

Omaha selected to host vice-presidential debate

OMAHA — The presidential campaigns of George Bush and Michael Dukakis Wednesday agreed to stage the campaign's only vice-presidential debate here, and city officials say they anticipate few problems preparing for the Oct. 5 event.

Gov. Kay Orr said she received a telephone call from Bush campaign chief Jim Baker at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday notifying her that Omaha was selected to host a debate between Democratic Sen. Lloyd Bentsen of Texas and Republican Sen. Dan Quayle of Indiana.

"It was a wonderful phone call and this is going to be a wonderful event for Omaha and the state of Nebraska," she said.

"We are thrilled," said Omaha Mayor Walter Calinger. "We had every confidence that the

debate would come to Omaha."

City officials say they do not anticipate any major problems in preparing for the debate.

"We've done all the planning that's necessary and we're ready to go," Calinger said. "We intend to have a first-class debate and showcase Omaha and Nebraska to the rest of the nation."

The debate will be held either at the City Auditorium or the Ak-Sar-Ben horse racing complex, because the Broadway musical "Cats" had already booked the Orpheum Theater, Calinger said.

Bentsen, campaigning in Texas, said he was pleased with the Omaha site.

"As I indicated last week, I'm a Big Red fan, so Omaha sounds great to me," he said.

"I look forward to meeting the junior senator

from Indiana because I think we really ought to measure and compare our records of experience and accomplishment in the U.S. Senate."

State Democratic and Republican leaders expressed pleasure with Wednesday's announcement.

Mrs. Orr said she didn't want to take full credit for the development, but believed comments she made Tuesday "pushed the ball over the goal line... we have a debate."

"I've been working on this debate for one and one-half years. I'll let you all figure out what changed since yesterday," she said.

Tuesday, Mrs. Orr had said Democrats were to blame for delays in naming Omaha as the site.

Mrs. Orr said she talked to Baker's staff

Tuesday and had been told that Paul Brontas, chairman of Michael Dukakis' campaign, believed Omaha was unacceptable.

But state Democrats disagreed, saying Mrs. Orr's comments almost lost the debate for Omaha.

"I'm especially pleased that it worked out even after Gov. Orr's outburst yesterday, which certainly hurt more than it helped our chances of getting a debate, said State Sen. Don Wesley of Lincoln, co-chairman of the Dukakis campaign in Nebraska's 1st District.

"The fact is that the Dukakis campaign had never objected to Omaha as a debate site and I'm glad that the Dukakis people have decided to overlook the governor's unfortunate outburst," Wesley said.

Chambers to remain candidate for U.S. Senate

State Sen. Ernie Chambers will be a candidate for the U.S. Senate on the New Alliance Party ticket Nov. 8.

Chambers, who had been given until 5 p.m. Wednesday to withdraw his name from the ballot, failed to appear at Secretary of State Allen Beermann's office to decline the U.S. Senate nomination.

"By his failure to do anything, he stays on the U.S. Senate ballot and comes off the legislative ballot as per the court order," Beermann said about the Omaha legislator.

Chambers, no stranger to making reporters play the waiting game, didn't leave his office at the state Capitol until after 5 p.m., leaving Beermann and reporters waiting on the second floor.

Chambers gave reporters a copy of an affidavit of declination of nomination with the word "void" written across it and a note that said, "This is what I would have filed, had I chosen to decline the U.S. Senate nomination."

He had sought to be on the ballot both as the candidate for the U.S. Senate and for the seat he's held in the Legislature for 18 years.

But Nebraska Supreme Court Chief Justice William Hastings issued an opinion last week that Chambers couldn't do both. He gave Chambers the deadline which, by statute, is 55 days before the Nov. 8 general election.

Chambers had asked Hastings to extend the deadline, but Hastings

denied that request Monday.

