

Prima donna Madonna



Backstage before the Live 8 flagship concert in London's Hyde Park on Saturday, **Madonna** didn't have much to say, except, "I pray for no rain." Evidently, the student of Kabbalah prayed to the right God. The concert to wipe out poverty — which included pop legends **Paul McCartney**, **U2** and **Elton John** — ran smoothly behind the scenes as well. According to my backstage source, **Madonna** was the only prima donna.

She demanded six hours of sound checks with her gang in full dress (**Sting** wore sweats), which my source thought "was a little excessive." But the crowd couldn't get enough when **Madonna**, swathed in a white pantsuit with a jeweled cummerbund, sang "Like a Prayer" with a chorus of 20 gospel singers.

Dishing coast to coast
You read it here first. Now it's official. My all-time favorite gossip columnist and the grande dame of this biz, **Liz Smith**, has inked a deal to do a column for *Variety*, the must-read daily for the entertainment industry. Now we can expect her syndicated dish, which runs in some 70 papers, to include abso-

lutely all of the inside inside Hollywood scoop, leaving no star unturned.

Smith, just back from London and Paris, says, "An American in either place these days sometimes seems nonexistent. I have never felt so marginalized. You pick up the English and French newspapers, and it's as if the United States has disappeared. Except for the stories attacking us over the Iraq war or the ones attacking our worldwide celebrities [**Brad and Angelina**, **Tom and Katie**, **Lindsay and her family**], we might as well be invisible." Hear that, **Mr. Bush**?

Wife of billionaire cell phone magnate eyeing Senate seat

The Republican party may have found its candidate to challenge freshman **Sen. Maria Cantwell**, D-Wash., next year — **Susan McCaw**. Susan and her husband, **Craig**, have made a fortune in telecommunications. Although the **McCaw** family avoids the spotlight, they are major philanthropists and Susan and **Craig** created **Team Read**, a successful children's literacy organization which pairs elementary school youngsters who have difficulty reading with high school tutors. I expect to see them on the guest list for President **Bush's** not-yet-announced July 18 state dinner for India's Prime Minister **Manmohan Singh** at the White House. Not only are the **McCaws** "Rangers" — that elite club made up of Republicans who each raised at least \$200,000 for **Bush's** re-election campaign — but **Craig McCaw** pioneered microlender **Gramercy Bank** in India.

Cropp strikes out for the holiday

While D.C.'s traditional independence Day parade narched down Constitution Avenue, the District's alternative parade in Palisades vent off without a hitch — and without a politician. While **Scott**, **Kwame**, **Vince**, **Iathy** and others were atop ar hoods and seats on **Mar Arthur Boulevard**, D.C. **Del.leanor Holmes Norton** was on the ground, walking the parade with little D.C.ers. Baseball opponent and Council Chairman **Linda Cropp** was a no-show, thereby causing many of the parade viewers not to hold up, as they were asked to, the red copy books reading "Play Ball."

And where was **Linda**? "I don't know where she was," said her PR spokesman, **Mark Johnson**. "Call

The Buzz



BY KAREN FELD

Stephanie Rice, her executive assistant. She handles her schedule."

"She had a prior commitment out of the city," said **Rice** abruptly. "I don't know where. Call **Mark Johnson**." Sounds like the D.C. government to me!

Gloria adds glory to the Fourth

The highlight of the Fourth in D.C. was the annual "A Capitol Fourth" concert hosted by **Barry Bostwick** on the West Lawn of the Capitol, followed by fireworks and a reception for the cast and crew in the Speaker's Lobby. **Gloria Estefan**



confidently stomped and strutted her stuff on stage in precariously high wooden-soled platform shoes, which was an amazing feat after sustaining severe back injuries in a 1990 bus accident. She made the show look easy as she entertained America's people here and abroad via PBS. "American Idol" loser **Kimberley Locke** apparently passed out from the heat during rehearsal but sang the National Anthem in a properly patriotic manner during the show itself.

Local resident tees off in Israel

Potomac resident **Carey Cherner**, 20, will be playing golf in the 17th Maccabiah Games — an Olympics-style competition in Caesarea, Israel, beginning July 12. We wish **Cherner**, who will be a sophomore at the University of Maryland in September — and who golfs at Woodmont Country Club in Rockville — more winning rounds.

Buzz Karen at karenfeld.com

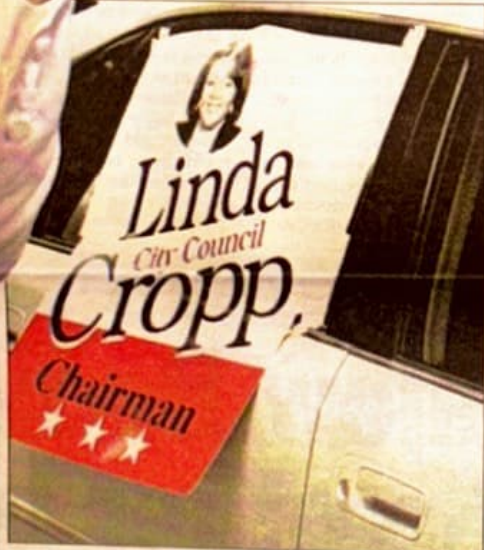


Photo by Carrie Devarah
D.C. Council Chairman **Linda Cropp** was absent at the Fourth of July parade in Palisades on Monday.