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Subject: SALT LS: Book reveals who told Sen. Harry Reid that Romney paid no taxes for 10 years

■ The authors reveal the source who told Senator Harry Reid of Nevada, the majority leader, that Mr. Romney had not paid any taxes in 10 years: Jon M. Huntsman Sr., the father of Mr. Romney's early rival in the Republican primaries.

Book Details Obama Aides' Talks About Replacing Biden on 2012 Ticket

By JONATHAN MARTIN

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President Obama's top aides secretly considered replacing Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. with Hillary Rodham Clinton on the 2012 ticket, undertaking extensive focus-group sessions and polling in late 2011 when Mr. Obama's re-election outlook appeared uncertain.

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Luke Sharrett/The New York Times

Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. with Hillary Rodham Clinton in 2010. President Obama's aides decided that putting Mrs. Clinton on the 2012 ticket would not offer a significant boost, a book says.

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The aides concluded that despite Mrs. Clinton's popularity, the move would not offer a significant enough political boost to Mr. Obama to justify such a radical move, according to a newly published account of the 2012 race.

The idea of replacing Mr. Biden with Mrs. Clinton had long been rumored, but the journalists Mark Halperin and John Heilemann, in their new book, "Double Down," provide a detailed description of the effort inside the senior circle of Obama advisers. It was pushed by the chief of staff at the time, William M. Daley, despite the close personal rapport Mr. Daley had developed with Mr. Biden, a fellow Irish Catholic and veteran of Washington politics.

"When the research came back near the end of the year, it suggested that adding Clinton to the ticket wouldn't materially improve Obama's odds," the authors write in their sequel to "Game Change," which

chronicled the 2008 campaign. “Biden had dodged a bullet he never saw coming — and never would know anything about, if the Obamans could keep a secret.”

In a phone interview on Thursday, Mr. Daley acknowledged that he had wanted to research what the move would have meant for Mr. Obama, whose popularity, in the fall of 2011, was at its lowest in his presidency to date. He called it simply “due diligence.”

“I was vocal about looking into a whole bunch of things, and this was one of them,” he said.

“You have to remember, at that point the president was in awful shape, so we were like, ‘Holy Christ, what do we do?’ ”

While last year’s grind of an election lacked the drama of the 2008 race, there was no lack of backstage maneuvering and fighting, providing grist for the authors’ reconstruction of Mr. Obama’s race against Mitt Romney and the at-times-unpredictable Republican primary.

Mr. Obama is seen as being detached from much of the tedious but necessary grunt work of politics and as wanting to be a more unapologetically liberal president.

Mr. Biden, who may run for president in 2016, is viewed warily by Mr. Obama’s circle not only for being a gaffe-prone “Uncle Joe,” but also for, in their minds, being overly consumed with his own political future.

And Gov. Chris Christie of New Jersey, another potential presidential candidate, is described as having been eliminated from vice-presidential contention by Mr. Romney because of unanswered questions about his background and health.

But at the heart of the book, which The New York Times obtained from people in the publishing industry, are the same two families that loomed over the 2008 race: the Obamas and the Clintons.

Even after Mr. Obama named Mrs. Clinton as secretary of state, seemingly binding the wounds from their hard-fought 2008 primary campaign, the book says, he still could barely endure spending much time with the often-exhausting Bill Clinton. Mr. Obama rarely contacted his Democratic predecessor in the first years after taking office, but after the midterm losses for his party, the incumbent and his inner circle realized that they needed the still-popular Mr. Clinton.

When the two of them golfed together in September 2011, an effort aides hoped would bring them closer, they did not even finish 18 holes. Mr. Obama succinctly expressed his view of Mr. Clinton to an aide after coming off the course at Andrews Air Force Base. “Obama grimaced and replied, ‘I like him ... in doses,’ ” the authors write.

Earlier in the year, “Clinton held Obama captive in the presidential limo” outside a fund-raiser at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York, the authors write, grabbing Mr. Obama’s hand as he reached for the door. Instead of having a one-on-one meal together that night, as was planned, Mr. Obama, unable to “handle any more undiluted Clinton,” invited aides from both of their staffs to join the dinner and talked to them about their children, rather than talking about politics with his predecessor.

