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B1

The Hogans: 'Whatever Happens,' She Says, 'We Worked Together.'

By Sally Quinn

It was about six years ago that Ilona Modly, wanting to earn enough extra credits to graduate from college, signed up for a summer public relations course at the University of Maryland.

"The first day of class," she recalls, "I walked in and saw the teacher, this short, dumpy guy in a hideous purple blazer."

It was Larry Hogan, now a Republican congressman from Maryland running for governor.

"It certainly wasn't love at first sight," adds Ilona Modly Hogan emphatically.

"That," pipes up her husband from the front seat of their rented campaign convertible, "is off the record." Then turning to his wife he added laughing, "We may have our first fight over this."

Larry and Ilona Hogan haven't really had much time to fight. Ever since they were married, in a small, quiet, family ceremony at Williamsburg Inn, March 16, they have been on the go.

Ilona, nearly 27, was finishing law school at Georgetown University and Larry, nearly 46, was sponsoring an anti-abortion bill in Congress, studying impeachment as a member of the House Judiciary Committee and announcing his candidacy for governor of Maryland.

So you see, they just haven't had a second. But Sunday, while campaigning in Maryland, a day hastily scheduled after the impeachment hearings became unnecessary, they had time to talk about their relationship, themselves and the life they hope to share.

Ilona Hogan is a slim, small woman with a pale face, pale blond hair, and a clear blue Teutonic gaze. She was born in Southern Germany of a German mother and



Photos by Margaret Thomas—The Washington Post

The Hogans: "It certainly wasn't love at first sight," Ilona says. "That," notes Larry, "is off the record."

Hungarian father and moved to Maryland when she was a small child. She looks decidedly German and her mannerisms complete the picture. She is reserved, contained and quiet, giving the impression she is shy, which she is not.

She is precise and methodical in her thinking and speaking, and she has sure confidence about her political opinions, though she will not readily offer them unless asked. She is a practical, intelligent, logical woman. She is not terribly humorous, and though cordial and

polite, she doesn't radiate a great deal of natural warmth or spontaneity. She's very mature for her age.

Ilona Hogan is a Catholic, as is her husband, and graduated from Immaculata High School here. "I give them credit for giving me the idea that women can do any blessed thing they want to do and not just stay home and take care of children," she says. She went on to Marymount College in Tarrytown, N.Y., and graduated from George Washington University here. It was

the summer after graduation that she took a course from Hogan in public relations.

"Her term paper was so great," he says, "that I scribbled on the bottom of it to let me know if she ever needed a job. She took me up on it."

Hogan was running for Congress at the time. He had graduated from Georgetown Law School, spent a seven-year stint as an FBI agent, and then gone on to start his own public relations firm.

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Above, candidate Hogan talks with Walter Camp.

Right, Ilona Hogan, in dirndl, dances with Joseph Schaff, in Lederhosen.



The Hogans: 'Whatever Happens, We Worked Together'

HOGANS, From B1

He was married (he married at 19) with two children when he met Ilona.

"Larry is very ambitious and very aggressive and he's so gung-ho about everything he does," says his wife. "He puts everything into it. He just didn't have the time for his family during his first marriage."

Ilona Hogan's description of her husband is very accurate. In her practical way she has no illusions about him and accepts him as he is. He is a short, not-quite-dumpy man who has a nice, almost handsome face and a very boyish demeanor. When you first meet Hogan it is very obvious that he is ambitious and aggressive and gung-ho. He is facile in his speech, gregarious, has a convincing manner and talks like what he calls himself, "a moderate." His voting record, however, shows him to be conservative.

His detractors call him slick. There is a touch of the P.R. man in him, which helps him to say what he thinks people might want to hear, partly out of genuine candor, partly out of a desire to please, partly out of calculation.

