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REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION

McCain vows own kind of change

GOP nominee says he will look past party labels for the good of the nation.



CLOSING NIGHT: John McCain is joined by his running mate, Sarah Palin, after accepting the nomination. "Again and again, I've worked with members of both parties to fix problems that need to be fixed," he said. "That's how I will govern as president."

By MARK Z. BARABAK
Times Staff Writer

ST. PAUL, MINN. — John McCain launched his final drive for the White House on Thursday night by stepping away from President Bush and toward the political center, vowing to forge a government focused on problem-solving rather than party labels.

"Instead of rejecting good ideas because we didn't think of them first, let's use the best ideas from both sides. Instead of fighting over who gets the credit, let's try sharing it," McCain said in an acceptance speech that stamped him as the new leader of the GOP. "We're going to finally start getting things done for the people who are counting on us, and I won't care who gets the credit."

The Arizona senator pledged to invite Democrats as well as independents into his administration, distancing himself from the approach of Bush, who typically counted on fellow Republicans to turn his policies into law.

"Again and again, I've worked with members of both parties to fix problems that need to be fixed," McCain said to subdued applause on the final night of the Republican National Convention. "That's how I will govern as president. I will reach out my hand to anyone to help me get this country moving again. I have that record and the scars to prove it. Sen. Obama does not."

The speech marked a transcendent moment that was unimaginable during the five years McCain spent as a prisoner of war in Vietnam. Three and a half decades after walking free and 25 years after launching his political career as a congressman from Phoenix, McCain accepted the highest political prize his party offers.

The glancing mention of the Democratic presidential nominee, Illinois Sen. Barack Obama, was typical of McCain's restrained tone and a contrast with the blistering speech that vice presidential hopeful Sarah Palin had delivered a night earlier. Delegates who repeatedly leaped to their feet Wednesday sat stock-still during long periods when McCain spoke.

The most raucous scene came at the conclusion of McCain's 50-minute address, when his wife, Cindy; Palin; and her husband joined him onstage for the traditional rain of balloons and confetti and a cannonade of streamers fired inside the crowded sports arena.

Before McCain took the stage, delegates unanimously selected Alaska Gov. Palin, 44, as the party's vice presidential pick, making her the first woman to run on the Republican ticket. McCain was formally nominated late Wednesday

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Taking the party to Main Street

GOP portrays itself as in sync with America, Democrats as fringe.

By PETER WALLSTEN and DOYLE MCMANUS
Times Staff Writers

ST. PAUL, MINN. — Speaker after speaker at this week's Republican National Convention defended small towns from the perceived slights of urban elites. They talked of working people, and ridiculed those with the time to become "community organizers." They railed against the media, Hollywood and the Washington cocktail circuit.

Cultural affinities, which President Bush played on heavily to paint 2004 Democratic nominee John F. Kerry as elite and out of touch, are now central to the campaign strategy of GOP presidential nominee John McCain.

The Arizona senator appeared to float above the culture wars Thursday night in a nomination acceptance speech that criticized "partisan rancor" and promoted his history of working with Democrats. And he is an unlikely standard-bearer for the forces of family values, given his admissions over the years of his failures as a husband, or for the advocates of small-town living, with his millionaire wife and multiple homes.

But this week's events demonstrated that McCain's campaign has settled on its final

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COLUMN ONE

Roots show at this salon

Adults who first came to Pueblos Unidos for haircuts as children still patronize the Compton shop, with new generations in tow.

By MARJORIE MILLER
Times Staff Writer

SHORTLY BEFORE 5 A.M. on a recent Saturday, Josie Reynaga welcomes three generations of the Castaneda family into her Pueblos Unidos hair salon in Compton, where half a dozen stylists await the groggy clients with curling irons and cans of Aqua Net at the ready.

A dozen mothers and daughters, sisters, cousins and in-laws file in to get their hair done for Irene Castaneda's quinceañera, her elaborate 15th birthday party. And Reynaga knows most of them by name.

Among the first to be seated in a glow of fluorescent light is 85-year-old matriarch Maria Domitila Lopez, whose stockings sag under the weight of early morning. Her thinning locks present a hairdresser's challenge. Martina Castaneda, 44, sits next to her mother dispatching advice and flipping through magazines for inspiration. As the smell of sweet bread wafts in from the panaderia nearby and ranchera music drowns out the noise of blow dryers, the sleepy teenage star of the show is prodded into a stylist's chair.

