Newsweek

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Master of Disaster

The Real Rudy Giuliani: A Profile
By Jonathan Darman
Newsweek

March 12, 2007 issue - Rudy Giuliani had been speaking for six minutes before anyone in the audience thought to clap, which was exactly the way he wanted it. Talking to a political crowd in North Spartanburg, S.C., last month, the former New York City mayor and 2008 presidential candidate was not there to excite but to warn; he was less interested in making political promises than he was in sketching out the perils we face. He spoke in the hushed tones of the day that marked him for history, September 11, 2001, his voice barely filling the somber setting—not a hotel ballroom or a church basement, but a firehouse, festooned with American flags.

America's struggle was far from over, Giuliani warned the crowd. The terrorists who tested the nation that morning were still plotting to destroy its spirit. He wouldn't even use the word "if" to talk about future attacks: "I think probably the way I have to say it is, *when* we're attacked. That's the only way we're going to be safe." The crowd remained silent. "We're going to be in this war for quite some time," Giuliani concluded. "Not by our choosing, but by theirs."

His remarks were dramatic, which was fitting, since Giuliani has always been a man of drama, always thriving at moments of crisis. Growing up in the Long Island suburbs of New York in the placid 1950s, he would close the door to his bedroom and listen to Italian operas, in which each song contained a challenge, a confession or a choice. As a college student he read the words of Winston Churchill, perhaps dreaming that he, too, might one day feel as though he were "walking with Destiny." For a pudgy, Brooklyn-born undergraduate at Manhattan College, his aspirations seemed somewhat outlandish. Sometimes they still do. In his daily interactions, Giuliani can be arrogant, abrasive and imperious, an average-size man trying too hard to prove himself a giant.

But when the crises come, Giuliani has proved to be big enough. New York City was crime-ridden with a dwindling middle class when he became mayor in 1994. By the millennium, the city was safe, swaggering—and the envy of much of the nation. On 9/11, with the president hidden from view, "America's Mayor" steeled the country by speaking the terrible truth: "The number of casualties will be more than any of us can bear." Now, with the war in Iraq in chaos and Al Qaeda still unvanquished, he is pitching himself to Republican primary voters as the man destined to steady the party and the nation in a time of trial.

The Republicans will require some convincing. Giuliani is a social moderate running in a party dominated by Christian conservatives; he supports gay rights and gun control, and hopes to be his party's first pro-choice presidential nominee since Gerald Ford more than 30 years ago. His tenure at city hall—in which he donned fishnet stockings to dance alongside the Rockettes and sauntered for the press corps as a pink-chiffon-clad Marilyn Monroe—is a case study in why no New York City mayor has gone on to higher office since 1868.

Yet with their party in turmoil after the disastrous 2006 midterm elections, some conservatives seem willing to overlook the mayor's colorful past. After a slow start, Giuliani's candidacy has gained ground in recent weeks, thanks in part to former front runner John McCain's staunch advocacy for escalating the troop presence in Iraq and the emerging impression that *none* of the top-tier candidates (Giuliani, McCain, former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney) is a true believer on social issues. In the new NEWSWEEK Poll, Giuliani leads McCain by 25 points (59 to 34 percent) as the choice of registered Republicans and voters leaning Republican for the party's nomination, while Romney trails both men by more than 30 points.

As Giuliani campaigns to protect the country from disaster, he will have to account for calamities from his own past and of his own making. Twice divorced, he has lived a life more to the tastes of New York tabloid editors than evangelical voters in South Carolina. "I can guarantee you that the majority of Southern Baptists will not vote for Giuliani," says Richard Land, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. "President Truman said he would never hire someone who cheated on his wife, because if a person breaks his marriage oath he could also break his oath of office."

Mindful of Giuliani's vulnerabilities, his campaign has controlled his exposure to the media tightly. He declined to be interviewed or photographed for this story. But with the Iowa caucuses still 10 months away, Republican primary voters will soon learn all about the Real Rudy that New Yorkers know so well. The former mayor's life story is that of a man with a righteous sense of right and wrong who excels when the world presents him with a crisis, and, when left to his own devices, creates crises for himself.

