

The journey to the Democratic convention

By Tom Betz
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The young woman smiled as she handed me my prize — press credentials to the Democratic National Convention in Denver — and asked if I had any questions.

It had taken six months of waiting and several processes to get to that point, but it certainly seemed worth it on Sunday morning as I arrived in Denver to begin a new adventure by attending and covering my first Democratic National Convention.

I had hoped to attend the convention both as a delegate and as a reporter, but the snow storm on Feb. 5, sort of stopped me from driving to Oakley for the caucus — the first phase of the delegate selection process.

With the delegate side out of the question I turned to the press credentials avenue. The first step was to find out how to apply for the credentials, and that I found on the Internet. The press credentials were being handled through the U.S. House of Representatives Press Gallery in Washington.

Step one was to fill out a form on-line and then send three copies of the newspaper and a cover letter to Washington. The web site said the decision on press credentials would not be made until May. I had

the package with the newspapers — I picked out the ones I had done stories about the Democratic caucus process and the congressional assembly — and had it mailed before the end of February.

As I waited outside the special room at the Sherraton Plaza I thought about the months of waiting to get there. When May came and there was no word on the press credentials I started checking. The first thing I found out was there were at least five different levels of press credentials, and it appeared the periodical press was not on the top of the list.

I was assured that the decision would be made in June, and that yes they had my information on file.

The Press Gallery people sent me an e-mail in June saying I had to fill out another form on-line to get credentials, and give them details about what coverage I planned at the convention. I dutifully filled it out and sent the form off in to the ether world thinking I should hear soon.

I actually got a phone call the first week of July saying that the press gallery had not received the on-line form and that unless I filled it out I would not get any credentials. I assured the girl I had filled it out in June. She said they knew I had done that, but that the system had fouled up and I was one of many who had

submitted our forms only to have them swallowed by a computer glitch.

I filled it out again and this time I got an e-mail telling me they had received the form, and that I should hear from them by the end of July.

Since February I had been telling my staff that I was planning to go to Denver and expected to get press credentials. As the weeks went by they kept asking if I had heard anything to be able to plan for that week.

I got an e-mail at the end of July saying the letters for credentials had been mailed. The e-mail said I would have to bring the original letter to Denver on Sunday to pick up the credentials.

When I got to Denver and tried to find a parking place at the Sherraton I kept thinking it was a familiar location, and then remembered it had been the Hilton Hotel where I had been at a State Democratic Convention with my grandfather, Fred Betz, who introduced me to his friend, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, who happened to be running for president in 1968. My grandfather, who had been Colorado Democratic Chairman in the 60s had been a longtime supporter of Humphrey, and I still have the photo of us taken in that Hilton Hotel room those 40

years ago.

The press credentials were being handed out across the street in the basement of the expanded portion of the Sherraton. I got directions and found the elevator to the basement. I started looking for the right room where my credentials waited. I walked past the room for the Democratic National Convention Committee credentials, then the Congressional Daily Newspaper credentials, the Radio/television credentials, the photographer credentials and finally came to the last one the Congressional Periodical credentials.

A man and woman stood guard at the door and she asked for my name, the original letter and my driver's license. I handed them over and she took the letter and held it up to the light to check the watermark to make sure it was authentic.

I was told they had three tables inside with the alphabet split up and that only one person was allowed in per table. I had to wait about 10 minutes for the table with "G" to be available.

As I stood there I thought about the day I had met Humphrey and that same day I had waited with my camera out in front of the Hilton for him to come back from a speech at the Brown Palace Hotel. The

Secret Service guys on duty were nice as they suggested a place for me to stand as we expected him to come by motorcade. Humphrey did one of his usual things and walked back to the Hilton after the speech surrounded by people and a circle of secret service people. I stood on top of a flower pot and got some photos of him, but then had to get down and found myself stuck behind the glass door when he came sweeping by. I was thrilled with my photos, but wish I had been in a better place to get to shake his hand again that day.