When Larry Hogan became the first Republican on the House Judiciary Committee to speak out in favor of impeachment, he suddenly became appealing to many liberals to whom he had formerly been anathema. Yet many felt that he had done it for political reasons. He said he thought it would lose him a lot of votes in the gubernatorial race, yet he is running in a largely Democratic state against a popular Democratic incumbent governor. It was also suggested that he did it, as a relative unknown, for name recognition. He denies this.

A colleague, Rep. Brock Adams (D-Wash.) once said of him, "He sits at D.C. Committee meetings like a pleasant fellow, talks like a moderate and then votes like a Neanderthal."

He has a rather sophomoric, eager, outgoing sense of humor, and though he is 20 years older than his new wife, he doesn't seem it at all.

"She reminds me often that she's mature for her age and I'm immature, for mine," he laughs.

Larry Hogan thinks his greatest liability is, "my candor." "I'm not as familiar with state issues as I want to be," he says, "because of the impeachment hearings. That's been used against me."

One wonders why Hogan does in fact want to be governor. "That's a good question," he says. "I wish I had an answer. I think it's because personally my own interests lie in the administrative rather than the legislative area. I like to see things happen."

Friends of Ilona Hogan don't picture her in the traditional role of First Lady of Maryland. She laughs about that, too.

"My friends say they don't see me as another Bootsie Mandel," she says, "and I don't see myself having teas all the time."

It would be difficult to imagine her



Left, Larry and Ilona Hogan relax in their campaign trailer. Right, Hogan gives a bumper-sticker to David Lingenfelder.

Photos by Margaret Thomas
—The Washington Post



indulging herself in that sort of frivolity.

Once she had graduated from college she began a part-time job in Larry Hogan's then-new congressional office. That developed into a job as assistant press secretary, then press secretary, then legislative assistant, then administrative assistant. While she was legislative assistant she began night law school.

It was about three years ago that they began seeing each other romantically. And Ilona quit her job and went to Georgetown University Law School full time. She graduated in May.

"I did want to go out with him," she says. "But I didn't want to work in the office with him at the same time."

"She gets along great with the girls in the office," he says. "The guys too," she says indignantly. "Yeah, but you would have had more trouble with the girls," he says. "Women," she says.

"I wanted to be known as his A.A.," she said. "If I'd been seen going out with him too, people would have thought the worst."

"That upset us when they put in Newsweek recently that I married my press secretary," he said. "They obviously chose to use that job because it sounded more like I was fooling around with my secretary. People accuse both Marvin Mandel and me of dumping our aging wives and marrying young girls" he said. "Well, my marriage was dead long before I met Ilona."

"Most of the problems we have," she says, "are from women who are in the same position as the wives. They were brought up to be wives and mothers and nothing else and when they were cut off they had nothing. Now, instead of trying to do something for them-

selves, they try to take it out on other people. That's why I will never," she says emphatically, "be a full-time wife and mother."

She is now, however, five months pregnant and barely showing.

"We struck luck on our honeymoon," she says.

"We didn't tell anyone because we knew they would start counting."

"Who counts?" he says.

"Weil," she says, "when Pierre Trudeau got married everyone counted and it wasn't nine months before she had the baby."

"Look who's counting," he says.

"I would like at least four children," she says. "But I do realize that you cannot be a total success unless you devote all of your time to something. I can practice law four days a week and be a wife and mother three. I realize I won't be a super-great lawyer. But I'm a firm believer in the quality of time spent with children, not the quantity."

She recognizes the problems of being a political wife but says they are not so difficult if you understand them. "There's a big difference between being a girl friend and a wife, as I'm sure Jeanne Mandel knows. Before, Larry would just introduce me. Now people will talk to me and I can go out and make speeches for him. But I must admit, it's awfully hard to stand there and look like window dressing."

"I can articulate the things he feels. Lots of wives don't get involved because they're afraid they'll make a faux pas. I play devil's advocate with Larry before his speeches. But when he's at a press conference the hardest thing is for me to sit there and say nothing because I know the answer to

the question as well as he does. In fact, we've joked about my running for the seat that he had to give up in order to run for governor."

