

Convention Diary

The Democratic National Convention, Boston, Massachusetts, July 26-29, 2004 as reported by a delegate from the Fifth Congressional district of Ohio.

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Wednesday, July 21

I thought you'd like to know how I'm preparing for my trip to Boston on Saturday. I spent most of yesterday afternoon sorting through the mail I've gotten in the last couple of weeks from the city of Boston - three duplicate packets from the Chamber of Commerce with brochures telling me where-to-go-dine-sightsee-shop-stay in the city and environs - from Ted Kennedy who wants me to join him at a caucus about health care and tell my personal story, from Seniors For Kerry, from Ethnics For Kerry and from all the Women's Action Committees that want to feed me, listen to me, inform me and in general ply me with drinks and hors d'oeuvres into the small early morning hours. I've gotten a letter from the chair of the Ohio Democratic Party, from DNC Chair Terry McAuliffe (two letters and a couple of e-mails), from the Mayor of Columbus, from the Mayor of Toledo, and a cute little Ohio For Kerry button from Jerry Springer who is about to run for governor in a year or two. There's a DNC Delegate Tracker, Roger Austin, who is always available to answer questions and soothe me - he's in charge of MI, OH, and WV. My e-mails come daily from the ODP, the DNC, moveon.org, impeachbush.org, the Wood Country Democratic Party, Emily's List, Planned Parenthood Foundation of America's Action Fund (I'm going to their luncheon), my friend Roger Austin and from the Toledo4Kerry headquarters giving me updates on events and needs.

I've signed up for anything Planned Parenthood wants me to do and also for the Democratic Women's Caucus. I've sent a very large check to Emily's List in order to eat with them Monday noon. I'm aware that I must attend a (location still-to-be-designated) state caucus breakfast every morning at 7:30 in order to pick up my credentials without which I will not be allowed to board the shuttle bus that will carry me to the Fleet Center. My photo ID is required, too, and will be also at the PPFA cocktail party Sunday night at a nearby friendly law office. Security will be iron clad. I have composed a schedule and I hope that I have the necessary tickets and passes that will allow me to attend the caucuses and luncheons that I've chosen. I have a pile of exciting sounding gatherings where **bold face people** are promised as bait - Diane Feinstein, Hillary Clinton, Barbara Mikulski, Barbara Boxer . . . and that cost a bundle to attend, but conflict with other dates I've made. I'll decide on those later.

After throwing away most of the mail we've gotten in the last few weeks - I think I'll pass on the Seniors caucus and the Ethnic one - I'm down to plane tickets and hotel confirmation. I think. Your father is serene in the knowledge that all he's required to do is wander around looking for Ohio people to collar and sell on our candidate, Robin Weirauch [running for Congress in the 5th

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district]. He's having a large ID card made for his lapel that announces he's the Campaign Finance Chairman for the RobinForCongress committee. He's deadly when he's on a hunt like this and I fully expect us to return with a pocketful of commitments to our campaign fund and for speaking engagements from - Jerry Springer? - nailed down.

We don't go until mid-afternoon on Saturday, so there will be time for us to talk. We're both working hard for Robin and already have had some real success. I'll report on all of that in early August. Right now we have this on our minds and are so happy we stumbled into this great adventure.

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Sunday, July 25

Today was a day of figuring it all out. We first needed to figure out how to access the second floor of the building where the Ohio Democratic Party's information and registration desk is located and where all the daytime meetings and caucuses will take place. We're on the 20th floor and the elevators will go from the lobby to there, but access to the the second and third floors has been blocked out, you can't get there from here, perhaps for security reasons - no one tells us. Sandy Isenberg, chair of the Lucas County Democratic Party, is on our elevator with Frank Szollosi, councilman, and she explains the drill to us: we must go down to the lobby and ride an escalator to the second floor. OK, got that, do it. We register at the Ohio desk, giving the names of person to be notified in case of catastrophe to me, the delegate, with address, phone, relationship, cell # of same. We head for breakfast at the cafe off the lobby, pausing to buy a handful of buttons, stickers, a bag for me, a polo shirt for Dad, a bumper sticker. Four buttons for \$10, money going to the DNC. Collectors items, I assure myself. An investment. We have schmoozed with Dennis White, Ohio Democratic Party Chair and Todd Rensi, the convention coordinator for Ohio. The hotel is filling up as more delegates arrive and now the lobby is swarming with all sorts, sizes, colors and shapes of happy and excited human beings wearing Kerry buttons and the t-shirts of their respective loyalties. Bottles of water and cookies decorated like political buttons are on offer free thanks to the Sheraton hotel. It's like a huge cocktail party but at 11:00 in the morning.

Dad takes himself off to go to see where Vermont is couched so he can talk up Robin Weirauch to the Dean Foundation in hopes of getting a grant for Robin's campaign. The Vermont delegation is a tiny cluster of people housed in the Hilton, who are lonely and happy to talk to the guy from the big importat Swing State across the street. No Howard Dean, but Dad left him a message. Worth a try. Dad also stops at the Sheraton concierge desk and makes a dinner reservation. Then we head to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts by cab, but not before we nearly knock down Dennis Kucinich who's standing by the revolving door. A tiny little guy with an appealing, open face.

At the Museum we spend a couple of hours wandering through this treasurehouse of Americana - there are all the famous Copleys, Peales and Sargents, and wonderful American furniture. There's also a superb special exhibit of Greek art and artifacts depicting athletes performing some of the same games as are now acted out in our modern day Olympic games, all tracing the ancient sources and sites. Modern photography of great athletes and Muybridge's experimental "action" photography hang beside amphora showing wrestlers and chariots. It's a beautifully conceived exhibit.

