

How I Didn't Spend My Summer Vacation

By ALLEN SALKIN

AND the winner is . . . Sam Brownback.

The senator from Kansas, a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, is running near the bottom in polls.

But by one standard Mr. Brownback has trounced his rivals: He is taking a five-day August vacation.

That's right, the candidate plans to do no campaigning, no fund-raising, no meeting with staff and no interviews for five-sevenths of a week, while he and his wife retreat to a family home in the Colorado Rockies.

"Sam really likes to hike, take picnics, look at the animals," said his wife, Mary Brownback, who was driving from Kansas to Iowa, where she was to meet her husband to campaign before their retreat this week. "Typical stuff."

-Hardly.

By the standards of the other candidates, Mr. Brownback's display of outright relaxation is as outlandish as advocating indoor soccer as the national sport.

"Do most Americans get several days off from the problems they face every day?" asked Andy Juniewicz, a spokesman for Representative Dennis Kucinich, who is running for the Democratic nomination and is not planning a single summer vacation day. "I don't think so. They work hard every day. Dennis Kucinich works hard every day."

As President Bush continues to flirt with the record for days spent away from the White House, most candidates are adopting a vacations-are-for-wimps posture. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton has no vacation plans, a campaign spokesman said. Gov. Mike Huckabee of Arkansas sort of does, if you count flying

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to his home in North Little Rock last Sunday to spend most of a day with his wife and three dogs.

But Mr. Huckabee, a Republican, took part of the morning to make a satellite appearance on "Face the Nation," so to count the day as R & R, as his campaign spokeswoman Alice Stewart did, is a stretch. Mr. Huckabee, who plans to compete in the Des Moines Marathon in October, is taking most of his relaxation an hour at a time.

"His idea of downtime and relaxing is to run," Ms. Stewart said. "That's something he gets accomplished no matter how hectic his schedule is, which says something about his character and determination."

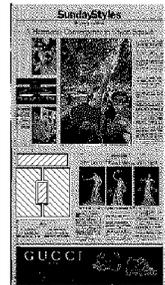
Thus has downtime become uptime: one more chance to deliver a message to voters. With the country at war, a mortgage crisis at hand and concerns over health insurance preoccupying Americans, candidates are acting as if being seen playing Frisbee is unpatriotic, said Juliet Schor, a sociologist at Boston College who has studied American attitudes toward vacations.

"There is so much wrong with the country and so many candidates are running on those problems that being seen relaxing on the beach makes it seem that one is not taking them seriously," Professor Schor said.

In addition, the candidates seem, like the country as a whole, to have developed a leisure phobia. Recent surveys have shown the traditional one- or two-week summer break is passé, replaced by a long weekend or two in July and August. For families in which both spouses hold paying jobs, and children attend schools that no longer follow the traditional June-to-September recess, scheduling days when everyone is free is increasingly difficult. Plus, said Ellen Galinsky, the president of the Families and Work Institute, a New York-based research center, work is no longer left at the office.

"We have this image of work as a marathon where if we don't keep running, we'll get left behind," Ms. Galinsky said, speaking on her cellphone from a cafe in Santa Fe, N.M., where she was supposed to be vacationing.

A 2007 survey by the travel Web serv-



ice Expedia found that 23 percent of employed adults check work e-mail or voice mail on vacation, compared with 16 percent in 2005.

On the campaign trail, candidates' standings in the polls have no bearing on how much vacation they feel free to take. Senator Christopher J. Dodd, near the bottom in Democratic polls, usually tries to spend vacations at his cottage in County Galway, Ireland, but his campaign says he will not make it this year. His only time off is in small bites. Last Sunday in Des Moines, Mr. Dodd played golf, attended church and spent time with his wife and daughters, said his press secretary, Colleen Flanagan.

Mitt Romney, who is near the top of Republican polls, spent a week over the July 4 holiday at his 11-acre estate on the shores of Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire, but he also conducted strategy meetings. "Vacation when you're running for president is different than when you're not," said Kevin Madden, a Romney spokesman.

(Over Christmas break, Mr. Romney used his other vacation home, a log and rock house in Park City, Utah, to shoot a video portraying his family discussing whether he should run for president.)

ALSO combining vacation with work in New Hampshire, site of the nation's first primary, John Edwards spent July 6 through 8 in Moultonboro with his wife and two children, at the lakefront home of a state senator, where they swam, fished, visited caves — and spoke to reporters and attended the firemen's muster, a carnival for local fire departments.

Another popular "vacation" spot for presidential candidates is — want to guess? It starts with an I.

Senator Joseph Biden usually spends his August recess with family in Delaware, but this August, Annie Tomasini, a Biden spokeswoman, said in an e-mail message: "They are bringing the family to him. Throughout this month, Senator Biden's wife, two sons and their families, and daughter will all take turns campaigning out in Iowa enjoying the sights of the Hawkeye State — especially the Iowa State Fair."

Ditto Senator Barack Obama, who took his wife and two children along last week, which included a Thursday event the campaign called "Potluck With the Obama Family" in Atlantic and what

was scheduled as "Grilling With Barack" yesterday in Cedar Rapids.

With news media and supporters following their every move, it's not exactly a classic American getaway in the minivan. But in an e-mail message, Mr. Obama's wife, Michelle, said keeping their daughters, 9 and 6, "stable and strong and feeling like their lives are happy and normal is very important to us, particularly in this process, and they keep us grounded and on point too."

The two New York candidates are taking little to no vacation time.

