

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO...

By **BILL SAPORITO**

A Congressman's scandal, a Senator's switch, Cincinnati's riots and stem cells. They were among the big stories until...

THE MISSING INTERN

Why Condit Is Running Again

CHANDRA LEVY HAS BEEN MISSING since May 1. Gary Condit was missing too, at least from the headlines, from Sept. 11 until Dec. 7, when he filed to run again for his congressional seat in California's 18th district in the agriculture-rich Central Valley. Television crews were waiting at the Stanislaus County courthouse, picking up a trail that had been erased from the front page by the terrorist attacks.

He's running, not hiding, calling himself a victim of a "\$100 million campaign waged against me by the news media." "It was a tough decision," Condit told *TIME*. "I just thought, There is no reason for me to go sit off in the corner. You know, I've done a good job on behalf of the people there; I am going to focus on my record and what I've done in the past."

It's his recent past that made this conservative Democrat from Ceres, Calif., the centerpiece of a cable-TV talkfest in the slow news months before the world changed. Levy, a Washington intern from Condit's district with whom he admitted having a "close relationship," was last seen



VERDICT AT THE POLLS The Congressman says he will ask voters to focus on his record

at a Washington health club on April 30. Condit is not a suspect in her disappearance, say Washington police. His crime, Condit claims, was not participating in the feeding frenzy, at least until a disingenuous interview with Connie Chung on ABC last summer. "From the outset I was talking to law enforcement, being helpful, telling them everything I knew, and so the media want to make it that just because I

didn't go on TV or in the newspapers that I didn't talk. Well, I told the people who were responsible for finding Chandra Levy everything I knew about Chandra Levy. I told them as quick as I could."

Condit's cooperation, or lack thereof, is still very much at issue. In mid-November he was subpoenaed by a federal grand jury looking into Levy's disappearance and whether Condit ob-

structed justice. "We wish that Congressman Condit had been as conscientious about providing truthful answers and assistance in this investigation as he has been in gathering signatures for his reelection bid," says lawyer Billy Martin, who represents the Levy family.

Condit has never admitted publicly to an affair with Levy, or with flight attendant Anne Marie Smith, who hit the talk shows to chat about their relationship. She also alleged that he asked her to sign an affidavit denying that the two were lovers, an allegation that is now a focus of the grand jury investigation.

The seven-term Congressman's choice to run again is unwelcome in the party and sets up an intriguing primary. Because of redistricting in 2000, his voting area is 40% larger and less conservative, which means his legislative record might not resonate. And his Democratic primary opponent, California state assemblyman Dennis Cardoza, is his best friend in politics, a man he mentored over the years. Both seem shocked that the other is running. "It was clear to me, after polling, that Gary just couldn't [win]," Cardoza said. "There was no winning folks back. He had lost their confidence."

FBI agents and D.C. detectives are back on the Levy case after being diverted by post-Sept. 11 duties. But every cop knows and fears that time is the enemy of a happy ending. Condit says he hopes the media will stay focused on her case, not on him: "There still is a missing person, and someone had something to do with this. Everyone seems to have forgotten this." Not the Levys.

—Reported by
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