

Blanchard: Clinton's old friend is also Gore's pal

NEW YORK — Everyone knows former Gov. James Blanchard is tight with Democratic presidential nominee Bill Clinton.

"He supported the Chrysler package," said Blanchard, who was elected to the U.S. House in 1974 with Gore following in '76.

"(Then-Rep. Dan) Quayle tried to kill it and Bush was opposed," Blanchard said. The federal underwriting of Chrysler Corp.'s loans helped save the No.3 automaker in 1979 and propelled Blanchard into the governor's office in 1982.

"I served on the Science and Technology Committee with Gore. He and I were part of the congressional committee on the house of the future.

"The last time he was in Oakland County I introduced him at a Phil Hott dinner and said one day he will be president of the United

Blanchard turns 60 on Aug. 8 and looks thinner than in his 30s. He and wife Janet had a hectic schedule of speeches and events. Although listed as chair of the Michigan Clinton caucus, Blanchard is staying in Clinton's hotel. A ground-floor Clinton supporter, Blanchard may be due for a presidential appointment if Clinton wins the White House.

"I'm a little upset that both (Clinton and Gore) are younger than I am," Blanchard told Michigan delegates at their Monday morning caucus. Clinton is 43, Gore 44.

■ 'I introduced (Gore) at a Phil Hart dinner and said one day he will be president of the United States. He's close.'

Ex-Gov. James
Blanchard

The irreverent Blanchard humor was still there: "Clinton was so brilliant a student at Georgetown University that all the Jesuits thought he was Catholic and not Baptist."

Clinton and Blanchard freely borrowed each other's ideas on education and job training as governors.



Bright lights, big city: Megan Tucker, daughter of Oakland County Democratic Party chairman Donald Tucker, looks out over the crowd at this week's national party convention at Madison Square Garden in New York.

Dems *from page 10A*

She felt vindicated that Sen. Gore, who dropped out early in 1988's presidential sweepstakes, was picked by Clinton to be the vice presidential nominee in 1992.

"I was out early in fall for Clinton. Then when he picked Gore, I said, 'Golly, these are my two candidates,'" Taras said.

As of Sunday, she had crammed in a lot of activities — the National Education Association caucus "Miss Saigon" and "Jake's Women" at the theater, probably a visit to the Museum of Modern Art later in the week.

"The NEA has been very strong for Clinton; and the MEA was on

board very early this year. I was involved in the early meetings. I think Michigan is going to be in the forefront (of the Clinton campaign).

"Education is going to be an issue where it hasn't been — the education president," the high school government teacher said, referring to a title Republican President George Bush bestowed on himself in 1988.

Two veterans

Ron Thayer and Mildred Jeffrey have to stop and count carefully all the Democratic National Conventions they've been to.

"Let's see — 1956, '60... this is my ninth," said Jeffrey, former trustee of Wayne State University and champion of women's issues. "We caucus every morning at 10 at the Hilton and have 1,200 to 1,500 women. On Tuesday the women (Senate) candidates will be there, NARAL (abortion rights league) and Mothers for Choice. "As you know, this is the year of women. They're voting in greater numbers and giving money," the Detroitier said.

"My first," said Thayer, was 1972 in Miami when I was working for Roman Gribbs (then Detroit's mayor). It's still exciting," said Thayer, a Clinton at-large alternate from Southfield.

"But I feel personally closest to Clinton. He was chair of the National Governors Conference which met at Traverse City." Thayer, then working for Gov. James Blanchard, helped set up the conference. "When Blanchard was chair of the Democratic Governors Conference, he picked Clinton to follow him.

"Every time I see Clinton, he gives you a bear hug. He's folksy,

warm, outgoing; he always remembers you."

Thayer's career as a journalist was brief, and its highlight was at the University of Detroit newspaper in the 1950s when he hired as columnist a Democrat named John Grubbs (now managing director of the Oakland County Road Commission) and a Republican named L. Brooks Patterson (county executive candidate).

A vice president for development at Channel 56, Thayer has spent some time with Wayne County Executive Ed McNamara, but Thayer wants to hold back any job change announcement for a month.

Frequent source

One of Michigan's most quoted delegates is state Rep. Maxine Bauman of Southfield, though most interviews fail to note she's a Paul Tsongas delegate.

"They ask me how's Clinton doing and the women's role," said Berman. "It'll be good to get these things over with."

Party bigwig boasts of his Michigan ties

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

NEW YORK --- Keith Geiger has changed in only two ways since he was a Livonia teacher and active in the Michigan Education Association. His graying hair has turned almost white. And his perpetual smile is a big grin.

"We have the most - 400 delegates and alternates," said the president of the National Education Association.

"We had a staff person as part of the (Democratic platform) drafting Committee. It's more a centralist platform than in the past. But we're very pleased because we have the candidate that goes with it," he said of Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton.

Geiger and wife Janet were on their way to guest seats in Madison Square Garden. They live in Fairfax County, Va., outside Washington.


"We (NEA) eliminated Bush real early because of his record. Zero. Jerry Brown didn't respond to our questionnaire. We declared there were four viable candidates at that time (early in the year).

The states had the option. Ten states (including the Michigan Education Association) endorsed Clinton only. The rest endorsed all four (Democratic candidates) and worked to get delegates.

"As for the governor (Clinton), although we've had differences, we like his record. He comes across cold until you start talking to him."

"We just talked with Gore. His record is 100 percent (pro NEA) this year and 91 percent over his career as a senator. His big strengths are in the environment and foreign affairs. That's what he'll bring to the ticket," Geiger said.

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