

## GIVE 'EM HELL, HILLARY

By Alison Pride

All through the election, we watched her, how she moved, talked, smiled, frowned, and stood by or upstaged her man. We watched as she was manipulated (i.e., advised) so she would make a more pleasing, and palatable, image for the timid American voters. Apparently the softening and mellowing of her image worked, because by the time Americans stepped into the voting booths, she had been declawed and we were no longer afraid of what she might do in an unguarded moment. Or at least the image makers managed to make us forget her enough to consider her as harmless as a Nancy Reagan or a Barbara Bush. All the while, there were those of us who were secretly pleased, even elated, that a woman of independent mind and ambition was moving stealthily and steadily toward the hallowed halls of the White House. I was one of those. I would have voted Hillary Rodham Clinton into the White House if she'd been running herself for President.

During the election, she was one of my favorite topics. I was appalled as she was lambasted for everything from her hairbands to her apparent disinterest in the culinary arts. I agonized as she was picked apart for her taste in clothes and her taste in politics. I fumed when the debate raged over whether she could truly be a role model for mothers who chose to work outside the home. I considered it poetic justice of the highest degree when Bill Clinton won the election and immediately made it clear that she would have a position of genuine importance in the new administration. Take that, you Neanderthal dimwits and Rush Limbaugh groupies.

Of course, those of us who felt from the beginning somehow protective of her (and she doesn't need our protection, I might add) were in for more months of angst after the election. If the spotlight seemed to glare unnaturally bright before the election, afterwards it burned. No sooner had the new administration celebrated its victory than the press had a speculative holiday. What would be her role? How much power would she actually have? Would she settle down and redecorate the White House and throw dinner parties like a proper presidential wife or would she continue to appear domestically impaired? Would she quietly pick a noncontroversial pet cause or would she continue to thrust herself headlong into the most volatile issues? Would Bill Clinton make good on his promise to give us "two for the price of one" or would he acquiesce to the critics and shut her out?

What became soon apparent after the election was that Hillary Rodham Clinton was not going to disappear quietly into the background. There were reports from unnamed White House sources that she harbored an ambition and a vision at least as strong as her husband's, some said even stronger. Forget that both Clintons maintained that theirs was an equal partnership. Forget that both expressed open admiration for the other's leadership style, and that they seemed to be comfortable with their complementary abilities. Hillary the Dragon Lady became Hillary the Potential Dictator. Hillary the rabid feminist, intent on destroying everything traditional and safe about womanhood.

It seemed like every time things would settle down, something would pop up to remind us that she was unlike any First Lady we'd ever had before. There was the name change thing. After the election, she let it be known that she wanted to be addressed as Hillary Rodham Clinton. The cry went up from conservative and liberal circles everywhere. What was she trying to pull? Did she think she could just sneak that one over on us? Before we knew it, she'd be trying to drop the Clinton name altogether. Forget that thousands of women in this country either maintain their own names after marriage or choose to hyphenate their names—hers had to be an underhanded and subversive motive. Then Bill Clinton had the gall to appoint her to head the Task Force on health care reform, and she in turn had the gall to close the sessions to reporters and members of the AMA. What's more, now she's actually audacious enough to present this proposal for health care reform to the country just like any other highly appointed

and powerful member of the administration. Is there no end to what this woman expects us to accept from her?

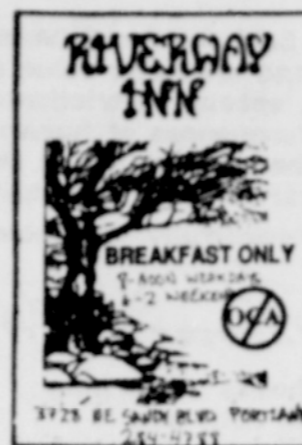
For those of us who can see her for what she is—an ambitious, intelligent, compassionate, complicated, politically accomplished and astute woman—the answer is a resounding no. We expect great things from Hillary Rodham Clinton, and so far we are not disappointed. Every time she sends those ripples of anxiety through the murky waters of unenlightened and dangerously stagnant attitudes, we cheer. Give 'em hell, Hillary. We may not necessarily agree with her, but we're glad she's in there shaking things up. Every time a new poll comes out that says Americans generally approve of her, we secretly smile. We know it's only a matter of time before she does something else to distress the people whose acceptance of her is uneasy and marginal. We know that she is sure to cause controversy throughout her tenure in the White House simply by the way she wears her hair or wears her make-up. She is the test case for how Americans might take to a woman president. The results have not been always encouraging; in fact, they were at times bleak. But those of us who believed in her before the election and continue to do so now realize that change is often agonizing for the individual who dares to pioneer it.

