
Partners in Power
Roger Morris

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The Clintons
and Their America



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A John Macrae Book

HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY • NEW YORK

Partners in Power: The Clintons and Their America

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Park Ridge

"She Had to Put Up with Him"

In their own ways, they were casualties of their America and refugees from the depression, much as Virginia Cassidy and Bill Blythe had been.

Dorothy Howell was of Welsh-Scottish descent with French and Native American ancestry as well. She was born in 1919 into the blue-collar tenements of South Chicago, the daughter of a fireman and of a half-Canadian mother who was all but illiterate. Part of the vast migration of the era, the family later moved to southern California, where Dorothy grew up in the sunlit but bittersweet promise of the Los Angeles basin. At high school in Alhambra, she was a member of the scholarship society, an admired athlete, and an energetic organizer of student activities. She left the West Coast almost as soon as she graduated, never looking back "too fondly," as one account put it, on a seemingly painful, unreconciled childhood and adolescence. Intelligent and pretty, with a compelling smile and an abiding sense of independence, eighteen-year-old Dorothy was back in Chicago in 1937, applying for a job as a secretary with the Columbia Lace Company, when she met a witty yet severe and begrudging young curtain salesman named Hugh Rodham.

He was seven years older and had been raised amid English working-class sternness and privation. His own father was brought from the bleak miners' slums of Northumberland to Pennsylvania at the age of three and, while still a child, was put out to work at the Scranton Lace Company, later to marry another English immigrant who had been a

winder in a silk-mill sweatshop since her teens. Theirs was an unsparing household, bound by the evangelical Methodism of their origins and the hard-bitten lunch-pail Republicanism of the time. One of three boys and his father's namesake, Hugh managed to attend Penn State on a football scholarship, majoring in physical education. But out of college during the depression, he found himself back in the lace factory himself, a second generation now "lifting boxes for lousy money," as one account put it. He soon fled, laboring for a time in the grim Pennsylvania coal mines, restlessly looking for jobs in New York, then Chicago, where he ended up in the fabric business after all, though in a more respectable, white-collar job as a salesman. He was still engaged to a woman in Scranton, and they had even taken out a marriage license. Then he noticed smiling Dorothy Howell at the office.

Their courtship went on for five years, with "much romantic back and forth," as friends described it. In his late twenties, he already foreshadowed the stinting, harsh husband and father he would become. Dorothy Howell was sadly ahead of her time, enjoying a brief relative independence during the depression and war years and ever after yearning for an equity and opportunity painfully denied in her married life. Proud, quietly ambitious, she had fallen in love with a "Mr. Impossible," as one chronicler of the family wrote. When Pearl Harbor came she was still a working girl, seeing Rodham but with hopes for higher education. She now put off college indefinitely, and they were finally married in 1942.

During the war, Hugh Rodham, with his college degree in physical education, supervised young recruits in the navy's Gene Tunney program, a regimen of conditioning and self-defense named for the former heavyweight boxing champion. In naval stations around the country, instructors like Rodham were expected to be stringently rigorous, austere, and aloof—tight-jawed calisthenics leaders equally free of emotion and flab, withholding praise, unconsoling, mocking of the slightest failure. Believed to harden the erstwhile civilians to a new toughness and resolve, it was all an unsentimental hazing for the warfare waiting outside the gate.

After 1945, the Rodhams were very much a part of the postwar generation of resumed hopes, intent on stability after years of uncertainty. "They wanted secure jobs, secure homes, and secure marriages in a secure country," Elaine Tyler May wrote of anxious millions like them. Just as traveling salesman Bill Blythe dreamed of owning an auto-parts franchise, Hugh Rodham would start his own drapery busi-

ness. He began to sell custom work to major purchasers like hotels, corporations, and airlines, buying, printing, and sewing the fabric himself, even hanging the curtains. He usually had only one employee—whom he generally treated as a slack navy recruit, with an irascibility those around him struggled vainly to gloss. "Although he badgered his help inordinately," said one account of the business, "there was an undercurrent of good humor in his manner—and nobody took Hugh at face value."

When he came home from the service he and Dorothy lived for a time in a one-bedroom apartment in an area of Chicago only miles from the house Bill Blythe had purchased. In January 1947 she gave birth to a placid 8½-pound girl, "a good-natured, nice little baby," she would say, who was "very mature upon birth." In a small act of unconventionality, she called her Hillary, a family name she saw as "exotic and unusual."

Three years later the family left the city for the new space and status—what many saw as the refuge—of the suburbs, a sedate place comfortably northwest of Chicago on the wooded moraine that gave it its fashionable name, Park Ridge. Taking in a wave of postwar migrants, it was no dusty subdivision of tract houses hammered up on a treeless grid but an established community of shade and character. The locale had been one of the older settlements adjoining Chicago's city limits, the site of a nineteenth-century brickyard that eventually exhausted its clay deposits. With the arrival of the Chicago & Northwestern tracks, the old industrial village gave way to a commuting suburb, suitably changing its name from Brickton to Park Ridge. By the 1950s a neat little town center had thriving small businesses and solid, respectable public buildings. To many this was the prize, the way life in America was supposed to be. "We could have been a Frank Capra set without changing a thing," one resident would say. "Park Ridge was where Dick and Jane lived with their perfect parents and their little dog, Spot," another resident remarked.

When Hillary Rodham grew up there in the 1950s and 1960s, the streets and yards were teeming with the children of the postwar baby boom and suburban exodus, literally hundreds of them in the blocks around her house. Over the decade after her family moved, the population of Chicago proper grew by some 20 percent, but the near suburbs exploded, Park Ridge itself almost tripling to nearly forty thousand residents.

They were hardly a dozen miles from Chicago's Loop, yet Park Ridge was a world apart from the city and even from more diverse

suburbs like Skokie, blocks away to the east. Park Ridge was on the rural outskirts of the metropolis. A few miles to the southwest, the area that would become O'Hare Airport, the world's busiest, there was still an apple orchard with cornfields beyond. Nearby were also Chicago's distinct communities of Italians, Poles, Mexican Americans, and Appalachian refugees, even Native American ghettos, and the largest single Jewish population in the metropolitan area. From all that, however, Park Ridge and similar suburbs were cordoned off by discreet but towering barriers of class and ethnicity. Here as elsewhere in the nation, sharply defined, exclusive enclaves of affluent, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants were segregated from unwanted minorities by racist real estate covenants and sub-rosa mortgage discrimination, as well as by income and economic privilege.

For the most part, it was a society of the educated upper middle class, among whom Hugh Rodham, even with a lucrative drapery business and his own new Cadillacs year after year, could seem *déclassé*. Away from his sewing machine and curtain hanging, he did not socialize with suburbia's "doctors, lawyers, and Indian chiefs," according to his daughter. "I never knew any professionals growing up," she would make a point of telling a reporter a quarter century later. In the social life the family did have, Dorothy Rodham herself would feel sharply the lack in her own background and forfeited education, "so unsure of her knowledge that she would drop out of conversations," wrote Judith Warner, "or simply play supportive audience to her husband's stronger voice." In their prescribed role, the mothers of Park Ridge stayed home to care for their houses and children. "Independent women, admired during the 1930s and the war," wrote one historian, "were now looked upon as neurotic freaks."

"It was a lily-white area," remembered Sherry Heiden, a childhood friend of Hillary Rodham. "I think finally by our senior year there was one black kid in the whole school." They all went diligently to Sunday school and services in lovely brick churches with the requisite steeples and stained glass—and sometimes grew into adults without realizing they were all so numbingly alike. "I was in college before it hit me that everybody and everything was in the same mold," said one. Only in the consolidated high school, enrolling students from neighboring Skokie and elsewhere, did many of them have their first social contacts with Catholics, Jews, or simply children from blue-collar families.

Invariably the politics of Park Ridge followed its social and economic contours, finding expression and lead in the newspaper and broadcast empire of Chicago's legendary reactionary, Colonel Robert

R. McCormack. The area was "white-collar country," as a group of political analysts once described it, "where the *Chicago Tribune* is a staple and where children are brought up to despise and fear the city [Democratic] machine." In a larger suburban district known for conservative sentiment, Park Ridge itself could be uniquely dogmatic and rigid, a contrast even to wealthier but more politically mixed and socially secure suburbs north along the Chicago lakeshore. A fiercely and unctuously dry community while liquor was sold just a township away, Park Ridge elected local, state, and national representatives known almost uniformly as *Tribune* Republicans for their right-wing extremism.

In a familiar pattern of class reaction, many in the town seemed all the more jealous of their exclusivity for having recently emerged themselves from poor or working-class origins. In the 1950s the picturesque community was an early center of the ultrarightist, conspiracy-minded John Birch Society, assailing President Dwight Eisenhower as a "Communist dupe," if not a Soviet agent, and equating Democrats in general with outright treason. So powerful was the reactionary fear taking root in Park Ridge and nearby suburbs that right-wing Republicans won the district's congressional seat in the early 1950s and never let go. Harold Collier, a former match-company personnel manager and a colorless creature of Colonel McCormack's, served nine terms and was succeeded in 1966 by a rotund state assembly politician and affable ideologue, Henry Hyde, who over ten more terms—until his embroilment in a banking scandal in the mid-1990s—would be known as "defender of the suburbs" and the GOP right's "most effective partisan weapon" on Capitol Hill.

In exclusive enclaves around Chicago—as in the Arkansas subdivisions—there were formidable social forces arrayed against honesty and revelation, both within and outside the family. Added to the prevailing cultural images of parents and children and to the postdepression, postwar drive for stability and security were vast corporate powers fastening on the happy new suburban family in its roles as advertising icon and lucrative market. Not least, there were the deeper politics of the moment. In many respects mirroring cold war reaction and conformity on the outside, the conservative male-dominated family regime and ideology of the 1950s and early 1960s abhorred and checked rebellion in the home almost as national policy contained revolt abroad—and often with similar means of reward and punishment. Just as Arkansas folk wisdom taught resignation to the fixity of local power, suburban orthodoxy in Park Ridge posed all the implicit contracts of

the new postwar affluence and stability—the approved credentials and paths to success, the cost of dissent or mere nonconformity, the seeming disappearance of the old basic divisions of class and wealth, the manifest superiority of the American system at home and abroad. “Domestic containment,” as historian Elaine Tyler May called the ethos of postwar life in the suburbs, “was bolstered by a powerful political culture that rewarded its adherents and marginalized its detractors.”

In the same suburbs, it was true, there were warning signs dating from the early 1950s—a growing and affecting literature chronicling discontent and the emptiness of materiality, a six-fold increase in psychiatrists and untold additional patients, and what sociologist Todd Gitlin called “generational cleavage in the making” among the young. There had been all that and more. But behind most closed doors in Park Ridge and its replicas, women and children in particular learned somehow to cope, to go on—perhaps even to feel better about their predicament, to reconcile themselves, though seldom to change the deeper pattern or to question the connections between their own despair or disillusionment and the larger social, economic, and political framework.

America's most powerful First Lady was to come from that crucible and those confines as markedly—and in some ways as painfully—as a future president emerged from his landscapes of Hope and Hot Springs.

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The Rodhams lived in a graceful two-story stone-brick Georgian house built before the war at the corner of Elm and Wisner. Hillary was soon joined by two younger brothers, Hugh, Jr., and Tony. As the only daughter she had her own bedroom, a cheery yellow with polished oak floors and a sundeck looking out on the pleasant neighborhood. There she grew into an obviously bright, determined, accomplished girl whose experiences were so stamped with the people and cultural setting as to seem now almost apocryphal.

“There's no room in this house for cowards,” her mother remembered scolding her about confronting the neighborhood bully. “You're going to have to stand up to her. The next time she hits you, I want you to hit her back.” According to the family story, the Rodhams' little girl did just that and won with her own fists a precious male acceptance and a coveted chance to play with the boys in the neighborhood. “Boys responded well to Hillary,” Dorothy would say proudly. “She just took charge, and they let her.” She also played avid ping-

pong, took music and ballet lessons, organized neighborhood "Olympics" and circuses, competed gamely with her athletic brothers, and amused everyone with a biting gift for mimicry that she would carry into her political adulthood. At Eugene Field Grammar School and Ralph Waldo Emerson Junior High, she was "a chronic teacher's pet," by one account. After school, she faithfully went on to the Brownies and Girl Scouts, earning a sash "so loaded with badges and dazzling little pins," thought Martha Sherrill, "that it's amazing she didn't walk with a stoop." On Sundays she was devoutly at the First United Methodist Church. Despite what one recollection called "the burden of that ceaseless public do-gooding," little Hillary Rodham seemed "to love it all." It was what growing up in Park Ridge was supposed to be.

How she reacted to the rest of her childhood was never part of the public myth. In the house at 236 Wisner, Dorothy Rodham was the town's conventional "stay-at-home mother" and child's "chauffeur," as Judith Warner described her. "I spent all my time in the car then," she herself would say. "The mother is the encourager and the helper, and the father brings news from the outside world" is how her daughter later benignly described what she called the family's "classic parenting situation." In that sense, however, the "news" from the world was often harsh, and the solicitous mother could not help her children with what writer Carolyn Susman saw as "a looming presence in all their lives"—the implacably judgmental and exacting Hugh Rodham. "Kind of like the glue that held the family together. But not the way you would think," Hugh, Jr., would say of him after his death. "My father was confrontational, completely and utterly so."

Most of the public memories of the man and his impact were cast after his daughter became famous—and with so much political and personal discretion as to be distorted. Nevertheless, the essence is unmistakable. "The suburban Hugh Rodham was tightfisted, hard to please, and always in command," concluded Norman King. "Though it is not fashionable to be macho today, Hugh fit the pattern perfectly then." There would be ostensibly fond recollections of the father's spending time with his children, devoting himself in a sense—though always with the drillmaster's mania for performance, endurance, proof of worth. One spring, Martha Sherrill noted, the entire family went to a local park and stood watching the man "pitch and pitch and pitch until his daughter Hillary learned to belt a curveball." She became an accomplished shortstop and hitter and applied her categorical intelligence to baseball lore, treating less knowledgeable young fans in the neighborhood with the impatience, if not contempt, her father had

shown his children. "She knew everything about the Cubs and everybody else, and really showed it off," said a childhood friend.

In the same way, friends remembered, Hugh Rodham had drilled his daughter on stock prices, requiring her to pore over quotes on the *Tribune's* stock market page for "good investments" and then praising her sparingly or upbraiding her with his usual rigor, depending on her "success." "You actually got tongue-lashed or sanctioned for losing money in that little game they had, and she learned the ropes fast," one recalled. "Making money like that was always very important to Mr. Rodham, very important," said another, "and it was something he tried to instill in her like everything else. No matter what you did, you weren't worth very much if you couldn't make money."

"Mr. Reality Check," Hillary would call him in the more neutral language of another generation. "I used to go to my father and say: 'Dad, I *really* need a new pair of shoes. My shoes have holes in them,' and he'd say, 'Have you done your chores? Have you done this? Have you done that?'" There were constant reminders of how fortunate—and precarious—their situation was, of what bitter hardships their father had suffered during the depression. He took them to an old coal mine in Pennsylvania to show them the grimy, spectral setting in which he once worked, however briefly. "The youngsters got the point," thought Norman King. "We were probably the only kids in the whole suburb who didn't get an allowance," Tony Rodham recalled vividly. "We'd rake the leaves, cut the grass, pull weeds, shovel snow. All your friends would be going to a movie. After your errands you'd walk in and say, 'Gee, Dad, I could use two or three dollars.' He'd flop another potato on your dinner plate and say, 'That's your reward.'" His approach to avoiding "spoiled" children, according to his wife, was straightforward: "'They eat and sleep for free! We're not going to pay them for it as well!'"

For misbehavior they were "spanked on occasion or deprived of privileges," as one account put it. Neighbors and friends saw Hugh, Jr., as the family rebel—"a kind of rascal, a roustabout," a local minister would say—but his sister as the obedient, amenable "perfect child." "I was a quick learner," Hillary told Marian Burros. "I didn't run afoul of my parents very often. They were strict about my respecting authority, and not just parental authority. My father's favorite saying was: 'You get in trouble at school, you get in trouble at home.'"

But in Hugh Rodham's family boot camp, the even harsher response was reserved for conformity and success. When his proud little

girl came home with straight As, he said to her dismissively, "It must be a very easy school you go to." Later, when she excelled in college prep courses, as Hugh, Jr., remembered, "He would say, 'It must be a pretty small college.' " At his sons' football games, Rodham disdained the bleachers and other parents, carrying a folding lawn chair in order to sit out on the sidelines, nearer the action, alone. After Hugh, Jr., who would go on to play at Penn State, quarterbacked a 42-0 championship victory and completed ten of eleven passes, he came back to Wisner Street to find his father lying on the sofa, ready with the familiar reproach. "I got nothing to say to you," he told the boy, "except you should have completed the other one."

Decades afterward, family and friends tried to interpret the elder Hugh Rodham's motives more gently. "With all of those things, he was not being mean or tactless. . . . He was trying in his own way to show us that we could be better," a son offered. "It's hard out there," Hillary quoted her father, explaining to an interviewer that his "encouragement was tempered by realism." The deeper cost of that tempering, however, no tactful language could conceal. Among both relatives and friends, many thought Hugh Rodham's treatment of his daughter and sons amounted to the kind of psychological abuse and adversity that might have crushed some children—and came close to doing so in Park Ridge. It was not the episodic, detonating, often bloody abuse her future husband suffered in Hope and Hot Springs but a slightly more subtle oppression. The Rodhams were not like the Clintons, with a "crisis every four minutes," Hillary would later tell her future mother-in-law. In a sense, she was right. The quieter, more discreet abuse of Park Ridge had known no intervals. "Her spirit, though, was unbreakable," biographer Judith Warner concluded. Others disagreed. "I don't think there's any question that the real little Hillary was broken," said a longtime observer. "The point is how she got mended, and the person put in her place."

