

# POLITIFAX™

A Weekly Electronic Newsletter on Politics in **NEW JERSEY**

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## Who's Hot

### *John Kerry*

For those of you who've been vacationing in the Malagasy Republic (We almost said Mozambique.) the junior Senator from Massachusetts won the Democratic nomination for President and delivered an acceptance speech that exceeded expectations.

### *Quote of the Week*

At one of what seemed to be an endless series of parties, Joan Quigley told us the story of her first foray into Hudson County politics -- as campaign manager for former Congressman Frank Guarini. Making the mandatory visits to each of the Mayors in the district, the future Assemblywoman went with the legendary Frank Rodgers to meet his lieutenants. Rodgers, who served as Harrison Mayor for half a century give or take a two-year term or two, introduced her to her new career with the appropriate observation that "*Mrs. Quigley, you've heard about the boys in the back room. Well, this is the back room. [Beat.] And these are the boys.*"

## The Democrats in Convention

**THE CONVENTION.** Our reason for including Joan Quigley's story -- aside from its intrinsic comic value -- is to draw a contrast between the way things used to be and the way they are now. For, while there may've been back rooms with boys in them in Boston this week, whatever deals they were cutting had nothing to do with who'd be the nominee. This was more like a pep rally or perhaps the Chamber Train Ride -- with every other state sending its Democrats on a train to the same city. Making matters worse was the seriousness of purpose discernible in everybody. There were very few funny hats. Everybody was focused -- in the daylight hours at least and even at night we saw little misbehaving -- on the coming campaign. And everything was programmed. To understand how little spontaneity was valued you need to know that the convention managers were in touch with every delegation every minute, so that, when the Edwards signs or Kerry signs or even Max Cleland signs appeared on the floor they came on the orders of some guy up there high atop the whatever. (Probably the same guy CNN listeners heard saying on Thursday night "All balloons, what the hell? There's nothing falling. What the [expletive deleted] are you guys doing?") Anyway, those who want to find out how it worked in the good old days can read Robert K. Murray's *The 103rd Ballot: The Incredible Story of the Disastrous Democratic Convention of 1924* and Richard Oulahan's *The Man Who: The Story of the 1932 Democratic National Convention*. This year's Boston, however, bore no resemblance at all to Murray's New York or Oulahan's Chicago. Everything changed in the 1970s with the proliferation of primaries. Not that that's bad; it's just that the change relegated conventions to something akin to an ostrich's wings: They're impressive. But they don't serve much purpose. All week, in fact, we kept thinking about how *Much Ado About Nothing* was playing in the Common at night and couldn't shake the suspicion that the municipal arts council or whoever picked the week's Shakespeare in the Park production was perpetrating a subtle literary joke.

**THE CITY.** Boston has everything a city needs to be livable: major league baseball (preferably American League), ethnic restaurants, good public transportation, and no City Council member who wears a white belt and white shoes in public. The only pall on Oliver Wendell Holmes's assessment that his native city is the Hub of the universe is that the only bars that stay open after midnight are the ones that feature music created for no identifiable purpose other than to drum up business for hearing aid manufacturers.

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## Around the State

### The Democrats in Convention


**THE HOTEL.** The New Jersey delegation was housed in one of the nation's great hotels, the Parker House, "the longest continuously operating (since 1855) hotel in America;" the scene of John Kennedy's first public speech (at age 7), his announcement that he was running for Congress, his proposal to Jacqueline Bouvier, and his bachelor party; and the site where both Boston cream pie and Parker House rolls were first concocted. The bar in the Parker restaurant ranks right up there with the Oak Bar at the Plaza for wood-paneled splendor, and The Last Hurrah, the hotel's other bar, is comfortable and appropriately named. The only bad rap any Democrat laid on the Parker House is that it served Hunt's -- not Heinz -- ketchup! Our non-delegates ended up in the Newton Marriott, which is the geographic equivalent of housing people in Roselle Park, West Orange, or Fair Lawn for the GOP convention. (The banishment was made more palatable by Nancy Shanahan, who handled arrangements with the hotel, logistics for getting people back and forth, and even an unscheduled hospitality suite for weary travelers returning from downtown.) Other delegations, presumably from red states, ended up in accommodations as inelegant as college dorms.

