

From Eisenhower to Obama, McGovern to McCain, PARADE has a long history of covering American presidential candidates. Now, with the campaign season kicking into high gear, we'll be introducing readers to this year's contenders. First up: the straight-talking Texas governor.

# Rick Perry Hates to Lose

## But Can He Win Over America?

BY LYNN SHERR • Cover and opening photograph BY BEN BAKER



IF A WEEK IS A YEAR IN POLITICS, TEXAS GOVERNOR RICK PERRY HAS BEEN through a decade since he entered the race to be the GOP presidential nominee on Aug. 13. At first he was heralded as the great right hope of the Republican Party, but after missteps in debates, the hunting lodge incident, and comments on hot-button issues—immigration, Social Security—he faltered in the polls. Perry is undeterred—the American people, he says, need his blend of straight talk, job-creation savvy, and hand-on-the-heart patriotism.

Perry, 61, grew up on a cotton farm in the West Texas town of Paint Creek. He was an Eagle Scout, a prankster, and a charmer who was dubbed “Most Popular” in high school. At Texas A&M, he was elected one of five elite “yell leaders,” students who fire up the crowds at campus events and lead them in cheers. He served in the air force for four and a half years and farmed for seven before he ran for state representative in 1984 and won. After that, he was agriculture commissioner and then lieutenant governor, ascending to the governorship in 2000 after George W. Bush resigned to become president. Today Perry is the longest continuously serving governor in the U.S. But above all, he remains a family man and says his best friends are wife Anita; son Griffin, 28, who was employed by Deutsche Bank until recently; and daughter Sydney, 25, who works in marketing. Perry took a break from a hectic campaign schedule last month to sit down with PARADE contributing writer Lynn Sherr in New York.

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**LYNN SHERR:** So tell us, what happened to you in the early debates?

**RICK PERRY:** A debate is an eight-ring circus, and you have a minute to talk. Sometimes it can be hard to explain your position on a

host of issues. I readily admit I'm not the slickest politician nor the smoothest debater.

**Your critics say you're not electable. Your response?**

Well, I disregard that. Americans are looking for somebody to stand up and tell them the

truth, and I have a record to back it up. Ultimately, if I can explain my heart, my jobs record, and my philosophy to Americans, I'm pretty confident that I'll win.

*Perry in a Word*

**“AGGRESSIVE.**

He's not afraid to use all the tools at his disposal to get what he wants.”

—Jason Embry, a writer at the Austin American-Statesman who's covered Perry for seven years

**Let's talk about immigration. You signed a law allowing some children of undocumented immigrants to pay in-state tuition at public colleges and universities.**

**What did you hope to accomplish?**

The reason we have to deal with these issues in the first place is because of the total disregard by the federal government of its duty to secure the border. After you realize that, ask, “How should each state in their sovereign right decide what to do?” In Texas, we said in 2001 that anyone who's lived here for three years, who is doing their schoolwork and qualifies to go to a public university, and who is pursuing citizenship can pay an in-state tuition. Our legislature decided overwhelmingly that these individuals get educated and enter the workforce, rather ➔