

Bill Folman

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BILL FOLMAN
—Photo by Carin Siegerman

With the presidential election still six months away, it's probably safe to say many Americans have had quite enough of the pre-election folderol. That's what makes Bill Folman the perfect author profile choice for his debut novel *The Scandal Plan*. It's a political farce that will have readers—and candidates—laughing all the way to the polls.

The Scandal Plan tells the story of Senator and presidential hopeful Ben Phillips, whose image needs revitalizing and poll numbers need bolstering. Phillips' chief adviser seems to think a scandal will accomplish both. Although Phillips is hesitant, he goes along, and voila, a "former mistress" comes forward.

As one might expect, the plan snowballs into a three-ring circus complete with a motley cast of characters, including a cub reporter working for a magazine who thinks he's stumbled upon the biggest story since Watergate. It's the perfect antidote for all who suffer from Campaign Season Overload Disorder. "The first seed for the idea came in late 2003, as the once-promising Iraq invasion descended into quagmire and Plame-gate, Mission-Accomplished-gate, and questions about pre-war intelligence all began to garner national attention. I noticed that despite it all, President Bush's approval ratings remained in solid positive territory." Bill also examined the effects of real-life political scandal on other politicians. "So after determining that such scandals can be helpful to a candidate, the central premise of my story was just a small leap away: what if a candidate actually tried to create his own helpful scandal?"

Folman's interest in politics can be traced back to his middle-school days. As a seventh grader, he drew political cartoons of Michael Dukakis and George H.W. Bush for the middle school magazine in his hometown of Easton, Conn. He recalls going to the Dukakis' rally and being "mesmerized by the experience. I was probably the only 12-year-old in the country to feel an emotional bond with the Dukakis campaign. I might have pursued a political career if I hadn't been distracted by theater as a teenager and then film in my 20s. There are no politicians in my family, but no shortage of opinions either. As a Jew and the grandson of Holocaust survivors, I was always reminded that politics matters—that it had real world consequences. I was raised to believe that government could be a powerful tool for justice, but, left unchecked, it could also be a force of oppression." Could there be a run for political office in Folman's future, we asked? "While I certainly wouldn't rule out running for office at some point in my life, my training is in storytelling, not policy making, and that's where I'm going to stick for the moment."

Folman, who now lives in California, graduated from Joel Barlow High School in Redding, Conn. Then it was on to Brandeis University, where he earned a BA, followed by an MFA from Boston University. Because Bill is what he calls "creatively schizophrenic" he followed a creative career path. "Growing up, I was the class artist, and that took a backseat to theater starting in high school. Since then, I've also been a director for the stage and screen, sung a cappella, done Improv and sketch comedy, edited my own films, dabbled in graphic design, performed in plays and musicals, and written for the stage, page, and screen. I joke that I've tried everything except poetry and mime. The joy of such schizophrenia is that the lessons you learn in one medium enhance your understanding of the others."

He credits his parents for his creative side. "Both of my parents are highly intelligent, open-minded, and supportive of the arts, and this created a wonderful environment in which to grow up."

The publication of his first novel is just the first of many memorable moments Bill will reflect on when he looks back at the year 2008. This summer, he and his fiancée, Carin, plan to marry. She has a doctorate in engineering, and works at a medical device company. "We have a real right brain/left brain relationship," Bill said.

When Bill's not writing, he teaches kindergarten "to pay the bills," and although he enjoys that very much, he said, "I'm still looking forward to being able to write full-time one day soon." He's currently working on his second feature-length screenplay (a romantic comedy), and is in the early stages of developing a second novel, which will also be satirical, involve many different characters, and while dealing with politics, will focus more on religion. His leisure time is spent in the outdoors where he hikes and bikes. He also enjoys watching a good movie, reading good books, and spending time with friends and family.

In his opinion, who will be the next President of the United States, we asked? His politically correct response: "Speculation is a dangerous game."

For more information about Bill or *The Scandal Plan*, visit www.disturbingleonard.com.



