

## Grassroots Focus on Paula Barry April 2007



My true awakening began in 1999. Our son was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of his school career and was truly thriving within this atmosphere. We wanted our son to have the classic American childhood where he would experience special moments to treasure for a lifetime. Classic American childhoods provide nourishment that warms the heart and soul. We wanted to provide him with experiences where he could feel and see his rich heritage. We wanted as a family to participate with pride in such traditions as picnics, museums, old fashion circuses, playing baseball, knowing his teachers and classmates, spending quality time with his grandparents, attending church to learn about God and prayer. We created a home that provided a safe haven where he could talk about his daily experiences and learn to identify the emotions that are part of all of our daily lives. The freedom to be an individual is the essence of America. This gives definition to what's so good about growing up in our glorious country.

America appeared to be humming along. A new catch phrase was popular. Perception is Reality. But I began to have a sense of dread. Our President had been riding on the coattails of a Republican Congress while actually "playing" at the role of a great leader. The media had convinced most Americans that they were very fortunate to have such a great mind in the White House. I began to worry. What kind of world was my son going to have to navigate through? Americans were living in the "day" and placing upon his generation burdens that our generation had never imagined. The American public needed to make time to assess our direction and hopefully reverse its course.

My polling place was located at the junior high school that my son would one day attend. The booths were set up in a large two-story library. It was a beautiful open, high ceiling room with oil murals of our great Patriots from the American Revolution. The sight was inspiring. I had voted here in the past but voters were placed within the dank halls of the school. I was the only voter present as a man and wife team welcomed me. Where was everyone? True, it was the middle of the day ... The couple appeared weary. They mentioned something about precinct chairman. I smiled at them as I hardly listened but I must have managed to acknowledge their plight. I cast my ballot and moved on to the rest of my day.

Several months passed when mail started to arrive addressed to me along with the title of Precinct Chairman. How did this happen? I received telephone calls from people I did not know calling about meetings, two year obligations... Was there a way to change this? Expectations had been placed upon me and I had no clue on how to proceed.

I attended a meeting at a large auditorium in Fort Worth. Upon entry, the room was full of energy with approximately 150 people milling around. They all seemed to know each other on some level. A loud whistle from someone got my attention while a few "ladies" yelled quiet! This finally organized the crowd. I was drawn to a calm woman with a very nice welcoming smile. After the assembly concluded, I expressed my frustrations and told her I needed guidance. She seems to be very knowledgeable, patient and helpful. Her name tag identified her as Melba McDow.

I left the building with a smile on my face and thanked God for his intervention in my life once again and always.

I was on my way...I started by canvassing the neighborhood, providing information to the voters on the current issues and candidates. I took on the unofficial role of Precinct Chairman for the adjoining precincts which was compiled of 4,600 + voters. I felt pride when the voters brought my information sheet to the polls to assist them. Our precinct conventions had good attendance with great participation that forwarded 22 resolutions to the District level. I was rewarded in every election when our combined precincts would consistently outperform the dismal percentages the state would predict for voter turn out.

Tensions were high before the 2004 elections. Friends and neighbors were seeking reassurance of a Republican victory. I felt like we were being forced to participate in the outcome of a street brawl. I tried to assure them that with their help we would prevail and re-elect a President that was truly devoted and respectful of his duties and managing the job of protecting us. We won!!! 80% voter turnout was heady....

The national mid-term elections of 2006 were a disappointment. Many Republicans had found reason to join in with the Bush haters. Northeastern Republicans were voted out of office by voters "seeking a more centrist agenda by ousting centrists." Voters didn't agree with "Bush's ultraconservative right-leaning agenda." The ultraconservatives have websites with headings such as "Conservatives Betrayed." During the Conservative Political Action Conference in March a veteran of the movement stated to the crowd "Let's focus on the conservative movement not the GOP." Ultraconservatives believing they have received "next to nothing" for their allegiance to the GOP. There is fatigue within our party from the constant thrashing of the media, the groups who demand their limited agendas only, Senators and House of Representatives elected as Republicans that disregard adherence to the Party Platform. All of these factors and more are causing a movement away from supporting the only party that comes close to representing them in their social, fiscal, security, moral and religious beliefs.

My hope is that we regain a sense of balance and unity among us before the 2008 elections. All of us will be responsible for losses in 2008. Let's begin this

renewal with a wise quote from President Reagan “I will work with anyone whom agrees 80% of the time.” Talk heartily to your families, friends and neighbors here and far away.