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OP-ED COLUMNIST

What 'That Regan Woman' Knows

By [FRANK RICH](#)

NEW Yorkers who remember Rudy Giuliani as the bullying New York mayor, not as the terminally cheerful "America's Mayor" cooing to babies in New Hampshire, have always banked on one certainty: his presidential candidacy was so preposterous it would implode before he got anywhere near the White House.

Surely, we reassured ourselves, the all-powerful Republican values enforcers were so highly principled that they would excommunicate him because of his liberal social views, three wives and estranged children. Or a firewall would be erected by the firefighters who are enraged by his self-aggrandizing rewrite of 9/11 history. Or Judith Giuliani, with her [long-hidden first marriage](#) and Louis Vuitton 'tude, would send red-state voters screaming into the night.

Wrong, wrong and wrong. But how quickly and stupidly we forgot about the other Judith in the Rudy orbit. That would be Judith Regan, who disappeared last December after she was [unceremoniously fired](#) from Rupert Murdoch's publishing house, HarperCollins. Last week Ms. Regan came [roaring back into the fray](#), a silver bullet aimed squarely at the heart of the Giuliani campaign.

Ms. Regan filed a \$100 million lawsuit against her former employer, claiming she was unjustly made a scapegoat for the O. J. Simpson "If I Did It" fiasco that (briefly) embarrassed Mr. Murdoch and his News Corporation. But for those of us not caught up in the Simpson circus, what's most riveting about the suit are two at best tangential sentences in its 70 pages: "In fact, a senior executive in the News Corporation organization told Regan that he believed she had information about Kerik that, if disclosed, would harm Giuliani's presidential campaign. This executive advised Regan to lie to, and to withhold information from, investigators concerning Kerik."

Kerik, of course, is [Bernard Kerik](#), the former Giuliani chauffeur and police commissioner, as well as the candidate he pushed to be President Bush's short-lived nominee to run the Department of Homeland Security. Having [pleaded guilty](#) to two misdemeanors last year, Mr. Kerik was [indicted on 16 other counts](#) by a federal grand jury 10 days ago, just before Ms. Regan let loose with her lawsuit. Whether Ms. Regan's charge about that unnamed Murdoch "senior executive" is true or not — her lawyers have yet to reveal the evidence — her overall message is plain. She knows a lot about Mr. Kerik, Mr. Giuliani and the Murdoch empire. And she could talk.

Boy, could she! As New Yorkers who have crossed her path or followed her in the tabloids know, Ms. Regan has an epic temper. My first encounter with her came more than a decade ago when she left me a record-breaking (in vitriol and decibel level) voice mail message about a [column I'd written](#) on one of her authors. It was a relief to encounter a more mellow Regan at a Midtown restaurant some years later. She cordially introduced me to her dinner companion, Mr. Kerik, whose post-9/11 autobiography, "The Lost Son: A Life in Pursuit of Justice," was under contract at her HarperCollins imprint, ReganBooks.

What I didn't know then was that this married author and single editor were in pursuit of not just justice, but sex, too. Their [love nest](#), we'd later learn, was an apartment adjacent to ground zero that had been initially set aside for rescue workers. Mr. Kerik believed his lover had every moral right to be there. As he tenderly explained in his acknowledgments in "The Lost Son" — published before the revelation of their relationship — there was "one hero who is missing" from his book's tribute to "courage and honor" and "her name is Judith Regan."

Few know more about Rudy than his perennial boon companion, Mr. Kerik. Perhaps during his romance with Ms. Regan he talked only of the finer points of memoir writing or about his theories of crime prevention or about his ideas for training the police in the Muslim world (an assignment he [later received in Iraq and botched](#)). But it is also plausible that this couple discussed everything Mr. Kerik witnessed at Mr. Giuliani's side before, during and after 9/11. Perhaps he even explained to her why the mayor insisted, disastrously, that his city's \$61 million emergency [command center be located](#) in the World Trade Center despite the terrorist attack on the towers in 1993.

