

### Another giant step for Pelosi November 15th, 2002

By Lynn Sweet

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WASHINGTON--In the history of the country, 11,647 individuals have been elected to Congress; 206 of them have been women, and until Thursday, no woman had ever been selected as a party leader.

Nancy Pelosi broke the Capitol's glass ceiling when Democrats elected the Californian as the House minority leader.

"I've been waiting over 200 years," Pelosi joked when she emerged from a Democratic caucus where she easily beat Rep. Harold Ford of Tennessee on a 177-29 vote.

"It's a staggering honor, there is no question about it," said Pelosi. She jumped in the race Nov. 7, the same day House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.) officially said he was stepping down as leader.

Pelosi, 62, first elected to the House in 1987, represents a San Francisco district, or, as critics say, she is a "San Francisco Democrat": code for someone who is too left, too liberal to be in touch with mainstream America.

It's true that Pelosi is one of the most liberal members of the House. She earns a zero rating from the American Conservative Union and a near perfect score from the progressive Americans for Democratic Action.

But a main reason that Pelosi vaulted to the No. 1 spot Thursday was that she was already No. 2.

She was elected House Democratic Whip on Oct. 10, 2001, and her organization, dubbed "Team Pelosi" never quit. Her campaign for whip was notable for its meticulous organization and lavish feasts. Her motto, an aide said, is "First we eat."

Pelosi also was able to collect a lot of chits. A nonstop fund-raiser, Pelosi was the top congressional contributor to other candidates for the 2002 election cycle, according to the Center for Responsive Politics, handing out more than \$1 million to other campaigns.

Pelosi was born into machine Democrat politics. Her father, Thomas J. D'Alesandro, is a former House member and three-term mayor of Baltimore. Her oldest brother, Thomas J. D'Alesandro III, was Baltimore's mayor between 1967 and 1971.

She moved to San Francisco after she married Paul Pelosi, an investment banker. The couples' net worth is more than \$20 million. They have a home in the swanky Pacific Heights section of San Francisco, a place in Napa Valley and a condo overlooking the Potomac River in Washington.

They have a son and four daughters, whose ages range from 32 to 38, plus five grandchildren. Pelosi's youngest, Alexandra, is the filmmaker whose documentary about being on the presidential campaign trail with George W. Bush, "Journeys with George," is running on HBO. Alexandra Pelosi, 32, said while growing up her mother "was the one who made Halloween costumes" and urged her children to read aloud to her while she cooked. "She makes great Italian dishes. This is really Act Two of her life," Alexandra said.

Act Two opens with Pelosi volunteering in California Democratic politics. She was a fund-raiser,

then the Northern Chair of the California Democratic Party and then the state party chairwoman.

In Washington, Pelosi became the ranking Democrat on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and is known for her opposition to extending favorable trade status to China because of that nation's human rights abuses.

Pelosi, a striking woman with a warm smile who dresses with a stylish flare, faces a big test of her leadership skills within a dispirited caucus.

Rep. Dick Armey (R-Texas), who is retiring from his majority leader spot, lobbed a backhanded compliment at her Thursday. "One of the reasons that Nancy's abilities are not appreciated," he said, "is that she is a beautiful woman."

"Nancy is a charismatic person," said Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.) who is a member of Pelosi's inner circle. Pelosi is part of a clubby group of lawmakers who have dined together for years in Washington.

Said Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), one of the crowd, they are the ones who are married and don't "want to go out with lobbyists and get drunk."