

With floor fight finished, GOP becoming united

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

Floor fights at political conventions generally don't usually have happy endings.

But the battle at the Republican state convention — over the GOP nomination for attorney general — came close to ending on a cordial note, according to some of the Oakland County delegates attended.

The floor fight between Birmingham attorney Scott Romney and Ada lawyer John Smietanka was intense, Oakland delegates agree, certainly the toughest in recent state GOP memory.

Smietanka carried the day, as slim majority of delegates went against the wishes of Gov. John Engler, who said he would prefer to have Romney on the ticket — along with Dick Posthumus, the governor's pick for lieutenant governor, and Candice Miller, the incumbent secretary of state.

In sharp contrast, Democrats expressed no dissension — and had no bloody floor fight — at their state convention last weekend as they nominated Jennifer Granholm as their candidate for attorney general. She was the choice of gubernatorial candidate Geoffrey Fieger, a newcomer to statewide politics.

But Republicans don't often take their lead from Democrats when it comes to philosophical disputes — or anything else — Oakland delegates said. There was a battle of ideas, and if it left some hard feelings, so be it. Romney supporters might have been disappointed, delegates said. And Smietanka backers were possibly resentful at what they saw as unwarranted arm-twisting on the part of the governor.

That arm-twisting undoubtedly "backfired," said Lathrup Village delegate Greg Lovejoy.

But the 1998 convention, and the contentious floor fight, didn't appear to leave deep wounds, delegates generally agreed. Nor did it appear to create bitter enemies.

There might have been some

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Carole Webb
Troy

damage, but none that can't be expected to dissipate as the campaign gets under way.

But the infighting associated with the floor fight was fascinating, said Lovejoy, a political science student at the University of Michigan. "It was exciting to watch."

Carole Webb of Troy called it "Politics in its truest form. Both candidates were highly qualified, and both worked very hard to reach the delegates. There was an excellent exchange of ideas."

Mary K. DeCuir of Southfield characterized the floor fight as "aggressive, yet very clean. The candidates stuck to the issues." It was the kind of debate that could strengthen the party, said DeCuir, who gave Romney — the son of the late Gov. George Romney — high marks for sportsmanship.

Delegate Gwyneth Plotzke of Farmington Hills said, "I'm impressed by the proceedings. There was nothing rowdy," she said, "just independent people doing what they considered to be the right thing. But I think they're ready to work together."

Madison Heights delegate Kathy Longo, who is also chair of the Republican Party in Oakland County, said any lingering hard feelings will necessarily give way to more pressing matters as the Nov. 3 election draws closer.

"I supported Scott," said Longo, "and I'm as disappointed as anybody. But that's all behind us, I think the part is fired up."

Troy delegate David Gorecyn, Please see FLOOR FIGHT, A8

Smietanka — GOP choice for AG

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Two western Wayne County delegates explained why the Republican state convention revolted against Gov. John Engler's choice for attorney general and nominated John Smietanka instead.

"Some of us want qualifications," said Dan Piercecchi, a former district party chair and Smietanka supporter. "Scott Romney is a nice guy, but..."

"Smietanka never stopped campaigning after 1994," added Harry Greenleaf, also a former district chair and Ford Motor retiree.

Smietanka spent 12 years in the Berrien County prosecutor's office and 14 in the U.S. attorney's office for western Michigan. Romney, 57, of Birmingham, is a corporate lawyer with no background in either government or politics.

Smietanka led 1,039 to 950 in the Aug. 29 balloting when Romney conceded in the Grand Rapids convention hall. Otherwise, GOP delegates rubber-stamped his entire slate for the Nov. 3 statewide ticket.

Romney won majorities in nine of the 16 congressional districts, but his majorities were small — just 55 percent in his home 11th District while Smietanka won 71 percent of his base 3rd District.

Of the 10 Republicans that Democratic attorney general

■ "Some of us want qualifications. Scott Romney is a nice guy, but..."

Dan Piercecchi
GOP Chair

Frank Kelley has defeated since 1962, only Smietanka, 67, of Ada, has tried a second time. Some — such as Oakland's L. Brooks Patterson, the late Richard VanDusen and Bill Farr — went on to other things. Others — such as Clifford Taylor and Myron Wahls — got judicial appointments for their sacrificial lamb efforts.

