

It's A New Republican Day!

*...even though the Old
Guard isn't leaving quietly...*

By Kat Rowoldt

I have just returned from the Republican Party State Convention in San Antonio. You never know what to expect, and this convention delivered on many levels. This was my third convention. Each of the three experiences have been very unique. Of course, the first one you attend you're in a fog because you really have no way to know what you're about to encounter, it's a learning experience, and sometimes that can be very frustrating. It's a lot like the first day on the job feels when you really don't know who's who, where the restroom is, and how the flow of your work day is going to go. It would make a world of difference if you had been properly trained and prepared for the work that is to be done at the State Convention before you go.

My second convention, I had the honor of serving as one of thirty-one SD delegates who worked on the temporary and permanent Rules Committee. I was representing our Senate District 28. That too was a learning experience in a totally different way. The physical and mental exhaustion one experiences in working 14-16 hour-days prior to the opening of the convention is unreal. But it is a necessary part of our State Party and how it operates. TGC Commissioner Rick Bacon represented us this year on the Platform Committee and I'm sure he will concur on the exhaustion factor.

This year I attended as media. I had been tagged as media at the two previous conventions, but I never had the time to really do anything along that line. I also paid the convention fee to be an official guest, though as media I did not have to. I thought it would be interesting to report on the Tom Green County delegation since they represented all of us at this very important political convention. Observing as an outsider also gave me a new perspective.



Senate District (SD) 28 meeting on Thursday at the Republican State Convention. Our district covers 51 counties from Lubbock to Menard.



TGC Commissioner Rick Bacon and his wife, Glenda. Bacon served on the Platform Committee representing SD 28.

Tom Green County is allowed 47 delegates and 47 alternates at the convention. It's always a good idea to have the exact number of alternates on-hand, ready to step-in if any of the delegates become ill, cannot attend at the last minute, or even has to step out of the meeting during the voting process. The goal is to have a full voting force on-hand, so our county will be well represented, and our voices heard, both in our Senate Caucus and the General Assembly meetings. When the Texas Republican Party meets at convention, it is the largest political gathering in the world. We had just shy of 10,000 delegates/alternates slated from across the state, plus all the guests, media, and convention center staff. It's a lot of people - and a lot of walking.

The delegates and alternates are selected by the Nominating Committee at our County Convention in March. While the Tom Green County Republican Party under the guidance of the Convention Officers produced a full delegation on paper at home, this year's choices for delegates and alternates failed to produce a full delegation to represent us at the State, where it really counts. Even with pulling in every alternate that was in attendance at the convention, our peak representation for our county was only 37 people. By the time the convention got down to doing business on our Rules, Platform, and Legislative Priorities, we only had 8 people there. There's more to that story, which I'll get back to in a bit.



TGC Commissioner Rick Bacon, who served on the Temporary Platform Committee, giving his report to SD 28 from the very long 3 days preceding the opening of the convention. He shared the key points from the work they had done up to that point.

As the title of this piece suggests, there are changes happening in the Republican Party, and some of the folks in it do not like it one bit. Probably a novel could be written on that topic alone, and I'm sure there are folks penning books across this state and nation at this very moment.

The Trump wave and momentum that swept our nation which caused him to be elected is having resounding affects down to the state and local levels. Unfortunately, instead of following Senator Ted Cruz's example of aligning themselves with the country's victoriously elected leader, many of the Old Guard are trying to hang on to their old dreams by kicking, screaming and falsely accusing the people they see as their challengers. I would not have imagined that Cruz could have aligned himself with Trump after their horrendous Presidential battle and

the final cord that caused him to end his challenge against Trump. Having been with him in a small meeting as he discussed such things a few weeks ago, my admiration for him and his commitment to represent us at all costs, continues to grow.

In Texas, one of the first rumblings of change began when the SREC (State Republican Executive Committee) elected James Dickey to State Chair, when Tom Mechler suddenly resigned. Dickey falls into the category of conservative, "grassroots" type

Republican. His margin of victory was razor thin. The Old Guard, Establishment, RINOs, (whatever you want to call them) were not happy at all. How could this have happened? Our representatives on the SREC did not vote for Dickey. It was obvious that our Senate District 28 was/is being represented by the Old Guard.

Later in the summer of 2017, Speaker of the House, Joe Strauss' home district began a movement to have him censured under Rule 44. In a hard push across the state, county after county began to join the movement demanding he be censured. The purpose of the censure was to be sure he would no longer be the Speaker of the House. Tom Green County by unanimous vote joined the movement, though some seem to now be reporting that it was not unanimous. Having been in that meeting and one of the voting force there, I know it was unanimous at the time of the vote and that a request was made for the unanimous vote to be recorded as such. Thus, the friction began at the local level.