Family and friends adopted Rodham's own pretense—that it was all good for them, however hurtful. Victims themselves, her mother and brothers came to rationalize what had happened to Hillary, arguing that the relationship with the father fortified her and bred her famously fierce determination and endurance. The family story of how she resolved at the age of nine to keep her maiden name when she married was the sort that proved how well she coped and survived and was stronger than most. Yet there was no real hiding the quiet cruelty and pain. The sense of stunted or denied love, a resort to refuge outside the family, the alternating warmth and vitriol, compassion and

sarcasm, the tightly controlled yet seething perpetual anger not far beneath the impenetrable shell—all would be visible in the independent but camouflaged woman she became. "She loves talking about ideas. She loves asking questions," Jan Piercy would say of the Hillary Rodham she knew well in the years just after childhood and adolescence. "Ask her about herself and I think you'll find she shuts down. Oh, she may answer your question, but I don't think you'll see much energy behind it." The same verdict would come from the other woman who had watched it all, and felt her own wounds. "Maybe that's why she's such an accepting person," Dorothy Rodham said in a moment of candor about her outwardly strong but long-suffering daughter. "She had to put up with him."

The parents "made no distinction between her and her two brothers," one observer wrote later, but the old shadings were in fact always there. With Hugh Rodham's approval, Hillary might take jobs as a baby-sitter, wading-pool lifeguard, or recreation counselor, but never in the drapery business, where her brothers worked often. At the same time, friends remembered the mother's steady, conscious effort to spur her daughter to succeed in academic and career terms, albeit terms still defined by men. "I've always spoken to Hillary as you would to an adult," Dorothy once recalled, with echoes of Virginia Clinton. The girl growing up in Park Ridge was to be what her mother had never been free to be in Alhambra, Chicago, or the suburbs—above all, a presence, even a power, in the competitive, image-conscious, male-run outside world. That, in some ways, was more important than the trappings of marriage and family, which the mother had without fulfillment. "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," Dorothy would say later. "Just because she was a girl didn't mean she should be limited."

One of her fellow students recalled that in the early 1960s their high school was "a big factory but also a really snobby place in its own way. The kids were just like their well-off parents, and everybody seemed headed for college with good jobs for boys, marriage for girls, and big homes and cars just like their folks." Utterly composed, a serious, busy young woman, Hillary Rodham seemed easily a part of that world, those expectations, yet in some ways deliberately separate. Through three years at Maine East, then a final year among some four thousand students attending the huge new Maine South, she continued to excel academically. At the same time, she played field hockey and volleyball, debated, acted in school plays, sang in the variety show. Asked years

afterward if she and her friends had ever cut classes or openly challenged school authority, a close friend could only gasp, "Are you *kid-ding?*"

She dressed conventionally, wearing her society's familiar box-pleated skirts, blouses with Peter Pan collars, kneesocks and loafers, though she remained relatively oblivious to clothes and pointedly spurned cosmetics and hairstyling. "She rejected offers to have her ears pierced . . . didn't smoke in the bathroom, didn't make out with the boys in 'the Pit' at Maine South's library, didn't even wear black turtlenecks," recorded Martha Sherrill. "She was totally unconcerned about how she appeared to people," thought Jennie Snodgrass, a classmate, "and she was loved for that." Dorothy Rodham was less certain. "When she was fifteen or sixteen, and other kids were starting to use makeup and fix their hair, she wasn't interested," the mother recalled. "That used to annoy me a little bit; I used to think, 'Why can't she put on a little makeup?' " There were moments when Hillary might look like the rest, dressed for the 1964 junior prom, for example, in gown and long white gloves, with lipstick and short, specially cut, slightly teased hair. But it was almost as if she were wearing a bizarre, slightly disagreeable costume, and after Maine South she would not return to its like for fifteen years, until the 1980s, when she appeared as the deliberately "made-over" wife of a comeback candidate for governor of Arkansas.

Defiantly unadorned and blithely uninterested in boys, she had little social life beyond her extracurricular activities and almost no dates, taking an old childhood friend to "girl's choice" dances and preferring a college boy from Princeton to her callow peers, though seeing little of him either. Like the makeup and clothes, sexuality was one of the rites of suburban passage for which she had neither time nor enthusiasm. "She wouldn't let some young man dominate meetings if he had nothing to say," said one of her teachers. "She wasn't going to be demure and spend a lot of time looking cute to attract people." To others, however, there was already an air of something more, an edge about her relations with young men. With no patience for her intellectual inferiors, she seemed to seek out intelligent boys, then coolly compete with them, establishing her dominance. It was not a matter of finding equality, some came to think, but a matter of maintaining a respectable superiority. "She was strong and secure and graceful, almost aloof," said Bob Stenson, a classmate who made even better grades. "I always felt a little funny around her. She was a tough competitor and formidable. I was always hoping she'd stumble a little bit."

The high school paper at one point predicted that Hillary Diane Rodham would become a nun, to be known caustically as Sister Frigidaire.

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The politics of the Rodhams were as fixed as their demands on their children. "Hugh always voted Republican," said a friend, "and not just voted, but could be downright righteous and rabid about it." At home they seldom discussed political topics when their daughter and sons were younger. But there were summer gatherings of the larger Rodham clan around lakes in northeastern Pennsylvania, where staunch Republican relatives deplored the Democrats, convinced that John Kennedy had stolen the 1960 presidential election from Richard Nixon by the connivance, among others, of Mayor Daley's notorious Cook County Democratic machine in Chicago.

Meanwhile, there arrived in Park Ridge a gentle, energetic young minister who would change Hillary's life. The Rodhams' red-brick First United Methodist Church was a stronghold of the town's fearful right-wing reaction well into the 1960s. In the wake of the Kennedy murder in Dallas and initial publicity about foreign conspiracies by Fidel Castro or the Soviets, the parish director of Christian education felt compelled to send a calming, cautionary letter to the entire membership of three thousand, "hoping that they wouldn't begin finding Communists under every rock," as one account put it. "There were a lot of John Birchers in that church," one of its pastors said later. The year of the Kennedy-Nixon race, when Hillary Rodham was thirteen, Donald Jones, a new youth minister, was appointed to the church. A thirty-year-old recent graduate of the Drew University Seminary, he brought to the suburb a professorial passion to give his sheltered young Methodists a broader sensibility.

As a seminarian, Jones had been deeply influenced by Paul Tillich, and it was Tillich's robust, socially active, and redemptive Protestantism that now shaped Jones's ministry in Park Ridge. Against the backdrop of the early 1960s—the civil rights movement, the fashion of the Kennedy administration, the first stirrings of a youth rebellion—his Thursday night class for a handful of teenagers became what they called with some awe the University of Life. His group was "not just about personal salvation and pious escapism," Jones would explain, "but about an authentic and deep quest for God and life's meaning in the midst of worldly existence."

He rented a projector to show François Truffaut's classic *Four Hun-*

dred Blows, Rod Serling's *Requiem for a Heavyweight*, and similar films. On his own guitar, he strummed the songs of Bob Dylan and had his pupils analyze the lyrics. There were lively discussions of Picasso prints, readings from Stephen Crane and e. e. cummings, a debate between an atheist and a Christian—all to make real "the feelings of others," as one remembered him telling them, and to enliven the "practical conscience and content" of their faith. "I was used to relating theology to pop culture, theology to art, theology to the world," Jones said later. "By the time I got to Park Ridge, I had read all kinds of things. I got them reading too."

They went on the usual group retreats, swimming and skiing. But Jones's more remarkable outings took them into a different world. He now led them on a startling series of visits to Chicago's inner city, taking them to recreation centers and other churches to meet black and Hispanic youth, even gang leaders. At one point, he carried along a large reproduction of *Guernica*, set it before a ghetto gang and his suburban teenagers, and asked them to relate to their own lives Picasso's portrayal of anguish and suffering in the Spanish civil war. The session, he well remembered, evoked far more candor and feeling among the poorer, supposedly less educated young people of the city than from their more privileged visitors. Eventually they also met the legendary social activist and organizer Saul Alinsky. Proselytizing among affluent church groups like Jones's young people as well as among Chicago's poor, the flamboyant, irreverent, profane, and hard-drinking Alinsky was at the height of his now acerbic, now raucous challenges to the domestic power structure. Typically, he had once staged a "fart-in" among protesters at a corporate headquarters and, to wring concessions from the Chicago city council, had threatened a demonstration that would flush all the toilets simultaneously at the new O'Hare Airport. He was another unique encounter for the Park Ridge teenagers. However brief, the meeting would have an interesting sequel. In a college thesis a few years later, Hillary Rodham would reveal much of herself in writing about Alinsky and his strategies, and the crusty organizer himself would offer her a coveted job as a virtual protégé.

Most of the inner-city encounters would be genuine revelations for the Park Ridge group, not least for the earnest, impressionable Hillary Rodham. "I was in junior high and high school and got a sense of what people were up against, and how lucky I had been," she once told an interviewer, still remembering the visits to Chicago with obvious emotion. "I don't think those kids had seen poverty before," Jones re-

called, "don't think they had interacted with kids that weren't like themselves." On April 15, 1962, he took the class to Chicago's Orchestra Hall to hear Martin Luther King, Jr., preach a sermon entitled "Remaining Awake through a Revolution." After the address he spirited them down to meet the already famous civil rights leader. Thirty years later, Jones himself and most of the others had forgotten the details of that night, but Hillary Rodham remembered it vividly, recalling that Jones had introduced them one by one and that she had personally shaken hands with King. "To accuse her of taking this message literally would not be going too far," one thought of her response to King's admonitions.

Eventually a Thursday evening discussion of teenage pregnancy filtered back to parents and stirred the inevitable controversy and outrage at United Methodist. Still, Jones mollified his superiors and managed to continue the youth group. By 1962-63 his pupils were busily organizing food drives for the poor and even a baby-sitting pool for the children of migrant farm workers camped amid wretched hovels and open sewage in fields west of the city. Small acts of virtual charity, the efforts touched no real power or politics yet in spirit and sensibility were extraordinary for Park Ridge. The imbued and shared idealism of Jones's young Methodists was plain—if bitterly poignant in terms of so much that followed. "We believed in the incredible social changes that can happen," said Sherry Heiden, "if you change your perspective."

Hillary Rodham began dropping by Jones's church office after school or on summer afternoons, eager to talk more about the new ideas and insights from the class. Responding warmly, he gave her a first taste of modern Protestant theology, in excerpts from Tillich, Søren Kierkegaard, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Reinhold Niebuhr, and others, and they carried on long, increasingly serious discussions. "She was curious, open to what life had to bring," the young minister would say. "She was just insatiable."

When she was in high school he gave her his copy of J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*. "I didn't tell you at the time, but when you had me read *Catcher in the Rye*, I didn't like it, and, moreover, I thought it was a little too advanced for me," she wrote Jones her sophomore year in college. "But now that I've read it a second time, I realize, I think, why you gave it to me. I don't think it was too advanced, as a matter of fact."

The minister introduced her to the larger social-political implications of Tillich's reformism, the quest to subdue with Christian idealism what many theologians saw as the postwar's social alienation and

secular loss of values. They talked as well, he remembered, about Kierkegaard's "leap of faith" in the face of rational cynicism, about Bonhoeffer's "religionless Christianity" of public morality and ethics, and especially about Niebuhr's more tragic, unsentimental view of history and human nature and of the necessary force of civil governance. "She realizes absolutely the truth of the human condition. . . . She is very much the sort of Christian who understands that the use of power to achieve social good is legitimate," Jones would say. Yet much of that was in retrospect, when the inquisitive girl of the youth group had become a famously powerful First Lady and when the politics of Hillary Rodham had been shaped by her experience in Arkansas as much as by theology.

At the time, in Jones's small church office, their quiet afternoon talks were less a matter of political tutelage than the tentative discoveries and questions, the first fitful awakenings of critical intellect and sensibility in a spiritually minded young woman. She was at heart, he knew, a cautious, carefully contained, and self-protective girl whose judgments about herself and the world, like her perception of *Catcher in the Rye*, were still forming. "Unlike some people who at a particular age land on a cause and become concerned," Jones said later about what would be a gradual, almost lifelong process, "with Hillary I think of a continuous textured development."

Jones was to leave students like Hillary with the habit of carrying small Methodist devotionals with them for comfort. The warm and ultimately loving personal relationship with him, unique in Hillary Rodham's life, was obviously crucial at the time. Jones was not only intellectually exciting and nurturing but fondly approving and accepting. A "world beyond . . . growling Hugh Rodham," Martha Sherrill called it. "Boys liked her," Reverend Jones once said, defending his favorite student to a reporter questioning her lack of social life in high school. "And not because she was flirtatious. She was not—she wasn't a raving beauty, but she was pretty enough. What attracted guys around her was her personality, her willingness to talk to them, at parity with them." It was a memory, some thought, that mirrored more accurately the maturity and affection of the thirty-year-old minister than the common attitude of suburban teenage males in the 1960s.

To Don Jones, as to no one else, she would continue to bring her questions and reflections. "I wonder if it's possible to be a mental conservative and a heart liberal?" she wrote at one point, charting the inner division that began in her adolescence. Before she finished high school the minister was gone, assigned to another church after little

more than four years in Park Ridge. (He would eventually go back to Drew for a PhD and a teaching career free of rancorous congregations like First United Methodist.) She was elected vice president of her junior class at Maine East but in the spring of 1964 ran for senior class president at Maine South and lost, producing a rambling, "philosophical" letter to Jones about reconciling herself to defeat. "Hillary," the pastor remembered clearly, "hated to lose." The letter was only the beginning of her correspondence, usually single-spaced and crowded onto both sides of the page, sent faithfully to him over the next three decades from Park Ridge, college, law school, Washington, Arkansas, and finally the White House.

Not long after he left Chicago in 1964, she wrote about the disapproval she felt from the new minister who had taken his job. "He thinks I'm a radical," she told her confidant and mentor with some exasperation. It was, after all, an irony they both understood.

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In the autumn of 1964 Park Ridge backed with unusual enthusiasm the conservative Republican candidate for president, Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona. "AuH₂O '64" bumper stickers seemed to fill the driveways, and Hillary Rodham, to the delight of her parents, joined the campaign as an official Goldwater Girl, wearing her straw boater and sash to rallies, briskly canvassing the already solidly Republican neighborhoods, and "[speaking] out for the right wing," according to Judith Warner, "with all the passion of a teenager." Elected to the student council as a senior the same fall, she organized around the national election an elaborate mock political convention in the new Maine South gym, showing her appreciation of the rituals of politics and even planning political demonstrations in the aisles. In November Lyndon Johnson crushed Goldwater by some sixteen million votes, though Park Ridge was unreconciled, its bumper stickers unremoved, fading irreconcilably in the midwestern sun over the years to come. That December Hillary Rodham wrote one of the ritual senior self-portraits in the Maine South paper. She chose to recount her high school experience in terms of a prosecuting attorney pursuing a case that has gone on "literally for years." To the routine question about her ambitions she answered pertly and, to some, a bit unexpectedly, "To marry a senator and settle down in Georgetown."

She graduated fifteenth out of a thousand in the class of 1965. Most of her affluent friends were bound for college, although many young men from lower-income suburbs were soon destined for Vietnam.

Some saw their class as a last charmed moment before the upheaval of the rest of the 1960s. Hillary Rodham was voted the girl most likely to succeed. The boy named for the same honor killed himself with a drug overdose before the end of the decade.

She had been a National Merit Scholarship finalist and National Honor Society and student council leader, known almost uniformly for her toughness, competitiveness, and strong convictions. Fellow students said she spoke out for things that she believed in, took unpopular stances, reconciled conflicting positions, and never exhibited a rebellious nature.

Like her future husband's, Hillary Rodham's high school poise and achievements shrouded a deeper loneliness and hurt—and decisive influence—few saw at the time. If Bill Clinton's models had been Roger Clinton and Virginia, hers were no less the long-suffering Dorothy Rodham and her stringent husband. But unlike Bill, she also had a genuine intellectual mentor and an exposure to ideas and to the diversity of American life otherwise as uncommon to Park Ridge as to Hot Springs. The essential contrast in their experiences was in many ways the difference between Uncle Raymond Clinton and the Reverend Don Jones.

Yet she seemed to take away nothing so much as the mark of her childhood place and time. "What people don't seem to realize is that Hillary's so conventional, so traditional, so midwestern, so middle class," her friend Sara Ehrman once said with unintended irony. "Her taste in art is middle class. Her taste in music is middle class. Her clothes. . . . She's very simple, brilliant, a nice person, and a product of her upbringing."

At the urging of two young Maine South teachers, she considered some of the most prestigious women's colleges in the East, including Radcliffe and Smith. "She was set on going to an all-girls' school," her mother said later. She had chosen Wellesley, as she told the story, the moment she saw pictures of its bucolic Gothic campus outside Boston—"the lake in the middle, the quaint Victorian classrooms, the tiny surrounding town."

Her parents drove her to Massachusetts in the fall of 1965 in Hugh Rodham's Cadillac. Saying good-bye, the mother, at least, realized how insular, how much within the sustaining, punishing family her daughter's life had been. "Aside from a few trips away with girlfriends, Hillary hadn't really been away from home," Dorothy remembered. "After we dropped her off, I just crawled in the back seat and cried for eight hundred miles."

Wellesley

*"Tomorrow, When You Are
the Establishment"*

Of America's most exclusive women's colleges, Wellesley was the wealthiest, its endowment one of the twenty largest in the nation among private schools overall. In the academic world, the college had been known since opening in 1875 primarily for lavish art and library collections and, after the war, for well-funded science laboratories. Even by the mid-1960s, however, Wellesley remained largely what it had been for decades, a staid, prestigious, conservative institution performing a traditional role for daughters of the upper classes. It was part liberal arts college, part finishing school, the intellectual reputation of its faculty and students never matching in rank—or expected to match—its financial assets.

To take classes among the picturesque Oxford-inspired buildings and green lawns, Wellesley students generally paid higher tuition and fees than even Princeton or Harvard men did. Their campus sat beside rustic Lake Waban and the neat, expensive colonial villages of Wellesley and Wellesley Hills, a still comfortable fifteen miles from Boston Common. First-year students could not have cars, be out after nine on most nights, or leave for weekends without parental permission. "Women in those places in those years weren't really encouraged to go to a school but to *be* educated and *be* well-bred," said one of them. "You have to remember that, for all its money and name, Wellesley was still mainly just a 'girls' school' in that sense."

