

Madame Smith Goes To Washington



This year's political campaigns have had a facelift. Now more than ever before, women are asking for their fair share of the responsibility in electing candidates — many of whom are also women.

In this article political consultant Jeff Greenfield shows how one way to change your life — as well as your community — is by climbing aboard the political bandwagon.

By **JEFF GREENFIELD**

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Political campaigns, whether for the White House, state house, city hall or Congress, have two things in common: First, they are tension-filled, exhilarating, exhausting exercises, fought out at a fever pitch. Second, they invariably attract personalities for whom the battle is a kind of substitute war: A fight-to-the-finish combat with an ambience of the trenches and the locker rooms.

For these people, who dominate far too many of the political battles I've seen, women exist as appendages: To comfort the wounded, stroke the ego, fetch the coffee, type the letters, ease the libido, answer the telephones . . . to do, in the crudely blunt words of the mayor of New Orleans, "the lickin' and the stickin', while men plan the strategy."

Because of this irrational prejudice, and because campaign staffs are drawn in large measure from formerly mostly male fields (especially law), politics has rarely provided a well-known, behind-the-scenes female.

Even as the women's movement entered politics, even as 40 per cent

ose Worthy Of You?

es, equipment and physical fa-
es.

Typically, a school that uses the
d "Christian" in its name is more
cerned with particular policies
ited to religious affiliation of its
ulty than academic background,
ording to Dr. Frick. "Usually
se schools do not apply for ac-
titation," he said. "If they do,
association usually finds the
ching staff does not reach re-
red standards. This does not nec-
arily mean they are bad schools.
ey just exist for a particular pur-
se."

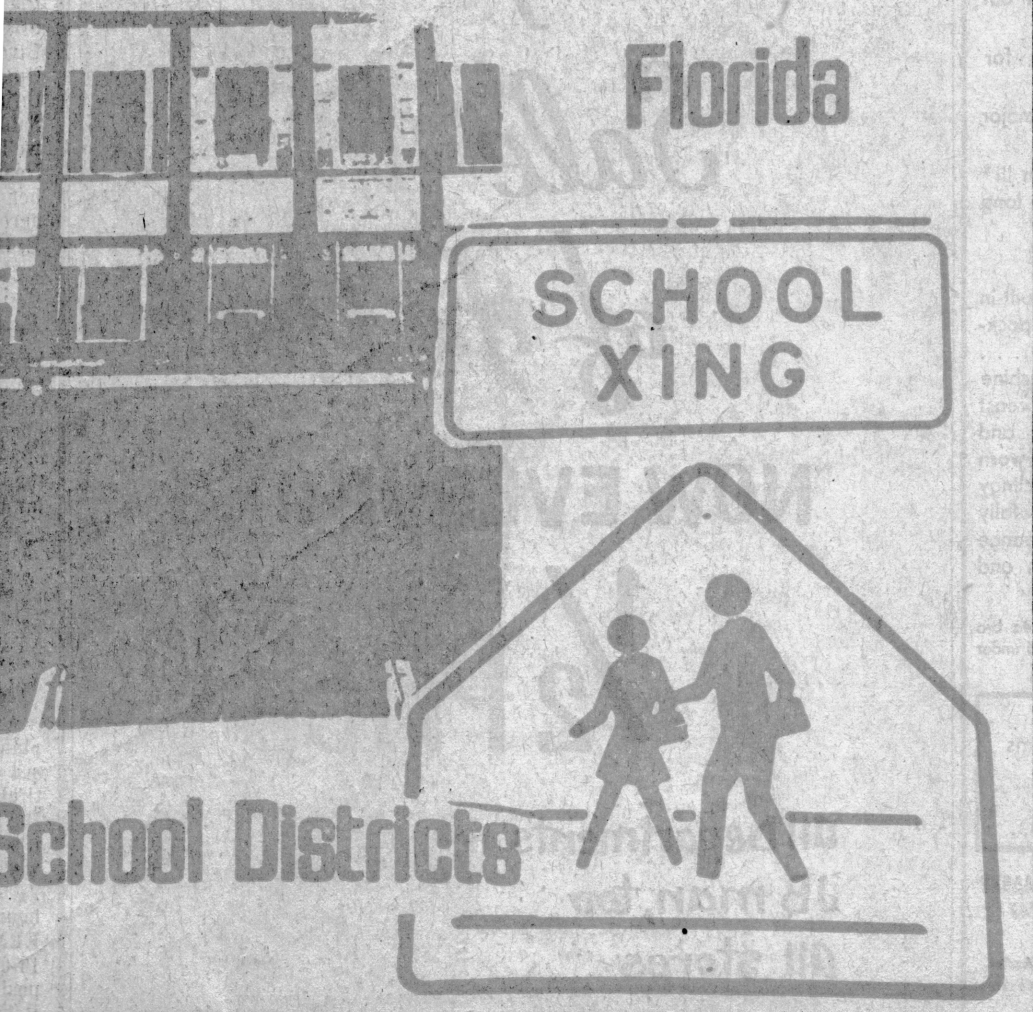
Many independent (private)
ools are good schools, says Dr.
ck. "Their methods of organiza-

tion vary," he said. Of the 330
schools in Florida accredited by
SACS, 35 to 40 are independent
schools.

Among some of the better Flori-
da private schools listed by Dr. Frick
are: Howie Academy (Howie in the
Hills) in Leesburg, the Florida Air
Academy in Melbourne, Admiral
Farragut in St. Petersburg, Tampa
Catholic School and Tampa's Jesuit
High School.

