

She's a state senator, an ardent feminist and a victim of blatant sexism.

She's Mary "Wendy" Roberts, D-Portland, one of eight Democrats facing off in the May 23 primary election for the labor commissioner's seat, which Democrat Bill Stevenson is vacating.

The labor commissioner administers the state Bureau of Labor, which enforces civil rights laws, wage-and-hour laws and the state's employee apprenticeship and training program.

A flood of civil rights complaints filed with the labor bureau has resulted in a backlog of cases that often are dealt with too late, Roberts says. And as labor commissioner she would "prioritize cases for service."

"Some cases have a time factor that is crucial," Roberts explains. "The fairest way to deal with civil rights cases is not always in chronological order."

Because she is familiar with both labor and legislative ropes, Roberts claims she fits the bill for labor commissioner.

The University graduate and Honors College member began her political career winning the house seat from East Multnomah County. In 1974 she won the Senate post and served on labor, business, consumer committees — and the powerful Ways and Means Committee.

Roberts, 33, considers her experience in both chambers essential to the labor commissioner's background — particularly when the Legislature begins drawing up the budget.

"You just can't walk into (the Legislature) cold," she says. "You have to know who you are dealing with. The House

## Feminist Roberts says senate work vital in labor battle

By CHRIS NORMAN  
Of the Emerald

and Senate experience is helpful; the Ways and Means, crucial.

"I can't see not having any Ways and Means experience because guess who determines your budget — Ways and Means. I'm the only one in the race who has been on that committee. The advantage I have is that I understand the process."

Roberts's stiffest challenge may come from Nellie Fox, the political director of the Oregon AFL-CIO, and Ralph Groener, a Clackamas county commissioner.

As a civil rights advocate, Roberts concedes her feminist perspective will influence her work as labor commissioner.

"A lot of women have lost their jobs because they're pregnant," she says. "The employers decided either the women can't do the job or they are afraid of a pregnant woman in the office."

"It's absurd to say a woman can't work

because she's pregnant. How many women are just slaving away when they're pregnant, washing clothes, minding the kids, answering telephones, making beds and fixing meals," Roberts argues.

"But, boy, they sure couldn't handle sitting at a desk (typing)," she says acidly. "You don't hear about expectant fathers losing their jobs and people worrying about them because they might become a father."

Roberts says her staunch feminist attitude stems from her actual experiences.

"There's nothing like a divorce to find out women can be self-sufficient," she says. Her parents were divorced when she was 11; consequently, Roberts grew up in a home where the mother worked full time.

"It never occurred to (me) that there was anything else," she says. "(I) didn't go through the white-knight syndrome where someone is going to come gallop-

ing up on a big charger, step off and say, 'My lady, I'm going to take care of you for the rest of your life.' "

But after several episodes during her 1966 travels in Europe, Roberts quickly realized her personal interactions with the people were based largely on the fact she was a woman "and I found that pretty offensive."

"Once I was beaten up in Paris for no reason at all," she says. "It was about 9 p.m. right on the main street, in front of a big, outdoor cafe with a lot of people there. Someone just came up to me, grabbed me and told me to go with him."

"And then he proceeded to beat me when I refused to accompany him. I ran into the cafe up to the counter and said, 'This man is crazy, call the police.' But they didn't want to get involved. Then he ran in and said 'Don't call the police, she's crazy. It's just a family thing.' "

On that note, Roberts turned and flew out the cafe door.

On another occasion in Paris she was walking to her uncle's home when some fellow started to follow her. After she was inside the man knocked on the door and tried to buy Roberts from her uncle.

She also had visions of joining the state department, but shied away when she learned women applicants were advised to have typing skills.

"I think these experiences had affected me because I had achieved a lot and leaned a lot in college and was preparing myself for being a real contributing person in life to society with all these noble ideas," Roberts says. "And then I went to Europe and found out all that was not considered."

### Beall events rescheduled

Certain upcoming events at Beall Concert Hall have been rescheduled for the month of April.

The composition student's recital previously scheduled for 8 p.m. Friday has been moved to 12:30 p.m. April 28.

The Brahms Horn Trio has been scheduled for 12:30 p.m. Thursday.

A student recital by Carol Robe was previously set for Wednesday. The new date is April 27 at 8 p.m. Kathleen Bohn, scheduled to give a recital April 27 has cancelled her performance.

