

In county race, man to work for \$1 a year

by MICHAEL P. JONES
Post Correspondent

The incumbent Clackamas County treasurer is running against a retired physician who says, if elected, he will run the office for the salary of a dollar a year.

Thelma E. Hooper, a Democrat and current county treasurer, said she is running on her past record. She began working in the treasurer's office 23 years ago as a file clerk and, since that time, has worked every conceivable job in that office.

In 1978 she was elected county treasurer. She said the job is important because the office receives, collects, invests and disperses all the funds that come into the county. This includes taxes, fines, license fees and assessments.

In addition, all accounting and auditing is conducted through that office.

Currently the treasurer's office operates with an annual budget of \$204,000 and has a staff of six.

Investments are an important function of the treasurer's office, Hooper said in a telephone interview from her Canby home. She said "about 95 percent of all the funds the county receives, we invest." Last year the county's investments earned \$11 million.

Hooper's Republican challenger, a self-proclaimed "maverick" in the political arena, said the treasurer's office is too secretive and a rubber stamp for the commissioners. If elected he said he would open up county spending to the scrutiny of the taxpayers and would distribute the monthly treasurer's report widely.

John G. Vandenberg, a urologist who just recently retired after 30 years of practice, professes to be a private investor, an inventor of medical devices and a frustrated taxpayer. He

calls the treasurer's position "the most important and sensitive office in the county."

"I've been living and paying taxes in this county for 30 years and I've been screwed," said Vandenberg. "They (the commissioners) waste too much money."

Vandenberg, a Milwaukie resident, said he never intended to run for public office. But when the primaries arrived and the current treasurer was unopposed in her bid for office, his supporters wrote in his name. Thirty-eight votes later, his hat was in the ring. But he stressed, "I'm am not running against the incumbent. I am running for the people who pay taxes."

If elected, Vandenberg said he will not accept the \$41,000-a-year salary the office currently pays. He said he will bill the taxpayers one dollar. He said he could not see paying taxes on the \$41,000 when he doesn't really need it.

When asked about her opponent, Hooper said she doesn't know why he is running. She said she believes his involvement "must have started out as a joke" that went too far.

"It's (the office of treasurer) a very important function of county government and one that we should not take lightly," said Hooper. "I don't know if this guy is serious or not."

Hooper said Vandenberg lacks experience in municipal finance, "a job you just can't learn overnight." She said over the years she has built up "a great deal of trust and credibility" in the office and she wants to continue that.

"I've been listening to that crap down at the courthouse and no one seems to be able to get a voice down there," said Vandenberg. "Does this really sound like I'm running as a joke?"

As for his experience

with finance, Vandenberg says he's well qualified. He said he learned about investments when he was in the first grade.

Vandenberg said when he was in the first grade his mother used to give him a penny, a nickel or a dime each day to take to school. He said his teacher would collect the money from all the students and place it in a bank account. This was to teach them how to save money.

But in 1932 the bank went broke and he lost \$4.85. That was the last time, he said, he ever lost money. When he was 16 years old he started playing the stock market and reportedly has done well for himself.

"I've never been in a negative cash balance since I was in the third grade," said Vandenberg. "I don't believe in spending more than you've taken in, like the county."

If elected for another term, Hooper said she "will continue to provide the same quality of service that the people of the county expect to receive."

COUNTY COMMISSIONER

Bev Henderson, Republican nominee, and Dale Harlan, a Democrat, will be vying for Stan Skoko's place on the board of county commissioners.

Henderson said she would bring "a fresh, new, positive approach to county government and a balance to the commission that's long overdue."

"If I'm elected it won't be the good ol' boys politics as usual," said Henderson. "People are tired of this and my approach is something that my opponent doesn't have to offer."

Two years ago Henderson ran unsuccessfully for a seat on the commission. Her platform was tightening the budget to cut costs, to work on maintaining good working relationship with the other board members and to listen to the concerns of the citizens

with it, I should do pretty good."

Orr's previous political experience includes four years as a State Legislator, with two sessions as chairman of the financial affairs committee. She also served eight years as the county assessor.

One of the changes Orr said she would make if elected is update the precinct list. As a precinct committeeman since 1951, she said she knows the condition they are in.

Orr also said she will seek out better places for voting polls in the county. At some of the precincts currently being used there are stairs to climb. This makes it difficult if the voters happen to be elderly.

Her opponent, Rielly, a Republican, has operated Robert Rielly Associates Personnel Agency Inc. for seven years in Portland. He has served in various capacities with the Republican party in the county.

Rielly said he is running for the office of clerk because he feels there is

"an opening for someone with a strong business sense." If elected he would manage the clerk's office like he would any other business.

My background in computerization of offices, management consulting and personnel "fits in very nicely," said Rielly.

From a management approach, Rielly said he would first conduct a survey of the office. This would include interviewing all the staff members and studying the needs of the office.

COUNTY SURVEYOR
Thomas A. Milne, surveyor candidate and a Republican, said he has the necessary experience and qualifications for the job.

He is currently the engineering unit supervisor with the Division of State Lands.

Martin A. Gage, a Democrat who is running for the office, was unavailable for comment. The latest voters' pamphlet lists his current occupation as a registered professional land surveyor.

His prior governmental experience include working for the county

surveyor's office and the Department of Environmental Services.

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