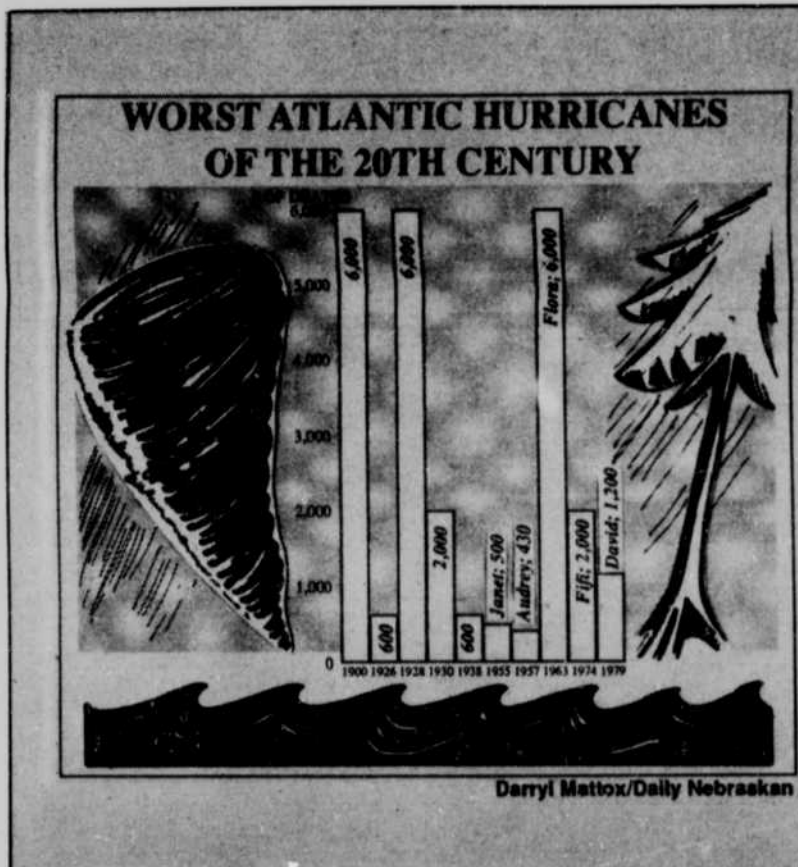
Chambers said Hastings was "wrong and unfair in view of how long he sat on the opinion." The hearing on Chambers' arguments in the state Supreme Court was August 23. The opinion was issued Sept. 8.

The affidavit given to reporters by a quiet Chambers took yet another shot at the Hastings opinion. It said Hastings' opinion was contrary to the constitution and laws of the state of Nebraska.

Chambers has acknowledged that he could accept the U.S. Senate bid and easily mount a successful write-in campaign for his legislative seat. He has scheduled a Thursday morning news conference in Omaha.

Last week, Chambers said his ultimate aim was to be on the ballot for both the U.S. Senate seat and the Legislature.

Chambers was nominated for the U.S. Senate seat at the New Alliance Party convention in July.



Gilbert batters Mexican peninsula

CANCUN, Mexico — Hurricane Gilbert, one of the most destructive storms ever, slammed into the Yucatan Peninsula Wednesday, shattering windows, drenching the land and cutting off the Caribbean resorts of Cancun and Cozumel.

Thousands fled from the storm, which has killed at least 14 people elsewhere. The Jamaican Embassy in Washington said the storm left 500,000 people homeless in that island nation.

The hurricane's 160 mph winds ripped over Cozumel island earlier Wednesday. Ham radio operators in the area said Gilbert knocked down a radio and television communications tower, uprooted trees and blew the roofs off buildings.

The winds leveled slum areas in Cancun on the Mexican mainland, where many people live in cardboard shacks, the operators said. In Quintana Roo state, huge waves

lashed at Caribbean resort beaches, and trees were downed by the punishing winds, Mexican officials said.

"The sound of the wind outside is horrible," said receptionist Pablo Torres at the Hotel Carrillos in Cancun in a telephone interview as the storm approached. "You couldn't leave even if you wanted to."