And Mr. Clinton’s praise, in the spring of last year, of Mr. Romney’s business record as “sterling” infuriated top Obama advisers and even prompted Mrs. Clinton to tell her aides that “Bill can’t do that

again.”

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Ultimately, though, Mr. Obama came to rely on Mr. Clinton, not only as a silver-tongued surrogate, but also as a private counselor. Mr. Obama huddled with Mr. Clinton at the home of the Hollywood mogul Jeffrey Katzenberg just days after the president’s disastrous performance in the first debate with Mr. Romney.

And on election night, immediately after Mr. Romney’s concession call, Mr. Obama instructed his campaign manager: “Get Bill on the phone.”

As the relationship between Mr. Obama and Mr. Clinton thawed during the campaign, the incumbent’s bond with his vice president was tested. On a trip to California in early 2012 dedicated to raising money for Mr. Obama’s campaign, Mr. Biden sought to append some meetings with Silicon Valley and Hollywood heavyweights that could help his future ambitions. Word got back to David Plouffe, a top adviser to Mr. Obama. “We can’t have side deals,” Mr. Plouffe told Mr. Biden. The vice president apologized to the aide.

But after a leak that infuriated Mr. Obama, the president followed Mr. Plouffe’s recommendation to limit the size of their strategy meetings, a decision that excluded Mr. Biden. Mr. Obama and his team were also angry when Mr. Biden declared his support for same-sex marriage on “Meet the Press” in the spring of last year, pre-empting the president’s own poll-tested plans to announce what the book indicates was a position he had held as early as 2004.

As for the Republicans, the book includes details with potential 2016 implications for Mr. Christie, who is widely seen as a favored candidate among establishment Republicans.

Mr. Romney included the blunt-talking governor on his vice-presidential shortlist, crossed him off, reconsidered choosing him and then ultimately decided that he could not pick Mr. Christie. Mr. Romney made the decision not only because of the fund-raising restrictions Mr. Christie would face as the governor of New Jersey, but also because Mr. Christie did not offer the same amount of information to Mr. Romney’s team of vetters as the other potential vice-presidential picks.

According to a memo on Mr. Christie from the vetting team, it had unanswered questions on a defamation lawsuit against the governor from earlier in his political career, on a Securities and Exchange Commission settlement involving Mr. Christie’s brother, on names and documentation of his household help, on information from his time as a securities industry lobbyist, and on his medical history. “The dossier on the Garden State governor’s background was littered with potential land mines,” the authors write.

Asked to respond, an aide to Mr. Christie arranged for Beth Myers, who oversaw the vice-presidential search for Mr. Romney, to issue a statement on Thursday that read: “Governor Christie complied fully with the Romney campaign’s request for documents in a timely manner, including a complete medical report from his internist and cardiologist.”

The book includes other nuggets of interest to political insiders:

- Mr. Obama, who is known to detest the intense care and feeding some campaign donors require, told

his campaign manager that he could not even name his top five bundlers — “I just have no idea,” he said. After meeting with the liberal billionaire George Soros, a potential major donor to Democratic 2012 efforts, the president said that “if we don’t get anything out of him,” he would never sit with him again.

■ The authors reveal the source who told Senator Harry Reid of Nevada, the majority leader, that Mr. Romney had not paid any taxes in 10 years: Jon M. Huntsman Sr., the father of Mr. Romney’s early rival in the Republican primaries.

■ Mr. Huntsman’s son, former Gov. Jon M. Huntsman Jr. of Utah, is portrayed in perhaps the most negative light in the book. As Mr. Obama’s ambassador to China, he repeatedly assured top White House officials that he was not considering a Republican presidential bid, even as he was meeting with potential campaign strategists during a trip to his Washington home around Christmas 2010. And while Mr. Huntsman was in Beijing, his wife was exchanging emails with his eventual consultant, trying to be discreet about their political plans by referring to her husband only with the code word “HE.”

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This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: October 31, 2013

An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated the year when former Gov. Jon M. Huntsman of Utah held meetings with potential campaign strategists. It was around Christmas 2010, not 2011.

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