Hillary Rodham found it "all very rich and fancy, and very intimidating to my way of thinking," she said later. She had "stayed appre-

hensive for about three months," she told Arkansas reporter Mara Leveritt. At the same time, others saw her as an eager, proper freshman who "at once signed on with the campus Republicans," according to one account, "and sat down to tea." "I was worried about her," her mother told a friend, "but Hillary adjusted to Wellesley without a problem. She joined clubs and was active immediately."

Fleeing their cloistered setting—"The biggest social life on campus was tea . . . one lump or two," said her classmate Kris Rogers—Wellesley women in numbers traditionally took the Boston transit trains on Fridays and Saturdays into Harvard Square, and Hillary joined the migration from the beginning. Not long into her first semester she began to date Jeff Shields, a quiet, diligent Harvard junior destined for law school. They saw each other more or less steadily over the next four years, in an essentially platonic relationship he remembered as "based on a lot of discourse."

There were dances, football games, parties at Shields's Winthrop House, strolls along the Charles in Cambridge and around Lake Waban back at Wellesley. At the beginning she was quiet, "tended to listen more than talk," Shields recalled. Her reticence soon disappeared. "The things that I remember most were the conversations," he told a writer. "She would rather sit around and talk about current events or politics or ideas than go bicycle riding or to a football game." The young Harvard man "fell in love with her earnestness," professed author Gail Sheehy, though while they were dating she also saw other boys from time to time, all of them, like Shields, "poli-sci, earnest-idealist, policy-activist, good-government types, not wild-eyed radicals," according to Rogers.

Her freshman speeches took the Republican side of current issues, including Southeast Asia and Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. But the winter and spring of 1966 were also spent in her own methodical, characteristic sampling of college preoccupations, as if she were trying them on for style as well as substance. In the beginning she had been the grind, then the partier. "After six weeks of little human communication or companionship, my diet gave me indigestion," she wrote Don Jones about her regimen of reading and composition. "The last two weeks of February here were an orgy of decadent indulgence—as decadent as any upright Methodist can become." Having played "social reformer" for the month of March, involved in assorted campus improvements, as she told Jones, she turned in April to become a thirty-day hippie, painting a flower on her arm. By May it was gone and she had returned to a more familiar role.

Jones thought her then and ever afterward in searching, often sharp rebellion against what they both called "sentimental liberalism"; a "sense of human frailty" pointed up for her, he told writer Donnie Radcliffe, the "difficulties of achieving justice and even the necessities of using power." The imperfection and irrationality of the mass seemed both to excuse the oppression of institutions and to render futile a more direct confrontation with power. In either case she came out of her freshman identity tasting with more scorn than ever for radical student movements. Earlier she had taken a black student with her to the Wellesley Methodist Church. "I was testing me as much as I was testing the church," she confided to Jones about her symbolic act. But when riots erupted in Chicago ghettos the following summer, giving new prominence to Martin Luther King, Jr., and Stokely Carmichael's Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, she was caustic about the more insistent young activists. "Just because a person cannot approve of SNCC's attitude toward civil disobedience," she wrote Jones, "does not mean that one wishes to maintain the racial status quo."

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During her sophomore year of 1966-67, a new militancy on Vietnam and civil rights was already marking other college campuses. With a handful of other students, including some of the African American women beginning to trickle into the college (ten attended that year), she began to urge greater black enrollment. Civil rights leaders were invited to speak to a sea of white female faces about the moral imperative of racial integration. "We were all still afraid to talk about it," Jan Piercy remembered.

Later, as a member of the student senate, Hillary would become one of the leaders of the exclusive school's version of the 1960s rebellion—protesting Victorian curfews, asking for a reduction of mandatory courses, advocating a pass-fail grading system, even proposing to lift the century-old ban on men in Wellesley dormitories. Conducted with no reproach to administration or alumnae, it was tame and polite reform, hardly comparable to the chanting, fists-in-the-air student upheavals at other colleges throughout the nation. Like Don Jones's taking his youth group to the forbidden interior of Chicago, her Wellesley acts would seem daring if only because of the stolid setting. The wider ferment of the 1960s merely opened the way for relatively modest reformers like the young woman from Park Ridge. Her re-

forms addressed outmoded or embarrassing conditions while posing no threat to the basic arrangements of power.

Her college protests would be "a Hillary-style rebellion," wrote Martha Sherrill, "methodical, rational, fair." She was intent on being individually successful in her causes—though success, as always in such easy pragmatism, increasingly defined the cause itself. "I wouldn't say she was angry," Jan Piercy said, comparing her to other student activists. "Intense anger is sometimes the result of frustration, from not being effective. And Hillary has always been effective."

By her junior year she was a recognized student leader, seen as serious but not too bookish and known as a natural go-between in increasing controversies pitting students against the administration. She had earlier chaired and held in check a volatile campuswide meeting on racial discrimination in admissions, what black students had attacked as Wellesley's "secret quota policy," and she would later act as a mediator between an African American women's group and college officials. "She had a talent for serving as a bridge between different groups of students . . . tried to keep everybody talking," Kris Rogers remembered. For the moment she had found a role and obviously relished it. "Hillary couldn't say no to a meeting," thought Martha Sherrill. "Get out the Robert's Rules of Order and she would come flying through the door."

Some still wondered about her own eventual political purposes. An admiring, affectionate Jeff Shields saw her as "someone who wanted to be involved and have an impact but didn't exactly know how." Apart from her good offices in campus issues, friends observed a change in Hillary over her last two years at college, a growing involvement, as one put it, in social issues away from Wellesley and a steady shift from Republican to Democratic politics. Despite a busy schedule, she would volunteer to teach reading to poor black children in Boston's ravaged Roxbury ghetto and later help out at one of the new alternative newspapers springing up in the city. As a Young Republican she had favored the right's old nemesis, GOP moderate Nelson Rockefeller, or Representative John Lindsay of New York against more conservative rivals Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. Now, by the winter of 1967–68, with opposition to the Vietnam War reaching a crescendo, she joined the student supporters of Senator Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota in his challenge of Lyndon Johnson.

Her Wellesley roommate, Johanna Branson, remembered Hillary's returning to their dorm the night of April 4, 1968, after hearing the news of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., in Memphis. "She

came in, the door flew back, and her book bag went crashing against the wall," Branson said. "She was completely distraught about the horror of it." While young blacks rioted in eighty cities and students prepared campus uprisings at Columbia and other universities, Hillary and a small group of Wellesley women put on black armbands to join a somber memorial march in Boston. She and others planned to march in Wellesley itself, only to have local veterans' groups threaten, as a young local minister remembered, "that we'd have our heads beaten in if we did."

In the wake of the King murder, the mood on campus was tense. She was among those asking students to boycott classes and attend a teach-in on civil rights issues, and when a professor scolded them for not giving up "weekends, something we enjoy," her reply in the college paper was instant, the first of many sharp responses to public criticism. "I'll give up my date Saturday night . . . but I don't think that's the point," she wrote. "Individual consciences are fine. But individual consciences have to be made manifest." Her own was soon plain. Within weeks she was running a carefully organized campaign for president of the student government. Like her two opponents, she advocated more student control over Wellesley's social regulations and even a role for class leaders in the institution's decision making. But like them as well, she was "vague as to exactly how they would implement the change in the power structure," as the *Wellesley News* put it in refusing to endorse Hillary Rodham or the others. When she won the race, she was astonished at her popularity and acceptance, despite her organization and the reputation she had cultivated for three years. "I can't believe it. I can't believe it," she told a faculty friend incredulously.

Her election was only the beginning of a remarkable series of events over the months between her junior and senior years. In early June 1968—the bleak moment of Bill Clinton's graduation from Georgetown—she was in riot-scarred Washington on the Wellesley Internship Program. One of thirty chosen from among three hundred applicants to aid Republican congressmen in assignments directed by Wisconsin representative (and Nixon's future secretary of defense) Melvin Laird, she spent the next eight weeks working routinely in the office of reactionary Harold Collier from Park Ridge's district. But the internship also gave her a chance to research and write for Laird and others on issues of revenue sharing and to meet several ambitious young right-wing aides who would later be prominent in the Reagan years.

In this first exposure to Washington, she left, as always, the impres-

sion of an assertive intelligence and effectiveness, whatever the substance. "She was for it," Laird would say of the Republican plan to "share revenues," shifting control of federal money and programs to states and localities. On the surface it seemed a benign scheme to dilute distant federal dictation and return decisions to communities where tax money was spent. But as is so commonly true on Capitol Hill and in state legislatures and courthouses, bland principle masked brutal politics. The vaunted "sharing," as many well knew, would simply turn over the money in state after state to more parochial, conservative, often corrupt local regimes, who could be counted on, in turn, to blunt whatever change or impact the original policies and appropriations might have intended. "Hell, can't anybody see it," a frustrated, courthouse-tutored Lyndon Johnson would say to his aides. "They want to share revenues with the boys that got all the real revenues to begin with."

From the Washington internship she went briefly to the Republican Convention in Miami, where she worked in the already failed campaign of Nelson Rockefeller to head off the presidential nomination of Richard Nixon. Like her passing involvement with Gene McCarthy's insurgency in the Democratic primaries earlier that winter and spring, her commitment to Rockefeller was spurred by his apparent promise to end the Vietnam War and address social and urban problems anew. There was, of course, a naive inconsistency between her work in Washington and that in Miami: the men she had served and impressed on Capitol Hill, the issues to which she devoted herself as an avid GOP intern, belonged to Richard Nixon and to a Republicanism that deplored Rockefeller and his policies as much as it did the Democrats. About Hillary Rodham's whole heady summer of national politics in 1968 there would be the air of the freshman sampler, trying on Congress one month, the convention the next, a matter more of scouting than of conviction.

Back in Park Ridge later that summer, she spent what was left of her vacation in languid poolside talks with old friends, punctuated by heated political arguments with her father at home. If she remained the moderate and the mediator at Wellesley, her political evolution felt far sharper in Park Ridge. "When fights flared between them," Judith Warner recounted, "the bottom line always was politics." In late August she and a neighbor, Betsy Johnson, took the train to Chicago to see for themselves the stormy demonstrations surrounding the riven Democratic Convention.

Inside the Chicago Amphitheater, the Old Guard, in the form of

Mayor Daley's machine and presidential nominee Hubert Humphrey, suppressed the last remnants of Vietnam dissent in the wake of the primary defeat of McCarthy and the murder of Robert Kennedy. Blocks away, near the Conrad Hilton Hotel, a symbolic spectacle took place. There had been bloody clashes earlier in the week, with student demonstrators chanting their familiar "Fascist pig" and "Hell no, we won't go" and Chicago police shouting back, "Kill the Commies" and "Let's get the bastards." On a sultry Wednesday night a disorganized crowd, already teargassed, milled about near the hotel, "most of them pacifically inclined middle-class kids," a reporter scribbled in his notes. Then suddenly, without warning, cohorts of billy club-swinging police charged. What a later inquiry termed a "police riot" was seen in part by shocked television viewers, including young Bill Clinton in Hot Springs, and the initial revulsion in the national press was widespread. "The truth was," Tom Wicker wrote afterward in the *New York Times*, "these were our children in the streets, and the Chicago police beat them up."

"We saw kids our age getting their heads beaten in. And the police were doing the beating," Betsy Johnson remembered. "Hillary and I just looked at each other. We had a wonderful childhood in Park Ridge, but we obviously hadn't gotten the whole story."

In the longer aftermath of the fury, there was a systematic backlash against the victims, Mayor Daley calling the student demonstrators "a lawless violent group of terrorists [threatening] to menace the lives of millions of people." "I think we ought to quit pretending that Mayor Daley did anything wrong," presidential candidate Hubert Humphrey would say of the repression at the convention as well as in the streets. "He didn't." Within only weeks, polls showed much of the public agreeing with Daley and Humphrey. Protests continued to rage on campuses, but the nation watched with a growing unease and resentment, despising the dissenters for being wrong, hating them for being right. Having broadcast the bloody images from Chicago and deplored the brutality, most of the press soon shed its initial editorial indignation and fell in behind the recoiling public mood.

Symbolic of the divide within a generation, Hillary Rodham watched the brutality at a political as well as a physical distance—shocked, as Betsy Johnson remembered, yet detached and apart in many ways. Elected president of the student government association, she would return to Wellesley to help organize teach-ins on the war, after similar meetings at other universities. Later that autumn, while many students boycotted the election, Hillary seemed far removed from the screams

outside the Hilton or the disillusion in their wake, leaving Wellesley again and again to drive through New Hampshire and western Massachusetts, avidly distributing literature and working on phone banks for the long-compromised Hubert Humphrey, with his "politics of joy" a cheerleader still for Washington's war policy.

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Hillary Rodham's last year at Wellesley was a combination of public accomplishment and personal disquiet. As student government president she continued to be the campus conciliator, with a genuine "empathy" for both sides, as Kris Rogers and others saw her. She was in favor of change, they remembered, but never too committed to it, thought the status quo oppressive or wasteful but was never too outraged by it. "She was really very mainstream . . . not a counterculture person . . . going to drop out or become radical, even in her thinking," Jeff Shields would say. "Because even when she became definitely liberal, it was always within a fairly conventional scope."

She presided over her own small salon in the common area and dining room of her dormitory. "Not a frivolous person in the least," remembered Eleanor Acheson, the granddaughter of Secretary of State Dean Acheson and a coworker in the Humphrey campaign. Acheson also thought her friend free of the usual family pressures. So many students were "tortured by insecurity, have parents driving them," Acheson told a writer decades later. "Hillary never had any of that." Her relationship with Jeff Shields ended early in her senior year. "Read between the lines," said a classmate, "that she just wasn't getting in bed with him." But despite her successes, the years at Wellesley were often more difficult than she acknowledged. Looking back on a presidential race fraught with personal attacks, her mother would insist to Judith Warner that "the trials Hillary faced as an adolescent . . . made the troubles of the 1992 campaign look like a cakewalk." At that, her undergraduate years seemed still worse. "The most difficult time of her life," Dorothy Rodham would say, "[was] when she was at Wellesley."

There had been no one for her at the college quite like Don Jones. Among the faculty, Patsy Sampson thought her very "intense," giving her A-pluses in child psychology courses, which Hillary obviously relished. Alan Schechter, a young political science professor who taught constitutional law with a devotion to civil rights and liberal politics, saw her as "the best student I had taught in [my] first seven years . . . at

Wellesley." It was with Schechter that she wrote her senior thesis on the community-action programs of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty.

No subject could have been more prophetic of the politics she and her future husband would inherit. Born in the euphoria of Johnson's early power in the mid-1960s, the larger antipoverty program was rooted in the faith of liberal economists that US postwar growth would be constant and that no meaningful redistribution of wealth or power was necessary for the realization of American democracy. "Poverty could be abolished without anyone's pocket suffering," as one historian described their presumption. The Democrats could "achieve the millennium without changing the system."

Yet there had been a fatal flaw from the beginning. A new cigarette tax in 1964 might have provided crucial billions for a direct, less politically vulnerable jobs program for the thirty to fifty million poor. Under powerful pressure from the tobacco lobby, however, Johnson and the Democratic congressional leadership had abandoned the tax. They chose instead to concentrate on regular Capitol Hill appropriations for "community action," designed to encourage economic power and popular participation at the grass roots in both urban slums and rural depressed areas. Barely two years later, by mid-1966, the efforts were doomed—not only starved of money and attention in the vast sinking of resources into the maw of war in Southeast Asia but also under attack by Democratic officeholders all over the country, threatened by the new political and economic assertiveness of the dispossessed. Governors and mayors, congressmen and legislators had lobbied Vice President Humphrey, and Humphrey in turn warned Johnson, who with escalation of the war could afford no major defections in the ranks.

"The poor were being organized against the establishments," wrote historian Robert A. Levine, "and, not surprisingly, the establishments didn't like it a bit." Politicians of both parties were soon joined by a resentful middle class—its own status threatened by the fiscal and social catastrophe that was Vietnam—finding it easier, then as later, to blame those below and nonwhite than to understand political economy.

This vivid story of reform and reaction Hillary Rodham now viewed in her Wellesley thesis. Like the author of a literate but blanched bureaucratic report, she meticulously described various programs and assessed their clinical impact. In the spring of 1969 she judged that the already moribund community-action programs had been "constructive" and that the poor would now require something "broader" and more "sustained," as one of her thesis readers recalled her conclusion.

But she stopped well short of analyzing the actual political murder of the programs or of discussing what the episode revealed in a larger sense about power and politics in America.

In the thesis she dealt in passing with Saul Alinsky. Since meeting him in Jones's youth group, she had heard him speak in Boston and had even gone to see him in Chicago before coming back to Wellesley for her senior year. His own reformer's approach to poverty—"an embarrassment to the American soul," he called it—had evolved to an elegant simplicity. The poor were poor because they lacked power and must be locally, practically organized to acquire it. Hillary Rodham judged Alinsky and his methods only marginal at best. "Organizing the poor for community actions to improve their own lives may have, in certain circumstances, short-term benefits for the poor but would never solve their major problems" is what Professor Schechter remembered as her thesis conclusion. "You need much more than that. You need leadership, programs, constitutional doctrines." Though she never defined precisely what the "much more" entailed, hers would in some respects be a sound verdict on the era that followed, when Alinsky and his disciples around the nation won hundreds of meaningful small battles for the poor and disenfranchised only to see poverty and disenfranchisement grow as never before. Packing a city council or embarrassing a corporate board here and there would be no real remedy to the massive corruption of federal power and the lethal redistribution of national wealth and resources in the 1980s. Yet to focus on Alinsky's localism and organizing tactics was to miss just that, the other dimension of his larger critique, the apportionment of power itself. Like her appraisal of the community-action programs, her self-confident dismissal of the old Chicago hero and nemesis did not come to terms with the underlying point of it all—politics.

