SCARWF President's Message October 2021
"Reflections on Orlando" or "What I Learned at the NFRW Convention"
by Susan St. Peters

The suitcases are finally unpacked and almost all the laundry has been done since my nearly week-long trip to Orlando, Florida, for the National Federation of Republican Women's 41st Biennial Convention. Wow, what a great time and what a lot I learned!

First, I'm grateful and honored to have been able to go to Orlando and represent our wonderful club. I'm thankful to SCARWF's 2nd Vice President Mollie Lazarus for also going and for letting me stay with her in her timeshare. I'm thankful for our other roommate, Daphne Ashbrook (of Saddleback Valley RWF) who joined Mollie and me and made the 3rd in our Three Musketeers, and who along with Mollie made perfect Louises to my Thelma as far as packing goes (you need to have seen *Thelma and Louise* for this to make sense, but perhaps this meme will explain—that's NOT really me, btw). I'm thankful to my older sister, Barbara Hallmeyer, associate member of SCARWF and president of Woodlake Valley RWF (and who will soon be CFRW Region 4 Director), who interested me in this organization in the first place and who was also in Orlando, and whom I was thrilled to spend time with. And finally, I'm thankful for all of you who allowed me to represent you and our club.

Arriving a few days prior to the start of the NFRW Convention gave us time to get acclimated to the time difference and to see and do other fun things in Orlando. On Wednesday, we saw an alligator! My photo is a bit blurry, but you can clearly see that it's not a stick!

On Thursday, Mollie, Daphne, and I met up with a contingent of other Californians for an Escape Room adventure at Escapology Orlando. We weren't quite sure what to expect, but it was so much fun! If you are looking for a team-building exercise or just something different to do at a family get-together, we'd highly recommend an Escapology experience, especially if anyone in your group is a Miss Marple or a fan of puzzles. But beware, escape rooms can be habit-forming, or so I hear!

That evening, Daphne and I went as Mollie's guests to the special NFRW Regents' Event. What a blast that was! Not only did we get to dress up and be welcomed by NFRW President Ann Schockett, but it was a fun evening of delicious food, live music, "gambling" (no real money, but we all got 50,000 worth of poker chips to play with at the tables), dancing, and socializing. Some of the ladies that I thought looked too frail to walk across the room put me to shame on the dance floor! So I figured, "When in Rome…," and I think Mollie now has some blackmail photos of me some-where. Former CFRW President Nam-Yong Horn was also at this event, and we caught up a bit.

One of the greatest aspects of being at the NFRW Convention was meeting like-minded women from all over the country. The pin-exchange was one way to break the ice, but Republicans don't seem to need much incentive to extend a hand of friendship. We met so many great ladies who, like us, are fighting to preserve our way of life and this very country. Here's a snapshot of one of the delegates whose name I can't recall but whose blazer I'll never forget.

Friday night was the kickoff of the NFRW Convention, and "the hits just kept on comin.'" First, we heard from Senator

Tim Scott from South Carolina who set a perfect tone for the evening. He was followed by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, another effective leader who brought the crowd of about 1,000 to its feet. He urged us to action with the words, "The Left is playing for keeps—aided by partisan, dishonest corporate media, Big Tech, and the DC bureaucratic swamp. They will smear and lie to hold on to power. So get in the fight. Stand your ground. Hold the line. And don't ever back down." The applause was deafening.

On Saturday, NFRW President Ann Schockett welcomed delegates, followed by the United States Space Force (Proposed) Anthem, the Parade of State Presidents, and the Invocation. Then, Central FL Cub Scouts Pack 6 treated us to the Presentation of Colors. To see those young ones treating our flag with such honor and respect brought tears to my eyes, and I wasn't alone. Nothing drives home how much we have to lose like seeing a few young people standing up for our country.

Imagine over 800 voices with every regional accent you can think of united in the pledge of allegiance. It was beautiful! We heard from Former Governor of Arkansas, Mike Huckabee, who has grown a beard (in preparation for the second job he'll have to take as a Santa at Walmart if inflation keeps skyrocketing as it is under Biden). He was fantastic and inspirational. After he spoke, he remained on stage as Ingrid Lake (of Bakersfield, CA, nominee for CFRW 1st VP) accepted the NFRW's prestigious Public Relations Award on behalf of California.

We heard from Roman Buhler, the Director of Keep Nine Coalition, protecting the integrity of the

Supreme Court. The new slate of officers for 2022 was announced, and there were no nominations from the floor. California was awarded the Campaign Volunteer Award for excellence in donating volunteer time to the benefit of the Republican Party, Republican Candidates, or the NFRW. California had the largest number of hours for our 80+ clubs with 2,140,000 hours. That's why it's important to keep track of your volunteer hours. The total volunteer hours reported by all states was 8,037,445, so California is responsible for bringing in over ¼ of those hours!

Congressman Michael McCaul (TX) and Congresswoman Claudia Tenney (NY), and other Republicans fighting for us in Congress and elsewhere spoke. The Saturday luncheon that followed was lovely and featured past CFRW President Nam-Yong Horn (now a resident of Arizona). Screenwriter Howie Klausner showed us a sneak peek of his film *Reagan*, starring Dennis Quaid and Jon Voight, and others you'll recognize. The film is scheduled for release in 2022.

The highlight of the afternoon was Governor Kristi Noem addressing us in person. She reminded us how vital it is for women to be involved in government by sharing, "When a woman is at the negotiating table when a peace negotiation is going on, resulting peace agreements are 35% more likely to be effective." She gave us a call to action like no other to get involved and admonished us, "Be careful what you ask the government to 'solve' for you." She had the crowd rising to our feet!

After various workshops, Club Achievement Awards were presented. I was so honored as your president to

hear our club's name called and to walk up on stage to receive my President's Diamond Award pin and our club's certificate. Afterwards, NFRW President Ann Schockett posed for a photo with each club president and thanked us for our club's work.

After the awards ceremony, we had a California get-together in a suite, and many but not all California delegates posed for a photo on a staircase at the hotel.

The next morning began with the Prayer Breakfast. What a spectacular event that "Be the Light" breakfast was. We enjoyed wonderful music and a message by Rabbi Aryeh Spero. An NFRW tribute commemorating the 20th anniversary of the September 11th attacks was very moving as was the remembrance of the 13 soldiers recently (and needlessly) killed in Afghanistan. We were reminded of the words of Isaiah 60:1, "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you."

We then went into the General Session, highlights of which included the Spirit of '76 Band and remarks by Rabbi Spero. After the bylaws report and rather heated discussions on the floor regarding a myriad of issues, the bylaws changes were voted on, followed by Commentator (and Comedienne) Katie Hopkins, who will be with us at the CFRW Convention in Rancho Mirage (and she alone would be worth the price of admission).

We heard from Gordon Chang, author and China expert and others. Another award went to California that many of you helped our state win: Elaine Anthony accepted the Armed Services Award. If you donated to the Gary Sinise Foundation, California's statewide Armed Service Project, your generosity helped gain California some much-deserved recognition. Thank you!

The National Officer election results were announced, the new slate of officers was approved, and the gavel was passed to new NFRW President, Eileen Sobjack, whose remarks closed out the convention. It was an incredible experience, and I learned so much just meeting and talking with other club presidents and attendees. I haven't yet heard where the 2023 NFRW Biennial Convention will take place, but wherever it's held, I'd say it's worth the trip.

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