

NATION & WORLD

Reform party split over Ventura

BY RON FOURNIER
ASSOCIATED PRESS



VENTURA

WASHINGTON — Reform Party chairman Russell Verney demanded Friday that Gov. Jesse Ventura resign from the party, saying the former wrestler "brought shame" to himself with a bombastic interview in Playboy magazine.

Verney's letter to the Minnesota governor reflects rising bitterness inside the Reform Party as its fractious members seek a 2000 presidential nominee.

The list of potential candidates is long and colorful, including Republican Pat Buchanan, New York tycoon Donald Trump, former Connecticut Gov. Lowell Weicker, Reform Party founder Ross Perot and Ventura himself.

The letter was released as a splinter group, American Reform Party, gathered in Washington. Their tiny convention attracted Trump and Weicker, as Ventura's political operatives scoured the landscape for any candidate who could block Buchanan.

The governor, whose frank talk got him elected in a November upset, told Playboy that organized religion "is a sham," the Navy Tailhook scandal was "much ado about nothing" and fat people "can't push away from the table."

On being governor, he said: "It's good to be king."

Ventura says his comments were taken out of context. He was not about to quit the party.

"I don't know why Russ Verney is concerned," Ventura spokesman John Wodele said. "He never supported the governor when he ran for office and he isn't supporting him now."

Verney is outgoing party chairman, soon to be replaced by a Ventura ally.

"In just one interview you have managed to severely damage the credibility and integrity of thousands of Reform Party members," Verney's letter said. "You have brought shame to yourself and disgrace to the members of the Reform Party."

At the American Reform Party convention, many of the 100 delegates jumped to Ventura's defense. "He's a straight-talker," said Louise Downing.

The former wrestler has promised to finish his term, which expires in 2003, but the delegates said they held out hope for a change of heart.

Ventura is trying to head off the possible candidacy of Buchanan, who may leave the GOP for a Reform Party bid. Ventura says Buchanan's staunch anti-abortion views are a poor fit for the Reform Party.

Ventura has urged Trump to run. His aides met Friday with Weicker, who addresses the American Reform Party on Saturday.

Independent candidates could run under the ARP banner or seek the Reform Party nomination and elicit the ARP's aid. Leaders of the splinter group said Friday they would be willing to rejoin the Reform Party to help the right candidate; they mentioned Weicker and Trump as possibilities.

Ventura and his allies defeated Perot's backers at the Reform Party's summer convention and installed Jack Gargan as chairman. They fear that Perot's backers are using Buchanan to regain control of the party.

Phil Madsen, director of Ventura's political operation, said Perot may be luring Buchanan in the race to create turmoil, allowing the Texas billionaire to jump into the race and call himself a unifying candidate.

"The overtures to the Buchanan camp could turn out to be a ruse," he said.

Perot has not ruled out a third presidential race. He and Buchanan are expected to talk soon by telephone about the conservative commentator's plans.

Buchanan plans to announce his intentions by mid-October. He must decide whether he has the stomach for a major fight that would not guarantee him the nomination.

The millionaire Trump has no political experience and is given little chance of winning, but he's looking more like a candidate every day. He is rushing to finish a new book to release it in time for a December announcement of his decision.

Myanmar rebels release hostages, leave Bangkok

BY MATT PENNINGTON
ASSOCIATED PRESS

BANGKOK, THAILAND — Thailand engineered a peaceful end Saturday to the armed takeover of the Myanmar Embassy by five pro-democracy activists, flying the rebels by helicopter to the Thai-Myanmar border, where they were allowed to go free.

After holing up in the embassy for 26 hours, the raiders released all 38 hostages, Thai Interior Minister Sanan Kachornprasart said at a news conference. Another 51 Myanmar citizens, mostly family of diplomatic personnel, who had hidden inside the walled embassy compound were also allowed to walk out.

"We don't consider them to be terrorists," said Sanan, who was one of the government's negotiators with the rebels. "They are student activists struggling for democracy. We have done what we have promised them."

Calling themselves the Vigorous Burmese Student Warriors, the hostage-takers had demanded the release of all political prisoners in Myanmar, a meaningful dialogue between pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and the military government, and the conven-

ing of an elected parliament.

