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Baby Bundlers Feed Democrats

By [Anna Schneider-Mayerson](#) • 08/02/04 12:00am

“Today was a ridiculous day, busier than going to the office,” said Devon Archer as he floated above the crowd in a skybox at the Fleet Center during the Monday-night convention kickoff. As an emerging young fund-raiser, Mr. Archer, 30, doesn’t have the name recognition of Glenn Close, Ken Burns or any of the other Democrats hovering nearby. But his hunky Melrose Place looks enable him to fit in with crowds like these, and his fund-raising prowess has made him something of a campaign V.I.P.

“If you’re a real doer, you get respected, and that respect is reflected in how the campaign treats you, because there are a ton of people out there who are a lot of hot air,” he said.

On this particular Monday, respect meant meetings with local and state politicians who want to profit from his fund-raising magic; a policy briefing at the Four Seasons with a top Kerry strategist; the walk-through at the Fleet Center for his college roommate Chris Heinz’s speech on Tuesday night; and dinner with some of his fund-raising buddies. Then it was on to the convention itself, via a campaign-arranged car. At 9:30 p.m., he rolled up to the skybox and poured himself a Ketel One and soda.

And that was just the start to the first night of the convention.

Mr. Archer represents a new breed of fund-raiser. In this age, the person with the most connections, who collects contributions from the widest circle of friends and contacts, has become the new macher in party politics. You could call Mr. Archer a “baby bundler,” a well-connected macher-in-training who has spent every free moment of the last two years tapping friends, family, business partners and even Republicans for contributions to the Kerry cause. Ever since the Massachusetts Senator announced his candidacy in 2003, the dimple-cheeked Mr. Archer has dedicated himself to hosting cocktail parties at old-boy hideaways like the University Club and the Links Club, attending weekly finance-committee pow-wows and dialing, dialing, dialing for dollars. He has coaxed as little as \$50 from his friends and cajoled the maximum, \$2,000, from his family and business associates. In the process, he has outpaced veteran bundlers more than twice his age and joining the finance committee alongside such finance gurus as Steven Rattner and Richard Holbrooke.

Now his hard work is paying off, with the kind of convention access lowly Hill staffers can only dream of. He has a room at the Four Seasons Hotel, tickets to all the hot parties, access to the convention floor and face time with Mr. Kerry. The convention is his induction into the Democratic elite, and when the bunting comes down and the four-day Boston romp is done, there will be little doubt that Mr. Archer is the Democratic equivalent of a made man.

And he is hardly the only baby bundler in town. At least a dozen young New York fund-raisers will have a chance to take in the action from the floor of the Fleet Center, or to party until the wee hours at Avalon and the Roxy. There is Lorenzo Roccia, a 30-year-old venture capitalist with a silky Venezuelan accent, who earned himself an invitation to the V.I.P donor reception at Mistral on Wednesday night by raising hundreds of thousands of dollars. (Mr. Roccia, who is listed as one of the vice chairs of the national finance committee, wouldn’t say exactly how much he had raised, but did concede that he was “at the top of the

pack.”) And there is Robert Smith, a 31-year-old banker who won himself a floor credential to hear Barack Obama’s keynote address after bringing in some \$80,000 at a June fund-raiser at the Chelsea club Deep. Robert Johnston, 35, has access to the Fleet Center’s elite Premiere Club, thanks to the more than \$100,000 he pulled in for the party, while Jack D. Hidary, 36, a self-described “serial entrepreneur,” plans to spend most of his time outside the convention center, attending at least two parties a night.

These guys are all part of an emerging generation of community and political leaders in this country,” said Simon Rosenberg, the president of the New Democrat Network, a Washington-based political-action committee and the leader of Bill Clinton’s 1992 national youth campaign. “You’re seeing the next generation of political leaders emerge in this campaign.”

And what kind of people are they? Well, they’re young, and they are often precociously successful in their chosen professions. At least two of the young bundlers, Mr. Hidary and Mr. Rocchia, have already taken companies public, while a disproportionate share of the rest have top-tax-bracket careers in banking, venture capital, private equity, public equity, distressed equity, happy equity, sad equity, you-name-it equity. This means that many of them can be found zipping around Manhattan in BMW’s, high-tailing it to the Hamptons for the weekend, or noshing at Nobu and Odeon when they’re not busy either earning their own fortunes or raising them for someone else.

The next generation, in other words, likes the high life. They have expensive tastes, expensive habits and, much like their older fund-raising peers, many have the means to indulge them.

Indeed, for all the change that campaign-finance reform has wrought, the next generation of big Democratic machers looks and acts remarkably like the current one. Some baby bundlers are even from the same gene pool as the veteran bundlers, with the kind of pure-bred political pedigrees that make campaign-finance directors drool with excitement. For instance, Brian Frank, a 31-year-old who has raised \$25,000 for John Kerry, is the son of California Representative Jane Harman. And Jon Patricof, 31, is about as close as a young contributor can get to fund-raiser royalty in New York City: He’s the son of the political power couple Susan and Alan Patricof, while his aunt is Jane Rosenthal, the Tribeca Film Festival producer and a prominent fund-raiser in her own right.

Poster Child

And then, of course, there is Chris Heinz, the “It”-boy stepson of John Kerry, whose father was the late U.S. Senator John Heinz and whose mother is Teresa Heinz Kerry. Throughout the last year, Mr. Heinz has been the poster child for this generation of multitasking bundlers, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for his stepdad while straddling the worlds of celebrity, politics and finance. In the process, he has become the fulcrum around which much of this flurry of activity revolves, drawing dozens of his pals into the bundling game.

Mr. Patricof and Mr. Heinz, for example, are close friends from Harvard Business School. Mr. Archer and Mr. Heinz were roommates at Yale. All three of their names can often be found at the tops of invitations for the same events, and they occasionally compete for the same contributors.

Mr. Archer said Mr. Heinz wasn’t the reason he got into fund-raising. He said he has had an independent relationship with Mr. Kerry dating from when the fall of 1994, when they met during an alumni lacrosse game. Nevertheless, Mr. Archer has been serving as something of a wing man for Mr. Heinz this week. In between his own busy schedule of policy briefings and private fund-raising meetings, Mr. Archer has been

walking his friend through the menagerie-working with him on his speech, trailing him to practice reading from the teleprompter at the Fleet Center.