

U.S. Jewish news

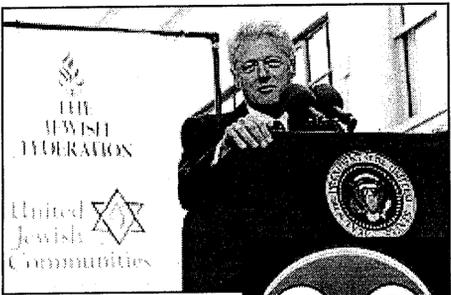
Behind the headlines

At the Democratic Convention it's suddenly cool to be a Jew

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) - The official agenda of the Democratic Party may be to nominate Al Gore and Joseph Lieberman, but the real business during the party's convention this month was to party from morn til morn, raise zillions of dollars and tell the Jews what wonderful folks they are. President Clinton, addressing nearly 4,000 Jews at an outdoor party on August 13, quoted comedian Red Buttons that "in Los Angeles, the Democrats are changing their theme song from 'Happy Days Are Here Again' to 'Hava Nagila.'" Sen. John Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) keynoted an elegant fund-raiser for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee on August 12 and wound up a somewhat disjointed speech by declaring, "I wish I were a Jew."

Between August 12 and 17, there were an estimated 100 convention parties a day, 80 percent by private invitation only. Somewhere near the top in cachet and money-raising prowess was the \$100,000 U.S.-a-couple brunch, to benefit the Clinton Library, at Barbra Streisand's Malibu digs August 13. Even more exclusive were the small parties thrown by billionaires David Geffen and Gary Winnick, presumably for friends of similar



President Clinton speaks at a party in Los Angeles sponsored by the National Jewish Democratic Council, AIPAC, United Jewish Communities and the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles. Credit: Photo by Robert A. Cumins, courtesy UJC.

Campaign buttons distributed by the National Jewish Democratic Council at a party in Los Angeles sponsored by the NJDC, AIPAC, United Jewish Communities and the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles. Credit: Courtesy Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles.

financial standing. For the merely affluent, plastic surgeon Steven Teitelbaum, a new player, threw a \$1,000 U.S.-a-head party for and with Hillary Rodham Clinton, to aid her Senate race in New York.

Some parties combined conviviality with a more serious purpose, such as the one at the home of Mel Levine, a Gore foreign policy adviser, who gave his guests a chance to dialogue with Leon Fuerth, the vice president's longtime national security aide.

Many Jews nervous that Lieberman will bring anti-Semites out of closet

By BRIAN SEIDMAN

NEW YORK (JTA) - Nervousness is tempering the initial euphoria over the selection of a Jew on the Democratic ticket for the White House. "Here comes this event, and we're unable to celebrate unencumbered by anxiety," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League. While he said the anxiety has not reached "panic proportion," the "buzz" reaching the ADL is that many Jews are worried about a rise in anti-Semitism after Sen. Joseph Lieberman, an Orthodox Jew, was chosen as Al Gore's running mate.

Foxman said he was surprised at how insecure many in the Jewish community appeared. He said he had expected to see more confidence in the American people's acceptance of Jews. "Anti-Semitism is there. It hasn't disappeared," Foxman said, but stressed that the rate of anti-Semitism is "the lowest it's ever been." A 1998 ADL survey found that the number of Americans who held strong anti-Semitic views had dropped to 12 percent in 1992 - and from 29 percent in 1964.

But despite lower levels of anti-Semitism, hate groups focused their vitriol on the Connecticut senator during the Democratic Convention this month. Before the advent of the Internet, many of these people would have been content to write anonymous letters to the editor or confine their comments to like-minded people meeting in basements and barrooms. Now, they have an international audience. "The idea of Orthodox Hebe Lieberman being a heart-beat away from the presidency makes me want to retch," wrote one contributor to the Internet message board of Stormfront, a white supremacist group. "We already have a Zionist-occupied government, but now the Clinton-Gore administration has brought it out of the closet," wrote another in all capital letters.

