

# HILLARY CLINTON

Hillary Clinton is  
the 67<sup>th</sup> United States Secretary of State,  
the former First Lady of the United States,  
and former U.S. Senator for New York.

Hillary's mother was essentially abandoned by her parents.

## **Who is Hillary Rodham Clinton?**

It's not supposed to be like this. Her mother's childhood a torrent of verbal abuse. A father who considered it his lifetime duty to denigrate each family member. Absolute rule. His rule. Inviolate.

Hillary Diane Rodham was born October 26, 1947 in Park Ridge, Illinois, the eldest child, with two younger brothers.

Hillary's parents, Hugh Ellsworth Rodham and Dorothy Howell Rodham, were the product of the Great Depression. They were typical of that generation. Middle class. Midwestern. Her mother a homemaker. Her father the owner of a small textile business.

Her parents' generation had faced the greatest challenges the world had ever seen during World War II. They had won. Through toil and bloodshed. Defeating the enemies of America and freedom. Then building a new nation, bathed in power and responsibility. They believed in the possibilities of a democratic nation coupled with peace and humanity. They believed in a responsible society.

Dorothy's mother, Della Howell, was one of nine children. When she was born her mother was only fifteen; her father seventeen. With such a fine start, what could go wrong?

Hillary's mother's parents essentially abandoned her at age three. She subsisted, alone for days at a time, on meal tickets her mother left her. Using them required her to walk to a nearby restaurant. Her father was only a little better. Dorothy's parents divorced when she was eight years old. After incessantly shuttling their two daughters from school to school, the children were sent to stay with their maternal grandparents in Alhambra, California. And during the next ten years Dorothy *never* saw her mother and *rarely* saw her father. Her grandparent's house was not a happy scene. Constant ridicule, criticism, and punishment was the regimen of her Grandma Della—who commanded Dorothy, resented her, ignored her, and enforced rigid household rules. Grandma Della was a weak, self-indulgent woman, ignoring reality, and consumed with television soap operas. Once Dorothy was confined to her room *for an entire year* for a minor infraction—*forbidden to even eat at the kitchen table*.

It was too much for a young girl to bear. So Dorothy left her maternal grandparents'

house—“found work as a mother’s helper, caring for two young children in return for room, board, and three dollars a week.” No chance to enjoy extracurricular athletics or drama that she loved. “She washed the same blouse every day to wear with her only skirt and, in colder weather, her only sweater. But for the first time, she lived in a household where the father and mother gave their children the love, attention, and guidance she had never received.” (Clinton, 3) Without that love, Dorothy might never have later known how to treat her own daughter Hillary.

Dorothy derived offense at others’ mistreatment of any human being, especially children. Directly related to the mistreatment that she, as a youngster, had for years endured. Additionally, she had witnessed the school-yard taunting, then internment, then confiscation of the homes and possessions of Japanese-Americans in California during World War II.

Said Hillary, “I thought often of my own mother’s neglect and mistreatment at the hands of her parents and grandparents.” (Clinton, 50) She recounted,

*She understood from personal experience that many children—through no fault of their own—were disadvantaged and discriminated against from birth. She [further] hated self-righteousness and pretensions of moral superiority and impressed on my brothers and me that we were no better or worse than anyone else. (Clinton, 10-11)*

Hillary’s father, Hugh Rodham Sr., had a deep, gruff laugh which he passed to Hillary. Welsh origins. His livelihood was as a coal miner. Worked in mines around Scranton, Pennsylvania, the sixth of eleven children.

He earned a college degree in physical education, then hopped a freight train to Chicago, securing a job as a traveling drapery-fabric salesman. Caught the eye of Dorothy Howell, married her in 1942, and shortly thereafter enlisted in the Navy. Trained recruits going to the Pacific theatre of war, and post-World War II was assigned to the Great Lakes Naval Station.

