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






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Obama Family Ties, Past and Present

By Shailagh Murray
KEMPTON, Ind. - Saturday was family day on the campaign trail.

Sen. Barack Obama's daughters, Malia, 9, and Sasha, 6, joined him and his wife, Michelle, for a final spin around Indiana. It was a rare public appearance for the low-key kids, who have spent most of primary season in Chicago.

As the Obama motorcade rumbled from stop to stop, the girls played and watched video games in the back of the Obama luxury bus. When the candidate dropped by a community picnic in Noblesville, they took off for a nearby playground, taking turns on the swing and slide, by all appearances oblivious to the Secret Service agents, campaign staffers and reporters who watched their every move.

In Kempton, the Obamas visited an old family homestead that had been owned by three generations of Dunhams, relatives on Obama's mother's side, before the family migrated to Kansas. A large white clapboard house on the property later served as a funeral parlor. Later, the Obamas dropped by a roller skating rink in Lafayette for an "ice cream social" with local families.

Family is a recurring theme in Obama's speeches these closing days, as he seeks to connect with working-class voters who have flocked to his opponent, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton. He recalled during remarks Saturday in Indianapolis and Noblesville how his grandfather had gone to college on the GI Bill after serving in World War II, that he and Obama's grandmother had bought their first house with a government loan, and that his own mother had collected food stamps for a while.

"No matter how much money you start with or where you come from or who your parents are, opportunity is yours if you're willing to reach for it and work for it. ... That's who we are as a country," said Obama. "That's the America most of us here know. It's the America our parents and our grandparents grew up knowing."

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