There were no immediate reports of casualties in Mexico.

The National Hurricane Center in Coral Gables, Fla., said a hurricane watch was in effect along the Texas coast from Brownsville to Port Arthur and along the coast of northeast Mexico from Tampico north.

At 6 p.m. EDT Gilbert was centered near latitude 21.3 north, longitude 88.8 west and approaching the north coast of Yucatan, about 60 miles east-northeast of the provincial capital, Merida, the statement said. The storm was

about 600 miles southeast of Brownsville.

Gilbert's winds had decreased to 140 mph as it moved over land, but the center said wind speed was expected to rise once the storm moved back over the warm Gulf of Mexico waters. It said the hurricane was moving west-northwest at 15 mph.

Gilbert is a Category 5 storm, the strongest and deadliest type of hurricane. Such storms have maximum sustained winds greater than 155 mph and can cause catastrophic damage.

Only two Category 5 hurricanes have hit the United States — a 1935 storm that killed 408 people in Florida, and Hurricane Camille, which devastated the Mississippi coast in 1969 and killed 256 people.

Jamaican Prime Minister Edward Seaga called the storm "the worst natural disaster in the modern history of Jamaica."

Shootout ends hostage crisis, 3 hijackers killed

MASERU, Lesotho — South African police killed three hijackers and arrested the fourth in a shootout Wednesday night that ended a hostage drama in which the gunmen seized a bus carrying 71 pilgrims headed to see the pope, South African officials said.

One of the hostages, a young woman, was killed, and 11 passengers were injured, the officials said.

The report of the shootout came from South African police headquar-

ters. Lesotho's military government had requested South African help in handling the hijacking. Police said the shootout occurred when the hijackers tried to drive the bus through the closed gates of the British High Commission in Maseru.

The hijackers began shooting, and South African officers returned fire.

Police said the casualties among the hostages were "apparently caused by the wild firing of the hijackers." They said no policemen were injured.

The shooting broke out about 20 minutes after Pope John Paul II arrived in Maseru, eight hours behind schedule. The hijackers earlier had demanded to meet with the pope and Lesotho's king, Moshoeshe II, a government official said.

After nightfall, gunfire was heard at the site where the bus was parked, and flares lit up the sky. Reporters were blocked from getting close enough to the scene to determine what was happening but saw ambulances

take bloodied victims to a hospital.

Police ordered journalists at the scene to disperse and then chased them away with whips. The bus was hijacked Tuesday night en route to Maseru.

Before the shootout, helicopters and armed cars blanketed central Maseru as 100 armed soldiers and police set up roadblocks and kept spectators at least four blocks from the bus, parked outside the British High Commission.

Voters not strongly committed National poll shows movement to Dukakis

NEW YORK — Gov. Michael Dukakis and Vice President George Bush were essentially tied in a national poll released Wednesday, with 48 percent supporting Dukakis for president and 45 percent backing Bush.

The ABC News-Washington Post poll was conducted Sept. 7 through Tuesday, finishing two

days after two other polls that had found an eight-point Bush lead. That indicated some movement to Dukakis in those last two days.

An ABC-Post poll released a week ago had also found an eight-point Bush lead, 51-43. That poll was done Aug. 31 through Sept. 7.

Pollsters have stressed that many voters are not strongly com-

mitted to either candidate, allowing for an unusually fluid race. The new ABC-Post poll, of 1,092 likely voters, did not delve into underlying issues.

A Los Angeles Times poll also released Wednesday put the race at a 47-47 tie. It was done Friday through Sunday, the same period as a Gallup poll that found Bush up,

49-41. A CBS News-New York Times poll done Thursday through Sunday was the other to find an eight-point Bush lead, 47-39.

The ABC-Post poll had a margin of sampling error of approximately plus or minus three percentage points. The CBS-Times poll also was given a three-point margin; Gallup's and the Los Angeles Times', four points.

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