

A Woman in Charge-The Life of Hillary Rodham Clinton by Carl Bernstein.
Hutchinson 2007

There are few better observers of the Washington scene, and few better biographers, in terms both of feel for subject and meticulous research, than Carl Bernstein. *A Woman in Charge* shows him at the height of his powers and in control of his subject, rather than the other way round.

A Woman in Charge is the story of the life of Hillary Clinton, both before Bill and after. It is a life rich in paradox and irony to be sure, but it is an immensely impressive life led by a deeply impressive woman. Some might consider *A Woman in Charge* to be part of Ms Clinton's manifesto for the Presidency in 2008, but it is too honest to be a true election-focussed panegyric: this is a warts and all biography, as the best biographies should be, and this **is** one of the best.

Bernstein traces Hillary Rodham's early life, her relations with her parents and siblings, her primary motivations, her school and university career, her legal beginnings. In each of these areas can be seen aspects of the woman she was to become. Then comes her fateful meeting with Bill Clinton at Yale, where she studied from 1969 during a period of the utmost turbulence in terms of student unrest about the Vietnam War and civil rights.

The story of the White House years has been widely documented elsewhere in all its aspects but Bernstein presents the key details here in a Hillary-centric way which adds a fresh dimension to aspects of the Clinton presidency which are illuminating of her character, her strengths and weaknesses, and her resilience.

A Woman in Charge is not going to be sufficient to propel Hillary Rodham Clinton to the White House as America's first woman President, but having read it the conclusion is unavoidable that if America **DOES** vote her into its top job it will have made an inspired choice.

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