Hugh Sr. ran his family like a petulant military officer, “barking orders, denigrating, minimizing achievements, ignoring accomplishments.” (Bernstein, 15) Confronted with resistance, he became even more fierce in his determination to rule absolutely. He *loved* a confrontation. Was this his way of making sure his children were fighters, competitive? One wonders. The marriage of Hillary’s parents was thus rife with tension. Hillary’s father was tough. Her father “harsh, provocative, and abusive . . . a sour, unfulfilled man whose children suffered his relentless, demeaning sarcasm . . . his parsimony, and silently accepted his humiliation and verbal abuse of their mother.” (Bernstein, 15)

Dinnertime? He was prone to throwing down the verbal gauntlet. Whatever topic came into his head. Expound a position of the extreme. Loudly. Something outrageous and provocative. Who would dispute him? Anyone who spoke up to refute Hugh’s position had to do it with brashness and enthusiasm bordering on anger. Dukes up. Slashing. Combative. Giving no quarter. He was also a vociferous Republican, never flinching from *their* dogma. Always ready to expound the “truth,” as Republicans saw it.

According to one member of the Rodham family, Hugh Sr. “was a bullshit artist,” a braggart who elaborated well beyond the truth. Yet that ability aided him in his sales jobs. And after his Navy service, Hillary’s father drew on his sales experience and began

a small drapery-fabric business. Manufactured and sold screen-printed fabrics. Said Tony Rodham, “Dad was the world’s greatest salesman. You never saw him lose a sale. Our father was the best closer I’ve ever met in my life.” (Bernstein, 17)

There were more instructive aspects of Hugh Sr.’s parenting. He did join Hillary sometimes. Playing pitch-the-ball with her. Fishing. Playing pinochle. His praise was rarely given, but when it was the children eagerly seized on it. Yet somehow the children survived his darker side, and instead took to their personalities the family’s overcurrent tradition of discipline, hard work, and education.

Each summer the Rodham’s enjoyed a two-week vacation at a cabin that Hugh Sr. and his father had personally built on Lake Winona, near Scranton, Pennsylvania. Hillary remembers her summer vacations in that rustic cabin. No heat except for the cast-iron cook stove in the kitchen. No indoor bath or shower. To stay clean, they swam in the lake or stood below the back porch while someone poured a tub of water onto their heads.

Hillary’s mother provided the counter-balance to Hugh Sr.’s bullying, lack of curiosity, narrow mindedness. Dorothy resisted being beaten down. Showed her children how to endure and evolve in spite of an abusive relationship. Divorce was, in her personal religion, anathema. Out of the question. Not an option.

Dorothy shaped Hillary in spite of Hugh Sr. She urged lofty goals for her daughter:

*Speak your mind. Aim high. Aspire to greatness. Set your own dreams. Work for them. Achieve them.*

Often Dorothy would say to Hillary, ‘Do you want to be the lead actor in your life, or a minor player who simply reacts to what others think you should say or do?’ (Bernstein, 23)

That admonition, repeated ad infinitum during her teenage years, sat in Hillary’s mind. Percolated. Became ingrained.

She knew which way she wanted to go. But she had to get out of her family situation to achieve it.

*Dorothy also wanted her children to be able to maintain their equilibrium, however great the chaos. To make her point, she showed Hillary how the bubble in a carpenter’s level moved to dead center. ‘Imagine having this carpenter’s level inside you,’ she said. ‘You try to keep that bubble in the center. Sometimes it will go way up there’—she tipped the level so the bubble drifted—‘and then you have to bring it back.’ She straightened the level. (Bernstein, 28)*

Hillary and her brothers were required to do their daily household chores. And without any allowance. Why? That other kids in the neighborhood received regular allowances failed to impress their father.

*They eat and sleep for free. We’re not going to pay them for it as well, (Bernstein, 20) Hugh Sr. told Dorothy.*

So to have any spending money at all Hillary had to earn it outside the home. She always had an outside summer job—since the age of thirteen—in addition to doing her household chores. Her first summer job: to supervise a small, neighborhood park. Three

mornings a week. Walking to the park, pulling “a wagon filled with balls, bats, jump ropes, and other supplies back and forth.” Later she babysat for neighbors and at a day care center. And later still worked as a retail salesgirl. Anything to earn a little pocket money and overcome the lack of an allowance.

