

Conventional wisdom might give Detroit edge for Dems

The Democrats are in

Not the candidates for governor or county executive; they won't go away. Democratic National Convention committee members are visiting to evaluate Motown as a possible site for the 2004 convention.

Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick is making a pitch during a three-day visit, trying to convince the committee that Detroit is a better site than Boston, Miami or New York.

A national political convention could bring as much as 8150 million to the local economy, much of it spent in the suburbs. Any convention in Detroit will rely heavily on suburban accommodations.

modations.

The last time a national political convention
came to Detroit I was working in public relations at Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield
Village. The 1980 Republican convention that

tions at Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village. The 1980 Republican convention that gave us Ronald Reagan was a relatively tame flair as conventions go.

There was a brief flurry about the possibility of former President Gerald Ford joining the ticket as the vice presidential candidate. As all nutty ideas eventually do, it died long before it ever reached the convention floor. The resistance of moderate Republicans (known as Milliken Republicans in Michigans (known as Milliken Republicans in Michigans Forder of the College of the College

moderate groups).

They were a cheerful bunch and, in time, were won over with everyone else by Reagan's

were won over with everyone else by Reagan's movie star charms.

The side conventions that went on at subur-han sites were often more interesting than the main floor event down at Cobo.

I was witness to Jack Kemp snubbing Michigan's favorite son Gerald Ford. At the time Kemp was a rising star, the prototype compassionate conservative with his enterprise zones iden.

zones idea.

He had arrived at a party function at the museum and was told the former president was about to arrive.

Apparently, Kemp didn't want to associate with the older moderate wing of the party, even

if the representative was a former president. He abruptly got his handlers to hustle him out just in the nick of time.

As an admirer of President Ford, I came away thinking that the former Buffalo quarterback was way too slick for his own good.

Another of my assignments was to play escort for the national press (the other big contingent

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at every convention), Reporters love Henry Ford Museum and were delighted to get the grand tour (especially for free, another thing reporters love).

The conservative GOP brought their convention to a troubled city with a Democratic mayor (who would later call their nominee 'Old Prine Face') in a state with a moderate governor (the original Milliken Republican, Bill Milliken). The Democrats will be coming to a city with a Democratic mayor, county executive and, if the polls hold true, governor.

Such warmth and congeniality won't be present at the other three sites.

Unfortunately, conventions aren't what they used to be. C-Span will offer the only gavel-to-gavel coverage. The broadcast networks are threatening to go down to an hour a night or less. The decision on the candidate is usually made in primaries months before.

The platforms are so meaningless most candidates don't know what's in them.

So the convention won't draw as many eyes to the city as they did when the 1968 Democratic Convention had them fighting in the Chicago streets (and good thing).

Still, the convention would bring a lot of people with deep pockets to our area.

If the city and state work together to put a fresh face forward, convention ward take back the word that Detroit and its suburbs are a fine place to live, visit and nominate presidents.

Hugh Gallagher is the managing editor of The Observer Rewspapers. He can be reached by phone at (734) 953-2149, by e-mail at hgallagher@oe.homecomm.net or by fax at (734)591-7279.



Festival booth time proves great for people-watching

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The young man who came around the Farmington Area Founders Festival information booth Thursday with a stethoscope around his neck looked vaguely familiar to me. He and two friends, all students at Baker College, had to find £50 people willing to have their blood pressures taken. As he sat down, I took a look at his identification badge.

"Nick Hippler," I said. "That sounds vaguely familiar."

amular.

And then it hit me. At last year's festival, Nick's friends had set up a table along the sidewalk on Grand River and were taking donations to help his family, On July 10, while pitching for the U.S.

Basehall Stars in Holland, Nick was struck by a line

Basebail Stars in Holland, Nick was struck by a line drive.

He was hospitalized for more than three weeks and appears fully covered, but the experience changed the course of his life.

As he wrapped the blood pressure cuff around my arm, he explained that he decided to go into emergency medical technician training after his harrowing experience. I know what it's like to ride in an ambulance, 'Hippler said.

Catching up on the news was just part of the booth experience, People who'd been enuising the craft fair in the Downtown Business Center parking lot stopped by to glance at the T-shirts and tote bags and pick up information about events and crafters.