Somehow, it doesn't seem like such a joke. And occasionally Rep. Hogan will be brought up short by his wife in the area of women's rights.

"I think you girls are a little overly sensitive sometimes about these things," he will say. "But when we were dating I cooked dinner for her sometimes if she had a late class or something."

"I also made my own bed and hung up my own clothes and that didn't offend my masculinity."

She insists that he does none of that now, but their house is spotlessly neat and clean. They live in Prince George's County in a house well isolated and with a swimming pool. There is a stable behind, owned by neighbors, where the Hogans keep their four horses. The house, once occupied by Hogan and his former wife, Nora, was bought from her by Hogan when she moved to Florida with their 18-year-old son. Hogan's 25-year-old daughter lives in Maryland and made him a grandfather three weeks ago. "My former wife and I are good friends now," he says.

The house is being furnished by the new Hogans in Victorian antiques which they collect on the weekends. It looks quite German, with little doilies on all the tables, knick-knacks everywhere, and heavy velvets and brocades on the furniture.

They had breakfast at home Sunday morning before a day of campaigning which included a mini-parade, a German beer fest (where Ilona changed into a dirndl), and a cocktail reception

(where she changed into a decollete evening dress).

Both Hogans admit to not liking campaigning. "I don't like to go up to people in shopping centers and impose myself," she says. "I'm not like Jeanne Mandel where she's had so much publicity people recognize her. I say I'm Ilona Hogan and they don't know who I am. And I don't like to say I'm Mrs. Larry Hogan."

But she smiles gamely, waves, shakes hands, and chats though she seems a bit uncomfortable and self-conscious and not wildly happy doing it. "I'd much rather go to a small political reception where people know candidates will be there and we can discuss the issues."

She postulated many of his positions while she was his administrative assistant. And she readily admits that they sometimes disagree on issues. "Ilona's more liberal than I am," he says.

"I'm more of a compromiser," she says. "Where he's more of a torch carrier."

One issue on which they are slightly at odds is abortion. And they both appear tense when the subject is raised.

He is completely against abortion except to save the life of the mother.

She says she can't put herself in the position of insisting that a woman have a baby if she knows it will be deformed or have Tay-Sachs disease. He disagrees with this position. She quickly says that if his bill is passed there would be some legal recourse for mothers of the potentially deformed. He doesn't say anything.

"I'm against abortion on demand though," she says. "The women in the women's movement who are for it are the one's who shouldn't rely on that crutch because they have all the birth

control available to them."

If they get to the Governor's mansion she says she hopes to continue working with her husband as she did before she left his office.

But they seem realistic about the fact that he may not win. "If not, I'll practice law," he says. "We've even thought of practicing law together. I was even thinking that doing a television talk show might be really fun and just the thing I should do, especially with my congressional insights." And they are looking forward to having a family (she admits that in the governor's mansion she would have a "built-in baby-sitter").

"But whatever happens, we worked together," she says, "and I just know him. We grew on each other. He's so aggressive I just know we'll have a great life together."

"I don't know at what point we fell in love with each other," he says. "But it wasn't a lightning bolt. I guess I liked her because she was bright and I got to depend on her."

"That's not exactly a bell-ringer," she says. "You can do better than that." She liked him because of "his sincerity and honesty. And he has this sexy look that he gets sometimes..."

"She keeps telling me that and I practice and practice," he says, "but I can't seem to get it. Then, just when I've given up she'll say, 'That's it.'"

"You know," he says, "Ilona has changed a lot of things about my life. I've been through a number of different careers and I'm not looking for challenges like I used to since I met her. I haven't been as ambitious to find a higher mountain. I don't feel that compulsion anymore. I'm more content. Less anxious. I don't feel that I have to claw my way to the top."

HOGAN, LARRY

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