Hillary's Choice" by Gail Sheehy (Random House, 1999, \$23.95)

"The Case Against Hillary Clinton" by Peggy Noonan (Regan Books, 2000, \$24)

"The Woman in the White House" by Norman King (Carol Publishing Group) "The First Partner" by Joyce Milton (HarperPerennial, 2000, \$14)

"Hillary Clinton -- The Inside Story" by Judith Warner (Signet Books, paperback, 1999, \$5.99)

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