

## The place for political clans and pin kings

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By DON MacDONALD

The Regan political clan has a new lease on life.

Patriarch Gerry and his wife, Carole, are both delegates at the Liberal leadership convention in Montreal. As a member of the Privy Council — that is, a former cabinet minister — Gerry gets to be an ex-officio delegate. Carole won her vote the hard way as a delegate chosen from Halifax West. The former Bluenose premier was spotted wearing a Brison button on Friday at a rally for his fellow Windsor-area native, but he's expected to land in Michael Ignatieff's camp.

It so happens the Regans' son, Geoff, is actively supporting Michael Ignatieff. Geoff's wife, Kelly, is also attending the Montreal convention as a delegate.

But a third-generation Regan has surfaced at the Montreal convention. Eighteen-year-old Caitlin, Geoff's and Kelly's daughter, is a voting delegate. Not only is the newest member of the Regan family political compact making her debut, but she's also studying political science at Acadia University. Besides her grandfather's side of the family, Caitlin can lay claim to deep political roots in her grandmother's family. Carole Regan's father, Jack Harrison, was Liberal MP for a Saskatchewan seat from 1949 to 1958. It's hard to get a much better lineage.

Another Liberal political dynasty may be in the making.

Annapolis Valley MLA Stephen McNeil is attending the Montreal convention. He doesn't have a vote, but he's a keen observer of what's shaping up to be a dramatic and historic event.

But the MLA's 16-year-old daughter, Colleen, is a delegate and does have a vote. And she told Halifax CBC-TV in a pre-convention story that she'll be watching events closely here, not only to make sure her favourite candidate wins, but also to pick up tips should her father decide to contest the provincial leadership back home in Nova Scotia.

The senior McNeil had no comment on his own leadership ambitions but joked that since his daughter made it to Montreal for a political meeting, 15-year-old son Jeff will be expecting a golf trip come spring.

Scott Brison's family are real troopers when it comes to backing his political ambitions. His father, Clifford, and two brothers, Mitchell and Phillip, travelled to Toronto from their home in Cheverie, Hants County, to vote for Scott in the 2003 Progressive Conservative leadership race.

Now that Scott has since switched parties and is seeking the Liberal leadership, the Brison family brigade is back on the road, in hopes he will find victory the second time around. Other former card-carrying Tories are working hard for Scott, including longtime trusty aide Dale Palameter and two delegates from Kings-Hants, Audrey Herron and Eric Sturk.

Being buttonholed takes on new meaning at a leadership convention. Each campaign has its own special button or pin, designed to promote its candidate but also to identify supporters.

Scott Brison is mounting a two-button crusade. A larger red and white pin boldly proclaims: "We want Scott," a phrase that also doubles as a chant as the candidate works the convention hallways.

But the Brison brigade has a targeted audience in mind with its second pin. A much smaller button made of silver carries his surname, in green, a not-so-subtle message that the candidate is in favour of protecting the environment.

Gerard Kennedy's camp is a bit stingy with the pins. One volunteer handing out the buttons Friday at the convention was only giving them to delegates, not observers or the media. But the former Ontario education minister is also using a bright-red scarf with the Kennedy name interwoven in white. "We can use them to reel in delegates on the convention floor," joked Nova Scotia Senator Terry Mercer, a key Kennedy organizer.

Not all pins are friendly. One observer from the Conservative party was handing out buttons Friday with an anti-Bob Rae message: "Go for Rae, Go for Broke." Should the former Ontario NDP premier capture the Liberal crown, watch for the Tories to order a bigger supply to hand out in the next federal election.

A real collector's item will be Ken Dryden's pin in the form of a hockey card. It's emblazoned in Grit red, complete with a tiny photo of the candidate outfitted in his goalie gear.

Halifax stockbroker Lonsdale (Lonnie) Holland had competing interests at the convention on Friday.

A lifelong Liberal who cut his political teeth at the party's 1958 leadership convention, he's come to Montreal to make sure Michael Ignatieff emerges Grit leader.

But big breaking news in the business world had the veteran financial adviser scrambling for a copy of the Globe and Mail's business section early Friday morning. The ROB played a story on its front section speculating the Montreal exchange plans to go public. That's of huge interest to Mr. Holland and his clients — enough to forgive him for mixing business and politics in Montreal.

Montreal is built for parties, and the Liberal party is giving its night spots a good workout. After the political events of the day, delegates, journalists and hangers-on — 5,627 people have registered — spill out of the convention centre and into the bars, clubs and hotel suites around the city to drink beer and talk to one another, squeezing pleasure out of the most interesting political convention in a generation.

From private parties for the truly connected, to free-beer fests jammed with boozed-up young Liberals, there is something for everyone. Ashley MacIsaac played at an Ignatieff party Wednesday night.

Parliamentarians for Israel held a swanky party with free drinks and a chocolate fondue fountain. Bob Rae had a party nearby at a sleek nightclub where the house wine cost \$10 a glass.

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