

Before and After the GOP '84 National Convention in Dallas on August 20-23, 1984

I got to know Senator John Tower's state director Molly Pryor for the petition on behalf of Dr. and Mrs. Chao who were in the process of adopting a boy from Taiwan. I asked Molly for help. Eventually, this boy was successfully adopted by the couple. To thank me they sent me a dozen of roses. In return to Molly's assistance, later we invited her and her husband over for dinner with other GOP leaders and activists.

When I was campaigning for Jesse Helms for congress in the spring of 1984 I asked him how could I become a delegate to the national convention. He told me the process and advised me to get appointed via Molly. To my surprise, I was appointed to be an alternate paired with Mr. James Lyons, a prominent businessman in TX. Since Stanton had no interest in going to the convention I offered the "spouse" tickets to Don Wang. At that time he expressed interest in getting into the mainstream as a business leader. Since then, I basically "introduced" him into the political arena by involving him in as many events as possible. For example, he gave him opportunities to speak at various events. He came from a very rich family in Taiwan and eventually became the chairman of the Metro Bank in Houston. He has been politically and economically very active in the Houston area since then. However, he never landed a helping hand while I was seeking jobs after returning from Washington, D.C.

One incident needs to be mentioned here. Even though many Asian Americans were enthusiastic about the Reagan/Bush reelection at the '84 convention, they were not recognized by the party. Under the Ethnic Voters Division chaired by Michael Sotirhos there was a Chinese American group chaired by Anna Chennault and Esther was listed as one of the advisors on the letterhead. On August 21, 1984 Anna Chennault rallied the Asian Americans at the convention to sign up a resolution to request an eminent Asian American to second the nomination of the president or VP on Wed. Obviously, she was hoping that she would be the one to be in the limelight. Esther did not know the process but only followed Chennault's command to hand deliver the resolution to Mr. Jim Baker's office at the convention. Esther was given this assignment because she was one of the very few Asian Americans who had the credentials/pass to enter the convention. Now, in retrospect, it was a very foolish and childish effort of Chennault but people were used by her. If she was really as knowledgeable about American political process as she appeared to the Chinese she should have had known that such a decision to have someone to second the nomination was not arranged in the last minutes. She either was ignorant or had tried until the last minutes by rallying Asian Americans for her personal gain. Esther learned the process of convention preparation which was planned for a long time when she was on the campaign staff for the Bush/Quayle '92. This convention experience was a sad chapter of Asian Americans' history of political involvement.

Only limited people were allowed to be on the floor and the convention, i.e., delegates, alternates, their "spouses" or guests and working personnel. Being an alternate I was

allowed to be on the convention floor sitting in a reserved area for Texas delegates and alternates. At times, I was invited to sit in Mr. Lyons', my "paired" delegate, seat while he was absent. I met many Asian Americans who were trying very hard to get involved in Reagan/Bush's reelection via the RNC's National and Ethnic Heritage Groups Council but could not get into the convention without credentials. I was very disturbed by what happened to these more than 30 Asian American supporters who were left outside the convention. Fortunately, some of them managed to get into a room with TV monitor/ close circuit TV to watch the convention. Let me give a little background of this discouraging event and "mised" or "misguided" Asian Americans. As a result of this painful eye witness I decided to lead the Asian Americans in TX DIRECTLY to the Party mainstream. I proudly say that I did make difference eight years later at the GOP 1992 National Convention in Houston.

The National/Ethnic Heritage Groups Council consists of numerous national and ethnic groups but mainly on paper. As a result, they were not valued or even recognized by the Republican National Committee (RNC). The chairs and members did not involve much within the grassroots Republicans possibly due to language and cultural barriers. The Chinese/Asian American one was initiated/founded by Mrs. Anna Chennault who was widow of General Chennault of Flying Tiger. I believe there were two groups came out from the original Asian American group. One group was formed by Mr. Ben John Chen, a wealthy businessman of New York City with her endorsement as Asian American National Republican Federation (AANRF). AANRF was officially chartered by the Republican National Committee Heritage Groups Council Convention in Washington, DC in June 1981.

