

Gantt campaigns here



Senate candidate Harvey Gantt talks to newly formed Committed Christian Citizens for Harvey Gantt Monday night at Friendship Baptist Church. The organization's goal is an aggressive grassroots campaign in Gantt's race against Sen. Jesse Helms. Gantt is a member at Friendship.

The Republican Convention

Powell left of many in GOP

By Mike Feinsilber
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN DIEGO - Colin Powell made his political debut Monday night, his first purely partisan speech to a purely partisan gathering. Many in his audience wondered if they were auditioning for the GOP's next presidential nominee - the one after Bob Dole, win or lose.

Powell is a phenomenon, not like anyone else on the political scene. On his book tour last spring he marched across the country like a conqueror. Poll after poll attest to his appeal.

But Powell has his critics, almost all conservative, and they say that such polls reflect celebrity rather than electability.

The former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is a newly-hatched Republican whose Republicanism is out-of-sync with the thinking of many delegates to the convention and the platform they adopted Tuesday.

He is for affirmative action, abortion rights and free trade - as Democrats love to point out. "Will they let him speak his mind at the GOP convention?" the Democrats ask in a 25-page report they're circulating.

Powell himself has said he is "a little nervous" about the religious right and "probably

more liberal than the mainstream of the Republican Party right now."

So his speech measured his appeal to the hard-core of his new party, and whether he can take the heat of competitive politics.

Last year, one of his critics, Marilyn Quayle, wife of the former Vice President Dan Quayle - who might make a run for the GOP presidential nomination in the year 2000 - suggested Powell might be thin-skinned. "He is not used to taking criticism and he is used to people doing what they are told," she said.

As it turned out, Powell didn't compete for the GOP presidential nomination. Nor did he choose to accept the vice presidential nomination, despite Dole's hardly hidden overtures.

He did not even campaign for the GOP. "I don't want to go out," he said in July. "I am practicing my own politics privately."

Powell may be reluctant, but he is still a valuable asset to the GOP and he has been given a prime-time spot, even if he lacks the oratorical skills of a Mario Cuomo, Jesse Jackson or Ronald Reagan.

He remains "the most popular person in the country, period," says historian Stephen Ambrose, who chronicled Dwight D. Eisenhower's

ascension 44 years ago. Eisenhower, another "political general," was courted by Democrats in 1948 and wooed and won by Republicans in 1952. He was twice elected president by huge margins.

In saying no to 1996, Powell said a candidacy would demand "a passion and commitment" he didn't feel.

That said nothing about 2000. Because of his age, the 73-year-old Dole has suggested he may not seek re-election if he wins this year, and a scramble for the GOP nomination can be expected.

A poll in May, participants called Powell more credible than President Clinton, twice as credible as Dole.

His hold on the American imagination is greater than Eisenhower's ever was, said Ambrose, a Powell-for-president booster.

Joseph Persico, coauthor of Powell's "My American Journey," compares the Powell phenomenon to that surrounding Charles Lindbergh, who electrified the world when he flew to Paris in 1927, the first flier to cross the Atlantic solo.

Powell does nothing to run away from his ethnic background and he champions issues important to blacks.

It's his moderation - not his race - that has attracted whatever opposition has surfaced so far.

Watt has high profile

By Byron Jenkins
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN DIEGO - Rep. J.C. Watts professes to be a reluctant star at the Republican National Convention, but you wouldn't know it from watching the freshman from Oklahoma in action.

One of just two black Republicans in Congress and a former football standout at the University of Oklahoma, Watts has been granted key roles at the party's quadrennial gathering.

Aside from a speech to the floor, he served on the platform committee and is playing reporter on the GOP's cable broadcast of its convention.

His name has arisen as a candidate to give a speech nominating Jack Kemp to be Bob Dole's vice presidential candidate.

But all the hoopla aside, Watts says he'd "just as soon be home fishing."

"I don't have a desire to be THE black Republican, if you will," he said. "The party has been good to me and I have been good for the party. I don't think the party has done any-

thing for me that they haven't done for anybody else."

A critic of the welfare system and a strong supporter of House Speaker Newt Gingrich, the first-term congressman said his convention speech would focus on ways to "grow our poor communities" as an alternative to welfare.

Watts represents a district that lacks a large black constituency and his views contrast sharply with many black leaders, some of whom he referred to as "poverty pimps."

"You've got some poverty pimps out there," Watts said. "They've hustled this system. They want people to be dependent on them. They don't want people to get off the system."

Watts began hustling through the San Diego Convention Center on Monday, interviewing rank-and-file delegates in his role as a GOP television correspondent.

The broadcasts are being carried on two cable systems, and Watts said he will strive to feature "real people, blue

collar folks talking about what's going on in America.

"This will give me a chance to hopefully have a little fun and put a little different spin on the convention," he said.

Watts studied journalism in college, but he says he is not contemplating a career change.

"I don't see this will lead to anything past the convention week," he said. "I'll keep my day job."

Watts, the first black Republican congressman from the South since Reconstruction, served on the convention's platform committee, chairing the subcommittee on health, education and welfare.

Watts gave a nominating speech for President Bush four years ago and New York Gov. George Pataki suggested that he do the same for Kemp.

"Take a look at J.C. Watts, another quarterback," Pataki said. "I think it would just be a tremendous thing for the Republican Party, for Jack Kemp and the country, to see J.C. Watts nominate Jack Kemp."

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