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Subject: : Documentary on W's Campaign Press Corps by Alexandra Pelosi - Roll Call
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SUBJECT:: Documentary on W's Campaign Press Corps by Alexandra Pelosi - Roll Call

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To: "Richard Mallory (E-mail)" P6/b(6) "MalloryP (E-mail)"

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cc:

Subject: Documentary on W's Campaign Press Corps by Alexandra Pelosi - Roll Call

Roll Call's "Around the Hill," October 3, 2002

'Journeys With George'

Politicians Get First Peek at Revealing Documentary

By Diwata Fonte

Alexandra Pelosi and her homemade documentary about life on George W. Bush's

2000 campaign trail debuted to Capitol Hill on Monday night.

Pelosi, who followed the Bush campaign as a producer with NBC's "Dateline," said it wasn't an accident that "Journeys with George" premiered in Austin, Texas, and many universities around the country before making it to Capitol Hill.

"I resisted coming here because everyone here is so political," said

Pelosi,

daughter of House Minority Whip Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.). "They can't see the bigger picture."

But the movie, which premiered at the Library of Congress, avoided partisan politics and instead focused on the humorous developments that occur when a

future U.S. president and the nation's top journalists co-habitate for a year and a half.

Viewers watch journalists eat turkey sandwiches day in and day out, record photo opportunities in bowling alleys, on snowmobiles and aboard train cabooses, and listen to the same stump speech at every stop.

Pelosi's rendition of campaign life portrayed the experience so accurately that Richard Wolffe, a reporter featured in the documentary said, "It's like a bad flashback."

Rep. John Tierney (D-Mass.) said watching how the journalists lived helped him understand their position.

"I didn't know the lifestyle of the press. They're really cramped and on top of each other," he said. "It's a tough way to make a living."

One telling scene showed Pelosi asking Bush a hardball question about the death penalty. After the press conference, you see Bush turning cold to her.

"It gives you an understanding of the position the press corps reports from in a presidential campaign," Rep. Max Sandlin (D-Texas) said. "It's part glitz, part facts and part entertainment. It's interesting that the report that you're getting is not just a news story."

Scenes mostly included lighthearted moments like Karl Rove prancing in the snow, or a campaign reporter comparing white-bread baloney-and-cheese sandwiches to the average Republican candidate.

But it also illuminated turning points in Bush's campaign through the press corps' perspective: Bush's visit to Bob Jones University, his speech after his DUI made news, or the picture taken with Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) after a defeat.

Many viewers expected to see the softer side of Bush, a man hyperconscious of media relations.

"The film showed mostly the human side of the president and the fluid nature of the campaign," Sandlin said. "It reinforced that the president is a human being."

But Rep. Sam Farr (D-Calif.) hoped to see Bush reveal himself more substantially.

"He's so guarded in this," he said. "Besides the clowning around you never get beneath the surface. He seems afraid of the press corps."

Despite controversy that Bush wasn't aware that Pelosi planned to produce a documentary with her footage, there's no doubt that Bush was aware of Pelosi. He played with the camera, often holding it and breathing into the lens. Bush even named the documentary, suggesting she spell "Journeys" with

a "G."

However, moments in the film hint at how Bush played the media.

"He charmed us, and the press corps fell for it," said Wolffe, a Financial Times reporter.

Wolffe predicts that campaigns will be more sensitive after Pelosi's documentary shows what she actually did with her camcorder tapes.

"I don't know if another candidate would do it again," he said.

Nonetheless, Pelosi plans to tape another show on the road. She's courting Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.), House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.), Sen. John Edwards (D-N.C) and Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) to see if she can document a Democratic presidential challenger's campaign.
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