Like OCA Houston Chapter, I founded the Texas Chapter of Asian American National Republic Federation (TAANRF) under the Asian American National Republican Federation (AANRF) in 1982. Since I organized the group again, I let other people take the leadership role as I did with the OCA chapter. This time with great efforts I was able to fine an old timer Chinese Americans from Houston Chinatown. Traditionally, Chinese Americans either foreign born or American born tended to vote for Democrat not Republican. Thus, it was not easy to get the old timers involved. I had to rely on the new immigrants including all Asian groups, i.e., Singh from India and Southeast Asian refugees. I invited Bill Ong, a native Houstonian Chinese to serve as the first chairman while she served as program coordinator for the 500 people event held at the Adams Mark Hotel, Sunday, October 24, 1982, 7:00-10:00 pm. I invited all the 1982 GOP statewide candidates and office holders. Anna Chennault was invited to this inaugural event because of her reputation among the Chinese. The event committee paid all her travel expenses including first class airfare. Ben John Chen also flew in from NYC. I gave an opening speech. This was the first time I met Anna Chennault. Since then, more Asian Americans have been involved than ever and got excited about Reagan's reelection in 1984. They thought they were in the right track to attend the GOP national convention

by participating in the Heritage Council. THEY DID NOT EVEN KNOW THE REAL PROCESS. Their enthusiasm to travel to Dallas for the convention resulted in nothing.

The National Republican Heritage Group Council (NRHGC) first asked me about forming a state chapter in Houston, spring 1979. Eventually, I founded the Texas Chapter of Asian American National Republic Federation (TAANRF) under the Asian American National Republican Federation (AANRF) in 1982. The AANRF was chaired by Ben John Chen of New York City. I was good at organize people but never intend to head any group. I would rather to play a supportive role instead of the head. Thus, I invited Bill Ong, a native Houstonian Chinese to serve as the first chairman while I served as program coordinator for the 500 people inaugural event held at the Adams Mark Hotel, Sunday, October 24, 1982, 7:00-10:00 pm. I invited all the 1982 GOP statewide candidates and office holders and Mrs. Anna Chennault of Washington, D. C. Mrs. Chennault was well known among the Chinese Americans and was the chairman of the Chinese American group under the NRHGC. I delivered an opening speech while Mrs. Chennault gave the keynote speech. This was my first time to met Mrs. Anna Chennault. Unfortunately, the TAANRF did not function well under the leadership of Bill Ong and his successors. (file:xtoNRHGC050489).

However, I learned the lessons at the 1984 GOP National Convention in Dallas and realized the need to have an Asian American group right under the state GOP. So I formed the Texas Asian Republican Caucus (TARC) with the support of Texas GOP state chairman, George Strake, Jr. Since then, I devoted more time on TARC – see the separate folder – than NRHGC. However, I had met some Asian American leaders via the NRHGC and supported various Asian GOP groups nationwide. I also recommended people for appointments because I firmly believe full participation and mainstreaming.

The GOP convention experience in Dallas in 1984 was a sad chapter of Asian Americans' history of political involvement. I was appointed as an alternate delegation at large to the convention as a "reward" of my political/campaign involvements through the Republican Women's Club. It was very disappointing to witness many Asian American "leaders" were misled and unable to get to the convention floor. The entire experience is detailed in the file of GOPinvolvement84. After realizing the "wrong" path the enthusiastic Asian American activists heading, I was convinced that it was imperative to form an Asian American partisan organization directly under the existing official GOP state party. That is the only way Asian Americans could become delegates to the state and national convention if they choose to form their own ethnic groups. Various ethnic groups under

the National Republican Heritage Groups (Nationalities) Council could not get into the National Convention floor. Their “empty” titles and groups were not recognized by the state GOP party simply because they were not involved in the local party activities and campaigns. In other words, they were not integrated into the mainstream. Naturally, anyone could get involved in the mainstream just as I did to become a delegate without any ethnic affiliation. As a result, I consulted the GOP state chair, George Strake who advised me to form an auxiliary organization like the Republican Women’s Club under the state party soon after the GOP 1984 convention.

I started contacting several ethnic community leaders and began to draft the By-Laws and Constitution. After many meetings and discussions for more than one year, the final version was adopted on March 2, 1986. At that meeting, I was elected as the temporary chairperson to convene the meeting. The Executive Committee was selected and formed and the By-Laws and Constitution were rectified, adopted and signed by all attendees. The details of the meeting could be found in the minutes (file:minutes020386).

