

The new

Antonio Villaraigosa

The Assembly's new leader
may have an historic
opportunity to become an
ethnic politician who
transcends his ethnicity.

by Gregory Rodriguez



Illustrations by Jonni Hill

Like any successful politician, Antonio Villaraigosa is many things to many people. To his Chicano peers back in the day when he was a more militant community activist, Villaraigosa is a local boy done good who has not compromised his fierce political beliefs in his climb up the political ladder. To his Anglo Democratic colleagues who have known him since he was elected to the Assembly in 1994, he is a pragmatic idealist who can transcend ethnicity.

And to his Republican adversaries, he is a straight-shooting, unreconstructed liberal who can nonetheless deal openly and fairly with his ideological opponents — a parallel view to that widely held about John Burton, the new president pro tempore of the state Senate (see story, page 6). Term limits, which restrict Assembly members to three, two-year terms, have not only paved the way for Villaraigosa's speakership, they have also

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leaders

John Burton

A veteran San Francisco lawmaker, last legislative survivor of a legendary political dynasty, takes the reins of the state Senate.

by Greg Lucas

It was like the funeral of Edward VII of England just before World War I. The crowned heads of Europe — the kings, the queens, the princes, the potentates — all gathered in one place for one moment in time. It was something rare. Emotional. A spectacle that would never come again.

As sheets of rain fell outside, they gathered in the ornate state Senate chambers. Legislative legends. Politicians of the Pleistocene Epoch. Leo McCarthy. David Roberti. Ken Cory. Bill Campbell. Joe Gonsalves. Jerome Waldie. George Zenovich. John Quimby. Willie Brown, the former "ayatollah" of the Assembly. Stanley Mosk, attorney general before many of the legislative staffers attending were born and Supreme Court justice since 1964. He was there, too. Ghosts hovered near the rostrum. Hugh Burns, Bob Moretti. George Moscone. Phil Burton.