Born in 1944, Rudolph William Giuliani was raised to be tough in moments of peril. On a school trip to Washington, D.C., at the age of 17, he stayed up late with other boys, horsing around in the hallway of the hotel. The commotion attracted the attention of an angry hotel manager. "He said to us, 'Pack your bags, you're out of there'," recalls Peter Powers, a Giuliani friend since childhood. The other teenagers panicked; Giuliani was unimpressed. "He's bluffing," said the future mayor. "I'm going to bed." Sure enough, the manager was never heard from again.

Giuliani was taught to venerate courage by his father, Harold, a man with a complex moral history. In 2000, Wayne Barrett, author of "Rudy!", uncovered court documents showing that Harold had served time for armed robbery in Manhattan when he was 26. Barrett's account also quoted eyewitnesses who claimed Harold had served as an enforcer for a brother-in-law who ran a loan-sharking business out of a Brooklyn bar. But Giuliani, who said he knew only "parts" of Harold's checkered past, still spoke of his father with awe. Powers recalls Harold as a moral pillar: "He would ... tell us, 'Behave, do the right thing'."

Young Rudy adopted a black-and-white sense of justice. After Manhattan College and New York University Law School, he set off on a career as a prosecutor singularly focused on battling evil. He made a name for himself as a young assistant U.S. attorney in the Southern District of New York, chasing drug rings and corrupt cops. Friends recall an exceptionally driven prosecutor. "Rudy's professional life always took precedence over his personal life," says Jeffrey Harris, a colleague from the Southern District. "If that meant canceling a vacation or not being at home much in order to ensure he ... performed at the highest level, he was willing to make the personal sacrifice." The sacrifice was real: Giuliani's first marriage, to his second cousin Regina Peruggi, ended in divorce. (It was later annulled by the Roman Catholic Church on the ground that the couple hadn't gotten a

special dispensation required for blood relatives to marry.) But his star turn earned him an appointment as Ronald Reagan's associate attorney general, the Justice Department's No. 3 position, in 1981.

At Justice, Giuliani had a knack for causing a ruckus. Shortly after arriving in Washington, he held a highly unusual meeting with the general counsel of McDonnell Douglas. The aeronautics corporation was under federal indictment on charges of fraud and conspiracy at the time and allegedly applied pressure to Republican lawmakers to get the Justice Department to back off. Informed of Giuliani's backdoor session, the two career prosecutors handling the case dashed off a letter to him claiming he'd created the "appearance that certain influential defendants have access to senior officials." The letter quickly found its way into the press. Enraged, Giuliani called the two prosecutors into his office. "He was raising his hands, screaming, 'How dare we send a note like this!' " recalls Michael Lublin, one of the prosecutors. "I've never seen a public official who behaved like that." The scandal passed, but Giuliani held a grudge. After the McDonnell flap, he was slated to give awards to Lublin and his fellow prosecutor, George Mendelson, at a Justice Department ceremony. Giuliani refused to present the honor, Lublin says. (Giuliani's campaign did not respond to a request for comment.)

Within two years, Giuliani had earned the trust of Reagan administration officials and was offered the job he really wanted: U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York. He logged long hours and brought a string of high-profile cases against mobsters, corrupt public officials and Wall Street inside traders. And he developed an addiction to media attention. To make a point about the city's rampant drug problem, he and New York Sen. Alfonse D'Amato donned black leather jackets and dark shades and cruised the streets of an uptown neighborhood to make undercover crack buys.

By then, Giuliani had come to rely on an influential adviser: his wife. On a trip to Miami in 1982, Giuliani was introduced to an attractive local anchorwoman named Donna Hanover. Hooked, he pursued her intently and proposed within six weeks. Together in New York, Hanover helped Giuliani navigate the tricky tabloid culture. This was no idle exercise; Giuliani had long viewed the Southern District as a jumping-off point for elected office in New York. In 1989, he ran as the Republican candidate for mayor against David Dinkins. He lost by three points.

