

Friday, April 23, 2004

Frohnmayer quacks about twisting words, Prefontaine

"Quick Quacks" is the newest Emerald feature, a spontaneous Q&A session aimed at giving readers a quick look at campus and community members' thoughts. "Quick Quacks" will run every Friday this spring. Please send suggestions about possible interviewees to letters@dailyemerald.com.

This week, University President Dave Frohnmayer, who has presided over the University since 1994, sits down at the "Quick Quacks" table. Frohnmayer has served as Dean of the School of Law, as a state legislator and as Oregon's Attorney General.

Emerald: What's the best thing about being a university president?

Dave Frohnmayer: Really getting to see all of the paths of knowledge and discovery, the really interesting things people do in a wide variety of fields. So many exciting people — faculty, students, staff — are doing so many interesting things.

Emerald: What's in your CD player right now?

Frohnmayer: The Lives and Music of Great Composers. We're doing Bach and the High Baroque. When that's not there, the Brahms' Double Concerto; when that's not there, the Beethoven Archduke Trio; and when that's not there, a CD by On the Rocks.

Emerald: In an alternate universe, where you never went to law school or became the president of the University, what would you be doing right now?

Frohnmayer: Ah, interesting. If I were smarter, I'd be a molecular biologist. Maybe an

archaeologist, or in the olden days, maybe a member of the U.S. Senate.

Emerald: The flavor of modern politics doesn't suit your taste, then?

Frohnmayer: It's really gotten ugly since when I left elected politics. It's really polarized now ... It's sad and tragic to see, because it used to be much different.

Emerald: Who's your favorite Duck athlete of all time and why?

Frohnmayer: Good question. Probably Steve Prefontaine. Guts, stamina, grit; he never quit. You never think of anyone other than speakers as being charismatic, but his running was very charismatic. His races were electrifying.

Emerald: In the face of increasing tuition and decreasing fiscal support of the university system from the state, what is the University doing to keep the cost of going to school here low?

Frohnmayer: Obviously, what we're trying to do is getting as many scholarships from private donors as possible ... We're trying to stop state disinvestment and encourage re-investment. We've also been pretty inventive, I think, offering discounts for early morning classes. For the price-shopping student, I think we're trying to be very creative and sensitive.

Emerald: What's the best restaurant in town?

Frohnmayer: Oh, geez, that's a good question. There are so many. Marché, Ambrosia, Waterfront. I just had lunch at The Glenwood. Beppe & Gianni's is wonderful; it's just a block and a half from where we live — you can't limit me to just one.

Emerald: What's the most important thing today's college students need to know for the road ahead?

Frohnmayer: They need to learn how to learn. They need to learn how to learn deeply, not just learn a superficial mastery of a field. The best that we can do is to teach someone to be deeply intellectually curious, to teach people how to think to solve new problems. The ideal outcome is a good liberal arts education.

Emerald: Any plans to retire?

Frohnmayer: Well, I don't think it'll be soon. I'll want to travel while I can still carry my own luggage, but right now, I'm firmly in the saddle. Right now, we have this imperative of raising hundreds of millions of dollars to support the University, and that's occupying a lot of my time — and rightfully so.

Emerald: What do you like best about Eugene?

Frohnmayer: Oh, the proximity to a wide variety of wonderful activities. I don't think you can beat Oregon as a place to live. ... I'll appropriate a saying from my friend: "I can't think of another place with such a high quality of life for such low overhead."

Emerald: In your experience, what's the most unusual or interesting thing you've seen in your official capacity as University president?

Frohnmayer: I got my words twisted in a public commencement ceremony: Instead of saying, "Will all those candidates for master's and bachelor's degrees please stand," I said, "Will all those candidates for machelor's and baster's degrees please stand." I tried to correct myself, but then said the same thing again to the amusement of thousands of graduates and their families.

The most heartwarming moment was when I had an unexplained cardiac arrest in 1997 when I was visiting the National Institutes of Health. As they did with the death of my daughter Kirsten in 1997, the community was amazingly supportive.

Emerald: Finally, where can we find Dave Frohnmayer on a Friday night?