**MONDAY.** It was pretty clear right from the beginning that everybody got the chin-up-chest-out Front Office memo. For example, the Governor spoke at a breakfast (sponsored by Aventis and NJBIA), and he was quite good. Afterwards, the folks from the Front Office and State Committee fanned out to remind every reporter they could buttonhole to remind them just how good he was. This effort totally ignored the

fact that the breakfast's most notable event was an impromptu three-sided sparring match involving Brendan Byrne, Frank Lautenberg, and guest speaker Senator Joe Biden of Delaware. (Biden: "I've made many mistakes in my life. You know most of them, and Brendan will tell you about the rest." Byrne: "As Joe said, 'What can I say that hasn't been said before? By someone else.'" Biden: "Frank's the oldest youngest pain in the ass in the Senate." Lautenberg: "Why don't you go back to Maryland where you belong?") Capital Public Affairs hosted a luncheon at Davio's honoring Bonnie Watson-Coleman and Delaware Governor Ruth Ann Minner. (The Governor has a reputation for brashness, fast cars, and zingers directed at her state's good old boy network but was regrettably on her best behavior.) After a cocktail reception sponsored by the Commerce and Industry Association we settled in at the watch party (compliments of MedCo.) to see Al Gore thank Bill Clinton (four years too late in the opinion of several people with whom we watched) and Clinton bring the faithful to the brink of screaming "Four MORE years" and reminding it why Republicans hate him. Winning Strategies then established the bed time for the week with a late night party with lots of Bruce Springsteen at the Bell in Hand Tavern.

**TUESDAY.** Breakfast (compliments of PSE&G and the IBEW Local 94) honored the Congressional delegation. Then, after John Adler's tour of Harvard, there was an AT&T reception for Frank Lautenberg at Cheers, a setting sufficiently elegant to satisfy the most critical Beacon Hill matron and sufficiently stocked with oysters to satisfy the most voracious seafood lover. The talk of the watch party (sponsored by the Greater New York Hospital Association and Glaxo Smith Kline), the Bergen County Democrats post-Fleet Center gathering at 33 Restaurant, and the rest of the convention for that matter was Barack Obama's keynote speech. Ev-erybody who heard him came away convinced they had seen the birth of a new star. (And we'd be remiss not to mention that he was recruited for his Illinois Senate run by Jon Corzine wearing his Democratic Senate Campaign Committee hat.)

**WEDNESDAY.** The big surprise at breakfast (by Novartis) was Obama's surprise appearance, which caught Frank Pallone mid-sentence. Obama, it turns out, is as good talking off the cuff as he is with a prepared text. But what finally convinced us of his rock star status was the sight of white Freeholders with

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black constituencies unsubtly pushing aside other delegates to get into a photograph with him. The non-surprise was Jon Corzine's umpteenth disavowal that he's interested in running for Governor next year. That night, after some fortification at the New Jersey Hospital Association cocktail party, we got our chance to see things close up at the Fleet Center. We were provided with a pass that designated us an "Honored Guest." We were looking forward to being where the action was. And we're not reluctant to tell you we've had emergency root canal that was more fun. The temperature in the hall approached the boiling point of water, which, we discovered, was considerably higher than the boiling point of other honored guests. We wandered around the seventh (that's the top) level looking for a seat. And we couldn't hear a thing anyone was saying. After about 45 minutes of feeling anything but honored, we left, hailed a cab to the Parker House, and, having missed, without regret, Al Sharpton's departure from the prescribed program, watched John Edwards's not-up-to-expectations speech on a wide screen TV with food and liquid refreshment provided by Novartis in its excellent hospitality suite. (The pharmaceutical company deserves special mention not only for the events it sponsored by also for providing a business center where folks with bosses more demanding than ours had access to computers, fax machines, and copiers. We dropped in on several occasions not to communicate with anybody outside Boston but for refreshments.) The evening ended with a State Commit-

tee reception for the Governor at The State Room in a 33rd floor space that provided such a spectacular view of Boston harbor we couldn't help thinking that, had it existed 230 years ago, Paul Revere could've saved himself the ride by hanging his lanterns up there where they could've been seen in Lexington.