Bitter about his defeat, Giuliani was convinced he would have to intensify his efforts to survive the bedlam of New York politics. Targeting Dinkins in a 1993 rematch, he brought in a steady stream of outside experts to run a series of seminars on city government. "He didn't want Dinkins to know something he didn't," says Henry Stern, a New York City parks commissioner under Giuliani. One snowy morning in 1991, while Stern was out walking his dog, he ran into Giuliani and his young son, Andrew, in a park on Manhattan's Upper East Side. "When are we going to get a dog, Daddy?" Andrew asked his father. "When we live in Gracie Mansion, we'll have a dog," Giuliani replied. The seminars paid off: in 1993, Giuliani defeated Dinkins by 2.9 points.

The crisis facing New York when Giuliani took over city hall was vast. With a $2 billion deficit, the city was struggling to provide basic services, and the persistence of violent crime had forced many urban professionals to move their families to the suburbs. The problems were so vast, some observers wondered if Giuliani, or any mayor, could do much to solve them. Dismissing the doubters, Giuliani seemed to revel in the challenge, casting it as historical drama. "Winston Churchill," he said in a December 1993 speech, "didn't walk out in the middle of the Battle of Britain and say, 'You know, those bombs may really win out in the long run and we may lose to the Nazis'."

Giuliani wouldn't rest until New York was safe. He ordered the NYPD to scale back its feel-good community-liaison projects and simply patrol the streets. As his police commissioner he recruited William Bratton, a media-friendly Boston police commissioner who subscribed to the "broken windows" approach to enforcement. The theory held that areas that tolerated small-time crime would eventually become havens for more-serious offenses. (A single broken window would lead to more broken windows, which would lead to squatters'

breaking into a building.) Graffiti artists, loiterers and prostitutes became the targets of the swift hand of the law. Bratton introduced CompStat—a system for mapping real-time crime statistics to allocate policing resources more precisely and keep track of officers' performance. Questions persisted about whether pursuing squeegee men—panhandlers who washed the windows of cars waiting in traffic—was the best use of the mayor's and his police force's time. But the strategies seemed to work: by the end of Giuliani's first year, homicides in the city were down 18 percent.

New York was emerging from adversity and Giuliani wanted the credit. It was widely reported that he was enraged when Bratton appeared on the cover of a January 1996 Time magazine under the headline FINALLY, WE'RE WINNING THE WAR AGAINST CRIME. Bratton stepped down from the NYPD within months. (Giuliani denied publicity was the issue; "Bratton didn't understand that he had a boss," says Giuliani friend Powers. "It's not a question of credit.") By this time, New Yorkers had grown accustomed to a mayor who loved combat—with allies and adversaries alike. "For Rudy, governing New York was conquering New York," says Mitchell Moss, a professor of urban policy and planning at New York University. "He thrived on confrontation." As long as Rudy got results, the public didn't particularly care how he did it, or how many fights he picked. The squeegee men were gone, as were turnstile jumpers and the more notorious pornographic emporiums. In terms of quality of life, he delivered. The rest was just drama—drama that exhausted those involved, yes, but what mattered was New York was livable again. Suburban parents no longer automatically vetoed children's trips into the city. By the end of his first term, Giuliani had cut 20,000 workers from the city's payrolls, was dramatically reducing the welfare rolls and had violent crime approaching a 30-year low. The public rewarded him with 55 percent of the vote when he ran for re-election in 1997.

His city delivered from strife, Giuliani went, in John Quincy Adams's phrase, in search of monsters to destroy. Sometimes the mayor created them when a lot of people didn't think they really existed. Where to begin? First, there was the New York Magazine ad campaign in which the magazine called itself "possibly the only good thing in New York Rudy hasn't taken credit for." Giuliani banned the ad from city buses, prompting the magazine to sue, successfully, on the ground that the mayor had violated its First Amendment rights. Then there was the risqué Brooklyn Museum exhibit that included a portrait of the Virgin Mary that the artist had stained with a clump of elephant dung. Whatever one might think of the exhibit's artistic merits—and reasonable people could disagree—Giuliani went to war in a way even some of his friends found rhetorically extreme. Outraged, he responded as though the museum was poised to destroy Christendom. "You don't have a right to government subsidy for desecrating someone else's religion," the mayor said. Some old supporters wondered if he'd lost his sense of proportion. "It was almost as if he became so enamored of his press," says Floyd Flake, a former Democratic congressman from Queens who supported Giuliani in 1993, "that he had to be solving something, even if there wasn't any problem to solve."