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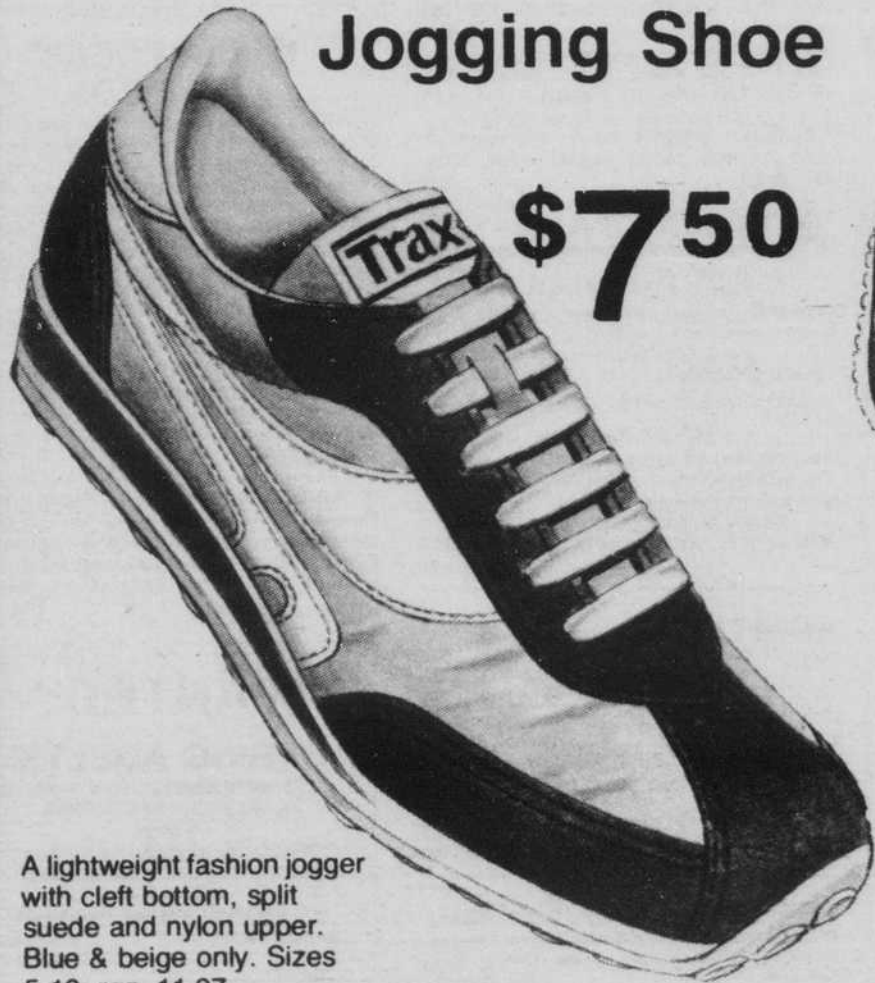
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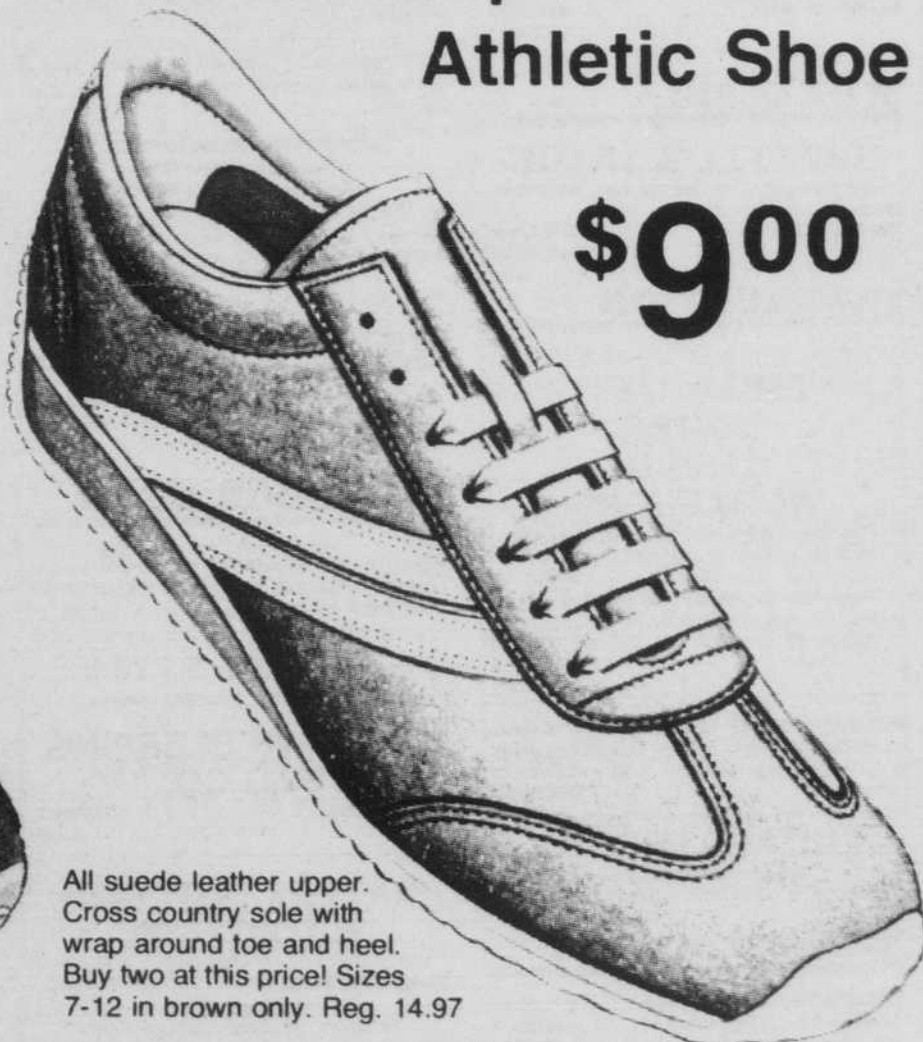
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