



RNC 2016 Cleveland

PERSPECTIVE FROM ONE WHO WAS THERE

By Joe Gardner, Alternate Delegate

My wife, Debbie and I were privileged to attend the convention. She was a delegate and I was an alternate delegate.

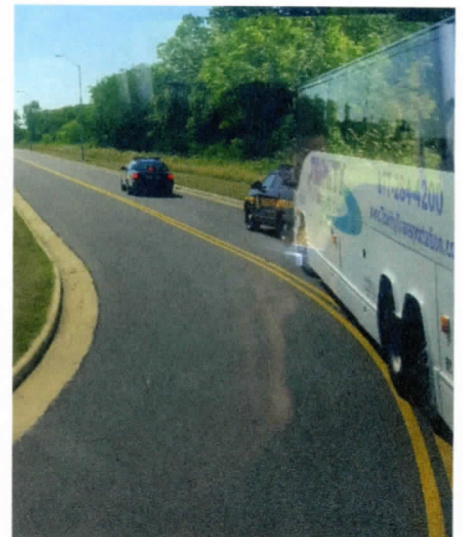
When we arrived at the airport in Cleveland, we were met by California Delegation volunteers. We were put on an SUV with other California delegates and made the long trek to Sandusky. The hotel was about sixty miles away.

By the time we arrived in Sandusky, we were dead tired. The next day was packed with activity and it started with breakfast and issuance of our credentials. Having credentials was the most important part for each day. Without them, you could not attend the convention and other activities. We were issued new, unique credentials every morning. Security was high and credentials served as part of the screening protocol for the Secret Service and other law enforcement that we encountered throughout each day.



Every day before we boarded tour buses to the convention, we were met by two Secret Service agents

who rode in the front seats. They were outfitted in tactical vests. We were also escorted by local marked patrol vehicles and various plain wrapped vehicles as we traveled the sixty miles to the "Q" Arena in Cleveland. I saw local city, state and township police vehicles taking turns escorting us on the Ohio Turnpike. We had the same type of escort each evening.



The buses were often filled with political conversations. It was cool to be with folks who share your same values and philosophies. It was also great to see the diversity around us. Every race and culture were represented. The best part was they were all Republicans.

Upon arriving at the "Q," It was amazing to see and realize how much security was in place. There were checkpoints, miles and miles of Jersey walls, fencing and barricades made of steel mesh. We had to cross mechanical vehicle-denial plates stretched across a single entry lane. Every security measure appeared to be very carefully choreographed with layers of redundancy.

There was a lot of excitement in the air as we walked to the arena. We endured another screening through metal detectors, wands and bag searches at the entry to the arena. The screening area was manned by various Homeland Security, Secret Service and TSA agents.

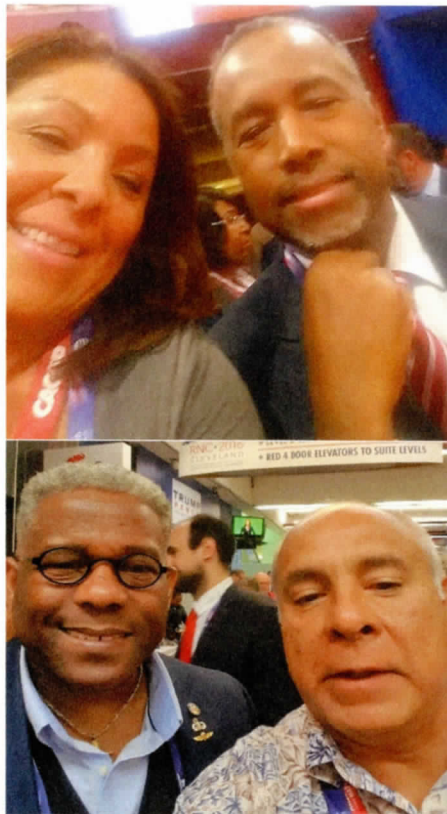
Walking into the main hall was a shock to my senses. It was happy chaos, with thousands of people milling or scurrying. Media crews and commentators, eager for a sound bite set up impromptu interviews with bystanders. The halls were lined with network television folks with folding tables and chairs, typing on laptops straddling cables and a maze of equipment.

You also had people festooned with gaudy hats and apparel. Media crews gravitated to them for pictures and interviews. I realized right then that those particular people end up being categorized by the media as the face of the party.