Schechter and three other graders gave her As on the thesis. Her adviser thought her, like himself, a "pragmatic liberal" in the spirit of the early 1960s, someone who shared what he called his "instrumental liberalism: using government to meet the unmet needs of the society to help those people who are not fully included within it." He had "high hopes for Hillary and her future," he wrote in a recommendation to Yale Law School. "She has the intellectual ability, personality, and character to make a remarkable contribution to American society." Her Wellesley thesis, however, would not be part of that contribution. Not long after graduation, enmeshed, like her husband, in politics, she instructed the college to seal her senior thesis from the public, even the tactical criticism of Alinsky and nebulous call for

"leadership" having become possible career liabilities. "Hillary can't afford the negative image of the sixties," an admirer would explain a quarter century later.

Friends remembered her as in search of a "calling" those last months. The overwhelming majority of her class were still anticipating no more than marriage and family, but "feminists visiting Wellesley . . . turned Hillary toward a legal career," according to Martin Kasindorf. She had decided on Yale Law after an encounter with an arrogant and sexist Harvard Law professor. "She's trying to decide whether to come here next year or attend our closest competitor," a Harvard friend said, introducing her to the faculty member. "Well, first of all, we don't have any close competitors," the man had replied. "Second, we don't need any more women."

The choice led to one last encounter with Saul Alinsky. She had once contemplated following Alinsky's example and "doing something in the area of organizing," Hillary would tell the *Chicago Daily News* in a special graduation interview. She thought his view of change through social agitation "a good point," like his political concern for the sensibilities of the middle class, "the kind of people I grew up with in Park Ridge." But when Alinsky himself offered her a job that spring as an organizer, she turned him down, telling him she was going to Yale. "Well, that's no way to change anything," he had said. "Well, I see a different way than you," she replied. "And I think there is a real opportunity."

Afterward there were repeated testimonials to her more idealistic purposes at the time, repeated surprise at the life she eventually led. "She didn't go to law school because she was interested in being a lawyer," thought Jeff Shields. "Not for the purpose of making money or becoming a corporate lawyer, but . . . to influence the course of society," Schechter would add. "I'm not interested in corporate law," she herself would declare. "My life is too short to spend it making money for some big anonymous firm." Shields believed her undecided about a career but, in any case, fiercely independent. "She didn't have any fixed ambitions in terms of knowing that she wanted to be elected to some office," Shields remembered. "She certainly didn't give any indication that she was looking to attach herself to a politician—and I'm sure probably would have been offended by that concept if someone had raised it at the time."

With Schechter's sponsorship and a concerted last-minute campaign within the class, she became Wellesley's first student commence-

ment speaker. An apprehensive college administration stipulated that the speech reflect a "consensus" of the class of 1969 while also being "appropriate." A drafting committee was formed, and student ideas poured in, urging her to speak candidly about the war, the assassinations of King and Kennedy, the Chicago riot, campus protests, and more from their turbulent last years. In the end the committee proudly refused to submit the speech for final review by the college president.

Though her mother stayed in Park Ridge with her brothers, Hugh Rodham drove to Boston to hear his daughter speak. The ceremonies began with Senator Edward Brooke, a Massachusetts Republican and the only African American in the Senate, making a perfunctory speech not even alluding to the war or popular unrest. Hillary Rodham followed with an unrehearsed response, "chewing out" the United States senator, as one account described it, "for being out of touch." To audible gasps from the crowd she scolded Brooke for his fey performance, "gave it to him, no ifs, ands, or buts about it," Schechter recalled. "I find myself in a familiar position, that of reacting," she said, "something that our generation has been doing for quite a while now." "Hillary just sort of launched off on her own," Eleanor Acheson said. "Some people, largely mothers, thought it was just rude."

She began her prepared text with words from a classmate and poet. "The challenge now is to practice politics as the art of making what appears to be impossible possible. We are not interested in social reconstruction, it's human reconstruction. . . . You and I must be free, not to save the world in a glorious crusade, but to practice with all the skill of our being the art of making possible.

"The issues of sharing power and responsibility, and of assuming power and responsibility, have been general concerns on campuses throughout the world," she said of the unrest of 1968-69. At stake were "integrity and trust and respect." Students were struggling to "come to grips with some of the inarticulate, maybe even inarticulable, things that we're feeling," she told them. "We are, all of us, exploring a world that none of us understands and attempting to create within that uncertainty." Only minutes into the address she seemed already to be losing some of the audience. "A murmur of whispered commentary buzzed under her words," said one account. "But there are some things we feel," she went on. "We feel that our prevailing, acquisitive, and competitive corporate life, including, tragically, the universities, is not the way of life for us. We're searching for more immediate, ecstatic, and penetrating modes of living. And so our questions, our ques-

tions about our institutions, about our colleges, about our churches, about our government, continue." In more elaborate language it was the plaint of so many in the paradox of postwar prosperity: "Is this all there is, all we have to look forward to?" But her speech brushed the larger political reality only to retreat to abstraction, without asking or venturing more.

"Every protest, every dissent, is unabashedly an attempt to forge an identity," she said. "That attempt at forging . . . has meant coming to terms with our own humanness." At one point she seemed utterly lost in ambivalence: "Within the context of a society that we perceive—now we can talk about reality, and I would like to talk about reality sometime, authentic reality, inauthentic reality, and what we have to accept of what we see—but your perception of it is that it hovers often between the possibility of disaster and the potentiality for imaginatively responding to men's needs." By now there was a small background din of people shifting noisily in their chairs, whispering, even beginning to move restlessly in and out of the long rows.

Closing, she tried earnestly to reconcile dissent with the old order. "There's a very strange conservative strain that goes through a lot of New Left collegiate protests that I find very intriguing because it harks back to a lot of the old virtues, to the fulfillment of original ideas." But that idea, too, she left dangling and ended abruptly on a banal, almost nationalist note: "And it's also a very unique American experience. It's such a great adventure. If the experiment in human living doesn't work in this country, in this age, it's not going to work anywhere."

Her class, a few of the more recent alumnae, and some parents gave her a standing ovation, though the distraction during the address had been telling. Twenty-four years later she would look back on the speech as "full of uncompromising language." Puckered Wellesley thought so at the time. Uttered as it was only in passing in her reproach to Senator Brooke, the word *Vietnam* did not appear in the officially printed version of her address, and the college's first student commencement speaker appeared nowhere in a 1975 official chronicle of the institution. Yet what stood out then and later was the uncertainty and equivocation of what she had actually said, when so many others of her generation were coming to grips more simply with realities of "power and responsibility." Had she spoken at Harvard, a reporter wrote years later, the speech would have "invited a mass walkout." As it was, a few miles away at Brandeis University, more typical of the class of 1969 and sadly more prophetic, a student com-

ment speaker was talking about the rule of "an economic elite in our society . . . which has a vested interest in preserving the social order on which their holdings depend." Valedictorian Justin Simon put it plainly: "If you support the war in Vietnam, pay for it. Don't have tax lawyers out making sure you don't pay too much."

Excerpts of her address were published by *Life* in a collection of student commencement speeches, accompanied by her first national photograph, showing a round-faced austere young woman with long straight hair, peering out through thick rimless glasses, the fingers of her outstretched hands joined pensively in front of her. In the same feature was a future White House aide and her own later collaborator on health-insurance reform, Ira Magaziner of Brown, who admonished his classmates, "The way things should be has got to be the way things are. . . . We should lose sleep because we are doing things that are wrong and we're allowing things that are wrong to go on in our society and we're accepting them." Beside the students was a premonitory passage from Vice President Spiro T. Agnew, who denounced the "sniveling, hand-wringing power structure" tolerating the era's "violent rebellion." He seemed at one point to be speaking to the Rodhams and Magaziners in particular. They should accept the "rational" status quo and reject "immature" dissent, Agnew advised them scarcely four years before he left office in a bribery scandal. "Ask yourselves which kind of society you want for tomorrow—tomorrow, when you are the establishment."

Hillary Rodham graduated from Wellesley already a paradoxical, guarded, concealed woman. Combing the same ground decades later, even the most sympathetic reporters would be troubled by how one-dimensional she then seemed, how "rational, cerebral," as one account described her, with "pain . . . fears . . . dreams" all seemingly missing. "She rarely, if ever," concluded Frank Marafiotte, "is described by friends or family members as creative, innovative, emotional, empathetic, intuitive, introspective, sensual." Ultimately, he thought, she seems "unknowable, certainly to others, and perhaps more ominously, to herself."

After the commencement speech she left the crowd, including her father, for Lake Waban, indulging a last act of ritual revolt by stripping to a bathing suit she had worn under her graduation robe and dress and plunging into waters where student swimming was strictly prohibited. While she was out in the lake, a school security guard happened by and spitefully took her things, including her thick-lensed glasses.

She finally told the story at a 1992 Wellesley commencement. "Blind as a bat," she remembered, "I had to feel my way back to my room at Davis." The audience laughed. No one seemed to notice the more poignant meaning of the incident: literally and symbolically, she had spent the triumphal moment of her college career much as the years before and after—ultimately, defiantly alone.

Yale I

"She Saw Right Past the Charm"

It was the same summer of 1969 that Bill Clinton spent so anxiously in Hot Springs trying to escape the draft, and Hillary Rodham started her life after graduation with another act of restless independence. Shunning a contentious summer at home in sultry Park Ridge, she struck out for Alaska—to the consternation of both family and friends, even hitchhiking part of the way. There she took a job in a cannery, soon to be fired when she earnestly told the manager that the fish they were packing for US grocery stores seemed tainted. "They really were dark and half spoiled," she told a friend, "but I guess nobody wanted to know that." She had come back from the Northwest with a new air of self-sufficiency, if not cynicism, her friends thought, and that autumn, as Clinton returned to Oxford with his ROTC deferment to await the lottery, she confidently enrolled as one of the few women at Yale Law.

People remembered her flannel shirts, thick glasses, and sheer plainness, austerity worn as a notice—or warning—the overall impression "somewhat intimidating," in Gail Sheehy's later description. She immediately joined the moratorium protests against the war and led her own campus campaign to have tampon dispensers placed in the women's rooms at the law school. There would be softening recollections of her Tammy Wynette records and of whispering and giggling with girlfriends. But above all, her Yale classmates marked her as "studious and solemn," and often solitary. The ever-disciplined daughter

of Hugh Rodham trooped regularly to the Yale undergraduate gymnasium to follow her own regimen of calisthenics.

From the beginning, there seemed no question about the strength and even passion of her scholarship. For an interval she worked on the founding editorial board of the short-lived *Yale Review of Law and Social Action*, a consciously progressive competitor to the school's traditional review. Given to indignant but duly cited articles on government repression of groups like the Black Panthers and on other political issues, the new journal represented a lively challenge to the law school's orthodoxy. "There was a great amount of ferment and confusion about what was and wasn't the proper role of law school education," she remembered. "We would have great arguments about whether we were selling out because we were getting a law degree."

She dated little in her first year, and some thought her lonely despite her outward, sometimes flaunted indifference to sex and convention. "Hillary was deliberately dowdy and colorless as a young law student but a radical and feminist only of sorts," said a close friend. "As I look back on it, regardless of her pose, I think she always wanted male attention as much as anything else." Whatever her deeper sense of self or of men, there were soon social frictions. "I think that those years were those of her greatest challenge," her mother would say. "She was a young woman and was the equal of men. At that time that wasn't yet accepted." But it was not only a matter of sexism. At twenty-two she was already unable or unwilling to mask a blunt, impatient, often acid distinction between those who interested her, seemed worthy of her attention and courtesy, and those who did not. "She was direct, she could be sharp, but she could also be very warm to people she liked and trusted," recalled Alan Bersin, a friend. "In other words," added another male friend, "Hillary could be extremely nice, or else she could be a real bitch. Not a lot in between."

Still, she continued to impress both peers and elders. As she had done at Wellesley, she volunteered to chair stormy campus meetings on protests against the school regarding community controversies, including, in 1969-70, a New Haven trial of Black Panthers, for which she organized shifts of students to monitor the courtroom under the direction of Yale constitutional scholar Thomas Emerson. As always, she seemed at once engaged and strangely disengaged. Ever neutral, coolly summarizing the less artful or more agitated speeches of other, more committed students, the young woman with the heavy glasses and severe demeanor was soon accepted here, too, as crisp campus moderator and the available mediator between student dissidents and

a nervous, groping administration—though she made sure, some thought, that she took no stand that jeopardized her own position. “She was so ambitious . . . already knew the value of networking, of starting a Rolodex even back then,” a classmate told journalist Connie Bruck. “She cultivated relationships with teachers and administrators even more than with students.”

Unlike at Wellesley, however, her role cast her in a different light for more discerning students and faculty. “In the years since, she has dissembled about her own ambition, but at Yale Law School she did not dissemble about her desire to be an important political figure,” another related to Bruck for a 1994 profile. “Here were all these great struggles over rights and foreign policy and all the rest, and she always seemed to join the fray yet hold back any conviction,” said one peer who watched her. “I think her great struggles may have been over gender and professional opportunity, but most of all it seemed to be over her own viability. Her real cause was Hillary.” A veteran of Washington politics in the Kennedy era, Yale law professor Burke Marshall thought her highly intelligent, hard-working, magnetic, but in the end unexceptional, even pedestrian, in her approach to politics. “A run-of-the-mill Democrat,” he would call her afterward.

After *Life* published the excerpt of her Wellesley commencement address, she was invited to a League of Women Voters conference of “young leaders of the future,” one of a series of anxious efforts by the two parties, as well as by conventional nonpartisan groups like the league, to deliver sixties student leaders from the sins of radical protest. It became Hillary Rodham’s introduction to a discreet nexus of Washington contacts—“candidate members of the establishment,” as one observer called the younger political figures assembled to mingle with students at such gatherings. There she first met various congressional staff and other capital figures later instrumental in the political rise of her future husband. Typical among them was an ambitious young black voter-registration attorney named Vernon Jordan, who twenty-three years later, having evolved into a wealthy corporate lobbyist, would preside over Bill Clinton’s presidential transition.

More immediately, however, the gathering prompted an invitation to speak at the league’s fiftieth anniversary observance, and in the spring of 1970, in the wake of the Cambodian invasion and the atrocities at Kent State and Jackson State, she delivered what some would look back on as the most telling speech of her career from Park Ridge to the White House. Her address was suffused with much of the sense of epiphany, and frustration, of the moment, as the character of the

Nixon regime became painfully evident and the shadows of war seemed to lengthen without visible end. "Here we are on the other side of a decade that had begun with a plea for nobility and ended with the enshrinement of mediocrity," she told the audience at the league's national convention, appealing to them "to help stop the chain of broken promises" that marked her coming-of-age. "Our social indictment has broadened," she went on. "Where once we advocated civil rights, now we advocate a realignment of political and economic power. Where once we exposed the quality of life in the world of the South and of the ghettos, now we condemn the quality of work in factories and corporations. Where once we assaulted the exploitation of man, now we decry the destruction of nature as well." They were not powerless, she admonished the largely white, upper-middle-class women, if only they asked and answered the right questions: "What kind of stock one owns? What do you do with your proxies? How much longer can we let corporations run us? Isn't it about time that they, as all the rest of our institutions, are held accountable to the people?"

In terms of what followed, the passages proved stunningly, sadly ironic. It would be as if the Hillary Rodham of 1970 were mocking the Hillary Clinton of two decades later—the Arkansas First Lady who condemned neither the exploited labor nor the environment of her adopted state, who had held her own highly lucrative stocks in a corrupt commodities market and in companies profiting from racist South Africa. She would sit on the boards of, and serve as counsel to, several corporations and would long since have ceased to advocate a "realignment of political and economic power." The evolution of one into the other was foreshadowed by much that was already shaped in her life, and it could be explained further by the most elemental forces of love and ambition yet to play out. But the league speech, soon forgotten, revealed with rare clarity the character of her passage from what she might have been to what she became. Hillary Rodham Clinton had, after all, once known the difference.

Contacts at the league gathering smoothed a next step in her career. One of those she met was a former aide to Robert Kennedy, Peter Edelman. When his wife, children's rights lawyer Marian Wright Edelman, later spoke at Yale, Hillary was instantly impressed and asked her for a summer job with her Washington Research Project. Supported by a Yale grant, she worked briefly at the project and then, on the recommendation of both Edelmanns, went on to a coveted staff job with Senator Walter Mondale's Subcommittee on Migratory Labor,

studying firsthand the plight of children and their families in wretched, disease-ridden migrant camps in Florida and elsewhere.

Mondale staff aides remembered her that summer, only two years after she worked on the other side of the aisle for the right-wing Harold Collier, as a quiet, dour assistant—"an apparent liberal," one called her—intensely involved in the subcommittee's inspection and documentation of one of the crueler by-products of American politics and economics. Through Don Jones's Methodist youth group she had known some migrant families passingly, but nothing prepared her for what she now found. The experience, she told friends and fellow workers, was "shocking." Late in July 1970 the subcommittee held hearings on the gruesome conditions in the camps, including those run by Coca-Cola through its newly acquired Minute Maid subsidiary. When Coca-Cola president J. Paul Austin arrived at the Senate hearing room to testify on July 24, he was accosted in the corridor by what onlookers, including other members of Mondale's staff, saw as a furious young Hillary Rodham, uncharacteristically emotional and "losing her usual cool," as one said. "She was really something, this young activist breathing fire," a company lawyer said later. "We're going to nail your ass," more than one of them remembered her angrily blurting out at the astonished executive. "Nail your ass."

Austin blandly promised the subcommittee to improve treatment of migrant workers, and the hearings eventually trailed off with no essential change in the conditions. In Washington's enveloping culture of money, exposure and reform had a way of dissipating in discreet irony. When Mondale ran as the Democratic candidate for president in 1984, it was with Coca-Cola's onetime corporate counsel as a ranking adviser and with large contributions from many of the same agribusiness giants who profited from the migrant agony revealed in the 1970 hearings.

Coca-Cola and Austin were hardly the only names implicated in the scandal. Hillary Rodham and a gasping hearing room heard witnesses describe what one called "some of the most squalid, inhuman conditions in the world" in migrant camps in Texas, where the laborers and their families toiled for, among others, a former congressman and millionaire landowner named Lloyd Bentsen. In 1970 Bentsen was a successful candidate himself for the US Senate on the strength of a fortune made in banking and insurance as well as migrant labor—and later, in 1992, would be chosen as secretary of the Treasury in the Clinton administration.

