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First Amendment

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Opinions



Change in Denver

By Jen Reeder

On Saturday, Aug. 23, my husband, Bryan, and I were enjoying a mellow night at home when we thought we heard thunder over the sound of our rented movie. When it kept going, we went to the window to see if it was gunfire. To our pleasant surprise, fireworks were exploding over Denver.

It turns out that this was our first taste of the big party that hit town last week, the Democratic National Convention. The next day we had another big bite when we walked downtown toward Coors Field to see a Rockies game. On our way there, we heard chanting and suddenly found ourselves engulfed by a peace march. It was led by a burly group carrying a banner that identified themselves as Iraq War Veterans for Peace. But there was also a lot of pink, as the vets had joined forces with CodePink, a group formed by women who opposed the Iraq War, and created a name based on the Department of Homeland Security's color coded terror alert system.

It was a festive group – there were peace signs made out of flowers, pink umbrellas, giant dolls and inventive signs like "Stop Mad Sheep Disease." Someone rushing by us gave me a fluorescent "Make Out, Not War" sticker, which my husband decided to act on immediately.

A few blocks later, we encountered a smaller group of peace protesters. When they stopped shouting "Peace: not bombs," we were able to hear the



Photo by Jen Reeder

A Denver restaurant uses creative marketing to attract parking revenue for the Democratic National Convention on Aug. 28.

car driving next to them blaring super funky music. Then we noticed several of their posters read "Funk the War!"

Outside Coors Field, I saw more bright posters and figured it was another protest, but it turned out to be vendors selling bottled water and peanuts. Then Bryan started nudging me. "Jen, that's Ken Salazar next to you!" Sure enough, the senator and his wife were joining the masses in a pilgrimage to the game. (Good thing we beat the Reds in extra innings!)

I missed most of the craziness for the next few days – it's not like Dacono and Frederick rescheduled their council meetings around the convention – but on Thursday, I

couldn't miss the big event. On Aug. 28, the hottest ticket in the world was at Invesco Field at Mile High to hear Barack Obama accept the nomination for President of the United States, and I had two of them.

I had heard that there would be long security lines and to get to the stadium early because there would be speakers and entertainment for most of the day. So Bryan and I started walking to the stadium before 2 p.m. As we passed our Safeway, we saw that volunteers for the Muscular Dystrophy Association were holding a fundraiser; it was \$30 to park in the grocery store's parking lot that day! We wondered who would pay that kind of money, even for charity, but the closer we got to the stadium, the higher the prices were. One Mexican restaurant had a sign that made me laugh: "Buy a burrito for \$50 and park free for the game."

We stood in line for well over an hour, but there was plenty to keep us entertained. In the true spirit of American capitalism, vendors were hawking all sorts of merchandise. There were lots of buttons and T-shirts, including one with a blue front that read "Democrats are sexy" with a picture of a donkey. On the back of the shirt, red letters asked, "Have you ever seen a fine piece of elephant?" Another unique offering was a table of Punahou School jerseys, a shout out to Obama's alma mater in Hawaii.

Ten dollars could buy you "Obama in a Bottle," a doll inside a plastic

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Made in the shade



Frederick resident Heather Thornton and her daughter, Kendall, 4 months, enjoy the shade on Aug. 19.

Photo by Jen Reeder

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Democrats fill Invesco for historic speech

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bottle, or an Obama squeeze toy ("Good for eight years!" quipped the seller.). There were freebies too: Planned Parenthood distributed pink condoms that proclaimed "Protect yourself from John McCain (in this election)" and cited his opposition to Roe v. Wade.

The folks in line were colorful too – people from all walks of life. There were businessmen in traditional suits as well as the gentleman in front of me who donned a bright red one, accompanied by a blue undershirt and white hanky. His friend was dressed in a union T-shirt and a hat advocating "Justice for Janitors." A Hispanic woman had her little boy with her, all dressed up in cowboy boots, while nearby, three 20-something ladies chatted incessantly on their cell phones, trying to find the rest of their party.

Finally through the metal detectors, we entered Invesco and headed to our seats. To our delight, Colorado bluegrass band Yonder Mountain String Band was jamming onstage. "This is gonna be cool," Bryan said, and he was right.

At 4 p.m., House Speaker Nancy Pelosi officially opened the convention, and the Disabled Veterans of America presented the colors. Someone announced

that we should rise for the Pledge of Allegiance, which was led by U.S. Olympic gold medalist Shawn Johnson, the little gymnast who could. Then we stayed standing while "American Idol" finalist Jennifer Hudson sang the National Anthem. Red rockets shot into the air over the stadium's Bronco at the line, "And the rockets' red glare," and I burst into tears. It was quite a moment.

The hours that followed were filled with speeches by prominent Democrats and concerts by musicians. There was no good time to leave our seats; I was standing in a food line when Sheryl Crow was playing.

One of the most memorable moments for me was when Bernice King, the daughter of Martin Luther King Jr., spoke. She noted that it was the 45th anniversary of her father's "I Have a Dream" speech, when he declared that he dreamed of a time when his children would not be judged by the color of their skin, but the content of their character. Forty-five years later, she said, Barack Obama was about to accept the Democratic nomination for president because of the content of his character, not the color of his skin.

"Tonight freedom rings," King said. "From the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado, freedom



Photo by Jen Reeder

A Democrat showcases her passion for her party at Barack Obama's acceptance speech on Aug. 28.

rings." Around 8 p.m., Barack Obama finally took the stage, and over 80,000 people were on their feet screaming and waving American flags. He laid out a detailed plan of the change he intends to bring to the country if elected president, and threw down the gauntlet to John McCain. After his speech, his wife, Michelle, and daughters Malia and Sasha joined him, and fireworks burst overhead, while a blizzard

of red, white and blue ticker tape and confetti swirled around them. I noticed Obama smile at Malia as she scooped up some of the streamers as they left the stage. People started heading out of the stadium to Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A." The convention was over. I turned to the man standing behind me, who had tears in his eyes as he summed up the experience. "What a day," he said. "What a day."