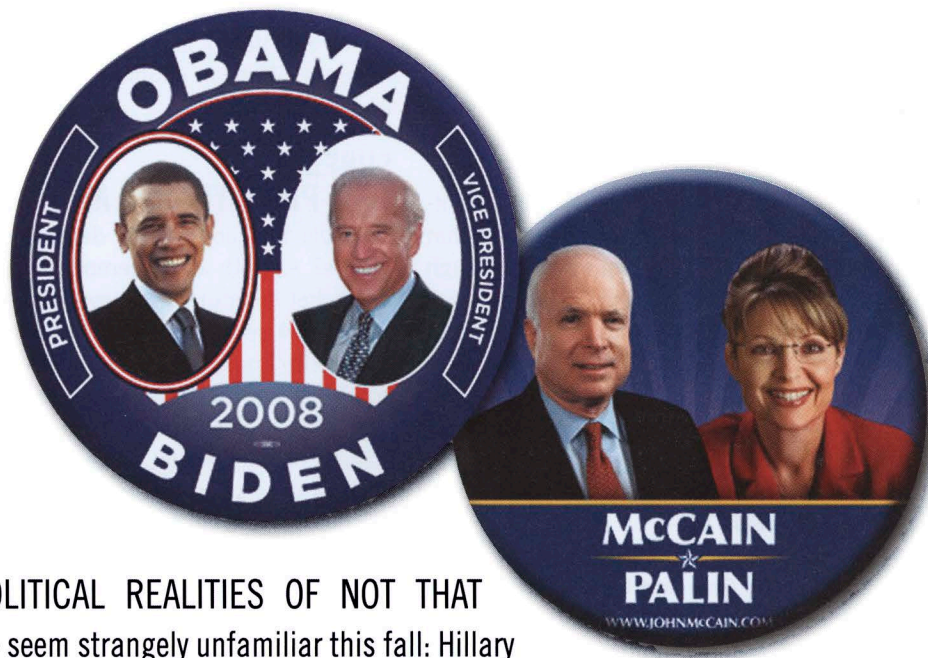




AN UNCOMMON CAMPAIGN



No matter the outcome,
the **2008** run for the White House
presents much more than the usual
fare of presidential politics



THE POLITICAL REALITIES OF NOT THAT long ago seem strangely unfamiliar this fall: Hillary Clinton was the “inevitable candidate” of the Democratic Party, unless John Edwards could find a way to stop her. Rudy Giuliani, leading the pack in most polls on the Republican side, was banking on a strong showing in Florida to end a challenge by Mitt Romney. Meanwhile, in the campaign “back stories,” a very junior Democratic senator from Illinois was demonstrating some impressive vote-getting appeal that might one day put him in contention to become the first African American vice presidential nominee, and a very senior senator from Arizona, out of favor with crucial GOP constituencies, had run out of money and applied for public campaign funding in what seemed like a “last hurrah.”

By June, both back stories had come forward—with a vengeance. John McCain and Barack Obama, a pair of long shots, emerged from a blistering primary season as the presumptive candidates. With the nominating conventions a few months away, each faced the same obstacle: cementing a fractured party to win the general election. “U.S. presidents are typically elected by coalitions of people who can’t stand each other,” says Robert McClure, Chapple Family Professor of Citizenship and Democracy at the Maxwell School. “When factions agree to stand together behind a candidate, it frees the campaign to focus on undecided voters.” Both seemed to recognize this in picking their running mates. McCain, a Republican moderate, made a broad gesture to social conservatives in his choice

of Alaska Governor Sarah Palin. Obama, an unfamiliar face to the traditional blue-collar Democratic base that had backed Clinton, called on a tried-and-true party stalwart, seven-term Delaware Senator Joseph Biden L’68 (see “Biden Time,” page 31). The result is the most demographically and geographically diverse quartet of candidates for national office in American history. “What’s even more interesting,” says Kristi Andersen, Maxwell Professor of Teaching Excellence in political science, “is that Obama did not begin his campaign with overwhelming support from African American voters, nor did Palin bring with her overwhelming support from women.”