Rodham returned to Yale soon after the hearings concluded. Proud of her work for the subcommittee, she would be visibly angry about the migrant labor scandal for months afterward. Yet that ardor, too, faded. Only seven years later, in an extensive public résumé that listed every other remotely notable accomplishment and affiliation all the way back to her undergraduate record at Wellesley, Hillary Rodham omitted her senatorial staff work on the migrant camps, not to mention her fervent Washington confrontation with Austin and her prophetic speech to the League of Women Voters.

That autumn of 1970 the members of a new law school class were already much in evidence in New Haven, prominent among them a charming, garrulous young man from Arkansas with "Elvis sideburns" who talked proudly about the miraculous watermelons of a place called Hope.

Repeated often in the 1992 presidential race, the story of the first meeting of Hillary Rodham and Bill Clinton at the law school library became a kind of political celebrity folk tale. As another student tries in vain to persuade him to join the stodgy law review, he is staring down the long reading room at Hillary. Eventually she gets up, walks all the way to where they are standing, and says drily, "Look, if you're going to keep staring at me and I'm going to keep staring back, I think we should at least know each other. I'm Hillary Rodham. What's your name?" It is a line, Martha Sherrill writes later, "worthy of Lauren Bacall." In Clinton's own version, it leaves him uncharacteristically speechless, grappling for his own name.

In terms of both the private turmoil and public gravity of the relationship that followed, the charm of the story was less revealing than the roles of the two people at the moment. The young woman of studied plainness, always proving her seriousness, is in effect picking up the tall, handsome, story-spinning Southerner she has unavoidably noticed around campus. He, who has been tirelessly selling himself like Hope watermelons to everyone for years, suddenly finds himself the customer. As the two of them described it later with obvious candor, both fell in love with the unexpected—or at least the novelty in their own felt experiences. "He wasn't afraid of me," she would explain. "I could just look at her and tell she was interesting and deep," he told one writer.

Before the introduction in the library, he had tried to approach her but had held back as perhaps never before; for a time he even sheepishly "stalked her," as Gail Sheehy described it. "I had just broken up

with another girl," Clinton told a biographer, and there was no question that Hillary Rodham was only the latest in a long line of encounters for him. "Before Bill Clinton, Hillary had dated a number of men at Yale," her own biographer wrote later. Others remembered men "in and out" of her life, as Donnie Radcliffe related. But one man who did see her socially before Clinton insisted that she had been with no one often—or in an intimate relationship, as she was with Clinton from the beginning. "She certainly wasn't his first, but he may well have been hers," he said, "and that's as significant as anything else in what followed."

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Entering the law school that autumn, William Coleman III was the son of a well-to-do Nixon cabinet secretary and one of ten African American students in a class of 125. He remembered in particular the "friendly fellow with a southern accent and a cherubic face . . . plopping himself down at the 'black table,' " around which Coleman and his fellow African Americans promptly segregated themselves in the law cafeteria. But Bill Clinton soon drew them in, as he had so many others, with his cheerful openness and infectious conversation. "He had the gift of a true storyteller," Coleman would say. "He could take the simplest event and, in retelling it, turn it into a saga complete with a plot and a moral."

Along with the personableness was an ease about, almost a condescension toward, the law school courses most others took far more seriously. Yale friends remembered Clinton's joining a "countercourse" during the first semester, a student-organized study group trying to reach beyond interpretations or opinions in the prescribed curriculum, and his carefully writing and rewriting occasional papers. None of his peers doubted how bright, quick, or articulate he could be behind that soft drawl. But here as elsewhere, he was more practice and persona—jaunty, warm, magnetic, ever sincere—than substance or conviction. Over their three years in New Haven, Coleman and several others thought him "somewhat casual about his formal studies," attending few classes, paying little attention to significant precedent cases or legal and constitutional theory, avidly reading murder mysteries or novels but rarely the law itself. "He did not spend lots of time trying to master *Marbury v. Madison*," a classmate said bitingly. What they did recall was his inveterate last-minute cramming. Three weeks before the end of the term Bill Clinton would borrow several

sets of notes from his more conscientious friends, hide himself away, and emerge to do "quite well," as one of them put it, on the final examination.

There was never any coyness at Yale about his patent ambition to run for political office at the earliest opportunity. Nor was there disapproval or discouragement from peers or faculty. "He was a very good student, he's very, very smart. But I'd never have thought Bill Clinton was law-firm material," Burke Marshall told a writer. "He was obviously going to be a candidate." Clinton was unashamedly someone, said a Yale roommate, "who at the age of twenty-four was prepared to define himself as a politician." As at Georgetown, his boyish gregariousness and seeming lack of artifice dispelled any suspicion or distaste. "After all, nobody in law school was cheerfully announcing, 'I'm going to be an ambulance chaser,' but what he did was a little like that," remarked one classmate. "In Bill Clinton there just didn't look to be any real cunning, though that, I guess, was the point." The backwardness of his home state could even justify to some the skimming and skating through law school. William Coleman thought "his ambition . . . so reasonable," the plan to put "a political apprenticeship ahead of scholastic pedigrees" quite practical, because Clinton would have a realistic chance of being elected in "the congenial environment of a small state" like Arkansas. "To Clinton," as Gail Sheehy summed up how most of them saw him, "law school was just a credential."

Lost in the prodigal image, of course, was something deeper, and less flattering to them all—the implicit assumption that politics and high public office might require credentials or prestige but not serious substance or knowledge, that a would-be state governor, say, *needed* to be glib and facile, *needed* to cram, do well on the final, and move on. "Whatever it tells you about Bill Clinton," one professor said of the future president's approach to Yale courses, "it tells volumes about this law school." Clinton discovered early that the heralded "paper chase" was not often the television image of dedicated, grinding, overworked law students extending the frontiers of justice. "Let's face it. I taught a kind of vo-tech for Wall Street mechanics and other shysters," one disillusioned professor said later. "There were the few serious and the many hacks, and the curriculum was such that they all did well." "In many ways it was a sausage factory," said another who studied, taught, and then administered at Yale Law, "an impressive trade school, but a trade school nonetheless."

Only weeks into the 1970 fall term Clinton moved to a four-bedroom beachfront house on Long Island Sound about twenty-five

miles south of New Haven, sharing it with Coleman, fellow Rhodes scholar Doug Eakeley, and Don Pogue, a midwesterner from a working-class family. The breezy house soon became a popular social venue where Clinton's classmates remembered his relish and conquest of young women and, in seeming equal measure, his gluttony—his frying everything in sizzling, spattering grease and then customarily devouring it "in one continuous motion from frying pan to plate and into the mouth," as one housemate recalled with amazement.

One of the few sixties student radicals in their circle, Pogue thought his new friend from Hot Springs had "a reserve of decency towards everybody he met that just kept him going." While Clinton talked long and agreeably with other students—with Coleman and other African Americans, deploring Arkansas's racist politicians like Orval Faubus; with Eakeley, pressing the virtues of southern literature—he argued long and loudly with Pogue about foreign policy and, most often, about the advantages and pitfalls of "working within the system," as Coleman recalled. He left behind no enemies from these arguments, they agreed, but also no doubt about "his commitment to politics"—that he would embrace the system as he found it, as he had already embraced it, smilingly confident he could handle any compromises a Don Pogue might warn against.

Clinton was as frequently absent from the beachhouse as from Yale classes, absorbed in a series of political campaigns and other part-time work. Though he had been given a Yale scholarship and continued to receive ample subsidies from Virginia's seemingly inexhaustible resources back in Hot Springs, he took various jobs to eke out expenses, teaching in a community college, working for a local city councilman, and investigating civil cases for a New Haven lawyer, a job that afforded him a fleeting glimpse of the teeming backstairs of urban America. "I wound up going into tenements where people were shooting up heroin, doing stuff like that," he once recalled. "I mean, I had some interesting jobs." (The next time he was near such casual drug use would be in very different surroundings and circumstances, at the posh cocaine parties of Little Rock speculators and his own political funders more than a decade later.) His errands into the inner city as a law student were the future president's only authentic exposure to this portion of the nation's underside. He would never work again at the street or neighborhood level of that world of chronic poverty and deprivation, never live in or around it, never genuinely touch its urban or even worse rural reality in Arkansas—never even tour its wreckage except in the crafted, sheathed role of candidate or officeholder.

Clinton's principal jobs continued to be political. At Yale he would work in the campaigns of a Connecticut state senator and a local mayoral candidate. But the more significant experience and connections came at the federal level. Back from Oxford, he had used his Rhodes contacts, notably Rick Stearns, to get a job for the summer of 1970 with Project Pursestrings, a Washington lobby backing the Hatfield-McGovern amendment to cut off appropriations for the Vietnam War. There he met Carl Wagner, a future Democratic political consultant and backer, and Anthony Podesta, who in turn steered Clinton that autumn to the US Senate campaign in Connecticut of the Reverend Joseph P. Duffey. An antiwar insurgent and former Gene McCarthy supporter, Duffey had won a primary against the old Democratic machine and was running in a tortuous three-way race in the general election. On one side Duffey faced the scandal-ridden incumbent Democrat Thomas Dodd, who had dropped out of and then reentered the race as an independent, and on the other a lavishly financed Republican congressman, Lowell Weicker, heir to the Squibb drug fortune.

As his classmates were buying law books and taking notes at their first lectures, Bill Clinton was busy organizing for Duffey the precincts of Connecticut's Third Congressional District, a heavily industrialized, largely Italian area gerrymandered out of New Haven and surrounding towns. The mainly ethnic, evenly divided blue- and white-collar constituency was resentful of Yale and fearful of the small but exceptionally vocal African American community around the university, which amounted to a mere 2 percent of the district population. Nominally Democratic, the district was represented in Congress by what amounted to a right-wing Democrat who voted consistently with the Nixon White House on root issues of class.

Building on past third-party congressional antiwar candidacies in the district, using the most advanced methods of telephone banks, data files, and student volunteer canvassing door-to-door, Clinton would mobilize the Third District for Duffey, everywhere emphasizing the minister's reasoned argument against the war but avoiding more volatile, if basic, economic and social issues. Despite Clinton's efforts, Duffey was to split the usual Democratic machine vote with Dodd and lose decisively to Weicker statewide. The gain for the law student from Arkansas was in further contacts: Duffey himself was a chairman of the Americans for Democratic Action and would be a future official in the Clinton administration, while Duffey's campaign manager and even-

tual wife, Ann Wexler, became a prominent Washington political consultant, corporate lobbyist, and Clinton backer.

What was to be called in 1992 a New Democrat would derive in large part from Bill Clinton's experience in Arkansas in the 1980s and from a thinly refurbished version of the old mercantile southern Democrat of the earlier postwar years. But in some measure, it would trace to Connecticut's third district in 1970, where a beset middle class might deplore "radicals" or resent assertive minorities, might be prey to reactionary manipulation, and still be efficiently organized to vote Democratic without confronting their fears or ignorance.

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Once asked if she had ever experienced one of those "ecstatic . . . modes of living" she had hoped for in her Wellesley commencement address, Hillary Rodham answered without pause, "Falling in love with Bill Clinton." One friend said, "She saw right past the charm and saw the complex person underneath. I think he found that irresistible." In temperament, thought, style, they seemed the ideal complement in a fitful new era of relationships between men and women, her own conventionally "masculine" force, rigor, endurance matching the best of his "feminine" warmth, feeling, responsiveness. "Rationality meeting intuition," her biographer Judith Warner wrote. Not least, it was the convergence of ambitions. "She not only understood how nakedly he wanted to be president but that he really could be," said someone who knew them through the years. "She got that right away." Many sensed her further calculation as well. "And she's always seen she could have political power with him—just not elected," another intimate told Connie Bruck.

"They have been looking at each other," Gail Sheehy wrote more than two decades later about their famous library meeting, "with mixed feelings of fascination and apprehension ever since."

Early in 1971 Hillary Rodham became a regular visitor and guest at the beachhouse, where the texture of their love affair and alliance became more apparent. Increasingly they seemed a partnership as well as a pair, Rodham helping him occasionally with courses in his otherwise relaxed approach, the two joining as what seemed an unbeatable team in the moot-court competition of Yale's Barristers Union. Under her discipline, they prepared meticulously. She organized the substance of the case, as friends remembered, and they all coached the rambling Clinton to focus on breaking the hostile witnesses. Yet in the

end they lost the prize trial. "I just had a bad day," Clinton told a reporter twenty years later, still feeling their shared failure.

He was unrelenting in his own habits, then regretful, reluctant to face her judgment above all—while she could be just as unsparing as he feared, yet abiding. There was, everyone saw, genuine passion and affection, though with blunt edges from the start, and then a marriage of political convenience with pain and bitterness—though never one-dimensional. Clearly one of the most significant love affairs in twentieth-century politics, it is a drama being played out between two people that has immeasurable effect on the governance of a nation. "I can still hear Hillary's humorous and fond admonition of Bill when he would wax a little too eloquent on some idealistic vision," a friend is quoted in a 1992 campaign biography as saying demurely of their beachhouse exchanges. "Oh, for Chrissake," another witness more candidly describes Hillary as exclaiming in the same setting. "Come off it, Bill. We've all heard it before."

In 1971–72, her senior year at law school, they lived together in a small colonial house near the campus, attracting as a couple much of the social life Clinton and the others had drawn to the beachfront, including later advisers and appointees like Robert Reich. To the outside world, Clinton was still the pungent storyteller, although in the fall of 1971 somewhat subdued about his own usually ardent ambition. "The best story I know on them," he wrote in a November 17 note to an Arkansas friend asking about White House fellowships, "is that virtually the only non-conservative who ever got one was a quasi-radical woman who wound up in the White House sleeping with LBJ, who made her wear a peace symbol around her waist whenever they made love." But then he struck a more serious note in remarking on the friend's own political ambitions. "If you can still aspire, go on; I am having a lot of trouble getting my hunger back up, and someday I may be [so] spent and bitter that I let the world pass me by." He concluded the typewritten letter on Yale Law School stationery, "So do what you have to do, but be careful."

To what Dorothy Rodham herself admitted was a "chilly" reception, Bill Clinton visited Park Ridge during Christmas vacation. "To be honest, I sort of wanted him to go away," the mother said about opening her door to the first young man remotely serious about twenty-five-year-old Hillary. "I knew he had come to take my daughter away." He stayed with them "a whole week," as she remembered. The Rodhams were at pains to ensure that Bill slept in one of the brothers' rooms

and that "he stayed in there." Typically, Dorothy was soon charmed by Bill Clinton's encouraging her to go to college and his readiness to discuss her academic interests with her, signs of respect she had quietly longed for and never been given in her comfortable suburban house.

They talked politics incessantly. "It was always the same subjects," she recalled. "Okay, you'll go back to Arkansas to realize your ideas, but what about my daughter?" Dorothy Rodham asked the tall, handsome young suitor at one point. It was the question of a woman who had sublimated herself and hoped for more for her daughter. Clinton had already announced his intentions to his own family. "He told them long before that he would never marry a beauty queen. He was going to get the smartest girl in the class," said a longtime Arkansas friend. "You have to remember," said another, "that Billy grew up where women who dressed flossy and used a lot of cosmetics were 'available,' and he wasn't ever going to *marry* that kind." Leaving from the Little Rock airport after a brief visit in 1971, Bill had turned to Virginia suddenly and blurted out, "Mother, I want you to pray for me that it's Hillary, because if it isn't Hillary, it's nobody."

Virginia met her in passing during a trip to New Haven. But it was not until Bill brought her to Hot Springs in 1972—the young woman looking particularly plain and "scraggly," as the mother remembered—that the first of many clashes took place. Bill had been coming home lately with "so many girls from all over," Virginia would reminisce, "all beauties" he took around to his favorite haunts and then out to the lake for a speedboat ride. Now there was this girl "with no apparent style." Virginia and sixteen-year-old Roger were disapproving and distant to the point of rudeness. When Hillary left the room to unpack, Bill took them both aside for an angry rebuke, his eyes boring through them, Virginia wrote, "like my mother's used to do." He told them then, according to the family story, "I've had it up to *here* with beauty queens. I have to have somebody I can talk with."

His scolding suppressed the mother's hostility for the moment. It was only the beginning, Virginia admitted later, of "a long, long road ahead of us." At the same meeting she thought Hillary "quiet, cool, unresponsive . . . offended." She was right. "The tension and contempt for the mother was there from the first time she set foot in that house," said a Rodham family friend. "She didn't particularly care for Arkansas, and she sure as hell didn't care for her future mother-in-law and nasty little brother-in-law."

Afterward they all explained the instant and enduring mutual dis-

like by what Bill Clinton himself called "a kind of cultural tension" between the distinctive Arkansas mother and the Chicago suburban daughter-in-law, by Virginia's later confessed envy of Hillary's intelligence, and even by some underlying similarity between these two strong, strikingly different women. "Well, the only thing I know," Virginia remembered Bill's telling her, "if you and Hillary don't like each other, then you don't like yourself."

Yale II

*"She Never Drew Her Identity
from Him"*

In the autumn of 1971, the Duffey forces in Connecticut had called on their former organizers to join the presidential campaign of Senator Edmund Muskie of Maine, Humphrey's running mate in 1968 and now the putative front-runner for 1972. "We got everyone in the room except Bill," Ann Wexler recalled. "He said quietly and firmly that he was for McGovern."

Against a cautious, grinding Muskie, already a captive of the party's Washington establishment and its major individual and corporate contributors, George McGovern embodied both an authentic commitment to end the war and, seemingly, a more open, representative governance. The earnest South Dakota senator would attract at the grass roots hundreds of potential insurgents against the Democrats' constricting core of Washington lobbyists and hangers-on, who gravitated to Muskie or even the spent Humphrey. Though many McGovern operatives were eventually absorbed into Washington's mercenary culture, two decades later the old distinction from 1972 still marked the Clinton administration. Onetime McGovernites became lesser officials in the White House and various departments, while many in the cabinet and among Clinton's senior advisers in economic policy and foreign affairs were former Muskie or Humphrey backers. "It's a little too clear who won in the end," one of them would say.