There are five local chapters besides membership at large: Bay Area Asian Republican, Greater Houston Chinese American Republican, Harris County Sikh American Republicans, North Texas Republican Asian Assembly and Vietnamese-American Republican Party. All the membership lists could be located in files: membership.

The first annual and organizational meeting was held on December 6, 1986 after several local chapters were formed. Between March and December, I worked very hard to get various chapters organized including one in Dallas.

April 26, 1986 held an Executive Committee meeting and minutes could be find in the field as file: minutes260486.

June 1, 1986 election meeting for interim officers for the forthcoming state convention on June 27 and 28 and November election.

October 5, 1986 Executive Committee and chapter meetings were held in Dallas.

December 6, 1986 five vice chairs were elected by all attendees at this organizational and annual meeting. These five vice chairs were placed on the ballot for the chair election on December 27. According to the By-Laws the chair and co-chair were selected by these vice chairs. Ballots were mailed in to the Nomination Committee. On December 27, 1986 the Nomination Committee open the ballots and tallied the votes. The results were that Mr. Nguyen Van Ngai was the chair and I was the co-chair. During Mr. Ngai’s tenure, I did all the work and he only carried the title as all correspondences show.

*****1987*****

January 10, 1987 Exe. Committee met to form various standing committees

October 25, 1987 Exe. Committee met in Dallas and adopted a special resolution that an election for Chairperson will be conducted by mail ballot during the first week of November, 1987. The letter from Esther Yao to Nguyen Ngai dated October 29, 1987 detailed the issues involved and can be found under file: xtochair291087.

The ballot listed five vice chairs. November 7, 1987 was the deadline to sent in the ballots from five voting candidates to the general secretary of the TARC; each one was entitled to two votes. The results were that I was the chair and Dr. Y. T. Huang was the co-chair.

November 2, 1987, Mr. Nguyen Van Ngai, the chair, suddenly resigned from the chairmanship on the eve of the election. He sent out a memo and a letter to the Executive Committee Members and GOP State Chair, George Strake respectively. The correspondence could be found in the files.

I, Esther Lee Yao, the new chair, sent out a memo to Executive Committee members and Chapter chairmen on November 24, 1987 to outline the goals and tasks for the upcoming 1988 election year including to vitalize all local chapters.

In my memo of December 13, 1987, I began to get TARC organized and back to the right direction/track after a year of no accomplishment during the tenure of the previous chair.

In January 5, 1988 memo, I formulated the agenda for January 13 general meeting. In my memo of January 14 to the Exe. Committee and chapter chairmen, I announced that Dr. Y. T. Huang would chair and organize the credential and membership committee to assess the status and organization of each affiliated chapters. Two chapters were updated as mentioned in my memo of February 4, 1988.

February 23, 1988 sponsored a public meeting for people to meet with state elected officials and TV reporter from Channel 11.

February 27, 1988 the first Ex. Committee meeting held under the new officers (files:xtoExCommittee231287)

March 5, 1988, the Bay Area Asian Republicans (BAAR) held a meeting for members to meet with their precinct chairmen (see file:xinvitationfromBAAR290288)

On March 26, 1988 I was invited to speak to the GOP State EX Committee members as chair of TARC, an auxiliary organization of state GOP. (file: speechoTXGOPEXCom260388p1 and p2)

April 2, 1988 The Ex Committee meeting (see file:AgendaExCommittee020488)

May 22, 1988 The Vietnamese Republican Chapter of Houston was reactivated (file:xfrVietChair220588)

June 9, 1988 Held both Exe. Committee and General Meetings at the State GOP Convention. The State GOP Convention was held from June 9-11, 1988. This gave TARC members an opportunity to interact with the mainstream Republicans. (file:xTARCmembers250588) During the meeting, the Constitution of TARC was amended and signed by the committee members.