Lieberman's speech hottest ticket in town, as Jewish history is made

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) - Joseph Lieberman never once used the words "Jew" or "Jewish" during the biggest speech of his political career. But on August 16, he made it clear why his nomination as the Democratic vice-presidential candidate represents the fulfillment of the American dream for the grandson of Jewish immigrants.

Mollie Welinsky, 72, had to shout to be heard above the din as some 18,000 Democrats cheered Lieberman to the rafters of the Staples Center at the end of his vice-presidential acceptance speech. "That was a fantastic speech that had everything. It was funny, to the point, sentimental and patriotic," said Welinsky, standing in the midst of the California delegation August 16.

"Lieberman proved that Al Gore couldn't have made a better choice to show the diversity of the Democratic Party," said Sarah Carren of Stockton, Calif. "Everyone was thrilled with his wife; she's a great speaker, too." "He said all the right things and said them with grace and humor," agreed Karen Wingar of Pasadena, Calif.

Lieberman's speech was interrupted 27 times by stormy applause and standing ovations by delegates waving elongated red signs spelling out Lieberman and chanting "Go, Joe, Go." The same exhortation was flashed in neon signs encircling the great hall.

Howard Welinsky, Mollie's son and chair of Democrats for Israel, got a call earlier from California's Latino Lieutenant-Governor Cruz Bustamante, asking whether Welinsky would like six passes to the evening's proceedings. "Every Jew in America would like to be in Staples Center tonight," responded Welinsky in gratefully accepting the passes.

Opening his remarks with "Is America a great country, or what?" and closing with "Only in America," the grandson of immigrants expressed his pride and gratitude to the United States. "I have seen" the goodness of this country "through the eyes of my grandmother," Lieberman said. "She was raised in Central Europe, in a village where she was often harassed just because of the way she worshipped God. Then she immigrated to America. On Saturdays, she used to walk to the synagogue, and often her Christian neighbors would pass her and say, 'Good Sabbath, Mrs. Manger.' It was a source of endless delight and gratitude for her that here in this country, she was accepted for what she was."

Lieberman worries Arab Americans, but leaders say he's not all that bad

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) - What Arab Americans most want from the Democratic ticket is some respect for their concerns and their voting power in key states. In particular, they want reassurances from vice-presidential candidate Joseph Lieberman that his Jewish identity will not tilt U.S. policy more strongly against Arab positions in the Middle East. "There is a deep concern in our community about how the election of Al Gore and Lieberman would affect the peace process," said James Zogby, president of the Washington-based Arab American Institute.

Zogby hosted a record 52 Arab American delegates to the Democratic National Convention at a festive "Meet Us at the Casbah" bash August 15. "The main question we want answered is how Lieberman stands on the Middle East," said Ismael Ahmed, executive director of the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services in the Detroit area, which is home to the largest concentration of Arab Americans in the United States. "He should meet with our people and clearly explain where he stands."



JOSEPH LIEBERMAN: Democrats cheered him to the rafters.

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Behind the headlines

Gore would likely continue Clinton's peacemaking efforts

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) - Would a President Al Gore continue his predecessor's commitment to forging peace in the Middle East? While critics of the current administration accuse President Clinton of being too anxious to conclude an Israeli-Palestinian deal to seal his own political legacy, most peace advocates praise his persistent efforts to do all he can to end the century-old conflict in the region.

By all accounts, Gore has been integrally involved in these efforts, which were launched early in the Clinton administration with the historic 1993 handshake on the White House lawn between former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian



AL GORE, Democratic presidential candidate: No significant differences expected in his Middle East policy.

leader Yasser Arafat. "No vice-president in history has been as involved as Al Gore in foreign policy in general, and the pursuit of peace in the Middle East in particular," said Mel Levine, a former U.S. congressman from California and co-chair of Gore's Middle

East advisory committee. "Al Gore won't need any on-the-job training," Levine said, adding that Gore has a clear grasp of the problems in the Middle East and an absolute commitment to Israel's security.

It is not clear what role his running mate, Sen. Joseph Lieberman, a Jewish lawmaker with strong views on the Middle East, would play in shaping U.S. foreign policy in the region.

