

THE RELIABLE SOURCE

By Amy Argetsinger and Roxanne Roberts

The White House Chief of Staff Shows His Plucky Side



BY VICKI POMBO

Josh Bolten accompanies Randy Travis at Wednesday's dinner.

In an effort to liven up embassy dinners, **Rima al-Sabah**, wife of Kuwaiti Ambassador **Salem al-Sabah**, always throws in a surprise or two: a jazz singer, a concert pianist, sometimes a belly dancer. For Wednesday's Kuwait-America Foundation dinner, attended by **Laura Bush**, **Condi Rice**, **Karl Rove**, **Michael Chertoff**, Justice **Anthony Kennedy**, **Charlie Rose**, **Adrian Fenty**, members of Congress and corporate big shots (the event raised \$1.5 million for a pediatric hospital in Iraq), she flew in **Randy Travis**.

But that wasn't the real surprise. "Josh, come up here and play something," Travis told **Josh Bolten**, the president's chief of staff, who plays bass in the amateur group the Compassionates. Egged on by applause, Bolten strapped on a guitar and motioned for his girlfriend, **Dede McClure**, to sing backup for Travis's "Forever and Ever, Amen."

The first lady and secretary of state led a standing ovation. A mildly embarrassed Bolten said he had "no idea" he'd be tapped: "It's a good thing I didn't know, because I would have been too nervous to enjoy dinner."