Weeks before the Duffey meeting, Clinton's earlier contacts around Project Pursestrings—Carl Wagner, Anthony Podesta, and Rick Stearns (who was among the first hired by the McGovern campaign)—had led

to an offer to play a meaningful role in the challenger's race. "We gave Bill Clinton in his twenties a chance to direct whole states in a presidential campaign, and to be a player in Arkansas as well," said one former McGovern adviser. "Hell, he couldn't turn it down even though a lot of us knew that deep down he probably preferred Muskie and those people."

A year later, in October 1972, McGovern having won the nomination to run against Nixon, one of the senator's aides, Sarah Ehrmann, drove out early to the airport in San Antonio, Texas, to meet the candidate as he arrived for a rally at the Alamo. She was surprised to find someone already there on the tarmac, eager to greet the campaign plane, "a tall young fellow dressed in a white linen suit," as she remembered him, "standing at the foot of the stairway." That's Bill Clinton, another aide said. He was one of the campaign's state coordinators in Texas and would be briefing McGovern personally on the events and politics at hand. Talking later to the figure in the ice-cream suit, Ehrmann was duly impressed. "That kid is really going somewhere," she remembered saying to herself.

The scene in San Antonio came at the climax of a pivotal period for Clinton. Both he and Hillary, who volunteered to do voter-registration work for the Democrats, spent much time in 1972 away from Yale, particularly in Texas, at one point sharing a small apartment in Austin with Taylor Branch, also a McGovern volunteer and a future biographer of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Canvassing as a registrar in the dusty sun-bleached barrios of San Antonio, Hillary Rodham thought her rounds "a big eye-opener," as she later told the *Arkansas Times*. She had always believed that "politics is the process of change—you get involved and you can affect the outcome." But in Texas she found "stunning" indifference, apathy, and fear. These were "American citizens," she remembered in evident astonishment, "who *wouldn't* register to vote."

Clinton's own experience, as a McGovern envoy within the protocols and rites of the state Democratic organization, was as different from hers as the world of party politics was from that of ordinary people. Texas liberals were behind McGovern. But they had to be kept happy as the campaign reached out to appease Bentsen and other conservatives as well. Here, as in so many other states, the process was played out less in substantive issues than in acts of petty tribute—seating arrangements at a rally, private moments with the candidate or his people, due deference to minor satrapies. Branch found himself appalled at the contrast of "the gravity of the issues

at stake with the silliness of the decisions we had to make on a daily basis."

Bill Clinton "loved the game," Branch remembered. He moved from faction to faction, audience to audience, with an instinctive and utter fluency, paying every obeisance, telling each just what they wished to hear. "He seemed fully at home in a roomful of county chairmen or a roomful of radicals," according to Branch. "Look, we've got to expand our base to appeal to people who don't see the world the way we do," Hillary remembered his "always saying" in 1972. But in sprawling oligarchic Texas he made expedient campaign allies rather than converts to McGovern.

Working out of Austin, Clinton met an ambitious local operative, Onie Elizabeth Wright of Alpine, Texas. Shrewd and acerbic, she was a chain-smoking organizer who had been an activist at the University of Texas in the 1960s and the youngest president ever elected by the state's Young Democrats. Later known in Little Rock as the "enforcer," the proud, fiercely devoted, crisis-managing Betsey Wright was to be one of Clinton's closest advisers and a tireless gubernatorial chief of staff for nearly a decade. By the 1992 campaign she was entrusted to guard his most personal and redolent Arkansas files as well as to compile dossiers to discredit knowledgeable local critics. Still later, though a lobbyist pointedly outside the administration, Wright was once again the *de facto* damage-control officer coping with revelations of pre-presidential philandering and other Arkansas scandals. But in 1972 she was simply a Texas country girl in awe of the extraordinary young couple living with Branch. "I'd never been exposed to people like that before," she remembered. "I mean, they spent the whole semester in Texas, never attended a class—then went back to Yale and aced their finals. They were breathtaking."

That fall of 1972, as Betsey Wright and others apparently did not know, Hillary Rodham had already graduated from Yale Law School and was doing independent research for the university that allowed for political diversion, while Bill Clinton, in his senior year, was sloughing off his classes and showing up to cram for finals much as usual. Wright, an ardent feminist herself, thought the serious young lawyer from Park Ridge might possess the drive and ability to lead a new generation of women politicians and once told a friend she was more impressed with Rodham's potential than with Clinton's. Rodham hardly seemed ready to determine her next step, much less to commit herself to a life in politics. Branch remembered that, "whereas his purpose was so fixed, she was so undecided about what to do."

Before Texas Clinton had worked for McGovern in Connecticut, where he extracted from the national campaign the authority to make his first real political foray into Arkansas. In early June 1972, with McGovern already assured of the nomination, Clinton went to Little Rock to mend political fences at the Democratic state convention prior to the national convention and, most of all, to establish his own presence. Whenever home from Yale, he ritually made rounds at the state capitol, enlisting Raymond Clinton's old Hot Springs contacts like Arkansas House Speaker Ray Smith to introduce him to legislators and other local politicians. Now, only weeks short of his twenty-sixth birthday, he came as one of the presidential candidate's men, suddenly dealing with Arkansas's ranking Democrats as a peer and—equally important—with the local media as the prodigal he would represent to them for long to come. Cultivating McGovern support without offending Arkansas's powerful congressman Wilbur Mills in his vain favorite-son candidacy, he was "treading softly in Arkansas political circles," the *Arkansas Gazette* prominently reported. "I was asked to come to Arkansas essentially to make as many friends as I could," he said of his deferential contacts with Mills, Governor Dale Bumpers, and others.

In an interview that emphasized his impressive credentials at Georgetown, Oxford, and Yale, Clinton pointed out that his formative experience in politics, unlike that of most other young people of his generation, was not with a Gene McCarthy or a Bobby Kennedy but in the ranks of familiar, respectable homegrown Arkansas politicians like Frank Holt and Senator Fulbright. Despite doubts about McGovern in the South, native son Bill Clinton would work with anyone, regardless of their views.

In the aisles of the state convention, Clinton would be far more aggressive. Claiming to have inside information on the various races, he tried to pressure delegates into withdrawing in favor of McGovern supporters who would vote for his man on a second national-convention ballot after the pro forma Mills delegates were released. Stephen Smith, then the youngest state representative, whom Bill had met at the capitol in Little Rock the year before, resisted his blandishments, won a delegate race, and nonetheless became a fast friend of Clinton's, going on to become one of his aides.

The sequence was a small foreshadowing of the public and private Clinton, a congenial image and rather more conniving reality. Campaigning for McGovern against Nixon in Arkansas in the summer of 1972, Clinton carefully avoided the great issues of the day: Nixon's racist appeal throughout the South, the GOP attack on poverty pro-

grams vital in Arkansas, a major escalation of the war that May as the US carpet bombed Hanoi and mined the port of Haiphong, even the Watergate break-in of only weeks before, which was already linked to the White House. He was "light stepping" in a "ticklish situation," the *Gazette* observed sympathetically of the young man it called "a good politician."

Meanwhile, coming with him to Arkansas for the first time, Hillary Rodham seemed typically less concerned with appearances. While he made the rounds to see his old circle in Hot Springs, including former girlfriends, she stayed home reading. Several people noticed. "There were hardly any other women who had been in Bill's Clinton's life who didn't try to spend all their time with him," said a former date. "She had her own interests and never drew her identity from him."

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"The wonderful thing about going into a McGovern headquarters is to find that there is no ego-tripping," Clinton told an Arkansas reporter on the eve of the convention that July in Miami. "Most of us on the staff—however good we are—realize that we are only mediaries [*sic*]," he said, diminishing his behind-the-scenes performance at Miami. Through Stearns and others high in the campaign, Clinton had positioned himself to be the nominee's sole coordinator for the Arkansas delegation. His small desk and direct phone to the floor were jammed in among other state coordinators' in the "boiler room," the candidate's mobile trailer drawn up next to the arena—where the operation would be generally known for its freedom from the usual petty jockeying, jealousy, and hierarchy. As many remembered vividly, however, Bill Clinton and his state were the glaring exceptions.

"He was going to *be* somebody in Arkansas, which was not the case with others on the staff, and so he *did* Arkansas. You couldn't touch Arkansas, no contact by anyone other than Clinton, like barbed wire around the state," said one McGovern aide. "You'll always have to work through Bill on Arkansas," a caucus worker remembered being told. If anyone encroached on the authority Clinton reserved to himself they faced not the usual sunny smile but a florid, yelling rage. "Hell, he really blew up at the slightest cross on that," said a coworker. But Clinton had the ranking Rick Stearns "running cover," playing the "enforcer or protector" for him. "I'm working the phones inches away from him," one campaign coordinator in the boiler room remembered, "and I resented that I couldn't talk to [Arkansas delegate] Brownie Ledbetter or anybody else on resolutions or other things I was

working on. A lot of us resented it." "You didn't horse around," said yet another McGovern aide, whose desk was only a few feet away from him. "Bill Clinton was going to be governor of Arkansas or something, and everyone came to see it was a lifetime ambition, that he was obsessed."

On the convention floor, meanwhile, there was the desired effect. Hot Springs's own Bill Clinton was the voice on the headquarters-to-floor phone, from the inner chamber of power. Arkansas delegates, many decisive in Clinton's career, saw and heard him once more as a prodigy, already influential at the national level. "I was thoroughly impressed at how well this twenty-five-year-old Yale student moved among the famous and powerful in the party," said Stephen Smith, who like others was unaware of the "barbed wire" around Arkansas in the boiler room. Among Clinton's Miami delegation conquests, too, was a thirty-seven-year-old Springdale, Arkansas, lawyer and former Fulbright aide, James B. Blair, whose inseparable connections and advice were to be not only vital in Clinton's political rise but also instrumental in the personal enrichment of Hillary Rodham.

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In November, barely six months before the first testimony to Watergate prosecutors and Senate investigators, Richard Nixon won reelection with a landslide of nearly eighteen million votes, the largest numerical margin in American history. As Clinton and Rodham watched their efforts overwhelmed in usually close-run Texas, Nixon crushed McGovern by more than a million votes, or over thirty percentage points. Only days after the election, at a private dinner in Washington, one of McGovern's exhausted campaign managers, Frank Mankiewicz, fascinated the room with what seemed a frustrated loser's fantasy. "In a little while we'll rediscover the Watergate scandal the press buried for the election," he told them. "We'll find we've elected a crook after all, and it'll all be so ugly that nobody will ever want to know what really happened in 1972."

As if to bear out the prophecy, two great myths promptly fastened in the aftermath of the debacle, despite Nixon's fall. The first was that McGovern's campaign represented an aberrant radicalism in American politics. The second, equally fixed, was that voters had turned in some vast, consciously reactionary tide toward historical reversal of the New Deal, to what Theodore H. White called "slowing the pace of power" in public control and balance of private wealth and corporate influence.

Missing in the simplistic imagery was how diverse and even conservative the McGovern ranks had been, from their mild South Dakota leader on down, how much their common opposition to the war hid deeper differences among them about root issues of equity and power. "The glue holding it together was the war, and people in the campaign really didn't talk about other issues. It was Humphrey and the Democratic hacks attacking McGovern in the primaries, and then later Nixon, too, that sold the radical label. Take the war out of the McGovern camp and it doesn't exist," said one ranking aide. "None of the men running the campaign, like Gary Hart or Rick Stearns, were exactly sixties protesters or real reformers. They were yuppies, politicians-in-training wanting to take power themselves, which some did eventually—not redistribute it or clean it up," another veteran of the campaign reflected years later.

Lost as well in continuing demagoguery around the myth of national reaction was the extent to which American government and politics were being marshaled to intervene on behalf of vested economic power, while the public was supposedly deploring the "intervention" visible in programs for minorities or the powerless. The 1972 election itself would be a watershed in the gushing of big money into congressional as well as presidential races, the corruption growing apace despite the later so-called Watergate reforms in political finance. Not surprisingly, it was the Nixon-Ford regime and accompanying Congresses of 1973–76 that laid the foundation for the bloated Pentagon budgets of the 1980s and other unprecedented corporate plundering of the federal Treasury. "Nobody will ever want to know," as Frank Mankiewicz had presciently told his fellow diners.

As the Democrats moved fashionably and lucratively rightward, demonizing their spurned 1972 candidate, Bill Clinton went with them. "What was so disturbing to the average American voter was not that [McGovern] seemed so liberal on the war but that the entire movement seemed unstable, irrational," Clinton told columnist David Broder in a solemn postmortem on his first foray into presidential politics. "This campaign and this man did not have a core, a center, that was common to the great majority of the country."

Running for office, Clinton would never again mention his once-impressive McGovern ties in Arkansas, and his own politics reflected the post-1972 contrition among certain Democrats, who began to see themselves through the eyes of Richard Nixon, as it were. Though several former McGovern aides arrived at the same accommodation—Mankiewicz himself became a highly paid Washington lobbyist—others

stood apart. "Those who were willing to make compromises with the system that took over after '72 were successful, and Clinton was a classic case in point," said one who had been beside him in the boiler room in Miami. "Bill cared enough about the morality of the war," remembered another. "But he was not a liberal who later sold out, [or] a progressive who grew up. He was one of those who was just a lot less liberal to begin with, a Muskie-ite at heart, I guess."

"Clinton may actually have started out that campaign much more liberal than he's let on over the years since," said someone close to him in 1972. "In Arkansas he'd learn how to hide, to be a closet liberal, and having done it for so long, you have to wonder where the 'there' is. What did Bill Clinton take from the McGovern experience? That's pretty clear—at the human level you can have good values, but in this political system, after *that* election, everything was negotiable."

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They came back to New Haven, still living together, he to finish his law degree before returning to Arkansas for a first political run, she to complete the research she had arranged in order for them to stay together at Yale his last year.

However compelling Hillary's love for Bill Clinton, her postgraduate work in 1972–73 was more than just a convenience. Under a special program of Yale's law and medical schools and its Child Study Center, she was assigned to review the legal rights of children in terms of public policy as well as legal doctrine and judicial practice. Her interest in the subject dated from her study of child psychology at Wellesley and had been furthered by her shocking exposure to migrant children with the Mondale subcommittee and in her study of family law at Yale. The postgraduate project would result in three articles published between 1973 and 1979 in the *Harvard Educational Review*, the *Yale Law Journal*, and an academic anthology entitled *Children's Rights: Contemporary Perspectives*. It was the beginning of a long career of speaking out on children's issues.

Unlike later speeches or lectures, her writing at Yale was unaffected by Bill Clinton's electoral career, and thus they stand alone as rare documents, glimpses of what Hillary Rodham then believed about the society she and Clinton were one day to lead.

Her studies were prompted and funded amid a wave of discussion of children's rights arising out of the political and intellectual ferment of the late 1960s. For a time she worked as a research assistant to Yale law professor Joseph Goldstein, whose edited collection with Anna Freud

and Albert Solnit, *Beyond the Best Interests of the Child*, was one of the prominent volumes of the moment, along with social psychologist Kenneth Keniston's *All Our Children*, which she also helped research.

Hillary Rodham's articles from the 1970s, written as the skeletal legal briefs they were, would seem to many relatively ordinary. She stopped short of advocating the emancipation sanctioned by some at the time and appeared to suggest only that the courts stop automatically regarding minors as legally incompetent until eighteen or twenty-one and that instead judges or other arbiters decide on a case-by-case basis if younger children might be competent to make certain specific, defined decisions about their parents, at least on the gravest matters. "I prefer that intervention into an ongoing family," she wrote, "be limited to decisions that could have long-term and possibly irreparable effects if they were not resolved." Her views likely would have been destined only for footnotes in the field had the words not been written by a future First Lady.

Behind the pages were flesh-and-blood choices and family drama—issues such as abortion, surgery, selection of residence or schools, often the well-being and emotional or physical survival of a child. She had already witnessed agonies of abuse and deprivation firsthand while working during 1971–72 in the local federal Legal Services program for the poor and for the New Haven Legal Assistance Association, an organization then litigating with Connecticut over the state's gruesome bureaucratic neglect of foster children. The work left her critical of figures like her former employer and ostensible children's advocate, Senator Walter Mondale, for often casting such human agonies in fiscal terms. Mondale "upset her at times," remembered a New Haven colleague.

Like her experience with the subcommittee on migrant labor and in voter registration in the Texas barrios, this was exposure to another America. Yet later critics would find a disturbing absence of human reality in what Hillary Rodham recommended as legal practice and public policy. "There is something overly abstract and unsatisfying about these articles," wrote one; in them, this critic said, "functioning families are not organisms built around affection, restraint and sacrifice. They seem to be arbitrary collections of isolated rights-bearers chafing to be set free. And there is no indication in her writing that what children want and what they need are often quite different." Some, like Margaret O'Brien Steinfels, writing in *Commonweal*, judged the most important of her writing "historically and sociologically naive." Though Steinfels and others do not, of course, suggest as much,

it is not hard to see the shadows of Park Ridge and Hillary Rodham's oppressive father behind the young woman lawyer of the 1970s who is sometimes angrily "opposed to the principle of parental authority in any form," seeing advocacy of children's rights as "another stage in the long struggle against patriarchy."

Her proposal for children's legal competence "amounts to a defense of bureaucracy disguised as a defense of individual autonomy," concluded the eminent historian Christopher Lasch, who thought her an unoriginal echo of earnest reformers of the early twentieth century. "Only trying to help," as Lasch described their unctuous credo, the "child savers" of the Progressive era left behind a structure of arbitrary state power as prone to its own abuses of children as any torturing family was.

But what may have been most revealing about Rodham's Yale writing was not so much psychological or historical as political. Behind her explicit indictment of "incompetent" families was a looming reality no juvenile court or earnest social program could touch. If families were disintegrating, if there were cruel deficits in neighborhoods, schools, and institutions, the havoc could be traced to the very heart of the nation's society and culture—and to a political system that served the special-interest arrangements that made the country what it was.

