



NORTHWEST

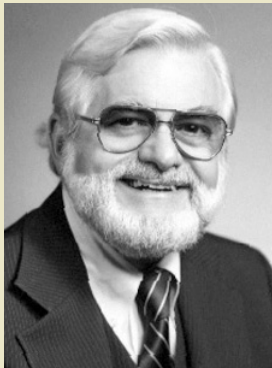
LABOR
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Portland

Retired Labor Press editor, columnist Gene Klare dies

Gene Klare, retired editor of the Labor Press and the longest-serving columnist in the newspaper's 109-year history, died May 30 from complications following a mild heart attack. He was 81.

Klare became the seventh editor of the then Oregon Labor Press in October 1965. He succeeded James Goodsell, who left after 14 years to become director of the U.S. Department of Commerce's regional office in Portland.

Klare retired in October 1986, but continued his column, "Let Me Say This About That," until January 2008 — a span of more than 40 years.



The Labor Press is a non-profit newspaper owned by 20 local unions and labor councils under the Oregon Labor Press Publishing Co. It was created in 1900 as the Portland Labor Press, but has undergone three name changes since then — the Oregon Labor Press in 1915, the Oregon/Washington Labor Press in 1986, and the Northwest Labor Press in 1987.

Klare was a veteran of the bitter Oregonian newspaper strike, which started Nov. 10, 1959, and ended with the paper busting its unions April 5, 1965. Klare was an investigative reporter for the newspaper. The strike did not stop the Oregonian

and Journal from publishing, but it did take a toll on their circulation. It was a subject Klare re-visited often in his "Let Me Say This About That" column. He even wrote a 100,000-word manuscript about a "fictional" newspaper strike.

During the labor dispute, Klare helped members of the striking unions establish the Portland Reporter, a tabloid newspaper that began publishing in February 1960. It ceased operations on Sept. 30, 1964. Klare worked as a reporter, advertising sales manager, and promotions manager. In the early years of the Reporter he also did some freelance writing for the Labor Press.

Goodsell hired Klare full time to the Labor Press staff in

(Turn to Page 11)



It's Democrat Jeff Merkley vs Gordon Smith in November

State and federal candidates backed by organized labor won big in Oregon's May 20 primary.

Every candidate running with the endorsement of the Oregon AFL-CIO won, including the two candidates for whom the state federation worked hardest: Jeff Merkley and Michael Dembrow.

Merkley, who is speaker of the Oregon House of Representatives, won the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate, and will face Republican incumbent Gordon Smith in November.

The national AFL-CIO has targeted the U.S. Senate race in Oregon as one of its top priority contests in the country.

Dembrow, an officer of American Federation of Teachers-Oregon, outpolled two other candidates to win the Democratic nomination for Northeast Portland's House District 45. No Republican filed to run for the seat, so Dembrow's primary win effectively makes him the latest addition to the Legislature's growing labor caucus.

And John Kroger, a Lewis & Clark Law School professor and former federal prosecutor, won the Democratic primary race for state attorney general with support from the AFL-CIO, the

Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council, Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the Oregon Education Association, locals of the Pacific NW Regional Council of Carpenters, and others. No candidate from another party filed to run for attorney general, so Kroger's win means he will be the state's top prosecutor as of January 2009.

Most AFL-CIO-endorsed state and federal candidates were incumbents or were otherwise strongly favored to win. But labor involvement likely made the difference in close races like the Merkley and Dembrow contests. With 45 percent of the vote, Merkley outpolled fellow Democrat Steve Novick by three percentage points. Dembrow won by 800 votes.

Much of labor's political impact came from outreach to union members, and to the 65,000 members of the AFL-CIO's community affiliate, Working America.

Oregon AFL-CIO spokesperson Rebekah Orr said the state federation made 195,000 phone calls, some automated, others by volunteers or by a hired call center. Union staffers and volunteers from affiliated unions

also knocked on 1,200 doors, and that's not counting the Working America canvass. Five paid staff from Working America spent three weeks going door-to-door in Dembrow's House district.

On the weekend before election day the Oregon AFL-CIO, Northwest Oregon Labor Council, and Oregon AF-SCME Council 75 co-sponsored a big get-out-the-vote (GOTV) canvass in the Portland metropolitan area.

Then there were worksite fliers — 50,000 a week for six weeks, Orr said — distributed at union halls and at construction sites and other union workplaces by members and staff of 50 local unions. Union leaders sent letters to 20,000 members. The Oregon AFL-CIO sent over 80,000 pieces of direct mail to union members in Multnomah County and to Working America members around the state: two mailings for Merkley, two for Dembrow, and a union voter guide.

A comparable effort was mounted by SEIU, which targeted its members, plus members of unions affiliated with the Change to Win labor federation. Staff and volunteers in 22 cities made 160,000 phone calls, knocked on

(Turn to Page 3)



Oregon State Rep. Jeff Merkley basks in his victory in the Democratic primary for U.S. Senate. Next up, Republican incumbent Gordon Smith.