Where did Hillary get her organizing abilities? They didn’t come about instantaneously when she grew to adulthood. No, they were *learned* in childhood. First as a Brownie Scout, then as a Girl Scout. Working in parades for the Fourth of July. Food drives, cookie sales, merit badges. Organizing neighborhood kids in games, sporting events, and backyard carnivals. Both for fun and to raise nickels and dimes for charities (an old photograph from their local newspaper shows Hillary and a bunch of her friends handing over a paper bag of money for the United Way—raised from a Children’s Olympics they staged).

Although she grew up in a cautious, conformist era in American history, her mother taught her to resist peer pressure. Never wanted to hear about what Hillary’s friends were wearing or what they thought about her or anything else.

*‘You’re unique,’ she would say. ‘you can think for yourself. I don’t care if everybody’s doing it. We’re not everybody. You’re not everybody.’ (Clinton, 14)*

The Wellesley class of 1969. Hillary’s class. An all-girls college. A school focused on “academic achievement and extracurricular leadership.” Naturally there were many more opportunities for women to operate in leadership positions in a women’s college than in a co-ed school. Ability, hard work, achievement. These were rewarded far more there than elsewhere. It was a psychological “safe zone” for women. A place where they could grow and flex their ambitions openly, without male competition. She found opportunity as President of the Young Republicans, but that ended with her turning away from their views. Her world view was changing. She was reading liberal liberally. The Vietnam War was intruding too. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s and Robert F. Kennedy’s assassinations. America was in conflict domestically, and Hillary was in the middle of the campus maelstrom.

At Wellesley, Hillary blossomed. In her classrooms Hillary’s encyclopedic memory and debating skills, honed over the dinner table at home, were formidable. In her relationships with other girls, she garnered quick leadership status. Because of her personal generosity. Her unselfish talent for praising others. Her tireless campaigning. Her keen memory for personal details. Her speaking skill, which included well-reasoned conclusions. And her concern for the problems of others. *She was electric.* Charged. Ready well beyond her years.

It was time to move on, politically and academically. On to “The Paper Chase” at Yale Law School.

She graduated from Wellesley and arrived at Yale in the fall of 1969. Bringing from Wellesley “a reputation as both a bold leader and an activist.” (Bernstein, 63)—based partly on her bold commencement address at Wellesley (the first by a student), which attracted national attention. Her picture had been splashed across *Life* magazine and the media. Illuminating her anti-Vietnam war speeches, and work in support of Eugene McCarthy’s candidacy for President at the 1968 Republican National Convention. She

was *known* and intimidating to other law students. Classmates were awed. Here was a woman that had *already done* what some of them aspired to. Her resume for activism had heft already.

Ultimately she was one of twenty-seven women, out of 235 students who graduated. Her concentration was children's rights and needs in family law.

1970. Enter William "Bill" Clinton. Fresh from Oxford University. They met briefly, but didn't really connect until the spring of 1971, after which they were inseparable. They married in 1975.

Action. Now she wanted to use the law to press *for the benefit of people*.

While at Yale, Hillary served on the editorial board of the *Yale Review of Law and Social Action*. Wrote a number of articles for the scholarly journals, including '*Children Under the Law*,' published in 1974 in the *Harvard Educational Review* (it researched the legal problems and civic consequences of children suffering abuse or neglect). Also while she was at Yale, she did a year of postgraduate study on children and medicine at the Yale Child Study Center, and substantial work on child development research, child abuse, migratory labor, and politics—through various organizations, including the New Haven (Connecticut) Legal Services office.

Post her marriage to Bill Clinton, she moved with him to Arkansas. When he was elected Governor of Arkansas, as his First Lady she successfully led a task force to reform Arkansas's education system. And co-founded the Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families in 1977.

