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Michelle Obama has Own Transition

Daughters Malia, Sasha her priority

(AP) -- As Michelle Obama prepares for her new life at the White House, at least two things are certain about the kind of first lady she will be.

She will remain the new president's close confidante and adviser, in keeping with a tradition that transcends presidencies and political party. President-elect Obama has portrayed her as the family's "rock" — and told Newsweek magazine she had "veto power" over his decision to run for president.

She's also the mother of young, frolicking children — something the country hasn't seen in a first lady in decades.

Daughters, Malia, 10, and Sasha, 7, are her priority. Michelle Obama has often said, the last thing she thinks about before falling asleep at night and the first thing on her mind when she wakes up in the morning.

Her schedule during the presidential campaign was arranged so that she would get home to tuck them in at night and see them off in the morning.

Not since 1977, when 9-year-old Amy Carter moved in, has there been such young children at the White House.

Aides say publicly that Michelle Obama is not interested in helping shape policy or having a seat at her husband's decision-making table. At least for now, she wants to focus on easing the transition for the girls, finding them new schools and getting them settled and comfortable with a totally new way of life.

To that end, first lady Laura Bush showed Michelle Obama around the White House resi-



Barack Obama accepts the Democratic nomination for President last August in Denver with his daughters Sasha, 7, (left) and Malia, 10, and his wife, Michelle. (AP photo)

dence on Monday while their husbands met privately in the Oval Office.

"My first job, in all honesty, is going to continue to be mom-in-chief," she told Ebony magazine, "making sure that in this transition, which will be even more of a transition for the girls... that they are settled and that they know they will continue to be the center of our universe."

A working mom herself, Michelle Obama, 44, was a high-level administrator at the University of Chicago Medical Center before taking a leave to help her husband's campaign. Familiar with the juggling act working mothers perform, she wants that to be one of her top issues as first lady.

"How to make sure our policies are structured in a way that supports that balance, whether it's more work/family leave, whether it's better health care.

There are a lot of policies that go along with allowing women that freedom," she told the magazine.

She also wants to help military spouses and promote volunteerism.

So, to the question of what kind of first lady Michelle Obama will be, there are some clues, including from her.

She has plenty of role models and has been compared to Jacqueline Kennedy, is every bit as high-powered as Hillary Clinton and has praised Laura Bush's calm and rational approach to issues.

Comparisons to Kennedy have centered on style and fashion. Watch for Michelle Obama to become a trendsetter, possibly a reluctant one. A sleeveless, off-the-rack, black-and-white dress she wore on "The View" quickly sold out. And she recently told comedian Jay Leno that the ensemble she wore on his show

came from J. Crew.

Her approach to issues? Perhaps calm and rational, like her husband — and Laura Bush.

The first lady defended Michelle Obama after Republicans criticized her for saying she was proud of her country for the first time in her adult life. Asked about the criticism, Laura Bush said Michelle Obama probably meant to say she was "more proud" and that comments during a campaign are closely watched and often misconstrued.

Michelle Obama said on "The View" that she was touched by Laura Bush's comments and had sent her a note.

"And that's what I like about Laura Bush. You know, just calm, rational approach to these issues. And you know, I'm taking some cues. I mean, there's a balance. There's a reason why people like her. It's because she doesn't, sort of, you know, fuel the fire."

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Obama Brother-in-law Back Home

OSU coach focuses on Beavers

(AP) — Now that his brother-in-law is headed for the White House, Craig Robinson turns his focus to his own campaign as basketball coach at Oregon State.

Robinson was in Chicago last Tuesday to celebrate Barack Obama's victory, appearing onstage at the massive victory rally at Grant Park. Michelle Obama's big brother was back in Corvallis on Wednesday for practice with the Beavers.

"It doesn't get much better than that," he said of the trip. "Although I would imagine that winning a Pac-10 championship would feel pretty good right about now."

Robinson is embarking on his first season as head

coach of Oregon State.

He came to Oregon State from Brown, where he had been coach for two years and went 30-28. The Bears went 19-10 last sea-



Craig Robinson

son and finished second to Cornell in the Ivy League, Brown's winningest season.

Hired by the Beavers in April, Robinson has campaigned for Obama on his own time.

On Tuesday afternoon in Chicago, Robinson joined a group — including his brother-in-law — that played basketball. Then they went to the Obama home for a quiet dinner. No television was on and no one answered calls.

Robinson said excitement began to build when the family could hear some cheers from outside. Then the helicopters started hovering above.

"We were thinking, 'Hey, it must be going well,'" he said.

After the rally, Robinson took the children home while the Obamas stayed to thank supporters.

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Jr. Boulevard Shields recalls a chorus of honking on the street and people pouring out of buildings waving American flags and jumping up and down.

Fireworks erupted into the nighttime sky.

Bob Boyer, another African-American who did a stint in the Oregon Senate in the late 90s, turned down several election party invites, opting to spend the night at home on the couch with his wife, Judy, of 30 years.

"It was a historic night and we wanted to celebrate between each other," said Boyer who received a barrage of phone calls that evening from relatives all over the country.

When asked what "President-elect Barack Obama" conjures up in his head a week later, Boyer thinks of the man's calm and calculating demeanor and how he's risen by harnessing grass roots support that eventually drew hordes of people to hear him speak.

"Portland set the stage at 75,000 people on the waterfront," said Boyer referring to when the Illinois senator spoke in the Rose City last spring.

Boyer attended the Democratic National Convention as an alternate delegate in August, and was told that the turnout for Obama's speech in Portland set the bar high for the senator's acceptance speech in Denver at Invesco CHECKField.

"I'm so proud of that," said Boyer.

Lorenzo Poe, who served as a member on the Portland Public School Board and currently senior policy adviser to Multnomah County Chair Ted Wheeler, also spent the night at home with friends and family.

He trolled through the networks trying to find any new nuggets of information before the election was called.

"My gosh, we've made it to that mountaintop," said Poe, who was elated at the news. But Poe

wasn't as stunned as his 87-year-old uncle who had made his way north from Jim Crow Mississippi decades ago.

"He had a fundamental belief that white America would never elect an African-American," said Poe, who added that his uncle spoke with "stunned belief" shortly afterwards.

Sen. Avel Gordly, a veteran African-American legislator who is stepping down in January to teach at Portland State, was at an election party at a lifelong friend's house. She sat most of the evening at a computer upstairs blogging for the Oregonian.

Once the election was called the house exploded in jubilation, as did the street outside.

Gordly said she was particularly impressed with the gracious concession speech by Obama's vanquished opponent, Arizona Sen. John McCain who she said, "spoke as a statesman."

"The ancestors are proud and smiling," she added.