We've been invited to attend a cocktail reception given by the Planned

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Parenthood Federation of America's Action Fund, the IRS category 501-C5 (political arm) of the PPFA. It's held at the law offices of Foley Hoag in a building at the Seaport Trade Center, the new development on the docks out in the harbor. The firm has given pro bono legal service to Massachusetts Planned Parenthood for over 26 years . . . many thousand of dollars worth and they were duly honored by the current board chairperson of the Advocacy Fund. The party was packed in expectation of hearing Gloria Steinem, who is now involved with Voters For Choice Action Fund, and Gloria Feldt, President of Planned Parenthood. The Glorias didn't disappoint. Steinem is a dynamic speaker who filled us with dread and a sense of urgency about the importance of this election. "Nothing in the 30 years I've been involved with women's issues has filled me with such a sense of crisis as we face now . . ." And Gloria Feldt told us that if Planned Parenthood volunteers and clients can get out the vote we will move 3% of the electorate to Kerry and to victory. It all sounded so possible and so important. We came away inspired. Dianne Luby, the President of the affiliate introduced John Kerry's sister, who has been a friend of Steinem's for years and has attended the conferences in Cairo and Beijing with her. She spoke of the immediate actions Kerry would take to reverse the Bush executive orders with regard to women's choice here and abroad. Also in the room was Teresa Heinz Kerry's sister, a pretty little plump woman much resembling her sister.

Our evening ended at Jimmy's Harborside Restaurant, a short walk away from the law offices. We had a table overlooking the water and next to the table of 18 people where Jerry Brown (Governor Moonbeam) held court in his distinctive tenor whine. He reminds me of the former Mayor of Toledo, Carty Finkbeiner, who controls any conversation because his voice is the loudest. Madeleine Albright stopped by to pay her respects to Jerry's group before moving off to her own table. She looks younger and thinner than her photographs. And behind us in the corner was a table of eight which featured Joe Biden and some others we didn't recognize. The two of us were as star struck as teenagers, I confess, but I'm sure by the time the week is out we'll have become completely blase.

Time to turn in . . . morning and the daily caucus comes early. Both Clintons tomorrow night at the Fleet Center.

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Monday, July 26

I can see that not only will I be sleepless in Boston, but I'll be hungry - probably not a bad thing for my shape, but not so good for my brain. We decided to skip the DNC Women's Leadership Forum Luncheon yesterday and take a walk down the block to look for a place where we could eat at a table smaller than the 8-seaters we are fed at in the big ballrooms, breakfasts with the Ohio Democratic Party, lunches with other pressure groups (today it's Emily's List in the Back Bay Ballroom). We went to the Cactus Club, an outdoor Mexican cafe with tables on the sidewalk under the trees. No margaritas at lunch, but good tacos and a chicken wrap that was too big to handle. I'm impressed by all the trees lining Boston's streets. Something you don't see in New York except along the park, or Seattle, Chicago or Detroit. More cities should try to do this. Perhaps there would be a happier citizenry.

Yesterday afternoon we went to the Ohio Party's Hospitality Suite where candidates for Ohio offices can meet and greet the current elected officials and delegates. Theresa Fedor, a state senator, is there - we know her and have a chat about our efforts for our Congressional candidate. There's a gorgeous spread of food and a full bar. Had I known that that would be the only food I'd see until breakfast I would have helped myself, but I was eager to get on the bus to the Fleet Center by 5:00 so I wouldn't miss the speeches. Little did I knowhow could I? . . . that I would be speeched to the limit before the night was out. Still, I was too excited to wait until the hour when experienced convention-goers choose to go to their designated seats, something nearer 7:00 or later, and no doubt taking time for a pre-convention snack.

At 5:00 I get onto Bus 8, the one serving our hotel and the Hilton across the street. It's about a 20 minute ride to the big, old, former Boston Garden, once home of the Celtics and Bruins. We are let off in a parking lot that's part of the complex - part train station and part arena. The walk to the Center takes us past the "pen" where the protesters are caged. The ACLU is suing the city of Boston over the way protests are being handled, but no one can think of a different way to do it given the demands of Homeland Security. Most of those who want to protest whatever have chosen to do it by marching around the Public Garden and the Common, spurning the area near where they would have more visibility by the delegates in particular. I can see why. But those protesting Israel's treatment of the Palestinians have decided to use the "cage", a many-layered wire fence enclosure under a train track adjacent to the bus parking lot, as illustration of how the Palestinians are in fact treated. A platform has been constructed so speakers have microphones to broadcast their outrage. Signs hanging on the fence read "The Prison of Palestine", "Future of The First Amendment", "Free Speech In America" and "Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, Boston - SHAME!" I hang around for a bit, but can't hear what the speaker is saying. His audience is only those who are enclosed with him, sadly.

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The Fleet Center, having been built atop a train station, requires you to take an escalator to the 2nd Floor where *Time* magazine has set up a large display of their history covering conventions (I pass), then to the 3rd where memorabilia of old hockey players and basketball greats are displayed. If you were an alternate delegate you'd proceed to the 4th floor where the seats under the eaves, in low oxygen, are located, but I'm entitled to a seat on the floor, so I walk down many steps to the carpeted playing floor (or ice, depending) where the Bruins and Celtics used to do their work. Ohio is located in two pie-shaped quadrants directly under and to the right of the speaker's platform. Wonderfully close to the action. Above and to the right is a sort of elongated box where CNN and NBC's reporters (John Roberts, Candy Crowley) talk to the camera over the din of the constant noise of the speakers on the podium, the babble of the seated and standing delegates, the people chatting in groups in the aisles, the mic feedback, the wandering local and pool reporters and camera handlers giving and taking orders, rock music between speakers . . . I marvel at the reporters' ability to concentrate.