School officials are happy to tell
you their school is accredited. A
listing of accredited high schools
and colleges is available from the

Please See Page 2



entered politics, even as 40 per cent
of the Democratic delegates and 30
per cent of the Republican delegates
in 1972 were women, even as more
women were elected to public office
in 1974 than ever before, the logis-
tical support system has remained
overwhelmingly male.

Ella Grasso, Bella Abzug, Bar-
bara Jordan, Carla Hills and Liz
Holtzman have all become well-
known office holders. But so far
there are no female equivalents of
Dick Goodwin or Ted Sorenson or
Bill Moyers or Pat Buchanan.

As Sissy Farenthold, who ran for
governor of Texas, once said, "For
any woman who wants to go into
politics, I advise that she run first.
If she waits to be drafted, she won't
ever make it to the legislature."

Yet, for all the rampant stereo-
typing and sexual discrimination
that pervades the campaign world,
the climate and structure of political
campaigns offer women a unique
chance to find exciting and at times
rewarding work. It takes a mixture
of stamina, patience and guts to
fight through the indifference, the
insolence and the outright bigotry
that has kept women out of the
backrooms and inner circles of cam-
paign planning. But it is not an
inevitably losing battle.

From the executive offices of
foundations and communications
companies to the higher reaches of
state and federal offices, there are
women who earned their jobs by
making — and winning — the fight
for a voice in a political campaign.

Right now, as the political sea-
son inaugurates hundreds of cam-
paigns in every city and state in the
country, the demand for talented,
hard-working people is at its peak
. . . and so is the chance for a
woman willing to take it.

"I always tell the young peo-
ple," said Bella Abzug, "Look,
while you're waiting for that other
thing, that revolution of yours, pick
up a piece of political power and
do something."

Please See Page 2.



Madame Smith

Continued from Page 1

Campaign politics is a mirror image of the ordinary business world; it is routine life turned inside out. Most jobs are 9-to-5 pigeonholes, with a clearly understood salary and a predictable — sometimes boringly predictable — set of responsibilities. Secretaries do not set policy; executives do not get coffee. If you are hired by Consolidated Widgets to inspect toggle switches, you are likely to be inspecting toggle switches until gold watch time.

In a political campaign, the only thing certain is that it will come to an end on Election Day. There is no such thing as an organized campaign; it's more like a Marx Brothers movie without a laugh track.

Picture a condemned office building or abandoned showroom: Telephones ring all the time; papers, coffee cups, cigarette butts, press releases, memos and maps are scattered over every inch of floor, desk and wall. Every spare chair is taken by overworked staffers and out-of-place visitors, waiting for a personal meeting with a candidate who is 300 miles away.

In this kind of world, credentials are all but meaningless; no college course or job training can equip you to work in a campaign. Either you have the instinct and the ability to work well in a crisis, or you don't.

But — and this is the key — if you do have that ability, there is no effective chain of command or slow-moving promotion structure to keep you out. In the constant, my-God-the-sky-is-falling-again universe of campaigns, it doesn't matter if you're too young or don't have a Ph.D. or are female.

As a young speechwriter in Robert Kennedy's 1968 presidential campaign and a little too impressed with my own precocity, I sat on an airplane at San Francisco's International Airport, waiting with a few other aides for a smaller plane to ferry us into a small Oregon town. A half hour before Sen. Kennedy and the campaign party returned, we were suddenly informed that the smaller plane wasn't coming at all — mechanical problems.

As I felt my sweat glands go into overdrive, a young campaign aide named Carol Welch called the Oregon airport and found it could accommodate our 707. She then called a federal safety agency to get clearance for the flight, called back Oregon to confirm the new plan, called Washington headquarters with news of the new arrangement, got the airline to okay use of the plane and crew, called the crew back from a San Francisco hotel and was calmly handling some other crisis when Sen. Kennedy returned.

There is no campaign with a surplus of hard-working competent people to handle crises like these; if you happen to be one of them, you will be given more work than you can handle — simply because there isn't anybody else around. The point is to be there when the chance arises.

Carol Opton spent a decade in New York politics, often being paid less than men doing the same work, often taking abuse for trying to use her mind instead of her typing fingers. Now, after playing a key role in the 1974 election of New York's Gov. Hugh Carey, she serves as his deputy appointments secretary at \$29,000 a year.

"You want to know how to get started

in politics?" Opton asks rhetorically. "You walk in and say, 'Here I am.' You won't get good jobs at first; you will clip articles from newspapers, make phone calls, being a go-pher. But there are a lot of lazy people in politics, people who like to sit around all day and gossip. If you work hard and meet people, you can really move up."

There is one emphatic rule that can make the move up quicker than it might otherwise be: in politics, knowledge is power. There are no "experts" (despite all the columnists who write that "experts say . . ."), because every campaign is new.

When a candidate has to know who he is meeting with (you'd be surprised how often they cheerily greet supporters whose names they didn't know 30 seconds earlier), when speechwriters need facts and figures about unemployment in Muskegon, when the home telephone number of a key reporter has to be found, nobody cares about rank or sex.

That's why Carol Opton offers a key bit of advice: "Go to every meeting you're invited to. Whether it's fund-raising, advertising or whatever, whether you know anything about it or not. And don't feel you have to say something to be noticed; wait until you have something to say that you can back up. It may take four hours, it may take four meetings, but if you say something smart, they'll come back and ask for your opinion next time."

A willingness to wait for that chance, and the brains to use it, means a chance to move up in a campaign.

But these skills do not mean the end of anti-female bias. To fight that bias, you have to know where it is mostly likely to appear, and what to do about it.