Many were saddened by the absence of The Great

crafters.

Many were saddened by the absence of The Great
Wall, a virtual institution at the Festival. The
restaurant was to have been part of the event, but
owner Henry Lum passed away just a few weeks

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The restaurant's delicious 'bow ties' were greatly missed – at least half a dozen people asked about them in the time I was in the booth.

Still, there was no shortage of food and drink. I also sat a spell at the Bluc Circle tent, where Denise Albrecht and Tracy and Scott Freeman set up cafe tables with flowery cloths and candles. Bluc Circle dad and Longacre Iced Tea were the order of the day.

cay:
Tough to tell which was more popular – but some
folks did appreciate the sugar-free iced tea, a special
blend concorded by the Longacre House's chef. I
was told Blue Circle members taste-tested several

was told Bhe Circle members taste-tested several variations. I've been sworm to secrecy about the recipe for Blue Circle-ade, and it's just as well. You wouldn't believe it anyway.

One of my favorite festival past-times is people watching and this year has been no exception. Astide from a few travelling aclas people who were shooed away by festival organizers, Thursday's diverse crowd seemed to be enjoying themselves, despite the heat and humidity.

Early in the afternoon, a group of children from Sunny Day Care and Montessori on Slocum passed

by. Holding hands and led by their teachers, they walked carefully down the sidewalk all dressed in bright yellow Teshirts. You can't help but oool and ahthi when you see adorable little children, and there were plenty of them at the Festival. My favorite was the little girl who got up out of her stroller while her mother was chatting and looking at exhibits, walked a few steps away and then just laid down on the asphalt, apparently to alege.

ently to sleep.

Of course, Mom realized that was probably a bad place for naptime and picked her up, much to the

phace for majnine and pieced aer op, much to the child's chagin. There were people dressed in casual clothes, men in suits and long-sleeved shirts (gotta admire someone who chooses class over comfort), moms in shorts and T-shirts and teen-agers dressed in almost every manner of apparel. I hesitate to criticize, because I grew up in the 70s wearing bell bottoms so long I walked off the bottom two inches. Executive Director Suzanne Lichtman, her husband Gary and daughter Natalie were everywhere, as were Deb Watson, who coordinated the craft fair. Sources tell me Mike Nowak, Festival Board vice president, also put in a great many hours on-site. The thing about a festival like this - and while I'm sure it looks like it all runs itself. I can assure you, it requires an incredible amount of coordination - is that it only works if everyone works it together.

you, it requires an incredible amount of coordination – is that it only works if everyone works it together.

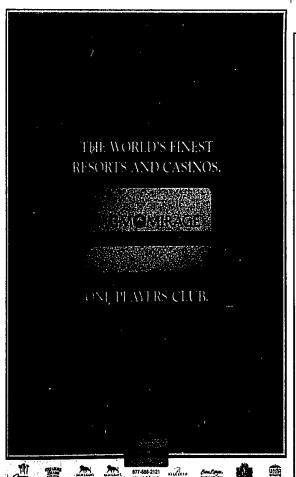
Were there complaints? Well, sure, Last year's success made the festival even more popular with exhibitors this year, so booth space disappeared quickly. Only two in a very large field of political candidates pot in on the first-come, first-served deal. But of course, everyone was free to walk the festival and hand out literature.

And in case anyone's wondering, the large space on the west end of the pathing lot was reserved for Time-Warner cable's Road Runner promotional trailer, which didn't arrive in time for the event. That was one of a million daily details that kept organizers hopping from one end of Grand River to the other and back again.

As a festival board member, well...! don't feel fixed the Lichthemas and so many others put in to make this an amazing success. Giftches and flared empers aside. I think everyone involved in this year's Farmington Area Founders Festival should take pride in a job well done.

Jon! Hubred is edit of the Farmington Observes, She well-

Jonil Hubred is editor of the Farmington Observer, She wel-comes your comments and suggestions by mail et 33-91 Grand Rever, Farmington KL, 48335, by phone (268) 477-559, by FAX, 2889 477-9720, or wa email, Juhund One-bonecomment, for more information about the Founder's Festival, go to





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Air conditioning is special promotion on initial visit.