I have found a seat next to an empty seat in the fifth or sixth row back from the front aisle. On the other side of the empty sits a large black gent who introduces himself as Derry Hooks, delegate from Cincinnati. We make friendly conversation while a woman is speaking passionately above us on the podium. The raised podium holds two speaker's rostrums and behind are bleacher seats where a backdrop of "typical citizens" are seated. A woman temporarily seated behind us tells us she's been selected to be one of those people and as such is instructed not to wear any bright colored clothing or shiny objects - candidate's buttons or flashing jewelry - that might reflect distracting light into the camera. She's meant to be a piece in the tapestry. Mr. Hooks becomes the subject of an interview by a reporter who inserts herself into the seat between us. She's Joan Lowy from Scripps Howard and I look over her shoulder to copy some of her notes. Mr. Hooks is exceptionally articulate, a teacher and member of the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers. He loves his job and he has much to say about why he cares about this election. He believes John Kerry understands what it's like to be a working person and George Bush doesn't. He bemoans the loss of jobs in Ohio and regrets that more working people are politically apathetic and discouraged. Word must have gotten around that Derry Hooks was a "good interview" because later a young woman who takes her notes in French also comes to sit next to him to get his point of view. She's from the *Quest France*, a newspaper in Brittany.

The backdrop of the stage is an enormous screen upon which the name and elected position of the speaker is shown, or photographs of John Kerry's life are shown, or Bobby Kennedy and his words, or Jack and his, or later, before the "main event", a montage of the landscapes of the USA unfolds while we listen to the beautiful voice of a male singer named Bebe Winans sing "The Star Spangled Banner". At one point in the evening Glenn Close, looking younger and

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more beautiful than ever, speaks in introduction of the nine women senators - Mikulsky, Boxer, Feinstein, Murray, Cantwell, Landrieu, Lincoln, Stabenow and Clinton. The Elder Stateswoman, Mikulsky, is chosen to fire us up to work for the election of John Kerry and John Edwards. Close is called back later to conduct the remembrance of 9/11 which includes a woman whose son and pregnant daughter-in-law went down in one of the suicide planes. A huge panorama of the New York skyline is beamed onto the screen showing the twin lights that replaced the towers for several weeks after the event. Then the house lights are dimmed and we all light up mini-lights that have been passed around while a violin played by a young member of the Boston Youth Chorus plays "Amazing Grace." Extraordinarily moving.

As the evening goes on more Important People are introduced: Bill Richardson, Chairman of the Convention, presents Jimmy Carter, who takes on Bush's foreign "adventures" and praises Kerry's restraint and judgement. The Reverend David Alston, a black minister from South Carolina and who was on Kerry's Swift Boat in Viet Nam, bears witness to his captain's bravery and strength of character - his words are more moving than any I've heard recently on the subject. Soon Richardson brings on Al Gore, looking tanned and trim. The ovation for him is long and loud. He seems to tear up at the enthusiasm for a moment. Al's remarks are funny, self-deprecating, strong - he's so much better at this than he was four years ago! - he says "every little boy and girl in America has the chance to grow up and win the popular vote" (laughter), and "take it from me, every vote counts - and should be counted." At the end Tipper comes out and they reprise The Kiss.

We hear from Terry McAuliffe, from Stephanie Tubbs Jones, first African American woman on the House Ways & Means Committee, from Robert Menendez of New Jersey, from Ed McElroy of American Federation of Teachers, from Gloria Feldt, from Rod O'Connor and Alice Huffman of the Convention Committeeand at last, from Hillary who speaks of the urgency of electing John Kerry in a lead up to her introduction of Bill. When Bill Clinton approaches the podium the standing ovation blows us all away. He is adored, it seems, by the entire host of convention delegates. I am interested to see that George Stephanopolis is standing in the front aisle with headphones on throughout the last portion of the list of principal speakers. He follows along with the words shown on the teleprompter facing the podium. I'm aware of how moved he appears to be by the speech made by the Rev. Alston on the specifics of Kerry's heroism in Viet Nam, shaking his head in wonder. I pay close attention to how he receives his former boss, Bill Clinton. Stony faced at first, he stares at the speaker and seems to shrug off some of Clinton's most dramatic claims for how he and Gore left the State of the Union and how it stands now. But little by little the old Clinton magic works on little George S. and soon he is laughing along with the rest of the crowd. I'd love to have been a fly on the wall when that break-up occurred six or seven years ago. In any case, Bill Clinton is the rightfully crowned master of rhetoric and political speaking. He

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has lost none of his ability to fire up a crowd. He is charming, funny and very very winning. I hope he works his tail off for this election of Kerry-Edwards.

Just before the end - I wasn't really sure when the final final end would come - of Clinton's speech I decide to head for the exit to avoid the crush for bus seats. But I get confused at how to get out of the building and find myself doubling back through the security station, soon to get caught up in the surging crowd of people going in all directions. My sense of direction is notoriously poor and eventually I find that I'm all but alone, wandering around the perimeter of the Fleet Center looking for the bus's parking stations. Cops point me one way and then another. Eventually I find myself within the empty protesters' "cage" which is tantalizingly close to the buses, but separated by the double layers of wire fence. It's exit is beyond the parking lot so I must circumnavigate the lot and soon I notice that the buses are leaving. I panic and begin run, following the fencing around the edge of the big lot until finally I wind up where I should have been a half hour before, others are there as well, and no bus. The remaining ones say "Off Duty". A person in charge tells us we should have taken the trains, but the waiting group is now large enough to be able to tell him to "shove it" (a direct quote from Teresa) and to find us a bus. In due time an "Off Duty" bus comes and we put those in wheel chairs aboard first. I decide that I'm old enough to follow the lame and helpless and grab me a seat. I'm home in bed by midnight - Dad has been watching it the convention on TV and is awake to greet me.

Thus endeth the first lesson

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Tuesday, July 27

It took me too long to get myself to breakfast . . . 8:15 and nothing was left but juice and a few slices of bacon. So I guess I'm on the Atkins whether I want to be or not. This report will be more on the events of the day than the actual evening convention because we found them more interesting on the whole. Dad had been able to scrounge a "Important Guest" pass for last night and so was able to go with me (to keep me from getting lost?) and sit in the seats up near the roof. He loved seeing it all first hand.

