



Day two in Denver

Peter Rosenstein
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Day Two: Sunday, Aug. 24

Sunday morning dawned bright and sunny in Denver, but much too early as far as I am concerned. The time difference had me up at 5 a.m. I will feel that later. The local TV news is filled with stories on the convention but I was pleased to see that among other things they were talking about the HRC concert, Rock to Win, which will take place Tuesday night. Along with Melissa Etheridge, Cyndi Lauper and Rufus Wainwright the talk now is that Hillary Clinton will be there after her speech to the convention.

The talk this morning on the street is the Republicans using Hillary in their attack ads against Obama/Biden. The betting is about 50/50 that it can or cannot work. The thought here is that Hillary will hit back at McCain when she speaks on Tuesday night and we shall see. I can't wait! There are rumors that she will release her delegates before the vote.

I walked over to the Brown Palace Hotel, the grand old dame of hotels in Denver, and had breakfast with Babak Movahedi of HALO fame. He then walked with me over to the Sheraton hotel to pick up my press credentials. It was much easier than I thought with no lines at all. Some cute guys in the lobby but then I realized why: It's the headquarters for the California and New York delegations.

I checked in with Chris Johnson and Joshua Lynsen, who are here for the Washington Blade, and they are situated about 10 miles out of town. The benefit of being a delegate from D.C. is that I am two blocks from the convention center.

This afternoon I had a few hours free to wander Denver. The streets are packed with people here for the convention. And more press than I have ever seen in one place. I have already met reporters from France and Denmark this morning. They are all fascinated with Obama.

I got the chance to see the Pepsi Center and that is where all the actual convention will take place. Biden will make his acceptance speech there but Obama will do his outdoors at Invesco field. The Pepsi Center is about eight blocks away from my hotel past the Colorado Convention Center where all the caucus meetings and many of the receptions will happen.

This evening I did a round of receptions mostly GLBT sponsored. The first was the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. It was at a very nice little club in the Clock Tower mall. I was greeted warmly by Rea Carey, the newly appointed executive director. Drinks were being served upstairs on the outside terrace and downstairs. I went downstairs and

ran into Brian Johnson, the CFO of the Task Force and board members Jerry Clark and Hans Johnson.

Brian introduced me to Marjorie Hill, who is an impressive lady and ED of the Gay Men's Health Crisis in New York. She first came to New York to work in the David Dinkins administration. Many of the same people from the Stonewall dinner were there and I was to see them all again at the dessert and cocktail reception hosted by the Matthew Shephard Foundation. Seems like we could rent a bus and just travel together.

There was a short program at the Task Force event and it included a little piece of a new film, For My Wife, with the subtitle what makes an activist. It was presented by Charlene Strong whose life partner died in a flood and told the story of how she was kept from seeing her in a hospital while she lay dying. It is a strong emotional statement for why we need marriage equality. Mary Kay Henry was there from SEIU as was Jared Polis again. He is making the gay rounds.

Jonathan Capehart, who is on the editorial board of the Washington Post, stopped in and he came to the next event as well. The Matthew Shepard event was held at the Westin-Tabor Center. It was a cocktails and dessert reception and I took part in dessert even though I had skipped dinner. Dessert is always more fun. There I bumped into Lane Hudson and TJ Helmstetter who is communications director for Dennis Shulman. Dennis is the blind rabbi who is running for Congress in Northern New Jersey. The Rabbi is a strong gay rights advocate and proposes officiating at gay marriage ceremonies. We need a rabbi in Congress. Maybe in addition to legislating he can also conduct services for Barney and the other Jewish members. I also got to chat with Michelangelo Signorile who is doing his radio show from the convention for the week.

As I was leaving the reception and the hotel to head to the Denver Art Museum for another opening reception I chanced on Gavin Newsom at the bottom of the escalators. I took the chance to chat with him for a few moments. I then saw John Falcheccio, Adrian Fenty's money guru. He solved the question of where the mayor was staying since he wasn't staying with the D.C. delegation. The mayor is staying at the Westin — maybe cozying up to the Obamas who have rooms at that hotel. Though it is Michelle Obama who is there now and Barack won't arrive till at least Wednesday night.

The reception at the Art Museum was my one non-GLBT event of the evening but we were there in force as well. Jack Jacobson who is an openly gay ANC commissioner in Dupont works for one of the host firms and was there with friends. It was a great event and I got to chat for a moment with Congressman Henry Waxman from California.

Then it was back to my hotel and stopping in to confirm that breakfast really was at 8 a.m. tomorrow and I have to be there to pick up my delegate credentials. So it's off to bed and a good night's sleep before the excitement starts again tomorrow.