The girl brought me back to reality and said it was my turn. I went in and the two young women at the table asked for the original letter and my driver's license. They checked them and made sure I was the right person. While one got the envelope with the credentials the other had me sign and date a form plus give them a cell phone number in case of emergencies.

The girl took the credentials out of the envelope and explained how they worked and that the one for Perimeter got me inside the Pepsi Center parking area where all the tents and outside events were to be held. The second one was the Hall pass, which would be the one to get me inside the Pepsi Center, but not

on the floor of the convention. To get a Floor pass I would have to go to the floor pass desk and sign up for a pass.

If one was available I would hand over my Hall pass and they would hand me a Floor pass to give me access to the floor of the convention for an hour or two.

She said the Hall pass would be my ticket to Invesco at Mile High on Thursday, and asked if I had any questions as she handed me my credentials.

I knew in my mind there were a couple of questions I needed to ask — what about a parking pass and can I bring my camera into the Pepsi Center without photographer credentials — but in the excitement of gaining the prize I forgot them.

I found out later I would have to go to another office to get a parking pass good for the Auarai campus, and to walk from there to the Pepsi Center.

I will have to ask the camera questions when I get there.

It is time to get the real adventure started by going to the Kansas delegation breakfast out at the Doubletree Inn at the Denver Tech Center.

I hate the red tape, but I love this job.

Development discussed

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Next Steffen asked who would be willing to chair the task forces. Harlan House said he would chair the multi-purpose building one. Members of the Economic Development board said there was already an effort to put a mill levy in place to support economic development with Jerry Fairbanks as the head.

Bill Finley said he would chair the retention of youth and young adult task force.

Office Manager Helen Dobbs for

the Economic Development Office, is in charge of local business retention efforts.

Goodland School District Superintendent said there is already work being done on long-term school planning by the school board.

No one volunteered to chair the power plant task force.

The task forces, said Steffen should report to a steering committee made up of members of the Sherman County Commissioners, Goodland City Commissioners, a committee person from local busi-

nesses, economic development, chamber of commerce, convention and visitor's bureau and education.

James Foster with the Office of Rural Opportunity helped Steffen.

Members of the Economic Development board present were chairman Chuck Wilkens, vice-chair Steve West, secretary Nancy Cole, treasurer Shelly Thompson, Danny Archer, Mike Cochran, Walt Linthacum, Don Newell, Larry Keirns and Dobbs.

Spraying program reviewed

By Tom Betz
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County commissioners talked about weed spraying in the northwest part of the county, saying they felt some of the areas showed real improvement.

Commissioner Chuck Thomas said at the meeting last Tuesday he had been up in the northwest part of the county and felt he could see where the spraying had really done well up there, but there were places that looked like the weeds had never been sprayed.

Daryl West, noxious weed control director, showed the commissioners a map of where he has sprayed.

Thomas said the goal this year had been to get the north part of

the county covered.

West said he had followed Darrel Schrader's mowers, and that most of the area covered was in the north. He said he had done a few spots down south where the weeds were bad.

Thomas asked how many feet wide the spray rig covers, and West said 19 feet. Thomas asked if there was any way to get out a little farther for the row of weeds along the fences.

Commissioner Mitch Tiede said the line where the spray stopped was noticeable along County Road 65 (Eighth Street west of K-27). Thomas asked if West could rig an extra nozzle for the end, and could put it on when it was needed.

West said he didn't think he could put an extra nozzle on because it

would cause some problems with the chemical mixture. He said he could adjust the end nozzle to reach out a bit farther.

Max Linin, who won the Republican nomination for commissioner in District 3 over Commissioner Kevin Rasure, was at the meeting and was invited to join in and look at the map.

Thomas said he figured West would catch the areas where sunflowers are growing next year to avoid crop damage.

Tiede said where he has been and where the weeds have been sprayed, he could tell the difference. He said it was looking good in many places.

"You can tell where the weeds have been sprayed," Thomas said.

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