As the wife of Bill Clinton, the 42<sup>nd</sup> President of the United States, she served as First Lady from 1993–2001. Afterwards she was elected and served as U.S. Senator from the State of New York from 2001–2009. It was the first time an American First Lady had run for public office.

In the 2008 race for the Democratic presidential nomination she was narrowly defeated by Barack Obama, yet went on to be appointed *by him* to serve as the 67<sup>th</sup> U.S. Secretary of State. She began serving in January 2009.

## Parenting Techniques

### 1—Find your guts in tough situations

Whatever her faults, never let it be said that Hillary's grandmother didn't have guts. When the sky looked blackest. When the chips were *all* down. She had *guts*.

The year was 1920. Hillary's father was riding on the back of a horse-drawn wagon as the horses struggled up a hill. Suddenly a truck hit the back of the wagon. Crushed her dad's legs. Rushed to the nearest hospital, the word from the doctors attending him was grim indeed. His lower legs and feet could *not* be fixed. He should prepare for amputation. They were ready to amputate.

Hannah, Hillary's grandmother, was told—and refused to believe the pronouncement. No doctor was going to amputate *her* husband's legs. *No one*. They couldn't operate unless it was to *save* his legs. That was *final*.

She demanded another opinion—this time from her brother-in-law, Dr. Thomas Rodham. She got it, and Dr. Rodham gave the *same* warning to the hospital staff—that nobody would be cutting the boy’s legs off.

When Hillary’s dad awoke his mother was guarding him. Assuring him that his legs would not be amputated—but that he would get a good, hard whipping when he finally got home.

It became an almost legendary story, repeated over and over within the family down through the years. Hannah Jones Rodham had faced the abyss—and defied it. She had protected the integrity of her family. Against all odds. She had guts. Guts to spare.

## **2—Doing two things at once is not rocket science**

Dorothy, Hillary’s mother, was, in simple words, a homemaker. Her family responsibilities and chores were numerous. *They surrounded her, nearly overwhelmed her.* Many needed to be done, seemingly at once. Hillary saw her mother as a woman of *enormous* energy, in perpetual motion. Making beds, washing dishes, putting dinner on the table precisely at six o’clock. Dozens and dozens of tasks.

Every day Hillary came home for lunch. Soup and sandwiches of cheese, peanut butter, or bologna. Wintertime being pulled on their sled to the grocery store. Carrying the groceries home for her mother. Reveling in creating fantasy worlds conjured in a large cardboard box. Then nightly story time for the children. Time to listen to the radio. Time and space for Hillary to spend with her mother.

Every week Dorothy took the kids to the library. Allowed them to play cards and board games (believing that these taught children math skills and strategy). And helped them with their non-math homework (math being the purview of Hugh Sr.).

Later—after the kids were grown and out of the house—Dorothy would take college courses. Not for a degree. Just to enlarge her knowledge. Dozens of courses. Building her mind.

Maybe it wasn’t the life Dorothy dreamed of. But she had a responsibility. To raise her children the very best she could. And she would not shirk that responsibility. No matter how many tasks life threw at her.

Organization and focus.

Trying to manage too many tasks results in chaos, in nothing getting accomplished. Teach your children how to organize for success and focus on the most critical goals—pushing the others aside.

There are, of course, many ways to organize. Each person’s personality reacts differently to different methods. The particular method used is not as important as its efficiency and dedicated use. Suggest several methods to your children. Show them your methods and let them see you using them constantly. Then monitor that they are, in some strict fashion, organizing and focusing.

## **3—Don’t tolerate waste.**

It was her father. He was the hawk. “My father could not stand personal waste. Like so

many who grew up in the Depression, his fear of poverty colored his life.” (Clinton, 11)

Rarely did Hillary’s mother Dorothy buy new clothes. They were invariably second-hand. New purchases required lengthy negotiations with Hugh Sr.—*often extending over a period of weeks*. Both Hillary and her mother entered the negotiations opposite her dad. Do they *really, truly* need that? How much does it cost? Why does it cost so much? Can’t you buy it cheaper somewhere else? What are you going to do with it? Will it last? They had to fight and fight hard for the *privilege* of getting something new.

