



The Girls in the Van

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At the moment William Jefferson Clinton was suffering the embarrassments of the Monica Lewinski affair, his wife began to make a political career for herself. Hillary Rodham Clinton had much support in New York City and the suburbs. The question posed by all experts was whether she would be overwhelmed by the traditionally Republican and conservative upstate vote. Her response was a statewide Listening Tour, which began with shedding all of her name except Hillary.

Most of the reporters following the campaign across the state were female, and so there is much about how to rear children and run a household while literally pursuing a career. But the most significant problem was finding a “lead” story every day. No politician can come up with new speeches each day; politicians have to repeat themselves, and repeat themselves, and avoid saying anything that will alienate blocks of voters. Hillary ignored reporters. She had her lines and her outfits, and she changed them only to fit the audience of the moment.

As Hillary gained confidence and experience, her reticence faded. She was already famous, a media star people came out to see just because she was Hillary. In contrast, her Senate seat opponent Rick Lazio was best known as the man who was running against Hillary.

Hillary came in with a clear message, learned how to deliver it, and overcame the “carpetbagger” image. She never completely revealed herself, but she earned respect. She became the foremost woman politician in the nation.

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