Thanks to his long experience not only as vice-president but also as senator and congressman, Gore enjoys the confidence and respect of the current Israeli government as well as of its opposition leaders, Levine said. Middle East analyst Shibley Telhami said there would be no significant differences between a Clinton administration and a Gore administration.

"A Gore administration would be good for both Israel and the Arabs," said Telhami, who holds the Anwar Sadat Chair for Population, Development and Peace at the University of Maryland.

Should an agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians be reached, he said, a Gore administration would place the same priority on its implementation as does Clinton's. Some analysts believe that Clinton's personal engagement in the peace process might not transfer to the Gore administration.

There could be a slight difference in style, but the policy would essentially be the same, said Michael Sonnenfeldt, chair of the Israel Policy Forum, which helps to promote the peace process. "Continuation would be the overwhelming theme," he said.

Sonnenfeldt expects that Gore would maintain an "even-handed" approach to the peace process so America could continue to play a credible role as peace broker.

On the perennial question of moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, Levine said that Gore would defer to the Israeli government in deciding when such a move should be made.

Berkeley man becomes 2nd Jewish veep candidate

By ANDY ALTMAN-OHR

Jewish Bulletin of Northern California

SAN FRANCISCO (JTA) - Two weeks ago, the Jewish community was woozy over the news that there was one Jewish vice presidential candidate. Steady yourself, because now there are two. At the splintered Reform Party convention in Long Beach two weeks ago, Nat Goldhaber of Berkeley was selected August 12 to be the running mate of John Hagelin, whom the party's anti-Pat Buchanan faction picked to be its presidential candidate. The turn of events caught Goldhaber, 52, and his wife, Marilyn, by surprise.

"I went down there to enjoy the convention and to avoid all the dirty tricks of Mr. Buchanan," Goldhaber, a Reform Jew and a member of Temple Sinai in Oakland, said August 15 by phone after a party meeting in Lake Tahoe. "Dr. Hagelin asked me if I wanted to be chairman of his campaign, and I said sure, even though I was a little reluctant to do that. Then he prevailed on me to at least put my hat in the ring (as a running mate) and I won by a majority among four candidates."

Like Hagelin, Goldhaber's name has never been heard by most Americans, even though he is a multi-millionaire and well-known in Silicon Valley. In 1987, he sold a software company he developed, Tops, to Sun Microsystems Inc. for a reported \$20 million U.S. Two weeks ago, he pocketed about 6 percent of MyPoints.com worth about \$27 million U.S. on paper when the company completed a merger with Goldhaber's Oakland-based Cybergold Inc. He founded Cybergold in 1995, offering rewards to customers as an incentive to respond to Web site ads and offers. He has headed several other start-up companies as well, and owns two planes, a Cessna 414 and a Citation jet.

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Focus on issues

Federation hiring of gay executive removes latest barrier

By JULIE WIENER

NEW YORK (JTA) - In the removal of one more perceived barrier to gays and lesbian participation in Jewish life, one of the nation's largest Jewish federations has hired an openly gay man to serve as its top professional. Harold Goldman, a longtime and, by many accounts, popular executive vice president of the local Jewish family and children's service, will serve as president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia starting in October.



HAROLD GOLDMAN: "His sexual preference is irrelevant," says a federation spokesperson. Photo courtesy Jewish Exponent.

Goldman, who will be the first openly gay chief executive of a major federation, declined to be interviewed. Despite the view of some traditional Jews that homosexual activity is forbidden by Jewish law, Philadelphia federation officials and the editor of the federation-owned *Jewish Exponent* newspaper say there has been no criticism so far of Goldman's appointment.

"From our perspective, his sexual preference is irrelevant," Susan Bodner, the federation's communications director, said, adding that Goldman was chosen for his "leadership qualities." The issue "wasn't controversial at all at Jewish Family and Children's Services, and we don't expect it to be here," she said. The appointment comes as gay and lesbian Jews are enjoying unprecedented acceptance in the mainstream Jewish community.

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