My guess is that Hillary Rodham Clinton will go down in history as one of the great First Ladies of this country. What her term will teach us is open to, alas, more speculation. How we have reacted to her independence and outspokenness will perhaps teach us something about ourselves. It should. That we were wary and at times downright afraid of her should serve as a warning. The battle for true equality between the sexes has a long way to go. When the debate over a powerful woman centers on her image rather than her content, we are in danger of regressing to the days when a woman was judged more on appearance than true accomplishment. We are saying that what a woman does is less important than how she looks or how well she adheres to the role society assigns or permits her. We are saying that not all choices are okay for women to make, even when they are choices arrived at by careful thought and hard reflection. Our level of comfort with and acceptance of Hillary Rodham Clinton is an indication of our willingness to accept change. For some of us, she is more than just the First Lady, she is a reason to hope for such a change.

### State Senator Joan Dukes

I've never been known as a "feminist", whatever that means, and I don't belong to any "women's" organizations unless the League of Women Voters qualifies (and I don't think it does). I've never been comfortable putting a label on who I am. My opposition to abortion has marked me by some and led to comments like "you know she's not one of us." Yet, I believe those very issues have prevented all of us who believe in equality at all levels from working together and moving forward on an agenda that simply can't wait.

On the inside it looks different. This past legislative session brought men and women who cared together without labels, without prejudice for their position on other issues, but with a willingness to fight for basic rights. Much of the Women's Health and Wellness Act was stonewalled in the House of Representatives; the Senate was deeply divided over creation of a Standing Committee on Sexual Harassment to deal with employment related problems that may arise in the Senate. The House hadn't even considered such a thing at that point. But the men and women who cared pulled together to educate and lobby. It takes time to explain why gynecological care covers more than was thought 20 years



(Ed. When the October issue was conceived it was planned as a women's issue. Due to circumstances that are all too common it didn't turn out that way, but we asked several women to contribute something on the thoughts of women today and this is the partial result. We will be doing an issue that focuses on women's issues in the future and invite women and men to share what they are thinking these days.)

ago, that gender neutral insurance doesn't have to be a threatening term, that you can define sexual harassment.

We made some progress this session, but the dialogue has to continue. These aren't just women's issues and they can't be won by only allowing through the door those who "pass the test". We must invite everyone in who cares, put the labels away and agree that we will sometimes disagree on issues. It's a dialogue that I hope will begin soon. But it must be a broad based, inclusive dialogue. That will make some people nervous, but these issues have been doing that for years. It's time to move ahead together, to understand each other, to educate and to realize the potential we have ignored for far too long.

(Ed. We asked Senator Dukes to talk to the issues that face women politically, and she expresses a view that we cannot argue against. As long as there are loyalty oaths on any issues we will never find the value that resides in our opponents, nor they in us. We thank her for her thoughts.)

### Saving the Babies

by Margi Curtis

Saturday afternoon, painting alone, aided only by a local radio station, my thoughts wander about the trails of old songs or some smoldering opinion fanned into flames by half hourly newsbreaks. A song about "forgiveness" causes the teenage face of Candy to appear in the center of my mental screen. She was 16 when I met her, so she is not a teenager now. What could have become of her, I wonder with a sense of sadness and pity.

She crossed my path as a long term "guest" at a Youth Detention Facility where I worked 3 years ago.

Candy and several others still haunt my thoughts regularly, for I had spent many hours playing cards or basketball with them, teaching some writing, listening, sharing stories and lives; feeding them and worrying about their coughs.

At least 2 of them are no longer alive, both suicides which did not occur in our facility. A 14 year old girl and a 17 year old boy, with beautiful, sensitive faces...haunting.

On the same radio as the song about "forgiveness" plays a news story of a young Kansas woman who attempted to murder an Abortion Clinic Doctor.

I've wanted to tell people about Candy so often because she is such a tragic archetype of the neglected and/or abused young human, thrown haphazardly into a life in which given a choice, I'm sure she would have chosen differently.

Candy's mother died when she was four years old and her father abused her when she was very young, the extent of which could not be exactly determined. She ended up in a series of foster homes and eventually, group home situations for young girls. She repeatedly ran away from these "homes", never bonding to any of the caregivers.

At some point in her adolescence, she began to look for love on the streets, in the form of older men who used her for sex. She became an alcohol and drug abuser (no small wonder) and when she

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