I also learned quickly to have my cell camera ready. There were celebrities present in the halls. Attendees were



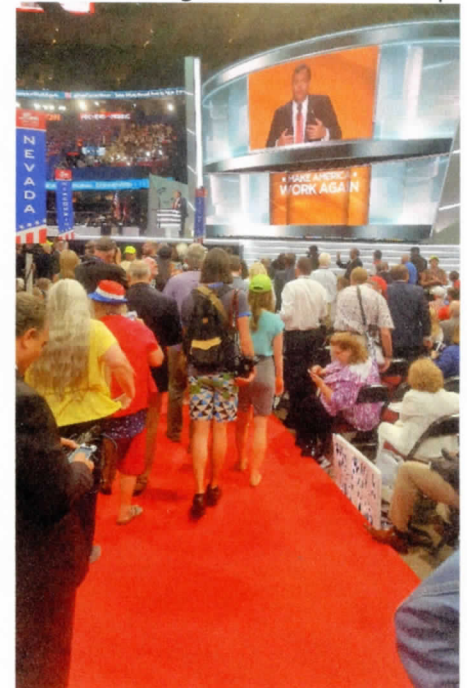
jockeying for positions for selfies. I saw Dr. Charles Krauthammer, Newt Gingrich, Bob Dole and many others. I shook hands with Dr. Ben Carson and took photos with Kennedy from Fox News, Allen West and David Spady from Americans For Prosperity.



Deb and I parted company in the hall each session due to her elevated delegate status. She had a coveted

seat on the main floor, representing California.

During one session, I was able to go down to where the California delegates sat. It was awesome being mere yards from the podium. There are delegate volunteers who are called "whips." They wear dayglow baseball caps. Their jobs were to make sure delegates were sitting in the right seats and served as cheerleaders to get the delegation to rise at key times during various speeches. They also handed out various signs for Trump.



As I entered the stadium, I was stunned by the massive stage and cordoned off areas on the floor for every state. Seeing it on T.V. does not give it justice. There was a rock band priming the massive crowd. People were dancing and waving signs. There was about twenty thousand people there each day. There were even more camera crews and national celebrity commentators milling down on the floor, preparing for their live shots.



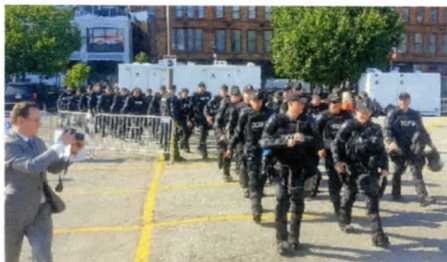
Each day of, session began with the presentation of Colors, the Pledge of Allegiance, an invocation and the Star Spangled Banner. I noticed people around singing with fervor for love of country. We all erupted in long applause upon completion of the Anthem. Various speakers began the program.

There were many speakers throughout each daily session. Some were real standouts like Rudy Giuliani, Chris Christie, Laura Ingraham, Pastor Mark Burns, Mike Pence and members of the Trump

family. The audience was engaged and reacted loudly to key points in each speech. You could gauge the hot button issues by the degree of response by the audience. Clearly, immigration, respect for law and order, supporting our police and military, jobs and building our economy were at the top.

There was a synergy among those in attendance. Spontaneous chants would break out at key points of speeches. "TRUMP!, TRUMP!, TRUMP!" "USA! USA! USA!" ruled the convention. References to Hillary Clinton often drew chants of "LOCK HER UP!" Others included "MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN or MAKE AMERICA SAFE AGAIN!" Media cameras and photographers moved to the chanters like flies to a porch light.

There were several mixers before and after sessions. On a couple of days, we ventured outside the secured area of the convention. We walked inside mesh fencing to the outside world. We received word that protestors were hurling bottles of urine over the fences. There was also a news report of two police officers hurt in a scuffle with protestors. Ten people were arrested. We really weren't exposed to any civil disruptions except a small crowd with signs and hawkers of political T-shirts and bumpers stickers.



We saw squads of troopers and officers donned in riot gear maintaining a line between us and those in the area. There were law enforcement members from all over

the United States. Others of the delegation made efforts to make contact with officers to offer thanks for their service and protection. Handshakes, hugs and photos were seen frequently exchanged between delegation attendees and law enforcement.



We met lots of new friends and saw many old friends from our political circle. We also met people for the first time who are our Facebook friends. Deb exchanged delegation pins with delegates from other states. I noticed Cleveland citizens were glad to see us. There were lots of friendly smiles and greetings from locals assigned to work the convention.

The days were long. We often returned to our hotel well after midnight.





Obviously, Governor Pence and Donald Trump were the standouts of the convention. Each provided substantive messages about their plans to make America great again. Donald Trump was not short on any details about his plans for the future of our country. He was confident and clear, from immigration reform, global trade deals that hurt American workers, supporting our military with the resources they need, to assuring respect for law enforcement and the rule of law. Republicans in attendance rewarded their messages with enthusiasm and numerous standing ovations.

The take-away from the Republican National Convention was a renewed sense of optimism. Republicans came into the convention hungering for someone who would fulfill their call for action to save the country. People seemed to be eager to turn back the last seven plus years of Obama and Hillary. Those in attendance were not disappointed and appear ready to carry the message back home to stop Hillary Clinton and to "make America great again."