Over the next three hours, hair is teased and curled, pinned into buns and sprayed

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GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

EXCITED: Republicans cheer John McCain on the final night of the convention.

Convention coverage

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Precedent: A young conservative goes from obscurity to VP pick. Sound familiar? **Page A15**

The Obama factor: He tells Bill O'Reilly the Iraq buildup worked. **Page A15**

Excerpts: McCain's speech. **Page A13**

Palin gives and saves amid big Alaska surplus

By KIM MURPHY
Times Staff Writer

DELTA JUNCTION, ALASKA — Daniel Congioli is sure it won't be long before energy is so expensive he won't be able to pay the bills. When that happens, he will be ready. This spring, he tripled the size of his garden. He's rushing to install a hand pump on the well, build a concrete-lined root cellar and get an ice house ready before next summer.

Thanks to soaring oil prices, he'll be able to pay for it all. Americans have been hit hard by months of \$120- and \$130-a-barrel oil, but in Alaska, they've hit the jackpot.

Congioli this month expects a check from the govern-

ment for as much as \$29,000 before taxes — a combination of the annual dividend he and his large family have earned from the state's oil wealth and a special \$1,200-per-person energy rebate signed into law last month by Gov. Sarah Palin.

The fuel givebacks will cost the state \$750 million. With a temporary freeze on gasoline taxes and a long-standing program to help poor rural Alaskans pay their fuel bills, the state this summer is handing out \$1 billion in energy relief. Though the amount of the dividend won't be announced until this morning, analysts say that even a family of four will probably get a check for up to \$13,000.

Few states could afford such

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Petraeus advocates delay in troop cuts

The Iraq commander's recommendation, a shift, reflects concern about ongoing threats in the country.

By JULIAN E. BARNES
Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — Army Gen. David H. Petraeus has recommended that President Bush postpone sharp troop cuts in Iraq until next year, delaying a large-scale shift of combat forces to Afghanistan and re-

flecting concerns that widespread violence could return to Iraq.

Under the recommendation, the current level of about 140,000 troops would remain in Iraq through the end of Bush's presidency in January. Then, a combat brigade of about 3,500 troops would be removed by February, a senior Pentagon official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because the recommendation has not been made public.

The move would represent a compromise between Petraeus and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, comprising the uniformed heads of the Army, Marines, Navy and Air Force. The Joint Chiefs had hoped for a sharper cut — of up to 10,000 troops — by the end of the year. Petraeus, the U.S. commander in Iraq, had pushed to keep 140,000 troops, or 15 combat brigades and support personnel, until next June.

"It is a compromise solution," said a military official, describing internal discussions on condition of anonymity. "It is about balancing risks and requirements."

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FELINE HOMESTEADERS: Two bobcats lounge at a foreclosed house in Lake Elsinore. At least two adults and three kittens are at the house; they're expected to move on in a few weeks.

KAREN BROWN

Bobcats jump on vacancy

By DAVID KELLY
Times Staff Writer

With real estate values plummeting and foreclosed homes sitting empty, a family of bobcats apparently decided the time was right to pounce.

So last week, they slipped out of the parched foothills of Lake Elsinore and into a spacious, vacant home in well-groomed Tuscan Hills.

Residents of the development got their first look Aug. 27 when the feline squatters — at least two adults and three kittens — lolled atop a wall out-

side the Spanish-style house.

Someone called 911, reporting mountain lions. Four police cruisers showed up and officers ordered everyone inside. But soon they were out snapping photos along with the neighbors.

Bobcats are not known to attack humans, said Monique Middleton of Animal Friends of the Valley, which provides animal-control services.

"But are they pussycats? No. Can they do a lot of damage? Yes," she said. "They usually look for a food and water source, and there is an old koi pond in the backyard and

that's where they are headed."

She said she expected the animals to move on in a few weeks, when the kittens are old enough to travel.

Tuscan Hills has been hit hard by foreclosures, and the house on Vista Palermo has been empty at least six months, neighbors said.

Said Scott Brown, who with his wife, Karen, moved here from Long Beach to be close to nature: "They are great neighbors, and as long as they don't want to baby-sit my kids, it's not a problem."

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Inside Today's Times

State lowers bar for high schools

Hundreds of California campuses meet U.S. goals only because the state set easier standards than for elementary and middle schools. **California, B1**

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