The mayor's largely cultural or political skirmishes—bus ads, art exhibits—were particularly irksome to minorities, who believed he was ignoring a *real* problem: the city's racial divide. To some community activists, Giuliani's police force seemed especially eager to practice its tough new enforcement tactics on black New Yorkers, guilty or not. Tensions boiled over on Feb. 4, 1999, when NYPD officers fired 41 shots at Amadou Diallo, an unarmed Guinean immigrant, in the vestibule of his Bronx apartment building. Giuliani expressed regret over the killing but seemed primarily concerned with protecting the police department's image. Ed Koch, the former New York mayor who'd supported Giuliani in the 1993 and '97 campaigns, became an ardent critic. "Blacks and Hispanics ... would say to me, 'He's a racist!'" Koch tells NEWSWEEK. "I said, 'Absolutely not, he's nasty to everybody'."

Giuliani was also embroiled in personal crises. By the late '90s, he and Hanover were leading largely separate lives. In 1999 the mayor met Judi Nathan, an attractive East Side divorcée. He was smitten. Over the next year, Nathan and Giuliani spent time together. When Giuliani was diagnosed with prostate cancer in the spring of 2000, forcing him out of a Senate race against Hillary Clinton, Nathan, a registered nurse, helped him as he

underwent treatment. Finally, in May 2000, after the New York Daily News published photos of the couple, Giuliani confirmed that Nathan was his "very good friend."

Then a bizarre sequence unfolded: a week after the photos appeared, Giuliani announced in his daily press briefing that he and Hanover would begin divorce proceedings. But later that day, in a hastily arranged press conference, Hanover had her own announcement: Giuliani's announcement had caught her by surprise.

Giuliani's private life was a shambles—and on full display. Another mayor of another city might have moved swiftly to settle the unseemly matter quietly; Giuliani, however, hired Raoul Felder, a celebrity divorce attorney never known to be shy of publicity. When Hanover's lawyers filed a "paramour access motion" seeking to prevent Nathan from entering Gracie Mansion, where Hanover continued to live, Felder accused Hanover of "howling like a stuck pig." (After a judge banned Nathan from the mansion, Giuliani moved into a suite in the home of his friend Howard Koeppel and his partner Mark Hsiao.) No detail seemed too personal for the papers—even the fact that Giuliani's cancer treatment had rendered him temporarily impotent was used to counter the idea that Nathan was his mistress. ("The mayor can't have a paramour if he can't paraform," the comedian Jackie Mason, a Giuliani friend, explained to the New York Post.) Giuliani and Hanover eventually reached a settlement, but by the summer of 2001, Giuliani, savior of Gotham in his first term, had fallen from his early heroic heights. He was unpopular, even irrelevant, as New Yorkers prepared to elect his successor in the autumn of the first year of the new century.

And then came the cold horror of September 11. In those morning and midday hours Giuliani was transformed into the man of destiny he'd seemed to always believe himself to be. Some New Yorkers will remember that awful day as a sheer struggle for survival, a crazed exodus from lower Manhattan. Others will recall the frantic search for a loved one feared to be in one of the towers or on one of the doomed planes. But when the vast majority of Americans look back on 9/11, they will, for the ages, think of Giuliani walking through ash and soot. He was honest, sad and strong; he was heroic. Alone that night, before going to bed, he read Churchill's May 1940 speech to the House of Commons: *I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat.*

September 11 made Giuliani untouchable. Queen Elizabeth named him an honorary knight. French President Jacques Chirac called him "Rudy the Rock." He became a fixture at Republican rallies around the country in the elections of 2002, 2004—the year the GOP convention came to Madison Square Garden—and 2006. Once reviled by his party for his moderate views, he leapt to the top of opinion polls of potential 2008 Republican nominees.