America's children were the most naked results of those values, that array of power and priorities. Theirs was the highest toll under the rule and example of the political fixers' market, in which corporate giants gorged while schools and other public institutions starved, in which vast official subsidies and exemptions to wealth were only good business while public day care and health insurance and free higher education were insidious dependence and state interference. It was children who suffered most the destructive, stunting bondage to rampant commercialism and material consumption. Most of all, there was the immutable lesson that American children sooner or later learned so graphically, that in the "real world" money and power—and their inevitable companion, hypocrisy—are what prevail and endure, nowhere more plainly or cynically than in politics and government.

"Unless we have a family policy in this country," Rodham wrote in the mid-1970s, "then whatever we do on behalf of children in relation to their families will continue to be band-aid medicine, lacking clear objectives and subject to great abuse." At no point in her deeply felt advocacy of children, then or later, did she come to grips with the larger system responsible for their plight—the national ideology of private gain and the political culture of collusion and complicity in

Washington and in state capitals. No more now than in her Wellesley study of poverty did she seem to see politically beyond the obvious symptoms of that deeper problem. As it was, the system she ignored continued to make her own advice "band-aid medicine."

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Their last weeks together in New Haven in the spring of 1973 were fraught with the tensions of Dorothy Rodham's unanswered question, "What about my daughter?" Several people remembered Clinton's genial possessiveness toward the fiercely self-possessed woman with whom he lived. To everyone he bragged about what a "star" Hillary was, "a little like he owned her," said a friend. For her part, she was completing one struggle for independence only to face a new dilemma of love and ambition. It was not easy to follow Bill Clinton back to Arkansas. "He was from somewhere. . . . He knew what he wanted to do there," she once told a reporter. Her own place and purpose, if she went to Arkansas with him, were far less clear. He obviously wanted her to like and adopt the place. Picking Hillary up at the Little Rock airport on her first visit, Clinton had taken eight hours to drive the fifty miles to Hot Springs, boyishly squiring her to every scenic overlook in the soft green hills, every favorite haunt and drive-in.

"She's a feminist and she's just wonderful," he told his Democratic Party friend Brownie Ledbetter, a Little Rock activist involved, like her, in family issues. She would need a local job that was "not just some make-work thing," maybe something in her field of children's rights. In Arkansas, though, there was little choice in work of that sort—or in suitable work for a woman connected to an ambitious politician.

In the early 1970s, in fact, Arkansas was just awakening to the possibilities of public-interest law. There were only the first grass-roots consumer movements and community action, the first steps toward holding local governments accountable, the first broader civil rights, labor, and gender challenges to the oligarchy that ruled the state. Lawyers and activists who did that work stood to be low-paid, operating out of dingy offices and run-down houses, often unappreciated by their own constituencies, dismissed or grinningly despised by the regime and social elite. They were a lonely remnant facing long odds against the money, lawyers, and politicians of the Little Rock power structure.

"It was a job to help people and maybe make a difference, but not in any conventional sense, somewhere to help yourself or make your husband governor," remembered one public-interest lawyer who knew

both. "The name on *those* letters and briefs," another said about public-interest challenges to Arkansas power, "was *never* going to be Hillary Rodham Clinton."

How much the couple recoiled from local public-interest law as a sacrifice to Clinton's ambitions, how much was her personal choice, was never clear, though friends believed the implicit decision as much hers as his. They had agreed on her career independence and the political imperative as well. "There certainly was a period of time when they were working out how they might do this. And I don't think there was any problem in terms of their personal relationship about her independence—he was perfectly open to that—but perhaps her feeling was that she might somewhat harm his political career, which was so clearly what he was aiming to do," Brownie Ledbetter told a writer later. "That relationship was a lot more complex than a lot of people say."

They left Yale in May without undergoing the ritual graduate interviews with prestigious law firms. As he had always promised he would, Bill Clinton simply headed home. He stopped along the way to call almost casually for a job teaching at the University of Arkansas Law School at Fayetteville, where he had once told Colonel Holmes he would be a student, impressing them now with his Oxford and Yale credentials, charming the dean with his apparent guilelessness. "You might want me to come teach up there a year because I'll teach anything, and I don't mind working," Clinton told him, "and I don't believe in tenure, so you can get rid of me anytime you want."

Using earlier Washington contacts as well as her research project patrons, Rodham went back to work with Marian Wright Edelman, now as an attorney for Edelman's fledgling Children's Defense Fund, a foundation- and corporate-financed Washington group that lobbied and litigated at national and state levels on behalf of poor, minority, and handicapped children. It seemed to her friends a natural, defining choice, though in the summer of 1973 she also took the bar exam in Little Rock.

"What in the world are you doing here?" asked Ellen Brantley, an astonished Wellesley acquaintance whom she ran into at the test. She explained that in her Washington job she was required to pass a state bar, could take it anywhere, and had simply "chosen Arkansas," as Brantley remembered.

She had been with the Children's Defense Fund less than six months when she was recruited by John Doar, the new chief counsel to the House Judiciary Committee for its historic 1974 inquiry and hear-

ings on articles of impeachment against Richard Milhous Nixon. A Wisconsin Republican who joined the Justice Department during the Eisenhower era, Doar stayed on under Kennedy and Johnson, conducting dramatic civil rights prosecutions before leaving to head Robert Kennedy's Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation in New York. He was a vanishing breed, an old-fashioned GOP moderate, incorruptible, someone reflexively associated with integrity and intellectually respected on all sides. To assemble a staff he had called his old Justice Department colleague, Burke Marshall at Yale, who gave him the names of both Bill Clinton and Hillary Rodham—the latter, Marshall thought, "very smart, very articulate . . . an organized mind." Already absorbed in his congressional campaign, Clinton turned down the chance but quickly recommended his girlfriend. "I'd have called her anyway," Doar said drily.

In mid-January 1974 Hillary Rodham started work with the new impeachment inquiry staff. She was at the lowest rank among forty-four lawyers, who were joined by some sixty investigators, clerks, and secretaries. Most of the attorneys, both junior and senior, came from corporate practices in Doar's circle in New York and Washington. "We were considered the radicals," said Fred Altshuler, a westerner whose legal background was not corporate and who soon befriended the young woman from the Children's Defense Fund. "I think we were both somewhat affirmative-action choices." More typical among her other young associates was the well-connected William Weld, a future Republican governor of Massachusetts. "This was a very conservative, gold plate-law firm kind of group," said a member of Doar's staff, "mostly an establishment posse out to hunt down the heavy-handed Mr. Nixon."

The inquiry staff moved into the slightly seedy old Congressional Hotel, across the street from the Rayburn House Office Building. The job also meant implicit, if not overt, gender discrimination. "Capitol Hill in general was incredibly sexist," Altshuler recalled. Rodham would be one of only three women on the professional staff. Subjected to the usual slights and remarks, she often bristled but was careful here as elsewhere not to appear the zealot. "She was sensitive to the issue, and without being shrill at all," an older male colleague would say afterward in his own telling terms.

In this, her first taste of government, Hillary Rodham was literally surrounded by dirty little secrets, immaculately kept. Doar turned the staff's floor of the hotel into a grated, guarded, wired fortress, sealing off the mounting evidence of the inquiry. He insisted on an air of

scrupulous nonpartisanship among his staff and on mute confidentiality with respect to the media and the public. "We're so damned secretive," complained one Missouri congressman on the Judiciary Committee, "that we're going to impeach Nixon in secret and he'll never know it."

She told stories later of being assigned to hear some of the infamous Nixon tapes, saying she listened to one they termed the "tape of tapes" as the haunted president was recorded reviewing his own Oval Office conversations, muttering exculpatory interpolations of what he really meant at the time. But young staff attorneys rarely if ever had such privileges or responsibility. The traditionalist Doar relied principally on documentary evidence and testimony from other hearings, distrusting computers or other electronic "gimmicks," as he called them, painstakingly compiling material on some 500,000 index cards in "a cross-filing system," noted one observer, "with a level of precision that approached life." Nor in the strict staff hierarchy did junior lawyers have any appreciable contact with the politicians or politics of the Judiciary Committee, a grave role reserved to the chief counsel and his most senior men.

Instead, she was assigned under other male attorneys down the line to tend the process of the inquiry, dealing with subpoenas, submission of evidence, the role of White House defense counsel, and similar questions of form. Procedural work, it held her largely on the fringes and was never the sort of exposure that some others received to Watergate's seething evidence of political abuse. Even under Doar's imposed secrecy, however, the staff constantly talked about the scandal among themselves, and, whatever her duties, Rodham had an exceptional vantage point.

Into that spring and summer they worked grueling hours, their lives consumed. Like most of the others, she lived a spartan existence in a single room at a friend's place not far from the Capitol. Doar himself slept in the shabby basement apartment of an old rowhouse a block from the Congressional Hotel. She and Bill were "in constant touch by telephone," wrote Donnie Radcliffe. At one point Clinton scheduled a trip to Washington, and Hillary told a more senior staff attorney, Bernard Nussbaum, who was already in politics, that she wanted him to meet her "boyfriend," as Nussbaum remembered it. "He's really good," she pronounced with casual certainty one night driving home. "He's going to be president of the United States." At that Nussbaum "went a little crazy," as he put it. "We're under a lot of pressure on the impeachment, and here was somebody telling me her boyfriend is go-

ing to be president." They apologized to each other the next day and Nussbaum went on to stay in touch with Hillary Rodham over the years, passing legal business her way and, eventually, for a brief and ill-fated tenure, becoming White House counsel.

By midsummer 1974 Doar's methodical work from his index cards reached a climax. The committee pored over more than forty loose-leaf notebooks with their innocuously named "Statements of Information" detailing the generic beast of Watergate. It was John Doar's inquiry, resented and ridiculed by the regular House Judiciary Committee staff, publicly overshadowed by special prosecutors Archibald Cox and Leon Jaworski, that in the end constitutionally dealt with Richard Nixon. Its work brought the formal House vote of articles of impeachment, forcing the president's resignation before a convicting Senate trial.

Despite Doar's precise accounting, the larger and more ominous dimensions of the abuses were publicly understood only after Nixon's resignation and subsequent pardon by Gerald Ford. The political process that disposed of a corrupt president by moving toward veritable impeachment also, in a sense, closed in around the corruption rather than cleansing it. The tainted political money exposed by Watergate, and even some of the more thuggish political methods, would survive the era's superficial reforms in new forms and new places into the 1990s.

For the young woman who handled Doar's procedural issues there were special ironies. Two decades later, as First Lady, Hillary Clinton would witness Richard Nixon's triumphal return to Washington as an honored elder statesman welcomed by the Republican leadership on Capitol Hill and admired even by the Democrats. When Nixon died in the spring of 1994 her husband would lead a national chorus of eulogy and homage. At the lavish funeral in Yorba Linda, California, they would hear Watergate's unindicted coconspirator canonized as a hero and statesman. It was as if the inquiry staff's grim "Statements of Information" had never been published.

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Following Nixon's resignation in early August 1974, Hillary Rodham made the decision to join Bill Clinton in Arkansas. "It was not on her radar screen," Fred Altshuler said of her going. "It was not the sort of thing she had set out to do." Some thought she would return to work for the Children's Defense Fund, some that she might strike off on her own political career.

A few saw career advantages for her in Arkansas, but "there was some fear on her part that she would simply be an adjunct to him," Carolyn Ellis recalled. "My response at that time," Ellis told Judith Warner, "was that she had no political base of her own, and that she could do an awful lot down in Arkansas with her talent."

For a first job Clinton smoothed the way by promoting her with the University of Arkansas Law School much as he had sold himself. Already introduced by him to the dean the summer before, she called the school in August and received an offer to teach "right away," as they told the story. Nonetheless, she interviewed at the same time with the prominent Washington lobbying and political firm of Williams and Connolly, where partner Steven Umin was ready to hire her. Umin remembered Hillary Rodham as "already the Washington type at the faded end of summer 1974. She knew how things worked here, and she knew her way around the Hill."

Her inquiry staff colleague Fred Altshuler and others saw in the end her hesitation about teaching in Arkansas. "It was not what she had worked for," he said afterward. "She had anticipated something more, and I think she had a hard time with it." He described to Donnie Radcliffe a "poignant" last dinner of Doar staffers at which they all seemed to be going on to "exciting jobs," Altshuler himself to a public-interest practice in San Francisco, while Hillary's future was what they all saw as the backwater of Fayetteville. "I think the ultimate trade-off was the White House, not to mention the ultimate revenge," said another, reflecting on that moment, "and she worked hard to get both."

Their friend Sara Ehrmann drove her from Washington to Arkansas, trying to dissuade her all the way. "Why are you throwing your life away for this guy?" Ehrmann asked when they stopped only miles outside Washington. "We haven't gone that far. You can still change your mind." They were standing at Monticello, where little more than eighteen years later Hillary Rodham and her husband would begin their triumphal inaugural entry into Washington.

They drove into Fayetteville on a warm Saturday, the day of the Arkansas-Texas football game and went first to Clinton's campaign headquarters, a run-down bungalow owned by Uncle Raymond close to the school. A lone volunteer was thumbing through the worn index cards and small wrinkled notes that Clinton, typically, had spilled out onto a desk, expecting someone else to order them all. Hillary Rodham was "stunned," one person recorded, "at the absolute anarchic lack of discipline at Clinton's headquarters." It would not be the

last time. From the nearby stadium the two women fresh from Washington could hear the screams, "Sooooieeee, sooieeee, pig, pig, pig," the ritual Arkansas Razorbacks' chant of "calling the hogs."

"For God's sake, Hillary, are you crazy?" Ehrmann finally asked her. "How are you going to survive here?"

"I love him," she answered.

The next day Ehrmann watched her determined friend take over the campaign office with her usual command and efficiency. Then Ehrmann heard Bill give a campaign speech, and suddenly Hillary Rodham's sacrifice seemed somehow justifiable, politically as well as emotionally. "I knew that he was going to be president of the United States," the former McGovern aide remembered; "and I didn't question her judgment anymore."

that young Bill Clinton had overwhelmed everyone in campaign finance.

When it was over—not counting all the in-kind and under-the-table gifts of Gabe Crawford's airplane, Uncle Raymond's property, and the rest—Clinton reported amassing nearly \$181,000, then the largest amount collected for a House race in Arkansas history and clearly besting Hammerschmidt's \$97,000. As a challenger he out-raised and outspent in 1974 even the Democratic congressional *winner*s around Arkansas by more than two to one and marshaled as much as Dale Bumpers or others in the party had ever brought to gubernatorial races statewide. He had done it by drawing on many of the same sources that would later make him governor and ultimately president.

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Bill and Hillary lived together in Fayetteville that fall and winter, renting separate apartments for the sake of appearances. Her friends elsewhere were "bewildered," she would say, that she was still in Arkansas. But there were many in Clinton's circle as well, including old girlfriends and women from the campaign, who still wondered about his attraction to her. "It was fascinating to his friends," said one account, "that Bill, with his reputation as a ladies' man, chose . . . the brainy and frumpy-looking Hillary."

After the election she stood back for a moment, not fully joining the law faculty until January 1975. But as soon as the race was over, Clinton turned to their courtship as a campaign of its own, arranging for the wives of political friends to invite her to their homes, surrounding her with the warm hospitality of the culture, drawing her in. "Bill beseeched us to make her feel good about coming to Fayetteville," Carl Whillock remembered. "He was afraid she would feel out of place."

With Clinton himself talking up her impressive background with John Doar, she came to the lecture rooms of the provincial law school as something of a "celebrity," one student remembered. In her "hippie clothes and northern accent," as Judith Warner described her, she "benevolently terrorized her students."

She plunged into her new work outside the classroom as well, becoming director of the University of Arkansas Legal Aid Clinic and setting up new inmates' rights programs at the notorious penitentiaries at Texarkana and Cummins, programs that might have been common in other states but were exceptional and obviously needed in Arkansas. In her first forays into the state's court system she

fought blatant discrimination against what Arkansas judges still called "lady lawyers." At the university she pressed trustees to include women in the search for a new chancellor and enthusiastically helped brief a newfound faculty friend and political science instructor for a debate with Phyllis Schlafly on the Equal Rights Amendment before the Arkansas legislature.

At every turn there were reminders that it was "his state and his political future," a colleague remembered. As part of the prison project Rodham had soon joined in the writing of an impassioned brief opposing capital punishment that resulted in a successful appeal for a convict on death row. Later, when her husband was governor and a presidential contender, she would ardently support the death penalty, even helping stiffen his resolve in carrying out executions at critical points in their political climb. Then, too, though her legal aid clinic saw in a year some three hundred otherwise unrepresented clients, she also spent "a lot of time placating the bar association," as a student recalled, soon agreeing under pressure to place the clinic's criminal cases with the usual local lawyers, whom many poor clients ended up paying anyway, "as if the clinic was just a lawyer referral for the ole boys," said one disillusioned participant. Meanwhile the friend she coached for the Schlafly debate, Diane Divers Kincaid, was soon to become the second wife of Jim Blair, the corporate lawyer whom Clinton had impressed with his "boiler room" mastery of the Arkansas delegation at the 1972 convention. Blair already represented the Tyson Foods chicken empire and other local and regional giants, and the four of them socialized together and became the closest of friends. A prominent Democrat, Blair was in the process of becoming Bill Clinton's most influential adviser and patron. Beyond issues of women's rights or civil liberties, there was always present the larger shape of vast concentrated power in Arkansas, the forces that would determine the Clintons' future.

Early in 1975 Hillary Rodham stopped by a Marine recruiting office in Arkansas to ask about joining "either the active forces or the reserves," as she revealed later. For those who knew her childhood, it was not strange that the daughter of Hugh Rodham would consider the military. Nor was the ethos of the Marine Corps at odds with her deeper political or social convictions. But mainly what she was looking for was an escape from the decision closing in around her that spring. It ended in what became a joke. "You're too old, you can't see, and you're a woman," a female recruiter told the twenty-seven-year-old law instructor. "Maybe the dogs [army] would take you."

