

# NEW YORK OBSERVER

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## The Mayor as Mourner: He's on Victims' Side

IS ANYONE BETTER THAN MAYOR RUDOLPH GIULIANI AT PINPOINTING VILLAINS? Let's give the Mayor credit. When Trans World Airlines flight 800 crashed, Mr. Giuliani and Police Commissioner Howard Safir went to Kennedy International Airport to assist the families and friends of the victims, it didn't take the Mayor long to realize that T.W.A. was doing little to relieve the anguish of the victims' families.

While T.W.A.'s operatives went home to catch up on his sleep, Mr. Giuliani was at the airport all night. When Mr. Giuliani lashed out at TWA management for its slow response to the tragedy, he did so knowing that he had done everything he could to help the grief-stricken families.

Unlike Gov. George Pataki, who prematurely claimed that divers had located dozens of bodies, Mr. Giuliani showed that he understands his role as a comfort giver, fellow mourner and advocate for the sick at heart.

The Mayor's presence at the airport wasn't required - the plane, after all, went down over water, far beyond the city's boundaries but, as events demonstrated, he became an essential part of the story, an unofficial monitor of the massive, but vain, rescue effort. By the time Mr. Pataki and Senator Alfonse D'Amato arrived on the scene (in matching golf shirts), the only fall guy they could find was the Suffolk County medical examiner's office, which had arrogantly turned down offers of help.

The FBI's New York bureau chief, James Kallstrom, could teach our politicians a few lessons. He's smart, articulate and willing to share the stage. He and Robert Francis of the National Transportation Safety Board have worked well together in explaining and coordinating the investigation. Mr. Kallstrom's casual attire and honest answers are a refreshing signal that the agency has truly outgrown the tie-and-jacket uniform of J. Edgar Hoover.

IS SUSAN MOLINARI BOUND FOR HIGHER OFFICE? It certainly looks that way. While almost every Democrat with a triple-digit I.Q. prepares to run for Mr. D'Amato's Senate seat in 1998, Ms. Molinari's keynote address at the Republican National Convention in San Diego could be her launching pad to succeed the state's senior Senator. Daniel Patrick Moynihan in 2000. Just as the Mario Cuomo's 1984 keynote speech in San Francisco elevated his stature, Ms. Molinari's 10 minutes of prime-time exposure is a golden opportunity to transcend her roots and attract the funds needed to run statewide. And just as Mr. Cuomo overshadowed his party's presidential nominee in 1984, Walter Mondale, the spunky Ms. Molinari should have no trouble outshining the 73-year-old Bob Dole.

Do New York City's three Democratic Congresswomen - Carolyn Maloney, Nydia Velazquez and Nita Lowey - realize they've been ignored by those in charge of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago? Is it possible that only Italian-Americans like former Representative Geraldine Ferraro or Ms. Molinari are acceptable to national party leaders?

More than 20 years ago. Representative Shirley Chisholm of Brooklyn ran for the Democratic Party's Presidential nomination. Since then, women have been elected as governors in New Jersey and Connecticut. But in New York, the only woman in a statewide office is Lit. Gov. Betsy McCaughey Ross, and she has so alienated Republican leaders that she probably will be looking for work instead of campaigning for re-election in 1998. Although women who vote in New York tend to be Democrats, they're too smart to spend their best years waiting in line when they can make it in banking, law and fashion - and then bankroll any pol they want

WHY SHOULD ANYONE TRUST IBM CHIEF EXECUTIVE LOU GERSTNER when he tries to tell us how to run public schools? IBM Corporation's Olympic computer system has turned out to be a fiasco - Mr. Gerstner, the leading corporate advocate for fixing the nation's schools, can't even deliver a computer system on time.

Last spring, Mr. Gerstner brought governors, business leaders and President Clinton to an IBM conference center on the Palisades to discuss the problems of the nation's schools. If Mr. Gerstner managed the schools as poorly as his wizards have managed IBM's Olympic computers, the nation's math and reading scores would be in free fall - IBM's much touted Olympic Computer system is the Chevy Corvair of the 1990's: it crashes on command.

ARE WE GETTING THE TRUTH ABOUT TERM LIMITS? Unless voters modify the current law, the entire City Council will be out of work on Jan 1, 2002. Whether this is good for the people of New York is open to debate, but this is much more than a petty Council issue. Term limits also apply to the Mayor, Comptroller and Public Advocate. If voters modify the term-limit law, the real winner will be Mr. Giuliani, who will then have the option of running for three terms. If nothing is done to change the current term-limits law, Mr. Giuliani would be a lame duck if he is re-elected next year.

But if the term-limits law is changed, the Mayor will have a chance to renew his rent-free lease on Gracie Mansion, and poor Ron Lauder - leader of the term-limits campaign - will realize that even with all his money, he can't dictate the terms of government in New York. Thank God he has other playgrounds.