

Right zooms in on Heinz

Heinz Kerry's foundation
work provides grist for foes

By Dennis B. Roddy
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Now that her husband, Massachusetts Sen. John F. Kerry, is locked into the Democratic presidential nomination, an assemblage of right-wing groups is gearing up to target Teresa Heinz Kerry, depicting her as a temperamental political spouse and financier of radical groups.

Some of the organizations, such as Citizens United and The Center for the Study of Popular Culture, previously took aim at former first lady and now Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Heinz Kerry, who inherited an estimated \$700 million from her first husband, the late Sen. John Heinz, and who heads one Heinz family foundation and sits on the board of another, has faced increasing scrutiny from conservative groups. Her husband's emergence as the near-certain nominee now appears to have focused more attention on her.

"They've got to kill something that's strong," Heinz Kerry said of her critics. "What can I do? Nothing. I know who I am. My friends know who I am."

Some of the attacks are likely to come not from the campaign of President Bush, but groups on the fringes of the political campaign, where deeply personal attacks have become commonplace.

"I do believe she clearly will be an issue. Her and her financial resources and her corporate entities and donations — all those things need to be looked at real closely," said David Bossie, a former congressional aide who now heads Citizens United, a conservative group that has kibitzed in presidential elections dating to 1988.

"We're looking at the entirety of John Kerry's life, and so clearly his money — the means by which he was able to borrow \$6.4 million for one of his homes, related to her, plays a part," Bossie

said. Bossie was referring to a loan that kept Kerry's campaign afloat before he broke into front-runner status. Forbidden by federal election laws to tap into his wife's personal fortune, Kerry borrowed against a home he and his wife share in Boston.

Floyd Brown, who now works for the Young America's Foundation, suggested conservative operatives also will pursue a personal line of attack on Heinz Kerry. He said he has spoken with several former Heinz Senate staff members about her.

"She's well known to be a difficult woman to deal with," Brown said. "I would encourage you to look up some old Heinz staffers. I think she'll undergo the same kind of scrutiny that Hillary did because she's been so active."

Cliff Shannon, a former top aide to John Heinz, said that while Heinz Kerry's political pronouncements might be fair game for criticism in the campaign, suggestions that she is personally difficult are unlikely to find witnesses from the late senator's staff.

"Teresa didn't interfere. She was almost never in the office," Shannon said.

A spokeswoman for the Bush campaign last week declined to comment on the growing public scrutiny being turned on Heinz Kerry. To date, neither Bush nor his campaign has spoken publicly about her.

In an interview last month, Heinz Kerry said she expected some rough treatment from the political right. "I don't care," she said. "These guys think small. They think small and they have to make a living."

She mentioned criticism from Rush Limbaugh, the conservative radio host. "He says I have unruly hair," she said. "So I must be an unruly person."

Earlier, Matt Drudge, a frequent channel for conservative attacks, had published a rumor — later knocked down — that John Kerry had engaged in an affair with an office intern. The woman said she was never an intern in his office nor involved with him romantically.

Heinz Kerry's major professional activities have been charitable giving. Shortly after taking the reins at the Howard Heinz Endowment and a board seat on the Vira Heinz Foundation, she shifted a large portion of the foundations' grant-making to environmental causes. The move invited scrutiny from a variety of groups that monitor foundations they view as too liberal.

One of them, the Capital Research Center, based in Washington, commissioned a study that purported to link Heinz Kerry to a San Francisco-based charity with ties to liberal groups that Capital Research views as radical.

The report, written by Gretchen and Tom Randall, a Chicago-based couple who head a consulting firm that examines environmental groups, accused the Tides Foundation and its affiliate, the Tides Center, of "laundering" Heinz foundation donations to radical groups.

Among the causes that Capital Research Center said received money through Tides were groups advocating "environmental extremism," "anti-war protest," and "gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender advocacy."

The Tides Center, to which the Heinz foundation gave more than \$4 million over a seven-year period, is primarily used to channel money to smaller charitable groups that do not otherwise qualify for foundation grants. The money, according to Heinz foundation spokesman Grant Oliphant, was all directed specifically to environmental charities based in Western Pennsylvania, none with radical ties.

The Tides Foundation, however, has given its own money to a variety of left-wing causes. Oliphant said the report misrepresented how the Heinz foundations used their money.

Tom Randall, one of the report's authors, said he had no way of determining for certain how the Heinz money was spent. "One of the confusions we found was that you couldn't really distinguish too well between the [Tides] foundation and the center," he said.

John Carlisle, who edited the Capital Research Center report, said he saw no evidence the Heinz endowments were funding any extremist groups, but said he believed the giving patterns of Heinz Kerry's foundations were nonetheless a likely issue in the coming election.

"The point we wanted to make is that Tides has its own controversial reputation and Heinz was working with Tides closely," Carlisle said. "Teresa Heinz Kerry has made clear she intends to remain head of her foundations if John Kerry becomes president. Her history of grant-making through the endowments is going to come under closer scrutiny."

The Capital Research Center's report was picked up in various quarters, including the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, whose publisher, Richard Mellon Scaife, has been a major donor to the center. The newspaper published a column by Tom Randall on the Heinz foundations' donations, but did not mention that Scaife's charities gave \$260,000 to Capital Research in 2002.

Scaife's newspaper has long been critical of Heinz Kerry although Scaife's wife, Barbara Ritchie Scaife, is a friend of Teresa Heinz Kerry and donated \$2,000 to the Kerry campaign. Scaife, Heinz Kerry said, "was fixated on my late husband first."

Other conservative groups have seized on the Capital Research Center report, as well, expanding their interpretations to suggest that Heinz Kerry's foundations have funded anti-American organizations.

"One of heiress Teresa Heinz Kerry's favorite charities is the Tides Foundation ... that funds to the tune of hundreds of millions radical groups that, among other things, protest the U.S. invasion of Iraq, demand open U.S. borders, provide the legal defense of suspected terrorists and promote the spread of Islamist ideology in the U.S.," wrote Joseph Farah, editor of WorldNetDaily, an online newspaper.

"There's no way Heinz money has gone to any of these organizations," said Drummond Pike, president of the Tides Foundation and a board member of the separate Tides center.

Farah's report quoted liberally from one by author Ben Johnson in FrontPageMag, another online publication produced by the Los Angeles-based Center for the Study of Popular Culture.

Johnson's piece is titled "Teresa Heinz Kerry: Bag Lady for the Radical Left," and attempts to tie Heinz Kerry to such groups as the National Lawyers Guild, a onetime communist front group. Again, the connection is based solely on the fact that the Heinz foundations used the Tides Center as a vehicle for giving to environmental groups in Western Pennsylvania.

The Center for the Study of Popular Culture is a Scaife foundation recipient. Its founder, David Horowitz, said Scaife foundations contribute \$250,000 of his annual \$3 million budget but that Scaife is not consulted on the content of his publications.

Horowitz also said that even if the Bush campaign stays clear of Heinz Kerry, the plethora of conservative online and independent groups is destined to latch on to her as a symbol of leftist intrigue.

"Right now I'd say she's a target," Horowitz said. "Even the unfair targets are targets these days."

Dennis B. Roddy can be reached at drodgy@post-gazette.com or 412 263-1965.