Fireworks were ablaze at the Tom Green County Republican Convention in March. The TEA Party and other conservative-minded attendees were aghast that the platform proposals being sent up to the State Convention virtually all had to do with some type of tax increase. Then when it came to who would be delegates and alternates to the State Convention, many of the "grassroots" people were even more concerned. It was noted by several, that the lists contained names of people who were at the County Convention but who had clearly stated they did not want to go, or could not go, to the State Convention. It also included people who had not been active in the party in years, one who was fighting for her life in a hospital in Houston, and various elected officials just in case they changed their minds and wanted to go at the last minute. Out of 94 slots (delegates/alternates), only 11 people who are active members in conservative "grassroots" organizations were placed on the official lists. This was all perfectly within the right of the leadership to do, but it effectively denied delegate/alternate status to many who regularly and actively participate in the Precinct and County Conventions, and who clearly expressed an interest in participating at the State Convention.

This same friction, between these two mindsets within the Republican Party in Texas, could be felt when you walked into the convention center on Day One of the convention. Cindy Asche (Old Guard, Establishment) was challenging James Dickey (Grassroots) for the Chairmanship of the Republican Party. I served on the Rules Committee with Cindy's father at the last convention. He is a true diehard Establishment Republican. I did not know Cindy but had the opportunity to meet her and hear what she had to say. She did not change my mind on who our party needed at the helm.



Show of hands on one of the votes from Thursdays SD 28 meeting.

A vote is taken in each of the 31 Senate Districts to determine who would lead the Party. Dickey won the vote 22 SD's to 9. SD 28 was one of the 9, with the majority of TGC supporting Cindy Asche. Her group, however, would not accept the defeat. They challenged the vote on the floor at the General Assembly. This was Friday afternoon, and this floor fight took the majority of the afternoon to process.

Asche's camp requested a weighted vote count from the floor. Each of the candidates, Dickey and Asche, were given ten minutes to address the delegation before the vote. They drew names to see who would speak first. Dickey won the drawing and took the stage with numerous State Representatives, Senators and other officials choosing to stand with him. He graciously thanked the delegation for their support, shared a few remarks and concluded.

Asche then took the stage and stood alone. With everyone listening attentively, it truly sounded like she was going to graciously thank her supporters and concede the race to Dickey. But suddenly, like a huge wide shift, Ms. Asche began hurling unverified accusations and statements about Dickey and the RPT. Her time ran out and she would not stop talking. In desperation she pleaded with the audience to allow her to continue with her potentially false charges against Dickey and the State Party office. She ended up being escorted off stage by the Sergeant-at-Arms.

Due to rules, Dickey had no opportunity to defend himself or address the charges being made against his office. The new vote was taken, weighted and counted. Asche ended up losing 2 more SD's - Dickey winning with 65% of the vote, 24 SD's to 7. SD 28 was one of the two SD's that flipped to Dickey. Mr. Dickey has called for an audit of the RPT books immediately to clear up any questions on the accusations Asche was spewing out.

It was very late in the afternoon, so the planned Rules debate was postponed until Saturday. The meeting was adjourned, and we never saw the majority of the TGC delegation again. On Saturday morning, the meeting commenced at 9:00. Our group was down to 17. By 9:37, two more had arrived, one being our County Chair, giving us a total of 19 out of that potential 47 delegates to vote on the Rules, Platform, and Legislative Priorities. By 10:45 when the speeches had concluded, and the real work was about to begin, only 11 remained. The TGC Chair and his wife, who were both delegates, had left by 10:00 a.m. taking as many Ted Cruz signs under their arms as they could carry from the empty delegate chairs. When the ballots for voting were handed out, only 8 Tom Green County delegates remained.



The strenuous task of voting Yea or Nay on each and every plank of the Texas Republican Platform was happening. Most of SD 28 was not present to cast their votes. 29 of our delegates/alternates had left.

I captured three delegates in this picture of empty chairs in our section, Lynette Lucas with face down reading the platform planks to vote, and Doug and Suzi Smith to the far right. Not in the photo were Deborah Bailey, Lyleann McClellan Thee, Ginger Moore, Bill & Anna Bartosh. These were the people who came to do business, not just attend the social events and to be seen. It's grueling work. My hat is off to those who stayed and completed the course. If the Tom Green County Republican Party is going to be the big-tent, all-inclusive party its chairman advocates, it is clear it has to reexamine the way it selects delegates and alternates for the State Convention. The alternative is a "purified" delegation that excludes divergent voices.



I was looking forward to hearing Jeff Betty's remarks at the San Angelo Pachyderm Club this past Wednesday. He was their guest speaker, with the assignment to speak on the Convention. (Video of his speech available on the CRN website.) I'm not sure he even mentioned the convention in his talk beyond saying he had just returned from it. That's unfortunate. As he will tell you over and over again, he is not part of the "TEA Party" group or what it represents. It was clear that day that he pits himself against them and other like-minded "grassroots" organizations. He had the opportunity to present his view from the other side of the party about the convention, but he did not. I am left without words to describe what he did say, but it did remind me of Cindy Asche's last political speech.

The conservative "grassroots" voice is finding its place in the Republican Party, even if some people, like Jeff Betty, are calling them the Far-Right. I think they chose that verbiage so they can somehow still define themselves as Republicans somewhere in the middle between Conservatives and Liberals. Those Far-Right people might have a different opinion on which side of the line "some" of the Old Guard, Establishment, and diehard RINOs are really standing on.

Until next time...

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