

Gracie Allen for President 1940: Vote With the Surprise Party

William Carroll

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William Carroll : Gracie Allen for President 1940: Vote With the Surprise Party before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Gracie Allen for President 1940: Vote With the Surprise Party:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A historical record of Allen's Presidential Campaign By Vinnie

Rattolle According to hubby George Burns' first book (which author Carroll clearly didn't peruse), the idea for Gracie Allen's 1940 Presidential campaign began when the Burns Allen radio show writers were brainstorming ideas for publicity stunts -- which Gracie was becoming a pro at. "She's done everything but run for President of the United States," one of them commented, and George replied, "That's it!" This is probably the most likely explanation of how it began, but Burns had a habit of changing details each time he told a story. Soon what was planned as a two-week gag on radio snowballed out of control, leading a very-reluctant Allen on a train-ride to Omaha, a dinner at the White House, three months of radio shows, as well singing a campaign song which was a hit across the nation and authoring a book called "How to Become President by Gracie Allen" (though it was REALLY penned by co-author Charles Lofgren, a radio writer). Burns chronicled his memories of the spectacle in "I Love Her, That's Why!" and "Gracie: A Love Story," but author William Carroll went a different route.... Following a brief summary of the campaign, misleadingly titled "Behind the Scenes" (featuring no insider information), Carroll's book includes the complete daily itinerary for Allen's train ride, the week of events in Omaha and the cue sheets for the final night of festivities in Nebraska, along with full reproduced text from Lofgren's "How to Become President" (sans the original illustrations, which were half of the appeal). Virtually every other page includes a photograph taken somewhere along the way (lots of crowd and location shots along with candids of various people in attendance), which are poorly-scanned, low-res newsprint quality. On one hand, it's great that a daily account of the activities has survived and was made publicly available... but it hardly makes for interesting reading. If scripts or transcripts of the radio shows and/or Allen's speeches were included it might have been a different matter altogether. The 72 photos (if I didn't miscount) give a good sense of how big a deal this campaign was for America, but Burns Allen appear in few of them and the quality's pretty poor. This leaves the book's most redeeming feature being the reproduction of the still-humorous "How to Become President," which tends to sell for much higher prices than this book does. As a historical document, this book features information that you won't find anywhere else. As an entertaining read, it's sorely lacking in original material -- which is damned shame since the campaign was born out of the funny notion of America's dizziest dame becoming the most powerful person in the country. It's sad that more care wasn't put into making this a bigger and better book. Oh yeah, and in the end, Gracie did get several hundred write-in votes, making her the first woman who had a real shot at the American Presidency. Hillary, you'd be nowhere without Gracie!

In 1940 Gracie Allen spoofed Presidential campaigns of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Wendell L. Willkie. Here is a complete behind the scenes report illustrated with dozens of unusual and rare photographs. Carroll was on Gracie's special train which provided the site of her platform speeches while traveling across the United States from Los Angeles to Omaha, Nebraska. Here's where you can meet this lovely lady in all her charm...plus read background details of the entire promotion. Enjoyable memorabilia at its best. And, Yes, Gracie did receive write-in votes during the national election.

About the Author Author Carroll, at that time an independant feature photographer serving the needs of newspapers and national magazines, produced this series for LIFE Magazine. They were never published and only recently prepared for use in this most unusual book.