Frohnmayer: Oh, gosh. Hopefully at a nice, relaxing dinner with family and friends, but sometimes the demands of the official life are a little more frantic.



To err is machine

Imagine this: You, Joe or Jane Citizen, walk into a voting booth this November, ready to exercise your solemn responsibility and participate in the democratic process. You cast your vote for your favorite candidate (or more likely, the lesser of two or more evils) on a touch-screen a la Jetson. Knowing you've fulfilled your civic duty, you leave the booth aglow from a job well done.

But the computer has different plans. By malice or mistake, the machine doesn't record the vote. Because the system doesn't keep a voter-verifiable paper trail of votes, your vote is lost forever in a black hole of undemocratic illegitimacy.

During March's presidential primary election, one of Sequoia Voting Systems' Optech system electronic voting machines in Napa County, Calif., failed to transcribe votes on paper ballots because of a problem with ink calibration, necessitating a re-scan of some 11,000 ballots.

In early voting during the November 2002 general election, six electronic voting machines in Wake and Jackson counties, N.C., lost at least 436 ballots. When poll workers entered absentee votes on the Election Systems & Software iVotronic touch-screen machines, the computers falsely detected that their memories were full and didn't record the votes.

Last year, California officials discovered that Diebold, another electronic voting machine manufacturer, had installed

uncertified software on the machines in several counties; the subsequent statewide audit revealed that the company had "upgraded" without certification the software in all 17 counties using its touch-screen and optical-scan machines.

The introduction of high technology into the voting process is, in theory, a very good one. Well-operated and programmed machines reduce the chances of



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human error, failures that can be critical in tight races. But when votes are lost or miscounted — usually without notifying voters or officials — the integrity of the democratic process is directly threatened.

In recent years, officials have phased out punchcard-style machines, which are susceptible to operating problems of their own. But replacing unreliable machines with newer unreliable machines which don't leave a paper trail is irresponsible, and begs for another electoral mess of the kind Florida saw in 2000.

Fortunately, Congress has begun to take

notice. Rep. Rush Holt, D-N.J., introduced House Bill 2239, titled The Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act of 2003. Along with its companion Senate bill, S.B. 1980 (introduced by Sen. Bob Graham, D-Fla.), HR 2239 requires that voting systems produce a paper trail, a powerful fail-safe method that makes any necessary recounts feasible and democratically meaningful.

Better still, the act would ban undisclosed software in voting machines, leaving the guts of the machine open to public and expert scrutiny.

Voters have also seen problems in Broward County, Fla., where 134 voters' ballots were lost, and unrecoverable because there was no paper trail. Machines in Hinds County, Miss., overheated, interfering with the election so badly the state legislature called for a new election; and in Fairfax County, Va., some voters saw votes they cast given to their candidates' opponents.

For the sake of fairness in the electoral system — the keystone of representative democracy — contact your representative and senators (Rep. Peter Defazio, D, and Sens. Gordon Smith, R, and Ron Wyden, D, if you live in Eugene), and urge them to support the above bills.

Contact the editorial editor at traviswillse@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Public debate requires knowledge and understanding

Public debate would be improved if people studied all sides of an issue before putting forth their own viewpoint. Matt Chorpenning has clearly demonstrated what happens when one enters a conflict knowing little about one's opponent ("Wagner misses God's point," ODE, April 7).

Chorpenning apparently thinks that Wagner believes God's word is limited to

a single book. There is an obvious error in Chorpenning's response: As Kimberly Wagner mentioned, she is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, an unorthodox Christian religion that believes not only in the Bible, but also in several other canonical texts, the words of a living prophet and in personal revelation.

Whether or not one shares Wagner's beliefs, only a fool would argue with her without understanding them. Premises of faith are personal phenomena which aren't subject to third-party validation,

so theological claims are generally unproductive in secular debates. Those who already believe that God opposes homosexual marriage don't need further convincing, while non-believers won't have their opinions changed by Biblical commandments. Fortunately, Wagner recognized this.

Regarding the separate question of the legalization of homosexual marriage, she said only that one should "have what opinion you wish," and concluded that she would base her opinion on

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