Our Ohio morning breakfasts feature speakers of both local and national political stripe. Because our state is so key to victory we have been assigned one of the better physical locations - the Sheraton is campaign headquarters as well as being where Ohio, Michigan and New Mexico delegates have accommodations. (Very handy when you are sleep-deprived.) But we also are addressed in the mornings as though we are truly important by people who flog us into concerted action to register voters and help them get to the polls. Today we had Henry Cisneros and a video of Madeleine Albright. But more on that tomorrow. As for yesterday, the state representative from Port Clinton, Chris Redfern, opened the meeting. He headed the Edwards campaign in Ohio back when. He introduced to us a veteran who was on Kerry's Swift Boat and who was there to testify to not only to Kerry's bravery but his humanity. We all are familiar with the stories of how truly courageous John Kerry was and how his shipmates banded together very early in the campaign out of devotion to him. This one repeated the scary story of being trapped in a narrow canal with fire on both sides. What we haven't heard as much about it is how Kerry allowed sampans of Viet Nameese civilians - people with their grandparents and their young children - to escape. Practice would have had the crews capture the boats and imprison the people in order to question them. Kerry insisted that they be allowed to flee. This veteran said that "his captain" showed great kindness and humanity for someone so young.

After breakfast Dad and I talk to the Congresswoman from Ohio's 9th District, Toledo's district and parts east along Lake Erie, Marcy Kaptur. Marcy had been introduced at this morning's meeting as the longest serving woman in Congress and she's particular honored for her outstanding work with John Dingell of Michigan to protect the Lake Erie coastline of northern Ohio. Another of Marcy's causes is to amend NAFTA. She opposed it when it was first proposed and in the meantime she has made it her business to monitor how her district is being affected by it. She traveled to Mexico to examine what has happened to Ohio plants that had been moved there in the last 10 years, their impact on the environment and their working conditions. She distributed a CD to members of the delegation for them to see what she saw and to show it to our friends. Marcy takes care of her district and is re-elected again and again. She is being seriously challenged this year by a candidate chosen by the national Ohio's

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Republican Party that is determined to oust representatives like Marcy, but her campaign manager tells us "no problem." We want her to know how great a candidate [for the Ohio 5th district] our Robin Weirauch is - Marcy recruited her - and to thank her for giving us this chance to make a difference. In turn, she compliments Dad and me for our active support of Robin. She says something that you would never hear in states like Massachusetts, New York or California, "Given your position in life [sic], one would expect you two to be Republicans and uncaring. You deserve praise for your concern for the ordinary person." Marcy lives and represents a part of Ohio that is conservative so she is used to the fight and unused to finding all sorts of people - not just union members - worried about what happens to the least of us.

At noon we are again late. Having committed to attend the Emily's List luncheon - expensive tickets, but worth it - we realize that we should have been there at 11:30 and it is now noon. We race to grab a cab and there's a line a block long waiting for rides to the lunch. Everyone has been in a morning meeting that just got out and are as late as we. When we finally succeed we are happy to share with another woman who tells us she's from Nebraska, fighting a hopeless battle of course, but winning in the district in which she lives - 90 miles west of Lincoln. Her husband is a trucker and he tells her he drives so she can work for the Democratic Party. The cab driver is Haitian (all cab drivers seem to be Haitian in Boston) and is new to the city. We say "The Convention Center and step on it." Really. But we fail to tell him the NEW convention center. After the long 20 minute drive to what begins to look familiar, he lets us off, speeds away and we realize that we're at the FLEET Center, not the new facility on the harbor. Another \$12.00 later we reach our destination at, now, 1:15, and just in time to hear the last few minutes of Ellen Malcolm's introductory remarks. As you no doubt know, Ellen conceived of and nursed Emily's List into being. It's goal is to elect pro-choice Democratic women in as many districts in the country as possible. We are seeking money from their PAC to underwrite Robin's campaign and wanted to support them by attending and being visible at this luncheon. The speakers we heard yesterday were, no other word, fabulous: Barbara Mikulski, Nancy Pelosi, Ann Richards and Jennifer Granholm.

Barbara was the first female Democratic woman elected to the Senate, she's the grandmother of them all. Her delivery is strong for so tiny a woman and her voice rings out as strongly as would that of a male's although in a higher pitch. Nancy Pelosi shared with us the tingley feeling she had occupying Tip O'Neil's office where people, senators, had had to come to ask for favors. Now they come to her. Ann Richards, oh you know her well . . . there's no one like her and she hasn't lost any of her wonderful delivery of jokes and serious, passionate ability to persuade. She loves to compare this administration to a bad marriage: he's cute, he's sexy, you get married, you find soon that he's spending all his time on the couch watching football and spending his money on guns and hunting trips, the yard looks like a jungle and there are dismantled

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cars up on blocks in the driveway. You realize it's time to divide the sheets and sign the divorce papers.

The last was the best. Jennifer Granholm, Michigan's new governor, is as beautiful as a movie star. Her delivery is so quiet and powerful that the room of 2000 guests was so still you could have heard a pin drop. She evoked the image of The Butterfly Effect, where a butterfly moving its wings over a marsh inTexas?caused a windstorm to arise in, say, Massachusetts. She described women as coming out of their cocoons and taking flight. We can make a difference. The message to the room from all five women was the same and said so powerfully - women, it's your time. Go For It. Ellen Malcolm said we want to all announce after the 3rd of November "Mission Accomplished!"