**THURSDAY.** Lacking much interest in hearing Howard Dean and even less in listening to Ben Affleck, what grabbed us most about breakfast (provided by Jersey Central Power & Light) was the buzz that the delegation had been chastised by convention managers for having smuggled more people than we were allowed onto the floor the night before. (Let's see, we had 128 delegates and were allocated 101 seats, and the guys running the show were appalled that a few people took a handful of credentials from those already inside and went out to bring in some more people who had every right to be there in the first place. They might be able to pull this stuff with people from Kansas, but we've got attitude.) Over at Cheers AT&T did for Jon Corzine what it had done for Frank Lautenberg on Tuesday, and we continued our imbibing at the Congressional delegation's reception at the Black Rose, then at the Novartis watch party, where we watched Kerry exceed expectations. For the event-capping party Corzine and Bob Menendez threw an Oyster Fest at the Union Oyster House, which boasts that it is the oldest continuously operating restaurant in the country. And who are we to argue.

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## News Roundup

### *Tidbits*

**Hero of the Week:** Rahway Mayor Jim Kennedy surrendered his delegate status so that Brendan Byrne could continue his streak of having voted at every convention since 1960.

**Stalwarts of the Week:** There weren't all that many protestors. (We were partial to the guy from the Vegetarian Party who was dressed up as a carrot.) You couldn't turn around, however, without seeing somebody in a Dennis Kucinich tee shirt.

**Biggest Fear of the Week Averted:** Dick Codey showed up mid-convention to great consternation that, with Albio Sires already in town, the Acting Governor would be Peter Harvey. This didn't cause as much of a stir as it might've, though, since there were so few Democrats left back at home that any subpoenas handed out at 7AM would go to Republicans.

**Biggest Laugh of the Week:** The first page of the special convention section of Monday's Washington *Post* carried the banner headline "Election 2000."

**Something to Think About:** In a discussion among a bunch of delegates about all the quotas Democrats impose on each delegation one woman asked whether anybody thought it'd be that way if there were real decisions to be made.

In case you hadn't noticed, this, the July 28 issue, is coming out on several days after July 28. The bonus for this delay is that there'll be an August 4 issue that will come out on August 4. After that we'll be on vacation -- mercifully -- for three weeks. We'll return with the September 1 issue, a special on the Republican National Convention that will arrive over Labor Day weekend, followed by the regular September 8 issue. And, if you're confused, don't worry; we are too.

A reminder for those of you who'll miss us while we're gone: On Sunday August 15 at 12:30 at the Yogi Berra Museum in Montclair, the authors of *The Black Prince of Baseball: Hal Chase and the Mythology of the Game* (one of whom is this newsletter's publisher/editor), will take part in a symposium on The Most Controversial Yankee. There'll be a book signing, obviously the important part of the day, immediately afterwards.

## Winners and Losers

### **Winner: John Adler**

Public events were so scripted and programmed the gathering sometimes resembled some kind of Stepford convention. The Senator's personal "mostly factual" tour of the Harvard campus, where he spent seven years, provided a refreshingly spontaneous break. When we signed up, we figured there'd be a dozen or so people on an intimate stroll. Well, about 100 people -- including Brendan and Ruthi Byrne -- showed up. The Senator, his usual witty and informative self, observed that what he enjoyed most about Harvard was the cross-pollination of smart people studying different things and sharing their knowledge. To which some wag added *sotto voce*, "just like the State Senate." The only disappointment was that he wouldn't join the former Governor's invitation to sing the university *alma mater* in an *a capella* duet.

### **Winner: Democratic State Committee**

On the way down in the elevator on Friday we ran into Jim McGreevey, who said he was off to thank the DSC staff for all their hard work. We told him we were going to make them winners for how well they handled everything. (We realized just how well when we heard some Pennsylvania delegates, who were also housed in the Parker House, complaining about how screwed up everything was.) The Governor asked us to express publicly his appreciation along with our own.

### **Winner: Boston**

The host city did all it could to make the event a success, including settling police and firefighter disputes with raises that were considerably higher than anticipated. So, there were no picket lines to daunt delegates, the streets were Disneyland clean, and, because lots of regular commuters took the week off, traffic was more than manageable.

### **Loser: Democratic National Committee**

After all the compliments we've paid Boston we have to say it was the wrong venue for the event. There simply aren't enough hotel rooms in the city and certainly not enough seats in the Fleet Center.