



A Conversation With BARACK OBAMA

The candidate talks about the youth vote, what's on his iPod and his top three priorities as president
By JANN S. WENNER

SHORTLY AFTER BARACK OBAMA CLAIMED VICTORY IN THE fight for the Democratic nomination, I joined him aboard his chartered 737 campaign plane as a member of the press corps. He was flying from Chicago to Appleton, Wisconsin, for a town-hall meeting, one of a series he was doing in Midwestern and swing states to address constituencies he might have missed during the primaries—and, of course, to get some warm-up practice for any town-hall debates he has with John McCain. ¶ The first thing I notice about the plane is how low-key it is, all coach seating from back (the press) to front (the candidate). There is no separate compartment for this potential president; he just holds down the second row for himself and his newspapers. There are no more than 10 staffers on the plane, and a dozen or more rows are empty, separating the senator from the Secret Service contingent and two dozen members of the traveling press corps. It's not a big day or a big event: The primaries are done, and none of the media big names are along. ¶ So far in this campaign, despite their evident admiration, Obama has held the press at a respectful distance. The limit for our interview is going to be 30 minutes, which I think says a lot about him and his campaign. Most every other presidential candidate I've met and interviewed has

PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER YANG

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