I decided to get to the convention hall later last night so Phil and I had a bite to eat in the bar at the hotel around 6:00. Luckily the man in charge of Ohio's part in the convention passed by and we were able to get him to find a guest pass for Phil. So Phil got to experience the bus ride, the walk into the convention center, the crowds and confusion - worse last night than the night before - and to see from his perch under the eaves all that transpired down below. My seat this time wasn't as choice as on Monday night. I sat in a row of four or five vacant seats that quickly filled up with a group that had come in together and talked over and around me throughout the evening. Something of the same was happening behind me. Two men must have thought they were at a cocktail party, so much loud (perforce because of the general din) happy social talk did they exchange. In the row in front of me sat a mother and her 6 (?) year old with his little tricorn hat sporting a "Thank You Howard Dean" button. A puzzlement, but then, a 14 or 15 year-old multi-pierced young woman was seated two rows in front of us. I read in this morning's paper that there's a widespread practice of variants of credential exchanging taking place. No kidding. Our leader this morning said, NO MAS. Tonight is serious business, roll call and registration of delegates and we must be there NO LATER THAN 4:00 - the fire marshalls are going to lock the doors!

The speakers last night were from the more liberal side of the party, knowing, I read, that with no TV coverage, the party can feel free to give a nod to the more liberal wing who love hearing Dick Gebhardt, Tom Daschle, Carol Mosely Braun, and Howard Dean lash the team. Howard Dean was particularly interesting in that he received a huge, extended, standing ovation which he was reluctant to quell. For someone there to endorse the candidate he seemed to love feeling as though he were the candidate and indeed, he said, "I was hoping for a reception like this but on Thursday night" - heh, heh. Other memorable things he said were: "We must restore a world leader to the world." "We won't be shouted down by those who carry a banner of false patriotism." "We will soon be proud to be Democrats in states like Mississippi, Oklahoma and TEXAS!!" - big cheer. He was strong and very forthright. Less strong was Christie Vilsack, the Iowa governor's wife who first endorsed John Kerry, giving her

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husband permission to abandon his support of Gephardt. She was all but inaudible, poor dear.

By cell phone Dad and I decided to exit, the time being now 10:20 and we wanted to get back to our room so we could watch the coverage of Barack Obama. As it turned out we watched him on one of the TV monitors in the hallway near the concession stands at the arena. A crowd of people about 10 deep gathered around the set. His message was "E Pluribus Unum . . .we are ONE nation, not red and blue states or one religion or another or gay or straight." There's no doubt that he's a star. Sadly, a black woman who was on the escalator toward the exit of the building at the same time we were, muttered, "He's wonderful, but I hope they don't destroy him . ." I thought of that remark this morning as I listened to Henry Cisneros, the former "Bright Star" of the early 90's. And I worry for John Edwards.

We watched Teresa Heinz Kerry on our room TV and were so proud of her and pleased at her reception, at the warmth of her affection for her sons. I heard someone this morning say that the audience in the hall didn't know when to applaud, that her delivery was confusing. Ohbosh! We loved her and I bought a pin this morning after breakfast that reads "SHOVE ITGEORGE W." I'm wearing it proudly.

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Wednesday, July 28

As the week has gone on I've found the crowds at the Fleet Center are swelling. I was warned to get to the convention center as early as 4:00 in order to find a seat and to be available to be counted and signed off on my vote as a delegate. I took the instructor, Todd Rensi of the Ohio Kerry office, at his word and was in place on an aisle, six rows back from the podium by 4:15. What I didn't take into account that an aisle seat with the aisle between me and the podium would fill up with print reporters doing interviews, photographers and camera equipment mules, people milling about chatting and in general a world within the larger world of the main spectacle. My old acquaintance from Monday night, Derry Hooks, sat two rows in front of me and again he was photographed and interviewed. I reached forward to tap him on the shoulder and tease him about his stardom. He was as mystified as I was about why he was attracting so much interest. Well, he's about 35, tall, well proportioned, very black and neatly dressed...and he's well spoken. He sits in an accessible location. That says it.

Another much interviewed "celebrity" was the daughter of an Ohio politician, now retired from some statewide party job. She was featured on the podium as "The Youngest Delegate;" she may be 15, and led the sparse early crowd in the Pledge of Allegiance dressed in a tight sleeveless blue dress, heavy makeup and 4" high white heels. She and the rest of her family sat on the aisle across from me. She was led away to be interviewed on TV with her mother as chaperone. I wonder what opinions she was able to offer. But Daddy was very proud.

Speaking of interviews: I suddenly found squatting beside me a reporter from the *Chicago Tribune*. He asked the usual questions about why I was a delegate for Kerry (I was impressed by his intelligence, his internationalism, his nuanced take on policy); what I thought of Kerry/Edwards' prospects in Ohio (excellent - don't believe all you read in the daily polls); and why (jobs jobs jobs and angry conservative farmers who haven't gotten what they thought they'd voted for). He took my name and e-mail address and I gave him the name of this blog [thanks, Mom!] so he could keep current with events. He was very nice and I'm glad he wasn't from FOX so I didn't have to be rude to him.

We open our room door every morning to find a pile of newspapers. This is one of the benefits of becoming a delegate I hadn't anticipated. We find the *Boston Globe*, *USA Today*, *the Wall Street Journal*, *the New York Times*, *the Weekly Standard*, *CQ*, *the National Journal*, *The New Republic*, *The Hill*, *Roll Call*. Luckily for Dad he has plenty to read while I'm off waving flags and holding up signs of support at the convention. A piece this morning in one of the above that I carried to breakfast offered the opinion that in the end no one misses the major networks or Dan, Peter and Tom telling people what to think. There is so much better coverage on CSPAN and PBS that the ratings of both of them

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has tripled as the ratings of the majors has just about vanished. Opinions can be had on FOX and CNN if opinions are wanted and many people can do without.