To recruit members the P.O. Box address was set up and paid by me, Esther Yao, as P.O. Box 590144, Houston, TX 77059-0144

On November 11, 1988, I sent out a memo for election of new officers on December 3, 1988. (File:xExCommitteeChapterchairs111188)

December 3, 1988 Election of new officers and Mrs. Pauline Van Tho became the new chair. After the election, there was a presentation, "How to Obtain Political Appointments" by Mrs. Molly Pryor, Chair of the Appointment Committee of Harris County GOP and she was also the state director for Senator John Tower.

December 10, 1988, I was invited to speak at the State GOP Ex. Committee meeting but had schedule conflict. I gave the proxy to Pauline Van Tho who delivered my speech at the meeting. (files:proxyauthorization301188 and SpeechtoTxGOPEXCom101288p1 and p2)

TARC held a Lunar New Year Party at my house on February 11, 1989. File:invitationLunarNewYrParty110289

In 1989 during the Houston mayoral race, I galvanized Asian Houstonians to support the incumbent, Mayor Kathy Whitmire. I also organized the Asians to support US Senator Phil Gramm.

I attended the TX State Republican Executive Committee (SREC) on behalf of Mrs. Pauline Van Tho who was the TRAC Chair in Austin on March 11, 1989.

I did recognize people/members' involvement in TARC and their contribution to various campaigns. I tried to seek appointments for them at both state and federal levels. Files: AppointmentslistTX180888 and AppointmentFormTX88 and other correspondences.

Meanwhile, I was involved in several Asian non-partisan political organizations, such as attending the National Republican Asian Assem The GOP convention experience in Dallas in 1984 was a sad chapter of Asian Americans' history of political involvement. I

was appointed as an alternate delegation at large to the convention as a “reward” of my political/campaign involvements through the Republican Women’s Club. It was very disappointing to witness many Asian American “leaders” were misled and unable to get to the convention floor. The entire experience is detailed in the file of GOPinvolvement84. After realizing the “wrong” path the enthusiastic Asian American activists heading, I was convinced that it was imperative to form an Asian American partisan organization directly under the existing official GOP state party. That is the only way Asian Americans could become delegates to the state and national convention if they choose to form their own ethnic groups. Various ethnic groups under the National Republican Heritage Groups (Nationalities) Council could not get into the National Convention floor. Their “empty” titles and groups were not recognized by the state GOP party simply because they were not involved in the local party activities and campaigns. In other words, they were not integrated into the mainstream. Naturally, anyone could get involved in the mainstream just as I did to become a delegate without any ethnic affiliation. As a result, I consulted the GOP state chair, George Strake who advised me to form an auxiliary organization like the Republican Women’s Club under the state party soon after the GOP 1984 convention.

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National Republican Asian Assembly on June 25-26, 1989 and Cindy Daub spoke . . .

WELCOME

Welcome! Thanks for your visit and interest in the topics provided by this website which is committed to serve diverse readers including parents, researchers, political leaders and interested general public.

This website consists of two distinguished components: A) documents of Asian Americans' political involvement in the US from 1975 to 1992; and B) published books and articles by Dr. Esther S. Lee, formerly known as Dr. Esther Lee Yao (姚李恕信.)

Being a contributor and writer of the information offered on this website, I'd like to first commend those who are interested in searching the facts and materials to enhance their knowledge and understanding of Asian American immigrants' political participation in this great nation. I believe such endeavor will be a great asset to the Asian American Studies for many years to come. Due to limited resources, the documents related to Asian Americans' involvement in Bush/Quayle '92 presidential reelection have not been scanned for this website. However, as the National Coordinator of Asian/Pacific American Coalition of the Bush/Quayle '92 campaign, I have donated the original files to be archived in the George H. Bush Presidential Library and Museum in College Station, Texas. Scholars and interested citizens are invited to peruse the information at that Library.

For those who are interested in my published books regarding cross-cultural family life and child development, I have to applaud you for your concerns of our future generations especially during this changing world and swirl of constant cultural conflicts between the East and West. Parenthood comes with both joy and blessings but also responsibilities.