Democracy activists say the rebels' takeover of the embassy sprang from deep frustration that their cause is receiving neither international attention nor making headway in their homeland.

In response, Myanmar closed its border with Thailand and reinforced its troops along the frontier, newspapers in Thailand reported Sunday. Thai border forces also were put on alert as a precautionary measure, the Bangkok Post said.

Dissident groups, meanwhile, warned of more violence if the government of Myanmar doesn't change its harsh, autocratic rule.

"In the past 11 years the democracy movement has consistently stood for a nonviolent solution, but this hasn't really delivered significant progress," said activist Debbie Stothard of the Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma.

"The students appear to have acted out of outrage at the regime's increasing repression and frustration with the failure of the international community to respond to the plight of Burma's people," the Washington-based Free Burma Coalition said in a statement of the take-over.

Sony co-founder dies at 78

BY GINNY PARKER
ASSOCIATED PRESS



MORITA

TOKYO — Akio Morita, the entrepreneur, engineer and savvy salesman who helped give new meaning to the words "Made in Japan," died Sunday, Sony Corp. said. He was 78.

The co-founder of the company, Morita had been in failing health since a stroke in 1993. He died at a Tokyo hospital Sunday morning of pneumonia, said Sony spokesman Aldo Liguori.

Morita co-founded Sony in a bombed-out department store after World War II. He was the last of a generation of Japanese industrialists that included carmaker Soichiro Honda and electronics rival Konosuke Matsushita.

Under Morita's guidance, Sony was instrumental in changing Japan's image from a maker of slipshod products to a world leader in high-quality automobiles and electronics. In the process, his company became a multibillion dollar conglomerate.

A native of the western Japanese city of Nagoya, Morita retired as Sony's chairman in 1994. A year earlier he had suffered a stroke that left him weakened and in a wheelchair.

He stayed on as honorary chairman, with current chairman Norio Ohga appointed as his successor.

The tanned, snowy-haired Morita, who took up waterskiing in his 60s, also pioneered new behavior for corporate Japan. He pushed his engineers to take risks with new products and criticized lavishly paid American executives.

He caused a stir in 1989 by co-authoring "The Japan That Can Say 'No'" with current Tokyo Gov. Shintaro Ishihara, then refusing to authorize an English translation. In it, Morita criticized U.S. corporate culture as overindulgent.

He also warned that America must revitalize its electronics industry by investing in research and development.

In the late 1980s, Morita called for many of the economic reforms now being carried out by Japan's government, but he reportedly declined an offer to become foreign minister in August 1993.

Even without Morita at the helm, Sony continues to lead the world in electronics and computer entertainment. Earlier this month, the company launched a new attack on rival game makers by announcing next year's launch of an improved version of its popular PlayStation system.

MAMMOTH

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an office crammed full of mammoth bones, teeth, figurines and paintings.

Agenbrood and scientists from the Netherlands, France and Russia, are removing the ice-encased animal from the Taimyr Peninsula in Siberia and airlifting it more than 200 miles to the city of Khatanga.

The mammoth will be kept frozen there in an underground tunnel, where scientists will study the 11-foot-tall animal.

Besides analyzing dirt, pollen, and even its stomach contents, a primary task is to extract DNA for cloning.

The cloning process involves putting DNA from the mammoth into an Asian elephant's egg that has been stripped of elephant genes. So even though an elephant would give birth, the

baby would be a mammoth, not a hybrid, Agenbrood said.

"I don't think [the elephant] would know the difference, though she might wonder why her baby is so hairy."

Agenbrood said he is not counting on success.

"I guess it would be a rarity, but the biologists are quite optimistic," he said.

A medical ethicist at the medical school and the department of philosophy at the University of Alabama at Birmingham is among the naysayers.

"You need live nuclei and live eggs, plus a host mammoth mother to gestate the fetus. Because none of these are available, 'Jurassic Park' to the contrary, it won't succeed," Greg Pence said, referring to the movie in which cloning was used to resurrect dinosaurs.

But scientists at Texas A&M University proved last month that live cells are not needed for cloning. The team successfully cloned a steer from the hide of another that died a year ago.

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Stupid things to say at a cool party #21

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