Last night I sat next to a woman from Toledo, the 9th District. We compared notes on how the Kerry Toledo campaign manager was doing in covering the territory. His territory is northwest Ohio and I allowed as how I thought he didn't recognize that there was a wide world out beyond the city of Toledo although he's responsible for both the 9th and the 5th Districts. The area is huge - all of the northwestern quadrant of the state - but more attention should be paid and more volunteers recruited. Since he (Scott Fairchild) is living with the woman's family for the duration, she felt she could tell him what we needed. I told her I thought that our campaign for Robin should be more closely coordinated with the Kerry campaign and that Scott could learn a lot from us about the opportunities he could seize in places like Fremont and Fostoria where, surprisingly, there are a lot of Democratic voters among the farmers and a lot of disaffected Republicans. Maybe we can make more progress in the next couple of months - we shouldn't try to do it alone.

In midafternoon Wednesday Dad decided to attend the Rural Caucus which was meeting between 2:00 and 4:30. He felt he needed to become more familiar with the issues that concern people living in the sparsely-populated counties Robin represents. Since this is the campaign headquarters, the caucus involved representatives from all over the country. Noted early in the session were statistics showing that of the 250 poorest counties in the USA, 240 of them are rural. We had seen dire rural poverty when we lived in Michigan. There is hopelessness, there is alcoholism and drug abuse, and the schools are as neglected as those found in the worst inner city neighborhoods. The meeting was well worth his time. He was told that in the Bush-Gore election of 2000, 22% of rural voters gave more votes to Bush than to Gore. The most recent polls among potential rural voters have that number at around 11% who say they will vote for Bush. The number is shrinking because these very conservative voters care about a balanced national budget. They also care about the disappearing access to health care in their area and the failing schools. They'd like to have internet connections that allow children to be educated in a school nearby through computer aided teaching. Many don't feel they got what they voted for in 2000. The opportunity is at hand for John Kerry and his policy for rural areas should appeal to many more of these important voters.

I was early enough last night to be present for the roll call, for the ceremonial presentation of the flags, and for the first speakers who follow one another for brief moments - perhaps 5 minutes each - in the spotlight. The New Mexico representative who's a Navaho chief, Senator Mary Landrieu of Louisiana, State Senator from Massachusetts Diane Wilkerson, Senator Maria Cantwell of Washington, Rep. Tom Allen of Maine, State Controller Steve Wesley of

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California. Cue the Fife and Drum Corps made up of little boys (Scouts?) who did a fine job. Cue the Youngest Delegate and the Pledge (with God). Rep. Carolyn McCarthy of NY, Rep. Joseph Hoeffel Senate Candidate, Rep. Chaka Fattah of Pennsylvania, Sen. Frank Lautenberg of NJ.

(Distraction caused by an elderly woman who collapses in the second row to my right and is quickly surrounded by fire, police, EMS, oxygen tanks, folding gurney - all of which she refuses. She settles her highly decorated hat back on her head and resumes her seat. Whew!)

We see Donna Christian-Christainson of the Virgin Islands, Ed Pastor Rep. from AZ, Senator Pat Leahy of VT who jokes about Cheney's verbal suggestions to him, Amy Klobuchar of Hennepin County MN, Raul Yzaguirre the CEO and President of La Raza and at last the more luminous stars. John Glenn speaks of the current erosion of the twin pillars of scientific research and higher education that fueled our prewar economic boom just as other countries are buttressing their own efforts. The very exciting Robert Kennedy, Jr. who is an environmental lawyer and chair of Riverkeeper tells us that GWB is the greatest danger to our environmental goals and law. He says that polluters are in charge of governmental agencies, lobbyists for the companies that pollute are entering government service in order to gut the laws that control the excesses of their own industries. He tells us that our children are going to pay for our own joyride as we shift the responsibility for clean up and repair on to their shoulders. Theirs will be our deficits, too. He tells us that humans need more than a large paycheck to have a rich life and that a clean environment is needed for the soul. This is an angry young man on a mission.

More speakers stand before us and will remain nameless as I run out of space. The evening hours tick on with one speaker following another interspersed by musical interludes featuring artists unfamiliar to this elderly listener - Wyclef Jean, the John Mellencamp group - and other moments when we rise to sway and dance in place to "the bouncing ball" as in old movie theaters. Some unforgettable moments are those when a real orator shakes us up - esse Jackson and the incomparable Al Sharpton who brings me close to tears: "I suggest to you that if George Bush had been responsible for appointing the justices who decided the Brown v. Board of Education case, Clarence Thomas would never have gone to law school." "It's not for government to decide who's sleeping in the bedroom, but to be concerned with who's eating in the kitchen." "George Bush asked blacks to drop the Democratic Party which takes them for granted. Well, Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation allowing every freed slave 40 acres and a mule. We tried up to the Hoover administration to get the government to make good on that promise. We never got the 40 acres and we never got the mule. So we decided to RIDE THIS DONKEY ALL THE WAY TO TODAY!" I wish I could get a transcript of all he had to say. "Mr. President, our vote is sacred to us having been washed in the blood of Chaney and Goodwin and Mr. President, OUR VOTE IS NOT FOR SALE!"

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The last exciting moment I'll recount was the appearance on the stage of the nine former chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. As John Glenn told us this morning at breakfast, generals will be endorsing George Bush's campaign depending on where their politics lay, but the Joint Chiefs are not normally political. To have them come out in public and commit as they did is extraordinary. Shalikashvili spoke for the group when he said, "I'm an old soldier and a new Democrat." He voiced for the other generals the disapproval they share at the way the adventure in Iraq - Bush's War - has been and is being conducted. This appearance was an historic moment not to be dismissed by the press or the Republicans.

Of course, the introduction of Elizabeth Edwards by their beautiful daughter, Cate, was touching and Elizabeth's tribute to her husband was as well. John Edwards accepted the nomination and the long, long applause with sweet wonder on his face and graceful acknowledgement. He saluted his parents in the boxes and gave warm praise to the character and strength of John Kerry. I watched the Glenns sitting two rows in front of me as they listened intently to John. He is an appealing speaker and will add depth to the ticket. We cheered and cheered. And then I decided it was time to fight my way out of the building. A man in the row in front of me began to leave as I did and I grabbed his hand while he played block. The aisles were absolutely packed - no fire marshall would have approved had he been allowed into the building by security. We fought our way to the stairs and then I hid myself down the escalators to the waiting buses and, after 8 hours at the Fleet Center, to bed.

