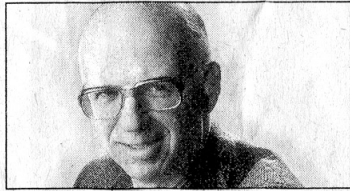


# Stevenson family farm suits a lively talk about conventions past



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LIBERTYVILLE, ILL. — The Stevenson family has a long history with political conventions.

Great-grandfather Jesse Fell went to the Republican convention in Chicago in 1860 to help turn the brand-new Republican Party to his friend, Abraham Lincoln.

In 1892, the first Adlai Stevenson was nominated to run for vice president, along with Grover Cleveland, in Chicago. In 1900, he was nominated a second time, this time with William Jennings Bryan.

In 1948, the second Adlai Stevenson, running for governor of Illinois, took his 17-

year-old son, Adlai III, along with him to the Chicago convention that nominated President Truman and gave the No. 2 spot to their cousin, Sen. Alben Barkley of Kentucky.

In 1952, Adlai II gave such a stunning welcoming address to the delegates in Chicago that they drafted him as their candidate for president. And four years later, they did the same thing again.

So it was fitting and proper that last Sunday several hundred people filled a tent behind the white farmhouse where Gov. Stevenson made his home in this suburb north of Chicago. Their treat was an eclectic panel that joined Adlai III, a former senator from the 1970s, in reminiscing about conventions past and answering questions from television newsman Bill Kurtis.

With only one exception, all the panelists had run for the presidential nomination. Two were Republicans: Sen. Dick Lugar of Indiana and

former Rep. John Anderson of Illinois, who ran as an independent in 1980 after failing in the GOP primaries. The Democrats were former Sen. George McGovern and the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson.

A unique perspective — the most positive of the panelists — came from veteran Chicago Alderman Ed Burke, who, as a young policeman, had been part of the security detail for the late Mayor Richard Daley at the tumultuous 1968 convention that nominated Hubert Humphrey and launched the national political careers of McGovern and Jackson.

Lugar, twice rumored to be the choice for vice president, cracked there ought to be a humane way of letting down those who get mentioned but not chosen — especially if they're beaten out by someone like Spiro Agnew. McGovern, forced to drop Sen. Tom Eagleton, his original choice for No. 2, in favor of Sargent Shriver, said he often has

wished that he had followed the example of Stevenson in 1956 and let the delegates choose the running mate.

But Adlai III said his father was bitterly disappointed that those delegates bypassed his favorite, John Kennedy, and saddled him with Estes Kefauver, his most persistent rival in the spring primaries.

There was general lamentation about the rising cost of politics. Stevenson said the entire budget for his father's 1948 campaign for governor was \$157,000. McGovern said the tab for his 1972 presidential race was \$32 million. "Now," said Stevenson, "the candidates will spend \$1 billion this year."

Jackson complained that "we have two parties but one source of money," those who can afford to write checks — and as a result, he said, "real issues don't get debated."

The biggest surprise to me was McGovern's stance on the "superdelegate" is-

sue that roiled the waters between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama this year. McGovern recalled that the "superdelegates," elected and party officials, were given a free pass into the convention in reaction to the rules his commission had drafted that opened the Democratic convention to blacks, Hispanics, women and young people. McGovern argued that the superdelegates are needed to leaven the mixture on the convention floor.

The conventions of which they spoke were much livelier affairs than those we have seen in recent years. The goal of the new Adlai Stevenson Center on Democracy is to improve these conventions without making them even more scripted.

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