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In the summer of 1975 she set off around the country, visiting friends in Chicago and the Midwest before going on to Washington, Boston, and New York—hoping to discover, as she told Gail Sheehy, “anything out there that I thought was more exciting or challenging than what I had in front of me.” Afterward some believed that she was still genuinely looking for alternatives, others that the journey was only a ritual in a decision already made.

Talking with one couple who had been particularly close to her over the past few years, she confessed with painful intimacy what some already knew well in Arkansas, that Bill Clinton was often involved with other women even as he ardently courted her. In the midst of the 1974 congressional campaign, even as she worked eighteen hours a day on his race and slept with him whenever they were together, Clinton was flaunting other conquests on the road. “I met a young woman, the daughter of a prominent Arkansas politician, who told me she was Bill Clinton’s fiancée,” remembered one witness. “Of course Clinton had lied to her. He was then living with Hillary.” Despite all that, Hillary told her friends she loved him and believed in him and would take her chances in the relationship. She would fortify herself for love and marriage as she did everything else, with reserves of resignation as well as grit. “I know he’s ready to go after anything that walks by,” they remembered her saying. “I know what he’s doing, but I’m going to go as far as I can.”

“It was two people who needed and fit each other. It was love. It was also a kind of bargain,” reflected one of the friends later. “But even at her most cynical or calculating I don’t think she could have bargained for what she got.” “It was just ironic,” thought another, “that she chose so consciously to live out her life through a man when she, of all people, could have led her own.” Still others came to believe that there had been a crucial imbalance all along. “There was always this something special about Bill, an identity, a place and a purpose, even if it was Arkansas,” said someone who knew them both from law school. “Deep down there was this ordinariness about Hillary. She needed to belong somewhere.” Yet most friends would later agree that she made her choice for no single reason but out of some swirling combination of motives—“Hillary’s usual mix,” one called it. The wounded, derogated little girl from Park Ridge who found resources within herself early, the formidable young woman

of potential, now made, they concluded, a Faustian bargain with her own heart—out of love, ambition, disappointment, hope, and perhaps even a guarded cynicism.

After ~~some~~ weeks she headed back to Fayetteville. "I just knew I wanted to be part of changing the world," she told a writer in 1992 but then added what seemed a remarkable confession of the sacrifice she felt: "Bill's desire to be in public life was much more specific than my desire to do good." In her absence Clinton had purchased a painted brick and stone cottage behind a rock wall on California Street in Fayetteville, a small house she had once admired. Now he surprised her with it as he drove her home from the airport. As usual, Dorothy Rodham was more frank than most in her memories. "It was just a little, tiny house, only worth a handful of money. I think there were only two rooms," she told *Paris-Match*.

Her mother flew to Fayetteville not long before the early-autumn date quickly set for their wedding. They were still painting and putting together the small cottage. At the last moment Dorothy took her daughter to buy a traditional white wedding gown at Dillard's department store. Hillary had "not thought that much about it," said a friend; she "was in kind of a haze once it was all set . . . not like her, really."

Virginia had driven up from the Springs and was having breakfast with friends at the Holiday Inn the morning of the wedding when Bill came by and told her he needed to talk with her about something. The table fell suddenly quiet. "Hillary's keeping her own name," he said. He began to explain his own lack of concern or his approval but never finished. His mother burst into tears while the women with her fought to keep from doing the same. "Pure shock," Virginia remembered her reaction, "I had never even conceived of such a thing. This had to be some new import from Chicago." Nineteen-year-old Roger Clinton's reaction was equally vehement, adding to his own distance from his new sister-in-law.

A simple ceremony was performed by a Methodist minister on October 11 in the hastily refurbished cottage, and attendance was limited to the immediate family. Dorothy Rodham's mixed feelings were audible later: "To see these two brilliant students loaded with diplomas, which could have brought them all the luxury and money in the world, there, in Arkansas, in that modest house because they had dreams of realizing their ideals. It was so moving."

The reception followed at the spacious old Fayetteville home of

Morris Henry, a state Democratic chairman. "Hundreds of guests . . . from all over the Third District," as Ann Henry remembered, milled about the house and yard on a balmy Saturday evening. The party turned into one of the biggest political affairs not only in the district but in the state itself. Having shed her glasses and curled her hair for the occasion, a radiant Hillary Rodham seemed unrecognizable to many. Everyone appeared to understand that it was part wedding reception, part rally—that Bill Clinton was running again. At one moment she had made a point of being photographed standing on a step, a head taller than her groom, smiling knowingly at the man whose fortunes were now her own.

Among the guests was Arkansas attorney general Jim Guy Tucker, who was already planning a 1976 run for the House seat of the disgraced Wilbur Mills, a move that would open his current office to Bill Clinton. Here again was a chance to climb the Democratic ladder. The two men had discussed it earlier that summer while Hillary traveled. "Just an absolutely terrific job to have," Tucker remembered telling him. Clinton had seen the possibilities right away, had been "capable," Tucker told a reporter, "of understanding what you can and cannot do with the law."

Clinton had argued that with the coming campaign he could not afford the time for a honeymoon. Dorothy Rodham, however, had presented the newlyweds with inexpensive tickets to Acapulco and had bought them for all the Rodhams as well (pointedly excluding Virginia and Roger in what was called a "family" excursion). "We had a marvelous time," the father said in a rare public comment about his daughter's famous marriage. The couple returned from Mexico that autumn to begin planning the race for attorney general in the May Democratic primary.

Hillary Rodham told friends she would certainly keep her maiden name, as she had resolved long ago as a little girl. She would be "a person in my own right," she assured Ann Henry and others, not the usual "sacrificial" political spouse. When Governor David Pryor's wife, Barbara, was ridiculed in Arkansas that autumn for an exotic hairdo and when the Pryors separated at the end of 1975, Hillary was incensed, showing up at a dinner of Clinton backers with her own hair frizzed in "support" of Barbara Pryor. "I thought that was a real principled thing to do," one of them told Donnie Radcliffe. They had all praised her at the time, and she was clearly pleased. The woman who had once lectured the League of Women

Voters national convention on corporate responsibility and realignment of power would increasingly express her protest and principles in such symbolic gestures.

"Hillary made her trade-offs early on," Jan Piercy said of her Wellesley roommate, "and I think she steeled herself not to look back."

again through the quiet auspices of Raymond Clinton and old family ties.

With a Stephens executive as his deputy, Clinton coordinated Jimmy Carter's 1976 campaign in Arkansas even as he ran his own race, adding national contacts and eventual federal patronage to his strength. He was obviously confident of his victory yet cautious and calculating to the point of turning against original allies. "Believing it hindered his candidacy as much as it helped," the *Arkansas Democrat* noted, Clinton now spurned the union support he had courted and depended on in his congressional race just two years earlier, pointedly refusing to oppose the state's "right to work" law and beginning a long, bitter feud with local labor.

He was constantly advised by his new wife, who was doing freelance legal work that spring in addition to teaching. "She called him all the time, every day several times a day, it seemed like," said a senior attorney who worked beside her. "And I'll tell you, she was a cold-blooded heifer, telling him exactly what he had to do with this group and that, who to dump and who to charm to win that election, no matter who'd backed them before." Another saw her as "a great pusher and mover," making sure that there were enough little American flags at his rallies, that supporters were dispersed through the crowd to give the impression of wide support. "By the time he arrived," said Clarence Cash, one of his primary opponents, "she had set things up for him perfectly."

When the candidate's own professional experience as a lawyer was questioned he quickly claimed he had represented clients from fifteen counties in cases from divorce to felonies to disability compensation, though in reality he lacked any such practice and had rarely been inside a courtroom in his three years as a law school lecturer and perpetual candidate. The misrepresentation was soon forgotten as his campaign showered the press and public with what he called "a set of comprehensive position papers"—including plans to toughen criminal penalties—released each day in the last weeks before the election. In the May 1976 primary he won 60 percent of the vote. Standing unopposed in the general election, he was, as one local editor anointed him, "obviously heir apparent to the Bumpers-Pryor moderate-progressive legacy."

With the office won, he went on to plan his attorney general's staff while directing the Carter presidential run in Arkansas, and in August Hillary made her own move into the Carter camp, joining the cam-

paign as deputy director in Indiana and staying through the fall as she took a leave from both the law school and Arkansas politics.

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The job came from Betsey Wright's lobbying of Carter operatives, though Hillary and her husband were already recognized in the party. The work provided political seasoning as well as capital with a likely president. Yet campaigning for Carter, whom the Clintons had met briefly during his visit to the university and whose candidacy they backed during the early presidential primaries, also involved for both of them a choice about competing forces and futures in the Democratic Party.

Running against the Georgia governor in 1976 were two of the party's last independent leaders, Congressman Morris Udall of Arizona and Senator Fred Harris of Oklahoma. Once they had been defeated there would be no escape from the party's growing bondage to big political money and Washington's oppressive lobbies and bureaucracies—from the bipartisan corruption of Congress itself, in which Democrats would become virtual mirror images of their Republican cohorts. The triumph of money was implicit in Jimmy Carter's coded mercantile politics of the "New South." It was inherent, too, in the Clinton's choice of Carter in 1976 and would be reflected vividly in their rule of Arkansas over the next decade and, even more, in their own White House politics and policies seventeen years later.

Indiana was expendable in Carter's calculations, conceded from the start to incumbent Gerald Ford in a strategy that counted on a southern base and a split in the old Democratic strongholds of the Northeast. But the new deputy director from Arkansas seemed to give away nothing herself. Colleagues remembered Hillary Rodham's campaign management in Indianapolis for its old-fashioned professionalism, its characteristic astringency, and the Carter-party distaste for what was now seen as the unrealistic principles of the past. The new politics, according to the *Washington Post's* Donnie Radcliffe, were "an antidote to the party's idealistic binge of the 1960s," by which he seemed to mean the democracy of Kennedy, Johnson, Humphrey, and the Vietnam War Congresses.

Like Bill Clinton in Texas four years before, Hillary Rodham was now coolly attentive to all the details of ego, protocol, and deference, as much at ease with old rural or town bosses from the state's decrepit party as with corporate lawyers and student volunteers. When a county

chairman became embroiled in a delegate selection battle, she labeled him "radioactive," as he recalled, and kept him largely out of the campaign. With grim determination she set up a phone bank in a former bail bondsman's office across from the jail and hired inmates out on bond because the rent and labor were both cheap. She rallied her staff as Carter stumbled toward the finish line with a series of tactical campaign blunders, portents of an administration she privately regarded with dismay and disgust. Most of all, staff members remembered, she disciplined those who made mistakes in her own ranks. "Hillary took no prisoners," one writer recorded. When the networks came on with their coverage early on election night, they instantly awarded Indiana to Ford. It had been no real contest from the beginning. Still, she stayed on at the dispirited headquarters, looking far beyond Indiana in 1976. Carter finally won the close national race in the predawn of the next day.

She would return to Fayetteville with both local and national contacts for Bill Clinton's eventual presidential run and with her own hard-won reward. At the close of his first year in the White House, Jimmy Carter recognized his Indiana deputy by appointing her to the national board of the Legal Services Corporation, the congressionally funded public corporation charged with providing legal services to the poor. On the corporation's board she was to work with Mickey Kantor, another campaign appointee, a former Democratic Senate aide and lawyer-lobbyist who would be the titular manager of the Clinton campaign in 1992. Back in Arkansas Clinton would join Senator Bumpers and the powerful Jackson Stephens of Stephens, Inc., a Carter intimate and major contributor, to dispense a dozen choice presidential appointments in the state, including appointments to the federal bench. There was one major disappointment. For chairman of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, with its vital role in the nation's savings and loan industry, neither Attorney General Clinton nor his politically talented wife were able to seat their candidate—their Springdale friend, Tyson lawyer Jim Blair.

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The attorney general's office in Little Rock was a time-honored rostrum for the state's ersatz reform, a place to denounce special interests while leaving their power intact. "It was a populism as natural and unabashed in Arkansas as hogs in a pen," wrote University of Arkansas political scientist Art English, "and Clinton fit right in." He promptly announced plans to intervene aggressively on behalf of consumers in

cases dealing with utility rates, pledged to "clean up and rationalize" property taxes he termed "a raving mess," and filed suit against alleged milk price-fixing, telling one applauding group that "some" big dairy companies "stole from you, just as if they'd broken into your house and taken it." To similar applause he strongly supported the death penalty as "a deterrent to crime," a conclusion for which he had "no statistics," the thirty-year-old Clinton told audiences, but "a gut feeling based on my observations over many years." At one point the new attorney general even ventured into foreign policy and international economics, deploring the "terrible shape" of the entire country as a result of Mideast oil prices and sinister Arab investments in America.

Everywhere he turned, it seemed, the new attorney general was lauded for what he was and would certainly become. Typical of the acclaim was his being named one of the state's "Outstanding Young Men of the Year" by the Arkansas Junior Chamber of Commerce after only two months in office. Yet even such seemingly unqualified honors held unseen irony. The young politician who carried the state's black precincts with overwhelming margins now received his award at the whites-only Little Rock Country Club. The admiring judges who selected him were Bill Bowen, a wealthy local banker and future aide, Clinton's old intimate Thomas J. "Mack" McLarty, and a third political friend whom Clinton would appoint to the bench and who would go on to administer a federal loan program and ultimately testify in a 1995 grand jury against the president of the United States—an enthusiastic Democratic lawyer named David Hale.

Despite her late-summer and fall absence in Indiana, Hillary Rodham was, from the outset, an unusual presence in her husband's tenure as attorney general. Not only standing beside him at the ritual rallies and receptions, she now appeared alone and spoke out herself on various issues, from the handling of evidence in rape cases to the media's deplorable preoccupation with "investigations" rather than with "presenting the news," as she put it to a sympathetic audience. "One of our problems is trying to control a press that is far out of line because of Watergate," she told a Little Rock Rotary Club in 1977. By then she no longer taught or ran legal clinics for the unrepresented, was no longer simply the attorney general's wife, but belonged to one of Arkansas's oldest, most formidable, most fundamentally conservative institutions, the Rose Law Firm.

The ultimate determining decision in her own career was made almost casually, as an extension of her husband's politics and—typi-

cally—with discreet inside arrangements. Preparing to move to Little Rock after the 1976 primary, Clinton had called Rose partner Herbert Rule III, a former legislator who had raised money in his 1974 race. “I got the word from Bill Clinton that she was coming and I tracked her down,” Rule said later. At the time the firm had few women or even Ivy League law credentials, and Rose rarely recruited from law school faculties or legal aid clinics. “Hillary was just a law professor, that’s all,” remarked one partner. But the firm saw her obvious value, offering the twenty-nine-year-old attorney a salary just under \$25,000—far higher than the pay in Arkansas for teaching or public-interest law and well more than Clinton himself would make as attorney general. Friends could not remember her even pausing to consider an alternative. “The decision had been made when she decided to marry, to go with his career as the engine for her own ambitions and power,” said someone who knew them since Yale. “By the time Rose came across with the offer, she was going to do whatever was best for Bill, whatever would get them to the top—and I mean all the way to the top—as fast as possible.” At the same time there was a sense, some believed, in which Hillary Rodham’s joining Rose was not so much entering into Arkansas as rejecting it, relishing the caste distinction between Little Rock’s most sophisticated and nationally prestigious law firm and the rest of the state and much of the political world her husband frequented. She was finding her own place, a refuge.

Both sides recognized the mutual compact in Rose’s employing the wife of an attorney general and politician on the rise. “She had an interest and talents that would indicate that she would make contributions beyond the mustiness of law,” Rule added coyly. “Sure, she was bright, but she brought us no special litigation skills or expertise otherwise,” recalled a senior partner. “Hillary was this huge political asset, pure and simple.”

For the firm she was the most natural hireling. Formed before statehood and named for a founder of the American Bar Association, Rose had numbered among its partners judges and state supreme court justices, mayors, legislators, a US Senator, and, above all, the intimates of those in power, figures who exerted their force more discreetly, without potentially awkward public visibility, without accountability. It was a matter of appearance and reality in an Arkansas when the two were frequently not the same. For a century and a half Rose represented and wielded the influence of the most powerful forces in the state—in land, timber, retailing, insurance, investment banking, agriculture, financial services—and, with governments at all levels, virtually

the entire enveloping grid of political privilege and consequent private profit from the Ozarks to the Delta. What Arkansas was the Rose Law Firm had been well paid to make it—and to protect and maintain the result. The discreet firm's own fortunes were inseparable from the economic and social system it served. Beyond any considerations of gender, résumé, or name, Hillary Rodham's presence on the letterhead was in a long tradition.

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They had been in Little Rock only months when a tectonic shift took place in Arkansas politics with the passing of one of Raymond Clinton's most powerful political friends, eighty-two-year-old Senator John McClellan. The death set off a scramble for the seat by two rivals, Governor Pryor and Congressman Tucker, and so opened the governorship to Bill Clinton, with the added bonus that at least one of his party rivals might be eliminated by the Pryor-Tucker fight. He began the campaign virtually at McClellan's funeral.

With money raised partly and discreetly, as always, through the Rose firm, he published in January 1978 a sleek "Attorney General's Report," celebrating his year's record in what one reader called "rapturous terms." Only later were the discrepancies clear. Clinton claimed to have recovered hundreds of thousands of dollars for buyers in a General Motors recall, though the rebates came out of a class action by other attorneys general. He boasted of aggressive policing of utilities, though his much-publicized appearances and statements at regulatory hearings added no meaningful consumer rights, and an unchallenged coal contract actually threatened higher rates. "I had to press over and over again for him to be aggressive at all," said a deputy who worked on regulatory problems, "but in the end he was mostly just talk."

Clinton had also given general "help for the elderly," said the report, though he had refused to confront a cruelly regressive sales tax on necessities. The attorney general had provided "official oversight" in the transport of hazardous materials, he assured voters, though what he had actually done, as in almost every other promise of his 1976 race, turned out to be far more rhetoric than legislation, executive action, or litigation. With some justification a later opponent would accuse Clinton of mostly "chasing headlines" as attorney general, and one reporter thought the vaunted report a typical "hype." Yet the extravagant claims, expensively packaged, had the effect of obscuring the authentic record. "We did push truth in advertising for optome-