Political science professor Grant Reeher, whose half-dozen books include *Click On Democracy*, co-written with Newhouse School professors Steve Davis and Larry Elin ’73, admits to being among the many who did not expect to see Obama heading the Democratic ticket. “The Jesse Jackson campaign and the enthusiasm expressed for Colin Powell in the recent past made the possibility of an African American as a major party presidential candidate seem more realistic,” Reeher says. “But as recently as last winter, I did not think I would see it during my lifetime.” He cites Obama’s willingness to openly discuss racial issues—and his deftness in doing so—as factors that helped reassure many Democrats. “Race has always been central



to the American political story, and I think the Obama nomination will be remembered as a pivotal moment in our history," Reeher says. McClure sees McCain's come-from-behind victory in the Republican race as unexpected, yet not surprising, given recent GOP infighting. "The party was so splintered that no candidate could command enough strength across all the elements that were at odds with each other," he says. "McCain had name recognition in his favor, and that was probably enough among the party faithful to leave him 'last man standing,' even though his critics had counted him out."

FAIRLY ODD COUPLE

An unforeseen pair of adversaries for the presidential election, McCain and Obama present résumés that make each an unlikely occupant of the White House as well. No matter the winner, the next president of the United States will be among the youngest or oldest ever elected, and only the third sitting member of the U.S. Senate to make that career move, last accomplished by John F. Kennedy in 1960, and first by Warren G. Harding in 1920. Ex-governors, such as Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton, enjoying the twin assets of executive experience and time on their hands, have dominated the presidency in recent decades, but only two, Mike Huckabee of Arkansas and Mitt Romney of Massachusetts, both Republicans, were viable contenders in 2008. "The governor who probably had the best shot at becoming president was legally barred from running," McClure says. "The prospect of putting California into play might have been enough to get Arnold Schwarzenegger the Republican nomination." A U.S. citizen who emigrated from Austria, Schwarzenegger is constitutionally disqualified for the job by foreign birth. This is in some small part ironic, as the next American president will be the first born outside the continental United States. McCain first saw light of day in the (former) Panama Canal Zone, whose status as a U.S. territory makes him good to go to the Oval Office. Obama's birth certificate was issued in Honolulu, some 2,500 miles west of the California coast. McCain, a

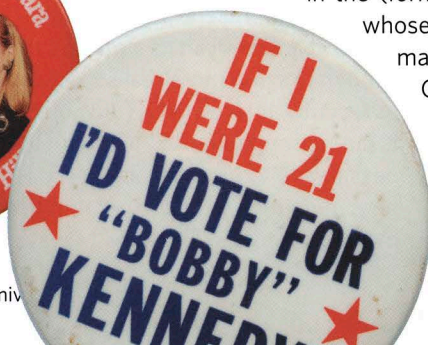
prisoner of war in North Vietnam for more than five years, would be the first American president to have suffered incarceration. Obama, whose father is a Kenyan national, would be the first of African descent.

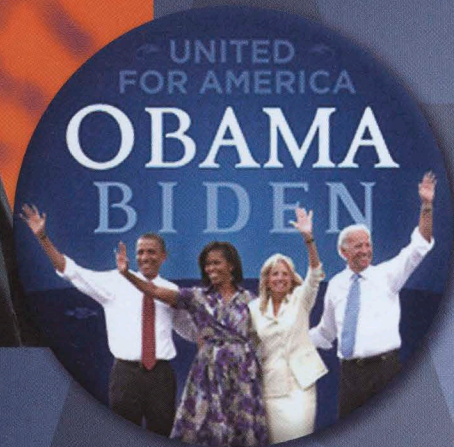
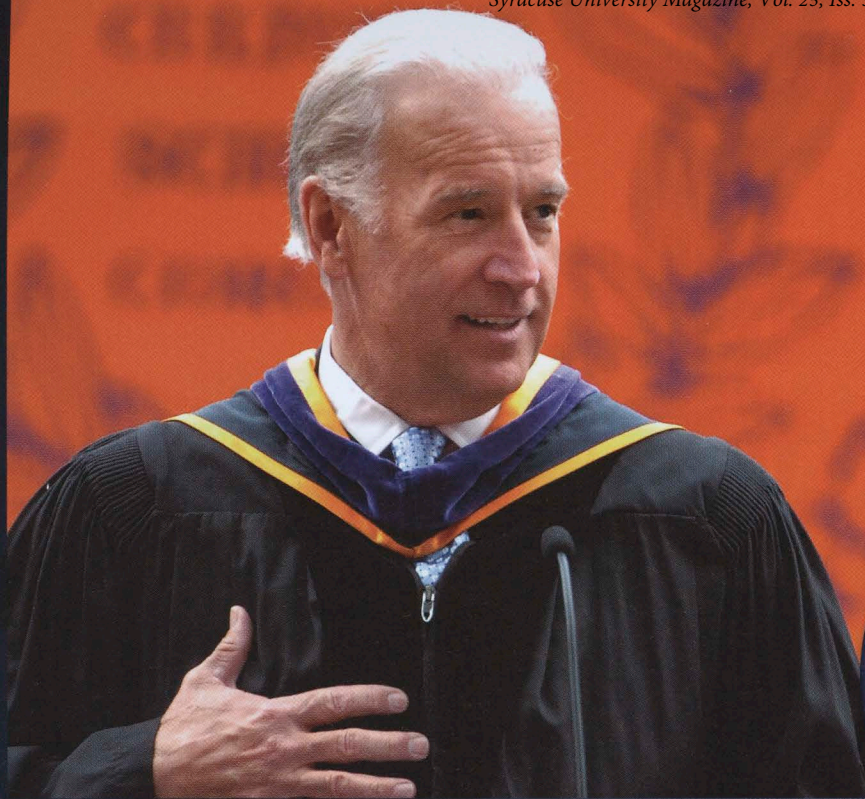
SURFING TO 1600 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE

How did the race narrow down to such an odd couple? As with all contemporary mysteries, it's a safe bet computers are involved. "Twelve years ago, only 4 percent of American voters told me in a Reuters/Zogby Poll that they received 'some' political information from the Internet," says John Zogby G'74, president of Zogby International, a leading public opinion research company based in Utica, New York. "Today, more than 40 percent say they receive 'all or most' news this way. Campaigns must have an Internet strategic plan and a full complement of employees and volunteers engaged around the clock, collecting research, blogging, sending viral e-mails, producing videos for social networking sites, and keeping all pages of the campaign site completely updated."

Kristi Andersen points out that 2008 marks the first time in 40 years that two Democratic candidates remained viable throughout the primary-and-caucus season, something the Clinton brain trust, top-heavy with veteran strategists, did not anticipate and was slow to accept. "Their fundamental error was the assumption it would be all sewn up after Super Tuesday [March 3]," she says. "The Obama people were mostly younger and less experienced, which helped their candidate in two ways. They continued fighting for every delegate, while the Clinton people were turning their attention toward the general election; and they were more at home on the Internet, building their campaign on the Howard Dean innovations of 2004, cultivating social network sites and raising money." Zogby agrees that Dean's failed run at the '04 nomination provided a model for Obama's success. "Dean's campaign showed how the Internet could be used for fund raising and organizing grassroots support in key localities," he says. "In 2008, Obama has had the edge over all other candidates in using new technologies to bring in unprecedented amounts of money from hundreds of thousands of smaller donors, and in reaching 'leaners' and organizing supporters."

Zogby believes this kind of broadband campaigning generates a momentum of its own, such as when unaffiliated supporters produce videos and upload them to YouTube (www.youtube.com).





BIDEN TIME: National Ticket Gains Orange Hue

ANYONE INTERESTED IN AMERICAN politics is familiar with U.S. Senator Joseph R. Biden Jr. L'68. If any doubts remained about Biden's status as a household name, they ended in August when Barack Obama selected the seven-term Delaware Democrat as his vice presidential running mate. The first Syracuse alumnus nominated for national office by a major political party, Biden is chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, which oversees approval of Supreme Court nominees, and an outspoken member of the Foreign Relations Committee. "I am here for everyone I grew up with in Scranton and Wilmington," he told the cheering party faithful in his acceptance speech. "I am here for the cops and firefighters, the teachers and assembly-line workers—the folks whose lives are the very measure of whether the American dream endures."

Dean Hannah Arterian of the College of Law characterized the nomination as historic for the college and an inspiration to the entire University. An active alumnus, Biden has spoken at law Commencement three times and delivered

