

Oregon delegates share experiences

1976 convention not unlike 1776

BY STATE SEN. VICTOR ATIYEH

The Bicentennial year Republican National Convention must have had some of the flavor of that first convention that ended with our Declaration of Independence.

Emotions ran high and efforts on behalf of ideas and candidates were intense. But in the end, a majority opinion was put together.

Additionally, as in the spirit of 1776, among Republicans there was a sense of a turning point, a moment in history which would determine the future of our country. A time to move away from oppressive government and high taxation and an urge to return the control of our government back to the people. Oregon was very much involved in that process.

Having been involved in two other national conventions, I could not help but compare them. There is no question that this one was more spirited and suspenseful than the other two, with a greater division between delegates. Outcomes were always in doubt, whether it was on platform issues, rule changes or even the selection of our presidential nominee.

This convention was more open than the other two because each potential nominee and his adherents wanted their views expressed. The whole process certainly had its shortcomings, but as a whole was one of the best political conventions.

As a member of the rules committee, which took on a unique importance through the suggested change in the vice presidential

selection, I was constantly consulted and was involved in procedural discussions. As floor leader for Gerald Ford in the Oregon delegation, I was involved in daily meetings with my counterparts from other states.

There is no doubt in my mind that Dr. Bob Voy, Beaverton, Ronald Reagans' chairman in Oregon, received equal responsibility. Because each issue was important to both sides no state could be ignored and all of us became important to both President Ford and Reagan.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The 1976 Republican National Convention in Kansas City was an exciting experience for members of the Oregon delegation, including three residents of the Washington County area. Sharing some of their experiences are Victor Atiyeh, state senator for District 4; Mary Alice Ford, Washington County Central Committee chairman, and Debbie Wilkinson, former field representative for the Stan Bunn campaign.)

The highlight of the convention for me was the opportunity to second the nomination of President Ford. Let me share the excitement by outlining events of the day. Wednesday morning as usual I went to a state leader meeting at the Crown Plaza Hotel. Upon my return at about 11:30 a.m. I received a message to call my regional chairman. In that conversation I was asked to second the nomination of the

President. I cannot describe the thrill that went through me by that request. Now a return to the Crown Plaza Hotel to meet with the others who had been honored. Subjects were discussed so that there would not be too much duplication. I indicated I would do my own thing. Then back to my motel to write, and time, my message. At 11:38 p.m. I arose to the podium and seconded the nomination of Gerald Ford with the following speech:

"On July 4th, 1976, we began the first year of our third century. In the first year of our first century courageous leaders with an exciting commitment blessed this nation. That courage and that commitment is here tonight. Oregon wants a democracy in the year 2076 for her children's children. Oregon and the nation wants and needs Gerald Ford to be our Presidential leader into a certain future. I am honored, as is Oregon, to second the nomination of Gerald R. Ford for President of the United States."

