

THE MAGAZINE FOR PEOPLE IN POLITICS

JULY 1998
US/CANADA \$4.95

CAMPAIGNS & ELECTIONS

A CONGRESSIONAL QUARTERLY, INC. PUBLICATION

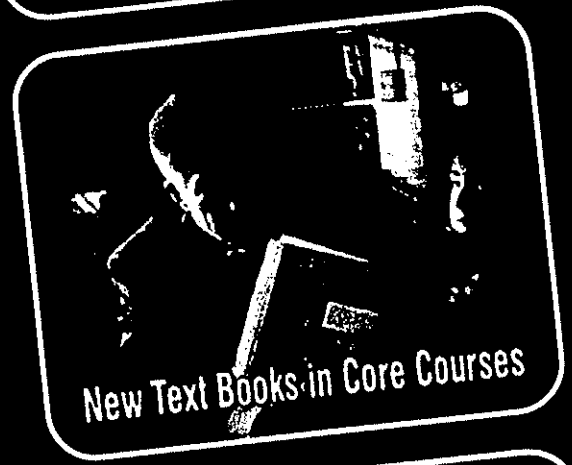
Producing Political Ads That Work

Finding the right edit suite • Using stock photos and film • New trends
PLUS: A look at the ads that helped Gray Davis beat the big bucks

Movers & Shakers: Devine, Goodman
Targeting Turnout: A New Approach
Rich Candidates: How Do They Do?
Case Studies: Credit Unions vs. Banks,
Nebraska's GOP Primary for Governor



DEVINE GOODMAN JOHANNS CHRISTENSEN



New Text Books in Core Courses



Checchi didn't vote in 4 of last 6 elections



Keep it in the Family



With the relaxation of once rigid roles of spouses and offspring, wives and children have become cooperators in the process of governance, and contribute more than just quiet moral support to officials.

BY JERRY CAMMARATA

Jerry Cammarata is a member of the New York City Central Board of Education and a former candidate for the New York State Assembly.

In two recent special elections for Congress, widows of two former members – Sonny Bono (R) and Walter Capps (D), both of California – were elected to fill the unexpired terms of their husbands.

The campaign consultants for both parties knew the value of having a family member – particularly a widow – run for the “open” seats. In certain circumstances, voters are more likely to stay loyal to the lines of consanguinity or matrimonial affinity than they are to party lines.

Family value – or the value of a good family – has always been important in American politics: Alexander Hamilton’s marriage into the powerful Schuyler family of New York gave him a place at the table of public discourse that eventually won him the job of first secretary of the Treasury; the Adams family of Massachusetts (Samuel, John and John Quincy, among others) was practically its own wing of revolutionary politics; and on the other side of the rebellion, it was the tag-team of the Howe brothers – Admiral Richard, Lord Howe and his sibling General Sir William – who paired up in the dual roles of Commissioners for Restoring the Peace in His Majesty’s Colonies and commanders of British troops sent to crush the recalcitrant revolutionaries.

Political families have emerged as a way for politicians to pool resources of savvy and experience and share the increasingly demanding burdens of office – and sometimes to ensure that the political legacy of a family leader is carried on.

In the past, family politics was, for the most part, horizontal: one generation would bequeath a political heritage to the next, usually father to son. For instance, the Fishes of New York – whose political activism started with Ulysses Grant’s Secretary of State Hamilton Fish (who was also governor of New York, congressman and senator), continued through the Congressman Hamilton Fish, who was Franklin Roosevelt’s archenemy on Capitol Hill, and is carried on today by Hamilton Fish III, former publisher of *The Nation* and himself a congressional candidate – represented upstate New York in Congress for five generations until Hamilton II retired in 1994.

Speaking of the Roosevelts, heirs of both presidents Theodore and Franklin have run for and held office in New York, California, Florida and Massachusetts.

Vice President Al Gore followed his father into the United States Senate. Even today, Minnesota Attorney General Hubert Humphrey III, former state Sen. Ted Mondale and Mike Freeman, the sons of famous fathers and scions of local political dynasties, are duking it out for the governorship of their state.

Though the only father-to-son political bequest at the White House has been from second President John Adams to his son, sixth President John Quincy Adams (Benjamin Harrison was William Henry Harrison’s grandson), such a succession is not beyond the realm of possibility today. Former President George Bush has taken multigenerational politics to a new apex: his father, Prescott, was a Connecticut senator; his son, George W., is governor of Texas and is a hot potential candidate for the White House; and another son, Jeb, is now the frontrunner to become the next governor of Florida.

There have been, of course, lateral familial ties in politics, too. The Kennedys of Massachusetts and the Longs of Louisiana are obvious examples.

These historical examples aside, it is important that we recognize the new value of family. Wives and children are no longer quaint props. With the relaxation of once rigid roles of spouses and offspring, wives and children have become cooperators in the process of governance, and contribute more than just quiet moral support to officials. They are as much collaborators and consultants as they are companions and comforters.

Irwin Gertzog, of Allegheny College, in researching his book *Congressional Women*, has found that between 1916 (when women could first serve in the Congress) and 1983, 84 percent of widows who ran for the husband’s seats were elected, while only 14 percent of other women won terms. In all, some 35 widows have served in the House, and another seven have been elected to their husband’s seats in the Senate.

The “widow’s mandate” is not what it once was, however. In the past, a widow was often “handed” the opportunity to fill out the husband’s unexpired term, as a chivalric gesture of congressional courtesy, and was then expected to go home and retire. That was not the absolute rule. Hattie “Silent Hattie” Caraway filled out the unexpired term of her husband Thaddeus, then won two terms of her own in 1932 and 1938 – but it was the “expected thing.”

There is a relentless synergy when several family members are able to contribute to and benefit from a common pool of experience.

A fine example is the Molinaris in New York. Former Cong. Susan Molinari succeeded her father in a New York City congressional seat, while he moved on to borough president. The younger Molinari then married another member of Congress, Bill Paxon of Western New York, having been proposed to on the House floor.

The new competence and capacity of these family members, their engagement in something that is no longer merely the family patriarch's hobby, means constituents will reap the benefits of experience that come with being part of a politician's inner circle, and need not fear that they are simply providing employment for otherwise un-hirable relatives – they get the benefits of nepotism without the embarrassment.

Who is to say that the nation is not the true beneficiary of the intellectual and spiritual estates of those who have gone before in these families of our government? Their inheritances of sagacity and expertise belong to us all. ■