Monaghan rescues

Smietanka ran poorly against Kelley in 1994, losing by 444,000 as Engler was reelected governor by 711,000 votes.

When it was reported that Romney could raise a \$1.5 million war chest, Smietanka supporter Tom Monaghan, the Domino's pizza baron, said he would match it. National committeeman Chuck Yob and Monaghan made Smietanka's nominating speeches.

Retiring Lt. Gov. Connie Binsfeld, receiver of much applause and bouquets of roses, nominated Romney, saying his father George and mother Lenore "instilled in their son a commitment to serve."

Rep. Al Cropsay, R-DeWitt, added that Romney is "staunchly pro-life" and "didn't need to

be told about the 2nd amendment" (right to bear arms).

Democratic delegates were thunderstruck — then pleased — at Smietanka's victory. Three weeks earlier, they were happy at the prospect of campaigning against the inexperienced Romney. This week, they were salivating at taking on Smietanka.

Smietanka's nomination left Wayne and Oakland counties from the top of the slate for the first time in generations. Engler is from Isabella County; Dick Posthumus, the lieutenant governor nominee, is from rural Kent County; and incumbent Secretary of State Candice Miller is from Macomb County.

Baker rejected

The convention's only other contest came for regent of the University of Michigan. Former regent Deane Baker twice attempted a comeback after being bumped from the ticket in 1996.

Baker, of Ann Arbor, trailed state Rep. Jessio Dalman, R-Holland, by 805 to 348 when he conceded. Cropsay made Dalman's second speech, describing her as "pro-life; for equal rights, not special rights;

for equal opportunity, not quotas."

Baker was trailing David Brandon of Plymouth by 804 to 217 when Baker threw in the towel.

Brandon, retiring CEO of Valassis Communications in Livonia and chair of the Central Michigan University board, was nominated by national committeeman Yob, who said Brandon would seek to have U-M issue charters to public school academies. U-M never has issued a charter, while CMU has issued the majority of the 100 or so charters in the state.

State Sen. Lorin Bennett, R-Canton, also called Brandon a good party man. "He has been there for the party. He has been there for the district. He attends district meetings to help plan for future elections," Bennett said.

U-M engineering student Jim Risko, of Eastpointe, got fewer than 100 votes and dropped out quickly. His platform: Cutting tuition 10 percent, cutting student room rentals from \$368 to \$226 per person per month, and "correctly" implementing technology.

Rest of slate

Others on the GOP slate: • State Board of Education — incumbent Gary Wolfram, 47, Hillsdale College professor, and Eileen Lappin Weiser, arts.

Please see SMIETANKA, A8

WIC kicks of new year

Women in Communications of Detroit kicks off its 1998-1999 season with a program on leadership development with speaker Carolyn Joseph, managing director of the Mentium Corp.'s Detroit office.

She will appear at Matt Prentice's newest restaurant, Duet (at Orchestra Hall) on the evening of Sept. 22.

Joseph will discuss how mentoring can help all individuals, from entry-level employees to middle managers and new business owners, advance their careers and their companies.

Founded in 1991, Minneapolis-

based Mentium Corporation specializes in executive development strategies. "Mentium 100" is a program which pairs female middle managers with upper executives from outside corporations for a year-long mentoring experience.

Duet is located at 3663 Woodward at Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. in Detroit. Registration begins at 5:30 p.m. with dinner at 6 p.m., program at 7 p.m. Cost for members is \$30 and nonmembers \$35. To RSVP, call the Women in Communications of Detroit chapter hotline at 248-652-1460.

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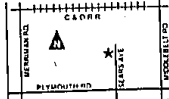
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Sat., Sept. 12th & Sun. Sept. 13th

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Leader Dogs for the Blind and Companion K-9.
The Greyhound Protection League and Have-a-Heart
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The general public is not allowed to bring dogs on ground during this event.

Olde World Canterbury Village is bringing Jaguar
Affiliates Group of Michigan's 31st Annual Concours
d'Elegance on Sept. 12th, 12:00 Noon to 5:00 PM.

Sat., Sept. 19th & Sun. Sept. 20th

Autumnfest

"Good Ole Country Hoe Down"

Fri., Sept. 25th, Sat., Sept. 26th & Sun. Sept. 27th

Bear Days

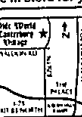
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