This website, by all means, is not a perfectly organized collection; it evolves continuously with additional scanned materials. They are basically personal files and folders much like many people's office files. To ensure originality and authenticity, all

papers were scanned without any editing or revision. They are raw materials for you to review, digest, analyze, evaluate and draw your own conclusion. All the materials of Part A are organized and categorized in folders by a particular year or years. Within each folder you will be able to locate specific files referred to in my narrative. At times, it is not easy to put all the puzzle pieces together; don't be discouraged. Hopefully, my brief narratives could offer you some background and clarity. I try to present the materials in a direct and plain manner without any "spicy" elaboration. This is a thick forest and you need to touch each tree. Please feel free to contact me via email: FNPL@hotmail.com if I could be of any assistance in making your search more convenient and efficient.

INTRODUCTION

Originally, I hoped to write a book about my involvement in the Republican Party at all levels including my own congressional race. However, being a researcher and author myself, I have read many biased or even distorted personal political experiences. In order to avoid a similar trap and temptation I believe it is more desirable for researchers to access the raw materials as evidence for their pursuit or projects.

My political involvement began in 1978 when President Carter "suddenly" recognized People's Republic of China (PRC) and resumed the normal diplomatic relationship with them. Many pro- Republic of China (ROC) Chinese Americans began to protest and even had street demonstration in Houston. As I was disappointed, I started reflecting. I concluded that it's not President Carter's intention to recognize PRC abruptly without consulting or foretelling the Chinese community leaders. It was our Chinese Americans' own fault for not involving themselves in American mainstream politics. My conviction was so strong that I contacted and joined the national Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA) quickly with hope to generate more impact collectively on American policy toward to China, as it related to the life of Chinese Americans. I even formed a Texas Chapter of OCA and became a national board member. Unfortunately, OCA was not permitted to engage in any partisan activities based on its Constitution and By-Laws. In order to be more effective, I joined the Bay Area Republican Women's Club (in Houston suburb) in 1980. Details can be found in the narrative of the 1980 file. Meanwhile, I became more involved in the Organization of Chinese American Women (OCAW) and formed a Houston Chapter. This chapter was quite active as the files show. Later I became the national vice president for communication of OCAW. This affiliation and networking benefited me significantly in my profession, and political arena.

Under the guidance of Mrs. Vicky Hepke, an active member of the Bay Area Republican Women's Club, I was able to participate in various campaign activities and was totally immersed in mainstream politics. Meanwhile, I tried to rally the Asians and mentor them to be mainstreamed. I organized several Asian American Republican groups and many major Asian political events and hosted numerous meetings, receptions, breakfasts, lunches and dinners for party volunteers, activists, candidates and public elected officials

at my residence in Clear Lake City (a Houston suburb.) My family members were very supportive and helped me with all these activities. I remember hosting a breakfast for Congressman Jack Fields at 8:00 am on one Saturday. We had more than 70 people and I prepared a full American Texas style breakfast including omelets made in advance. I informed the attendees that the breakfast had to be concluded at 10:00 am because I had to catch a flight for Puerto Rico for a congressional commission hearing. As a result, I gradually built up my GOP credentials and status in the Party. (My political credentials are located in the folder of Bio/Vita.) Although I did not receive a comparable appointment to my qualification in the Bush Administration due to my support of Senator Dole during the 1988 Primary, I was the first Asian American to serve as the Deputy Directory of OBEMLA, US Department of Education. I resigned from OBEMLA and returned to Houston running for Congress in 1991 at the suggestion of Mr. Ron Kauffman, White House Political Director. Even though I lost the primary by a small margin my campaign generated great encouragement and inspiration among future Asian American office seekers. Later in June, 1992, I resigned from the University of Houston/Clear Lake and became the first salaried full-time staff in charge of Asian/Pacific American Coalition for Bush/Quayle '92 campaign. Unfortunately, he was not reelected. My political involvement gradually diminished during the Clinton era. It was difficult for me to maintain close contacts with people in Houston during my stay in Washington, DC from 1990 – 95. In spring 1998 I went back to academia and eventually retired as the dean of the Graduate School of Troy University/Montgomery in January 2006.

This website will provide you with information on how the Asian, especially, the Chinese Americans in Houston got organized and became more assimilated into the mainstream politics since early '80. Today, they have formed a formidable political power in Texas that the Republican Party cannot afford to neglect. At the national level, many Chinese supported my congressional race and I had fund raising events in 14 cities. This network continued to expand when I was appointed as the national coordinator of Asian/Pacific American Coalition for Bush/Quayle'92. During the last five months of the presidential campaign, I was able to galvanize and inspire even more Asian Americans throughout the country to support Bush/Quayle '92 reelection. I even mapped out the strategy to guide them becoming delegates to the National Convention held in Houston. As a result, GOP had unprecedented number of Asian American delegates at the 1992 National Convention in Houston. Although both the congressional and presidential campaigns were defeated, the impact on Asian American's increasing interest and participation in American politics is undeniable.