Perhaps, too, they talked about the business ventures the mayor established after leaving office. Mr. Kerik worked at Giuliani Partners and [used its address](#) as a mail drop for some \$75,000 that turns up in the tax-fraud charges in his federal indictment. That money was Mr. Kerik's pay for an 11-sentence introduction to another Regan-published book about 9/11, "In the Line of Duty." Though that project's profits were otherwise donated to the families of dead rescue workers, Mr. Kerik's royalties were mailed to Giuliani Partners in the name of a corporate entity Mr. Kerik set up in Delaware. He would [later claim](#) that he made comparable donations to charity, but the [federal indictment charges](#) that \$80,000 he took in charitable deductions were bogus.

Amazingly, given that he seeks the highest office in the land, Mr. Giuliani will not reveal the clients of Giuliani Partners. Perhaps he has trouble remembering them all. He testified in court last year that [he has no memory](#) of a mayoral briefing in which he was told of Mr. Kerik's association with a company suspected of ties to organized crime.

Ms. Regan's knowledge of Mr. Giuliani isn't limited to whatever she learned from Mr. Kerik. She used to work for another [longtime Giuliani pal](#), Roger Ailes, the media consultant for the first Giuliani campaign in 1989 and the impresario who created Fox News for Mr. Murdoch in 1996. A full-service mayor to his cronies, Mr. Giuliani lobbied hard to get the Fox News Channel on the city's cable boxes and presided over Mr. Ailes's wedding. Enter Ms. Regan, who was [given her own program](#) on Fox's early lineup. Mr. Ailes came up with its rather inspired first title, "That Regan Woman."

Who at the News Corporation supposedly asked Ms. Regan to lie to protect Rudy's secrets? Her complaint does not say. But thanks to the political journal The Hotline, we do know that as of the summer Mr. Giuliani had received more air time from Fox News than any other G.O.P. candidate, much of it on the high-rated "Hannity & Colmes." That show's co-host, Sean Hannity, [appeared at a Giuliani campaign fund-raiser](#) this year.

Fox News coverage of Ms. Regan's lawsuit last week was minimal. After all, Mr. Giuliani [dismissed the whole episode](#) as "a gossip column story," and we know Fox would never stoop so low as to trade in gossip. The coverage was scarcely more intense at The Wall Street Journal, whose print edition included no mention of the suit's reference to that "senior executive" at the News Corporation. (After [bloggers noticed](#), the article was [amended](#) online.) The Journal is not quite yet a Murdoch property, but its editorial board has had its [own show on Fox News](#) since 2006.

During the 1990s, the Journal editorial board published so much dirt about the Clintons that it put the paper's brand on an [encyclopedia six-volume anthology](#) titled "A Journal Briefing — Whitewater." You'd think the controversies surrounding "America's Mayor" are at least as sexy as the carnal scandals and alleged drug deals The Journal investigated back then. This month a Journal reporter not on its editorial board [added the government](#) of Qatar to the small list of known Giuliani Partners clients, among them the manufacturer of OxyContin. We'll see if such journalism flourishes in the paper's Murdoch era.

But beyond New York's dailies and The Village Voice, the national news media, conspicuously the big three television networks, have rarely covered Mr. Giuliani much more aggressively than Mr. Murdoch's Fox News has. They are more likely to focus on Mr. Giuliani's checkered family history than the questions raised by his record in government and business. It's astounding how many are willing to look the other way while recycling those old 9/11 videos.

One exception is The Chicago Tribune, which last month on its front page [revisited the story](#) of how, after Mr. Giuliani left office, his mayoral papers were temporarily transferred to a private, tax-exempt foundation run by his supporters and financed with \$1.5 million from mostly undisclosed donors. The foundation, which shares the same address as Giuliani Partners, copied and archived the records before sending them back to New York's municipal archives. Historians told The Tribune there's no way to verify that the papers were returned to government custody intact. Mayor Bloomberg has since signed a law that will prevent this unprecedented deal from being repeated.

Journalists, like generals, love to refight the last war, so the unavailability of millions of Hillary Clinton's papers has received all the coverage the Giuliani campaign has been spared. But while the release of those first lady records should indeed be accelerated, it's hard to imagine many more scandals will turn up after six volumes of "Whitewater," an impeachment trial and the avalanche of other investigative reportage on the Clintons then and now.

The Giuliani story, by contrast, is relatively virgin territory. And with the filing of a lawsuit by a vengeful eyewitness who was fired from her job, it may just have gained its own reincarnation of Linda Tripp.

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