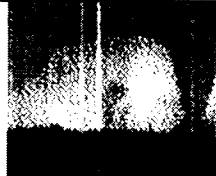


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The Kicker

SEPTEMBER 2 [THURSDAY]

Partying with Pataki at the Copa

By Benjamin Ryan

9/1, Copacabana, 10pm

Apparently riled up by the unbridled fury toward John Kerry exhibited by Democratic Senator Zell Miller of Georgia at the convention, the New York and Puerto Rico delegates flocked to Copacabana on 34th Street for a Latin fiesta that Governor George Pataki dubbed "the best party of the best convention."

Greeting the long line outside the club was a mob of protesters led by organization called Killer Coke. Due to the fact that Coca-Cola was one of the evening's sponsors, the group was out to protest what they believe is the soft drink giant's practice of using "death squads" to kidnap and/or kill union organizers in Colombia. Further, the group of some fifty or more people, stationed across the West Side Highway from the club, exhibited an anger perhaps even greater than that of Sen. Miller toward free trade treaties, which they believe leave governments susceptible to law suits from foreign companies like Coke for passing legislation that limits their profit potential.

Tennessee Watson came down from Portland, Maine for the protests, the Coke one in particular. She admitted that "there aren't very many people who are aware of the issue." Hence, she was passing out fliers entitled "Columbia Coke Float," which depicted dead bodies riddled with bullet wounds floating face down in a giant glass of Coke. On the reverse side of the flier was a vitriolic letter to the Coke board members, lambasting them for human rights violations.

The delegates and their friends, ho-hum as usual about the agitators, were unimpressed. They had blaring Latin music and salsa dancing on their minds.

But the really big question of the evening was: who would you rather get in a shouting match with, Vice President Dick Cheney or Sen. Miller?

New Castle, New Hampshire, resident Wayne Semprini said, "I've got too much respect for Dick Cheney to yell at him. But I'll tell you, nobody could stand up to Zell Miller."


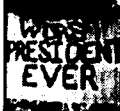
But when presented with the notion that the scowling Sen. Miller has a particularly choleric temperament, Mr. Semprini backtracked: "Who says he's an angry guy? I don't think he's angry at all."

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Mr. Semprini, who summers in Nantucket, said he knows Sen. Kerry casually from the scene out there, and opined that the Democratic presidential candidate "couldn't hold Zell Miller's briefcase."

During his address to the audience, Gov. Pataki stumbled aimlessly through an awkward address in Spanish. This did not seem to bother beauty queen Miss National Puerto Rican Day Parade, Michelle Rodriguez, who was looking sleek in her pageant sash.

When asked if she'd been following the convention, Ms. Rodriguez squirmed and admitted that she hadn't especially, explaining that she is essentially apolitical, though she leans Democratic.

"Politics aren't really my thing," she said, adding that "Republicans are great."

Meanwhile, Upper East Side Republican Jim Busterud, a 47 year-old recent divorcé, taking a break from hitting on a young female reporter from Newsday, described Sen. Miller's performance as "Zesty."

Another odd character was Chris Bock, who insisted that he was in the chicken sales business. He was wearing a baseball hat that said "The Chicken Man" complete with two miniature chickens poking out of it, and a button that informed the crowd that September is the national chicken month. Mr. Bock said that he would prefer to get in a brawl with Vice President Cheney over Sen. Miller.

"I could probably beat Dick Cheney," he said.

As revelers made their way back east toward their hotels, they were greeted with a man passing out "political fortune cookies" with messages such as "your lucky letter is W" inside of them.

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