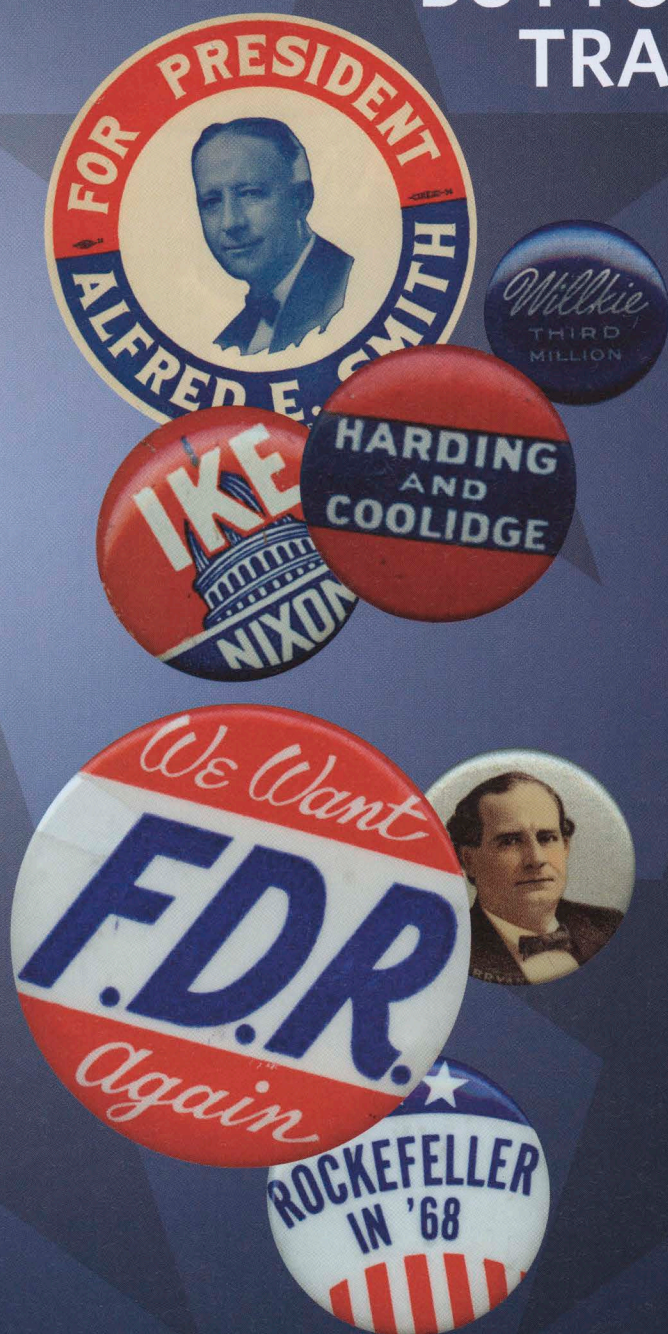
the keynote at the college's Centennial Celebration in 1995. He has been recognized by the University as a recipient of the Chancellor's Medal (1980), the Law Alumni Association's Distinguished Service Medal (2003), and the Arents Award (2005), SU's highest alumni honor.

Biden overcame childhood stuttering to become an accomplished public speaker, and set his sights on a political career early in life, earning a bachelor's degree in history and political science at the University of Delaware in 1965. While studying law in Syracuse, he married Neilia Hunter '66, and the couple lived on Stinard Avenue, near Bellevue Elementary School, where she taught. After earning a J.D. degree, Biden was admitted to the bar in Delaware and practiced criminal law. In 1972, while serving as a member of the New Castle County Council, his first elective office, he challenged incumbent J. Caleb Boggs for the U.S. Senate, gaining the Democratic nomination in a race considered hopeless by party veterans. With only 9 percent of likely voters supporting

him in an August poll, Biden pulled off a stunning November upset. One of the youngest candidates ever elected to the Senate, he reached the constitutionally required age of 30 two weeks after Election Day. The following month, an automobile accident took the lives of Neilia Biden and their 18-month-old daughter Naomi ("Amy"), sparing their injured sons Joseph III ("Beau") and Robert ("Hunter"). To ensure his boys a full-time father, Biden began commuting daily by train between his Delaware home and the Capitol, a 200-mile round-trip. In 1977, Biden wed Jill Tracy Jacobs, now an English professor at Delaware Technical and Community College. The couple have a daughter, Ashley. Beau Biden L'94 was elected Delaware state attorney general in 2006. Hunter Biden is founding partner in a Washington, D.C., law practice. Asked about his extraordinary devotion to parenthood, Biden told a reporter, "A lot of men have been able to divorce their professional lives from their family lives. I can't."

—David Marc

ON THE CAMPAIGN BUTTON TRAIL



IN 1968, DICK WOODWORTH G'79 WAS TRAVELING in the South when he discovered an original John F. Kennedy campaign poster from 1960 selling for a mere two dollars at a gas station. He purchased the poster and began what would become, four decades later, a 1,300-piece collection of presidential campaign memorabilia, featuring buttons, posters, ties, bumper stickers, and more. "All of my pieces are original campaign pieces," Woodworth says.

