

REPORT

HOUSTON VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE FOR DELEGATE AND IWY COMMISSIONER REGISTRATION NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE HOUSTON, 1977

I was asked by Helen Cassidy at the end of September to find volunteers to carry out registration for NWC to be held in November. By mid-October, it developed that this was to be registration of some 2000 delegates and under 100 IWY Commissioners. Accordingly, I secured the names of some 35 people besides myself who were willing to help. Commissioner Harry Edwards mailed these people letters of appointment. Priscilla Weatherly of the Washington IWY office mailed me lists of the persons who would be badged, and one of the volunteers who is a professional office worker typed a clean alphabetized copy of the list of delegates-at-large, some of whose names were forwarded to us very shortly before the Conference. I made paste-ups of the lists of elected delegates, in order to provide room for their signatures, which we expected to require in the registration process. Some ten days before the Conference, I obtained the badge forms for registration from House of Coleman, the printer, and distributed them with sections of the name lists to some nine of the above volunteers for typing. I typed badge forms for the delegates-at-large, as well as about 200 others required at the last minute. The finished badge forms were returned to House of Coleman on Monday before the Conference, to be numbered with odd numbers only, beginning at 4000. I then typed 29 pages of numbers, which we expected to have badge holders sign as an additional security measure. The badge forms and other registration materials were turned over to Priscilla Weatherly at the Houston IWY Office on Wednesday, November 16.

It had earlier been decided, in consultation with Priscilla Weatherly, that the registration materials would be divided into three sections for the delegate registration on Nov. 18-19. Accordingly, three sections of registration were set up in the Arboretum room at the Hyatt Regency by the morning of the 18th, each consisting of one table on a dais with two volunteers seated in back. After receiving the delegate's letter of appointment, a volunteer obtained the person's badge from a third volunteer, seated behind the first pair with a tray of badge forms. Each delegate then proceeded past a diagonally placed table to pick up a Conference Kit and other materials, and then to the photo-identification booths. There her picture was taken and a laminated badge produced with an appropriately-colored background for the photograph (red signified "Commissioner" or "Total Access", blue signified "Staff", white was for Delegates, and gold was for Alternate Delegates.) Before leaving the first station, each person paid a \$5.00 registration fee. As a last procedure, the new badges were punched and strung with elastic cord by another pair of volunteers and the recipient was cautioned to guard her badge.

Registration for IWY Commissioners was held on November 17th from 9AM to 7PM in the Pecan Room of the Hyatt Regency. This was a fairly uneventful procedure, although the early appearance of many Commissioners should have been appreciated as an augury of what was to come the next day.

In fact, several hundred delegates were lined up to register well before registration was to open at 9 AM on Friday, the 18th. Because of the crowding, several of our double-check security measures, particularly the requirement for delegates' signatures anywhere but on the badge itself, had to be abandoned. The complex forms for receipt of the fee money, as devised by Aida Schoenfield, were also simplified in the interest of processing registrants more rapidly. Even so, lines for registration were long all morning. Just as things became a little less crowded in the early afternoon, 34 badges which had been completed and were waiting to be punched and strung were stolen from the table next to the photo-identification machines. This was not an irrevocable loss, as the recipients were still in the room to be re-photographed with their badge forms, but the event did back up a long line of registrants once again.

Registration tapered off in the evening hours to such a degree that Commissioner Edwards decided to close for the day at 10 PM, rather than the midnight that had been advertized. At about 10:30, several delegates from Ohio appeared and were not too pleased to discover that they would have to wait until Saturday to register. They said that they had driven in 64 blocks from the outskirts of Houston.

Registration was quite light on Saturday. There were no further mishaps until about 1:30, when the registration materials were taken to the Albert Thomas Coliseum for the use of Commissioner Edwards in preparing his Credentials Report. While registration was temporarily closed for this reason, the same Ohio delegates appeared who had been turned away the night before. One of them threatened to sue the IWY Commission individually and Collectively. Eleanor Holmes Norton of the EEOC also appeared during this time, but did not have to wait long. One delegate who was personally known to me appeared to be rebadged (having lost the first one), and several delegates appeared in order to have new photographs with correct background colors. Registration finally closed about 5 PM on Saturday.

I held no training sessions for my volunteers. They were unwilling to assemble from their homes scattered between Dickinson and Conroe, and I did not have time to attend any sessions myself. Nevertheless, all 36 people showed up and worked hard, learning their part of the procedure immediately before performing it. Delegate and Commissioner Registration went off fairly well, and many of my volunteers thanked me for the opportunity to participate. I rather enjoyed it, myself.

Majorie Randal