

# Puttin' on the ritz at Mondale hotel

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

SAN FRANCISCO — Michigan Democrats attending the 39th national convention are housed in the Meriden Hotel, the city's newest, most luxurious and probably most expensive.

It is also the headquarters hotel of presidential nominee Walter Mondale and his running mate, Rep. Geraldine Ferraro.

How did it happen?

"It was part draw and park luck," explained Rick Wiener, the 37-year-old state chairman attending his first national convocation.

"We drew a high number (among state delegations). We were given a list and just assigned here." He surveyed the surroundings. "Not too bad. Sometimes life treats one well," he said.

TED MONDALE, the standard bearer's son, provided one clue. Saying hello to the Michiganans Monday morning, he recalled the Wolverine state had provided his father a critical victory on March 17 when the Hart handwagon was going strong.

"They say my father's an old-time politician," Ted said. "The beauty of that is that old-time politicians don't forget their friends."

NO NEED to worry about finding a shuttlebus, a costly cab or a cable car schedule to get to "work." The underground Moscone Center is a half-block away.

Our room overlooks the Moscone Center and the infamous parking lot, where all the assembled unelcted nonconformists can do their various things. They can't bother the delegates, who are free to gawk or move on, whatever their pleasure.

FOR MANY of the party faithful, a national convention is a place to take a vacation. Not this year. The Moscone Center is tiny, by convention hall standards, and credentials (tickets) for friends of the party are few.

"We have only 31 passes," chairman Wiener told his 155-member delegation. "Nobody will be awarded by lottery at 3 p.m. each day. The other 12 I have the dubious honor of distributing. I already have 50 requests."

Just to make sure the chairman's 12 were spread around fairly, the delegation voted that the list of recipients be displayed on the bulletin board.

THE MERIDIEN is French-owned with a continental air. Meeting rooms are named for wines. Michigan meets in the Sauterne Room.

They say the help are all at least bilingual, or even multi-lingual, but my own foreign languages are too rusty to verify this.

The manager is called the concierge. The book of guest services is in English, French, Spanish and Chinese.

## Democratic Convention

The bars of soap aren't Dove or Lifeboy but carved, scented French soaps. A complimentary bottle of wine — Macon Blanc, 1983 — awaits each guest. The room comes equipped with gold-stamped bath gel, shampoo and body lotion.

Price is \$100 a day, or almost \$1,000 for two for the convention, paid in advance, and no refunds if you cancel.

Breakfast from room service is \$10.75 for juice, two eggs, bacon, toast and coffee. If you're from Battle Creek and are loyal to corn flakes, it's \$3.

For dinner there's a rib eye at \$16.50, chef salad at \$8.50 and French onion soup at \$4.25. A bottle of Johnny Walker Red will cost the expense account \$36; McMaster's and Grand MacNish aren't listed.

"My wife and I are Egg McMuffin fans," confessed Alan Heimkamp, 32-year-old budget-conscious Livonia attorney and Mondale delegate.

The McDonald's a few blocks away was charging back-home prices, though the orange juice was from Florida.



The Michigan delegation struck it rich when they drew the hotel that also housed the Mondale-Ferraro headquarters.

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