There were other, more immediate rewards. After leaving the mayor's office in January 2002, Giuliani eventually commanded $100,000 per engagement on the lecture circuit. He found joy spending his new money with Nathan. "She became a socialite," says a friend who would comment on the couple only anonymously. "She helped his hair, she helped his suits." In May 2003, Michael Bloomberg, Giuliani's successor as mayor, married them in a star-studded ceremony on the lawn of the mayor's residence. Wearing an antique white Vera Wang gown and a pearl-and-diamond tiara, Nathan was finally mistress of Gracie, if only for one night.

Giuliani had found the good life, but that didn't stop him from playing a role in the arena, with very mixed results. In 2004, when the Bush administration was looking for a new Homeland Security secretary, Giuliani enthusiastically made the case for Bernard Kerik, who'd served as his police chief on 9/11. Gruff and hard-charging, Kerik was a Giuliani favorite; when the former mayor started Giuliani Partners, a security firm, he brought Kerik onboard, along with other associates such as Anthony Carbonetti and Denny Young. His recommendation helped Kerik win White House support. "Rudy got the door open for Bernie," says an administration official familiar with the Kerik nomination who would discuss personnel matters only anonymously.

Kerik's nomination was a disaster from the moment Bush announced it. Reporters inundated the White House with allegations of his seemingly shady behavior, including a sweetheart stock deal, improper use of police resources and connections to Mafia-linked construction moguls. (In 2006, Kerik pleaded guilty to two misdemeanors for accepting $165,000 in renovations to his Bronx apartment from a company attempting to win city contracts and for failing to report a $28,000 loan from a real-estate developer.) The White House was caught completely off guard. Bush withdrew Kerik's name after a week and a half, and the botched nomination threw Giuliani's political future into doubt. By the end of 2006, he had yet to assemble a serious political team for a 2008 run. The New York Daily News published an embarrassingly amateurish memo from his staff laying out potential fund-raising targets (many of whom had already been scooped up by McCain) and forecasting potential weaknesses. More than a few Republicans concluded he wasn't serious about running.

Then, once again, Giuliani surprised. "I'm running," he told Larry King in an interview last month before setting off on a series of carefully staged campaign events around the country to prove the point. Just showing that he meant it gave Giuliani a serious bump in the polls and worried his rivals. "I have thought for the longest time that [Giuliani] had zero chance," says an aide to another Republican candidate who asked for anonymity talking up the chances of his boss's rival. "But he's got real momentum. And if there's a terrorist attack between now and the election, he could be the next president of the United States."

Social conservatives remain skeptical and suspicious. "Giuliani is highly respected by lots of Americans because of his leadership after 9/11," says Gary Bauer, president of the conservative nonprofit organization American Values. "In fact, there is evidence that it might be the only thing people could tell you about him." A particular weakness for Giuliani may be gun control, a cause he advocated again and again as part of his crimefighting plan in New York. Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform, asks: "The question is, do you need someone who is 100 percent on these issues, or someone who reaches a threshold? He wouldn't be polling so well if he wasn't coming close to a certain threshold."

Giuliani may well be his own worst enemy. His strength in crisis can blur into stubbornness; his resolute conviction sometimes leads to churlishness and a tendency to divide the world into good and evil, with little apparently in between. Voters will have to decide whether his virtues are worth his vices in the White House.

But make no mistake: he is a man of formidable virtues, and mastering the brutal politics of New York is good training for a fast-paced nomination fight and what will likely be a close-run general election.

Will conventional considerations—that is, the ordinary expectations voters have of presidential candidates—apply to Giuliani, or does 9/11 loom so large in the national consciousness even now that Americans will give the mayor a pass on the temperament question in favor of a man who is both strong and competent? (It is hard to imagine a President Giuliani botching the response to Katrina in the way President Bush did.)

The numbers may be strong now, but as British Prime Minister Harold Wilson used to say, a week is an eternity in politics, much less a year. At the event last month in South Carolina, Giuliani looked unsteady as he fielded questions on jobs, immigration and free trade. He still seems un-comfortable when coaxed off his national-security script. But no one knows better than Giuliani that every day is not 9/11, and while the crises of a campaign may seem inane, they are far from inconsequential. In the coming months, there will be a million small disasters—ways to falter or chances to become a man of destiny once more.

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