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Thursday, July 29

I've mentioned, as have all the publications, how coddled the Ohio Delegation has been all week. How lucky Dad and I have been to have fallen into politics in Ohio this year of all years. We have been told that "Ohio is the ethnic and economic barometer of the nation" - a Bill Richardson quote. The climax of our exalted treatment came yesterday at the final morning breakfast-caucus where it became even more obvious that we as a group were being placed in the role, not as those whom one wants to favor, but as those from whom one wants a favor. We got the whole nine yards in terms of celebrity attention. The breakfast was sponsored by the Pharmaceutical Industry Management Association/Ohio AFL-CIO and a speaker was making his pitch as Dad and I got to the table, plates loaded with sticky buns, bacon, fruit, scrambled eggs, (passed on the pancakes and syrup). Several other noted Ohio Party officials spoke: the new chairman, Denny White, and Rep. Sherrod Brown from Lorain, while we downed our breakfast, plates clattered, waitresses passed coffee, diners chatted companionably in not-hushed tones. But the pep rally was only beginning.

Up rose Richard C. Holbrooke. I stopped eating immediately to listen and take notes of his words. I've admired him since Bosnia and beyond, and I love his soft-but-authoritative delivery. First he says, "I love Dayton". He loves Dayton because of the time he and his band of negotiators spent those many weeks there, forming the truce that stopped the murderous fighting between the Serbs and the Bosnians. Wright-Patterson AFB was the ostensible reason why the town was chosen, but it was Dayton that formed the healing atmosphere. And he says that although the Serbians involved in the negotiations were, as he put it, thugs and murderers, Dayton treated all with kindness and respect. He says the town became a living metaphor for peace and the striving for it that took place there. People of all ethnic origins from all over the state - and, indeed, from all over the country - came to demonstrate and pray for peace. "A Dayton" has entered the language in the diplomatic corps - as in, "why can't we do a Dayton?" It showed the world how all kinds of people live together in America.

He notes that Diana Kerry, one of John's two sisters, is present and that she's an experienced translator; the other sister, Peggy, works at the UN for Holbrooke. We had met Peggy at the Planned Parenthood reception Sunday night. She cares deeply about this administration's performances at the Cairo and other international conferences on women's health and the executive gag rules.

Holbrooke says further that the two men, Bush and Kerry, have entirely different approaches to Iraq. John Kerry is a true internationalist. Bush is not. Kerry is the son of a diplomat, raised abroad, and knows foreign cultures. He

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volunteered three times: first for the navy, then to go to Viet Nam, then to Swift Boat duty. He chose the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (not a good career move according to his advisors). He KNOWS foreign countries. He has the respect of the world. An example: Ireland loves America - there are 45 million Irish Americans, after all. They cheered Ronald Reagan when he visited, they cheered Bill Clinton, but they BOOED George W. Bush. Bush had to travel around in a bubble for security reasons but also to shelter him from the hostile crowds. Holbrooke says that four more years of this and Americans living abroad will have security worries and companies will lose business. The unknowns in the coming weeks are, as we all know, are: 1) if they capture Bin Laden, 2) if there's another attack on our country, and 3) Iraq. We are not safer now than we were before Iraq. Our cities' and ports' vulnerability has grown hugely and still no money is being spent to beef up their security. At the cost of four days in Iraq we could protect, for example, Long Beach where our largest naval facility is located. The administration hasn't moved to do it. Finally, Holbrooke said, a response to accusations of Kerry flip-flopping should list these (he seems to like to number his thoughts):

- 1) Saddam's removal was a legitimate goal, as was the removal of Slobodan Milosovic.
- 2) Kerry twice supported resolutions to remove Saddam. Holbrooke did as well.
- 3) Kerry said that the effort to remove him had to be international.
- 4) Going to war without the Security Council's support, on the basis of faulty intelligence, was not what Kerry supported. It was a rush to war.
- 5) Kerry has actually been the one with the steady position as opposed to Bush who has now assumed Kerry's position. And finally, Mr. Holbrooke says what we all know, "Everyone knows that the winner of Ohio will be the next president of the United States."

Next to speak was Diana Kerry, the youngest of the two sisters. She tells us she was actually born in Dayton. She has degrees in history, education and theater. She was a translator at the Munich Olympics and taught for 15 years in an Indonesian school. She is now an enrichment teacher in Boston inner city schools. She tells us that until three years ago Indonesia was 85% in approval of the USA. Now, thanks to Bush, only 15% are in favor of us.

She wants to tell us about her brother inasmuch as we are told people "don't know who John Kerry is". She says he has a host of loyal friends, loyal staffers who say to her "where your brother leads, I will follow". John has been a man of integrity; has demanded accountability in government - he was part of the Iran-Contra investigation, for example. "He will always tell the truth to the American people". Diana is now working to get the 5million overseas residents to register and vote. It is her ambition to get, not just a margin of victory, but a HUGE margin of Democratic Party victory. We can do it!

Dennis Kucinich races through his "Ohio makes a difference!" speech, barely

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pausing for breath. More cheerleading comes from Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones, from Cleveland, who gives (shouts?) a speech that brings us to our feet, pounding the tables. She says, forget about those so-called swing voters, our mission is to turn out our base! Labor is the base of the Democratic party. She makes us all raise our right hands and pledge to pound the pavement to get the job done. We laugh at ourselves, but no one keeps his hand at his side and we all swear to obey.