Nothing escaped the discussion. Buying on credit was out of the question. *No credit*. Only cash purchases were allowed (“He did not believe in credit and he ran his business on a strict pay-as-you-go policy” (Clinton, 11)).

Nothing was too small a waste to ignore.

*If one of my brothers or I forgot to screw the cap back on the toothpaste tube, my father threw it out the bathroom window. We would have to go outside, even in the snow, to search for it in the evergreen bushes in front of the house. That was his way of reminding us not to waste anything. To this day, I put uneaten olives back in the jar, wrap up the tiniest pieces of cheese and feel guilty when I throw anything away. (Clinton, 11)*

Waste is rampant among Americans. Daily we throw out huge quantities of food, medicine slightly out of date, excess packaging. We waste more as Americans in a land of plenty than most other societies *have*. We are to blame. And we teach our children, by our actions, that it is *OK*. To reverse this pattern, we as parents, must start to crack down on waste—whenever and wherever we find it.

*Waste not; want not.*

The old adage still applies. In good times, not so good times, and bad times. *Now* is the time to prepare your children for a future where plenty may have turned to scarcity.

#### **4—Don’t give in to bullying, whether you are a child or adult**

Both of Hillary’s parents exhorted her to be tough. *Life was tough. She had to be tough*. It wasn’t going to be easy out in the world. Better to learn to be tough *now*, rather than later. To that end, they conditioned her.

Girls in the family had to stand up for their rights. Just as boys did. No difference. The world wasn’t going to be any easier for women than men. So women had to learn to be tough. Tougher than men. Tougher than others. Tough enough to withstand everything the world had to throw at them.

*In Park Ridge my mother noticed that I was reluctant to go outside to play. Sometimes I came in crying, complaining that the girl across the street was always pushing me around. Suzy O'Callaghan had older brothers, and she was used to playing rough. I was only four years old, but my mother was afraid that if I gave in to my fears, it would set a pattern for the rest of my life.*

*One day, I came running into the house. She stopped me.*

*'Go back out there,' she ordered, 'and if Suzy hits you, you have my permission to hit her back. You have to stand up for yourself. There's no room in this house for cowards.'*

*I returned a few minutes later, glowing with victory. (Clinton, 12)*

Bullying can be a teaching lesson. Letting it go too far, of course, is terribly bad. But mild bullying can be fought by your child, overcome, and provide a gritty backbone for life.

## **5—Do all the good you can**

*Social responsibility.* For Hillary it began in the First United Methodist Church of Park Ridge, Illinois. She was an active member. They “opened my eyes and heart to the needs of others and helped instill a sense of social responsibility rooted in my faith.” (Clinton, 21)

John Wesley founded the Methodist Church in England in the 1700’s. Good works were one cornerstone of his church. His religion, his philosophy had a simple rule:

*Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.*

It’s not an easy path to follow. There will be many who will try to stand in your way. But you *can* prevail.

Do all the good you can.

## **6—Be accepting of different opinions**

The kitchen table became the site of heated discussions by the Rodham family. Hugh Sr., Hillary’s “highly opinionated” father, led the discussions. The three lowest forms of life, in his opinion, were:

- Communists
- Shady businessmen
- Crooked politicians.

Politics. Sports. *Every subject was open for comment.* Maybe you couldn’t sway Hugh Sr. *But*—he appreciated well-constructed and defended arguments. Yes, almost everyone in the family had a different opinion. But that didn’t prevent those opinions from existing under the same roof. You didn’t demonize your siblings, parents, or children for diverse thoughts. For thinking adverse to yours. You accepted various opinions as OK. OK in a family. OK in a community. OK in a nation.