While Rudolph W. Giuliani and his wife, Judith Giuliani, were spotted around their weekend house in the Hamptons at least once this summer, Maria Comella, a campaign spokeswoman, said there are no plans for an extended getaway. Ms. Comella said the candidate plays golf whenever he has time on the trail, but she did not know the last time he picked up his clubs.

Being president, it seems, is less work than being a candidate, at least during the summer. When the Clintons were in the White House, they enjoyed long summer breaks in Martha's Vineyard. This month Mrs. Clinton is stopping by the island for one day, Aug. 25, to attend two fund-raisers before flying to Nantucket for another fund-raiser.

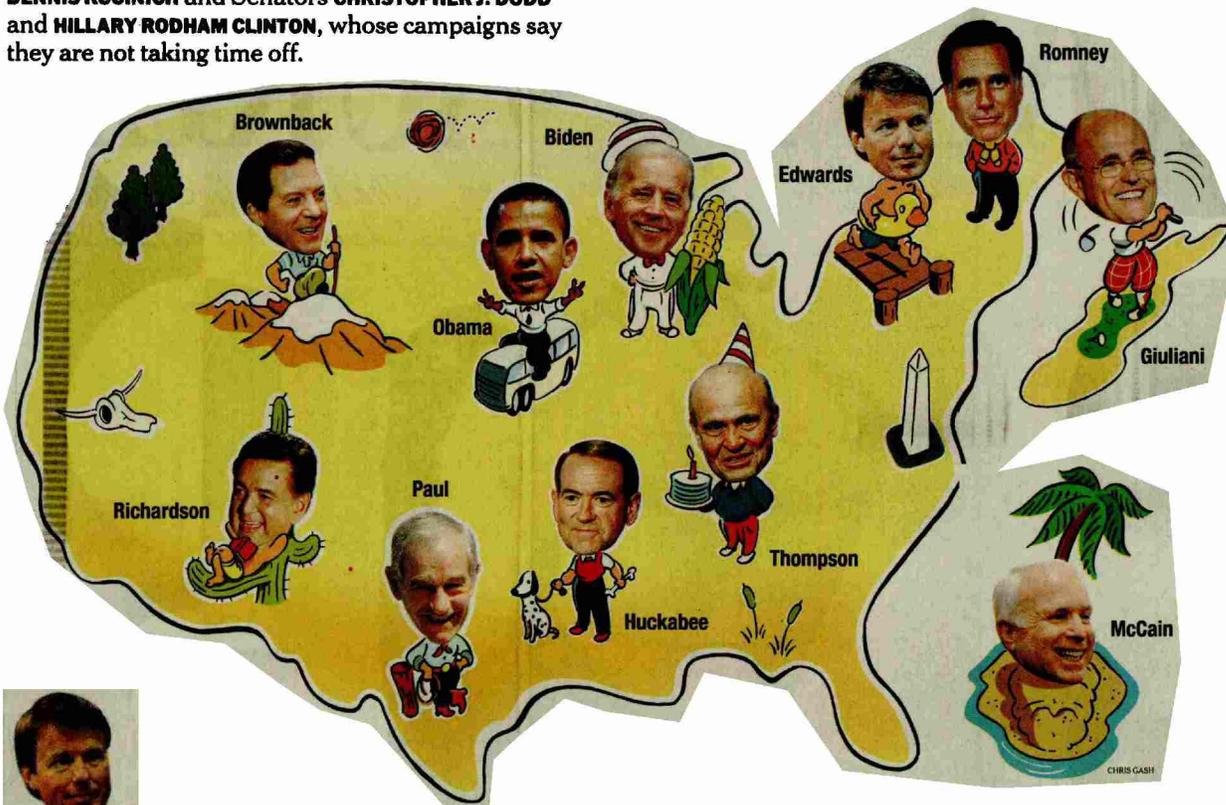
"She has no plans for time off," said Blake Zeff, a Clinton spokesman.

They do things differently in Kansas.

Mrs. Brownback said she did not understand the sort of vacations most of the other candidates were taking. "A vacation is somewhere we can go and spend time together with kids or as a couple and be a family," said the Kansas senator's wife. "Not to go out and campaign. I wouldn't call that a vacation."

GONE FISHIN' . . . FOR VOTES This summer, on their brief vacations, Senator **SAM BROWNBACK** is spending five days in the Colorado Rockies; Senator **BARACK OBAMA** took his family on a bus trip through Iowa with campaign stops; Senator **JOSEPH BIDEN** and his extended family went to the Iowa State Fair; **JOHN EDWARDS** spent three days at Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire, including news interviews; **MITT ROMNEY** spent five days at the same lake plotting strategy; **RUDOLPH W. GIULIANI** has occasionally visited his house in Water Mill, on Long Island, and tried to find time to play golf along the trail; Senator **JOHN MCCAIN** plans a weekend with his wife in the Caribbean; **FRED THOMPSON** went to Tennes-

see for two and half days to celebrate his 65th birthday and the birthdays of his mother and sister-in-law; Gov. **MIKE HUCKABEE** had a lazy afternoon at home with his wife and three dogs (a Shih Tzu, a Labrador and a King Charles cavalier) in Arkansas; Representative **RON PAUL** is set to celebrate his 72nd birthday with 1,000 friends, political allies and constituents at a convention center in Texas City, Tex.; and Gov. **BILL RICHARDSON** flew to New Mexico to celebrate his and his wife's 35th anniversary at a spa resort. Among those not pictured are Representative **DENNIS KUCINICH** and Senators **CHRISTOPHER J. DODD** and **HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON**, whose campaigns say they are not taking time off.



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