Stephanie is followed by former Senator John Glenn, the most revered member of the delegation. John tells us that the two political parties haven't taken a total role reversal. The Democrats used to be accused of incurring big debts, of too big a government and of too much foreign involvement. We have unnecessarily put our children to repaying our debts. He says that Margaret Thatcher, when she wanted to tackle the debt in Britain, eliminated whole specific programs and departments. THEN she cut taxes. We have runaway budgets and deficits . . . this is not conservatism. Senator Glenn tells us that what truly impressed him on Wednesday night was the sight of the former chairmen of the Joint Chiefs all lined up on the stage. Normally they are not political and to have them "come out" in public and commit as they did is extraordinary. He is angry that national guardsmen are going back for their second tour of duty. He says that Schwarzkopf had 540,000 troops in the Gulf War. You must have overwhelming force so that you will have enough manpower to control the country after the fighting stops. Republicans who vote according to their conscience - not those who vote the party line only - will have to think about whether they feel they got what they voted for. I stop after the breakfast to speak to Annie Glenn at the back of the room. I remind her of a small meeting held in Perrysburg when John was campaigning for Carter/Mondale. The event was so intimate that I've always felt as though I knew Annie Glenn. She remembered the local Holiday Inn and its woman manager. We had a good long talk and laughed about trying to exit the Fleet Center the night before.

The *piece de resistance*, for whom we'd been kept in our chairs, was John Edwards. Looking cheery and rested (!) he bounded onto the stage, said a few rousing words of encouragement - "Ohio is Ground Zero in this election", "We NEED you!", "We, John and I, will work hard and our wives will as well, but YOU HAVE TO HELP US..." Then, like Jolly Old Saint Nick, he disappeared through a back exit.

The evening began at 4:00 for me. I understood that if the crowds were thick Wednesday night, they would be solid wall-to-wall bodies on this last night. No chance for Dad to get a guest pass, no chance for me to find a seat unless I got there before 4:45. Which I did. Again I was on the aisle some 7 rows back from the stage. I was armed with a packet of Oreos and a bottle of Dasani as well as one of the three canvas bags that came as favors from the mayor of Boston or a

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candidate over the past four days. I put a newspaper in it, my crossword puzzle and left enough room for whatever sign or goodie would come my way over the evening. Behind me was the same gent from Washington state I'd sat in front of the night before. I was in one of the last two or three Ohio seats and we shared the row with Washington. Beside me was a woman who was a delegate from the Native American community in La Conner WA, the Swinomish Tribe. She had beautiful, taut *cafe au lait* skin and was wearing a beaded fetish necklace. A reporter from King County's webblog was interviewing her and getting an update on the Native American Caucus that had taken place earlier in the week. Governors from AZ, NM, OK, MT, SD, and AK attended as did Mark Udall, Sen. Patty Murray and Patrick Kennedy. The governors of New Mexico and South Dakota told the caucus that they wouldn't have been elected if it weren't for the Native American vote. "Maria Cantwell will come when she needs to be reelected", said Lona Wilbur, the delegate.

I haven't space to repeat what everyone has seen on TV (if you watch Jim Lehrer or C-SPAN, that is), but I do want to end my assignment for the week by mentioning some of the speakers who might not have been seen, who impressed me and who left me with quotable quotes. **Kwiesi Mfume**: "Before we say anything about protecting Democracy in Baghdad, let's be sure we have Democracy at home." A not-so-guarded reference to Florida and the less publicized discrimination of Native Americans trying to vote in South Dakota. **Barney Frank**: "Yes, there's a Gay Agenda and it consists of wanting to be able to fight for our country, to be able to find work without fear of firing when our private lives are examined, of being able to marry the person we love. We think Ralph Nader trivializes our (GLBT) lives when he says there is no difference between the two parties . . . there's a huge difference if only on the basis of the Republican Party's treatment of us". And, finally: "On behalf of the Stonewall Democrats I'm proud to put our support behind the candidacy of John Kerry and John Edwards." **Mark Warner**: "Believe me Virginia is in play. I was told when I ran it couldn't be done, but Democrats can win Virginia if all of you work. Virginia has wandered in the Republican desert for 40 years and this Bush can't lead them to the promised land." **Joe Biden**: "Imagine if our president had reached out, after 9/11 when Paris Match and other French papers wrote "we are all Americans now", and asked that they join us in a joint effort to destroy the terrorists. Imagine if we'd all been asked to conserve energy in a program to free us from dependence on foreign oil and to start a program of national conscription. He squandered that momentary opportunity. It's only leadership if someone follows - and no one is following." **Wes Clark**: "Anyone who tells you that one party has a lock on the defense of our nation is committing a fraud. Repetition of a lie does not make it true."

As all the speakers - dozens - were leading us up to the final moments of the evening, CBS, NBC and CNN had their reporters squatting/kneeling sweatily in the aisle next to me. Yes, Terri Wallace sweats. It must be the most frustrating work. The cameras weigh 40 pounds (I asked) and the crew is in constant

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contact with the invisible voice in the booth above (except when they're not and, like children lost in Toys 'R' Us, panic ensues - are you there? can you hear me?). It's wait wait wait - call the booth - wait wait wait. And finally, arise after an hour of squatting in order to not block our view, move on. I never actually saw them speak into the ice cream cone of a black mike they clutched at the ready. Oh well.

And finally for me: Ah, yes, the daughters were beautiful, poised, funny and marvelous. I pulled out a kleenex and dabbed my eyes. And Max Cleland was perfectly wonderful, particularly when he said that Kerry's active protesting the war spoke for him when he was depressed and broken, told him that John Kerry was "my brother before I knew him". (I wept, I blew my nose.) And then my John Kerry strode onto the stage and hit a home run. He blew away the eager audience and Teresa as well, who seemed to faint in joy against the shoulder of John Edwards as Kerry paid loving tribute to her. If people needed to see the "real" side of John Kerry, or John Kerry's ability to show joy and warmth, they couldn't have asked for more. I also thought he showed a tough side and a practical side. I will be perfectly happy to have him as the president of my United States.

I made my exit before the balloons came down.