The materials primarily focus on my public service beginning in 1978 until 1992. The folders are organized by both topics/themes and chronological order. Again, the complete record of the Asian/Pacific Americans for Bush/Quayle '92 is available at the archive of President George H. Bush's Library and Museum at Texas A & M University, College Station, Texas. There is too much material to be scanned at this time.

After returning to higher education as education professor, I was appointed by Governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas to serve on the Commission of Early Childhood Education in 1998. After retiring from the deanship of the Graduate School at Troy University Montgomery I was appointed by the Honorable Al Gonzales, the US Attorney, to serve on the National Advisory Committee on Violence against Women in 2006.

Campaign for Senator Bob Dole

Esther was appointed by the majority leader Senator Dole to serve on the Congressional Commission for the Study of International Migration and Cooperative Economic Development, 1987-1990. This was considered as a cabin level of appointment. There were 10 members appointed by congressional leaders: six by senate majority and minority leaders and four by House leaders. Two were women. There were all prominent public figures, either elected or appointed. It was considered by Esther as a miracle to be appointed by Senator Dole who did not know Esther at all.

Esther first learned of the openings of this congressional commission from Rudy Beserra, a White House Public Liaison officer. He was very supportive of Asian American leaders. One day Esther dropped by his office before returning to Houston. He told Esther that will be a high level commission on immigration formed as just approved by the Congress and she should seek the appointment. Later, he told Esther that the appointment was not presidential and he could not help. He advised her to seek the appointment via congressional leaders. Since Esther did not know any of them she had to get help via her Republican Party network. Her friend, Josephine Wang, introduced her to a young aide in Senator Dole's office. From him, Esther learned of the name of Senator Dole's right hand, Ann Coe who was in charge of the appointment. In order to meet the young aide, Brain during my short stay in Washington, DC Josephine and I had to hatch hike from Omni Shoran Hotel to downtown and got a taxi to Arlington, VA on a snow storm day. To thank Josephine's support Esther asked Josephine to represent her at the press conference when the commission presented its findings and recommendations four years later.

It took about one year to appoint the commission members. Esther submitted her credentials to Ann Coe but did not expect much due to the knee competition. Esther was shocked when Ann Coe called, "I think you'd like to hear this news . . . " Esther was the only Asian American and one of the two women. This experience gave Esther tremendous opportunity to learn and serve our country. She traveled with other members to Caribbean and Central and South American nations in addition to various site visits and public hearings. It enhanced her personal and professional development immensely.

It was not an easy decision for Esther to support Senator Dole's presidential campaign in Texas during the primary. Naturally, all her GOP friends supported their native son, George H. Bush. Nevertheless, Esther chose side based on Senator Dole's recognition of

Asian American's contribution to the USA. In fact, he had the same open attitude toward other minority groups as well that could be easily found in his speech. Esther knew that Senator Dole could not win in TX to carry all the delegates – winner take over, but she determined to have a good show.

She galvanized people in the largest county in TX – Harris County. She organized them by precinct and ethnic grounds. She even recruited a young lawyer named Al Gonzales who later became the White House Consul and appointed by President W. Bush to be the Attorney General in 2005. She was so committed to Senator Dole's campaign that she even tried to get voters out door by door before the voting place closed. Because of her support of Dole against Bush during the 1988 primary she was not awarded with a good appointment with Bush administration later. However, she accepted the consequence without any regret.

Later, Senator Dole's wife, Elizabeth Dole was appointed by President George H. Bush as the Secretary of Labor. She did recognize Esther's contribution to her husband's campaign in Texas and considered her for an appointment in her department. However, when she consulted two Chinese American woman activists in Washington, DC she did not get a complete support from one of them. This same person also sabotaged Esther's another opportunity with the Interior Department even though Esther had always respected her as a mentor.