Visit Woodworth at his Syracuse home and you will find yourself surrounded by shadow boxes full of Republican, Democratic, and third-party candidate memorabilia from each presidential election year, beginning with his oldest piece, a William Henry Harrison pin from 1840. Woodworth's favorite item is a 1960 campaign brochure, "A Time for Greatness," concerning J.F.K. and his family.

Woodworth acquires these collectibles in numerous ways. Some of his most valuable items were inherited from friends and neighbors. He found others at shows hosted by the American Political Items Collectors, a nonprofit organization he holds membership in that invites collectors to buy, sell, and trade campaign memorabilia at gatherings across the country.

Woodworth's interest in politics is reflected in his career as well as his collection. Since earning an M.P.A. degree from the Maxwell School, he has taught state and local government courses at Onondaga Community College (OCC). His students have taken an interest in the collection, and family members have welcomed its growing presence in the household. "My collection takes up our whole dining room, so I have to have family support!" he says.

Woodworth occasionally displays the collection at OCC and other schools and locations, sharing the benefits of its historical and educational value. He particularly enjoys exploring the collection with his grandson, Jacob, who has taken a strong interest in the hobby. His newest additions: buttons of the 2008 presidential candidates. "I hope to keep expanding my collection every four years and just keep going with it!" he says.

—Jamie Miles

Television-radio-film professor Larry Elin finds compelling evidence of this. "On YouTube, you'll find about 5,000 videos supporting Obama, with the lion's share coming from individuals and groups outside his organization," he says. "'Yes We Can,' a music video, has been viewed more than 8 million times. Obama has mastered a venue that can reach and invigorate young, eager activists."

With all candidates campaigning online, the key to electoral victory may be in how the Internet is used. "Clinton's campaign was tied to the top-down mentality of her husband's strategists," Elin says. "They used computers to create e-mail lists and broadcast information, while Obama's campaign attracted its base through social networking. As a result, Obama crushed Hillary Clinton on the Internet." Michael Short '09 runs the SU Students for Barack Obama Facebook Group, whose 200 members share information about themselves and the campaign at the social networking site. "It makes it easy for us to post events and news articles and to organize ourselves," says Short, a dual major in political science and public relations. "For example, I was able to keep in touch with people during the summer. Then, when school started, we were able to get about 100 students to our first meeting, an incredible turnout." Short, who is New York State field director of Students For Barack Obama, believes younger voters, attracted by such sites across the country, could make the difference in a close election. "In the past, any political campaign that has relied on the youth vote has lost," he says. "I think 2008 is going to be historic in that the youth vote is going to be there for Obama."

Whatever the outcome this year, Andersen believes "social networking sites are the wave of the future." Nargis Hossain G'07, a McCain enthusiast who holds a master's degree from the School of Information Studies, hopes that isn't the case. Although she expresses her support for the Republican candidate on her Facebook page, she generally finds Internet electioneering lacking in substance, and ineffective for changing minds or capturing leaners. "I prefer discussions of issues to using politics for social networking," says Hossain, a medical administrator at the University of Buffalo Hospital Department of Surgery. "My husband and I are both very active in the McCain cam-

paign. We go out in the trenches and talk to people, including antiwar people and anti-Republicans. These are the voters we want to reach." Asked whether Obama's new-tech image gives him an advantage over McCain, Hossain says, "I heard that Obama uses a Blackberry and McCain doesn't know how to send e-mail. So what? Does that affect policy?"

AND THE WINNER IS...

If the 2008 election presents challenges to American democracy, they more likely concern national character than effects of new technology. No matter how earnestly the candidates wish to stick to the issues—health care, Wall Street woes and the economy, energy, war, terrorism, climate change, disappearance of the honey bee—there will be temptations in their campaigns to deal from the dirty deck of race, sex, and age cards. "Race has divided America from the beginning and continues to do so, but thus far, I have seen no evidence that McCain has any intention of injecting race into the campaign," McClure says. "If that remains so, this election will be a milestone, no matter who wins. That said, there will almost certainly be those who will take the opportunity to bring racial divisions into the fore. In a free country, there is little we can do about that." Whichever slate wins, on January 20, 2009, an African American or a woman will be sworn in to national elective office for the first time in the nation's 232-year history. Reeher believes that the unprecedented diversity of the 2008 national tickets is an achievement worth noting. "Regardless of one's particular policy and partisan beliefs," he says, "this is a time to appreciate the remarkable thing the nation has accomplished, and what it says about our future."

