

one comment Creighton sometimes hears that provides evidence that Corvallis has not completely shed its conservative tag. Some drivers shout, "Go back to Eugene!"

CANVASSING THE OVERPASSES

Three weeks later, a dozen Dean supporters from Corvallis are huddled along the Albany overpass waving campaign signs at southbound traffic. This is an idea they had discussed at the Nov. 5 meetup. Dean groups throughout the state coordinated an "I-5 visibility day" in the hours before the Civil War game. The groups decided to canvas the overpasses from Portland to Ashland with campaign signs and supporters. It seemed like a great idea from the cozy confines of the Tunnison Community Center. That was before anyone knew Nov. 22 would be one of the most frigid days of the year.

Nonetheless, drivers headed southbound toward Eugene are greeted by a red, white and blue banner reading "Dean Not Deception" when they pass through Albany. Bob Hughes and Sandy Bryce had the sign printed just for the occasion, and are among the first to show up on the overpass. Swartley and others follow in parkas and knit caps, sporting Dean signs and jugs of coffee and chai. They are greeted by a mixed response from passers-by that comes in three common gestures; the thumbs up, thumbs down and middle finger.

As John Wolcott grips a sign that reads "the doctor is in" between his gloved hands, he remarks that the effort might not be such

a statement if it were a sunny afternoon, but standing on a narrow sidewalk 30 feet above the highway in freezing temperatures "says something." Wolcott is on to something. Hanging out on overpasses guzzling chai tea and being flipped off by motorists, organizing statewide events over the Internet without the help of a central campaign, organizing bus trips to Iowa to canvas the streets in support of their candidate — this doesn't seem like a typical presidential campaign.

Perhaps it's because the people here don't seem like typical volunteers. There are those who have never campaigned before, some who are former Republicans, and the head of the Oregon State College Libertarians, to name a few. Interesting characters like Swartley are the norm in this campaign. If these meetup groups weren't lead by a band of determined, independent individuals, they wouldn't work.

Each meetup begins with a pre-taped message from the candidate. While few in the room have heard him speak live, Dean's no-nonsense style is largely what has persuaded his backers in Corvallis to donate their time to helping the campaign. The direct style is not unlike many of those in the local effort, who pepper each meeting with a healthy dose of debate about the direction of the local campaign. Swartley sums it up well. "Dean delivers a common sense message," he says, "and he's talking to people who are really sick of all the B.S." **EW**

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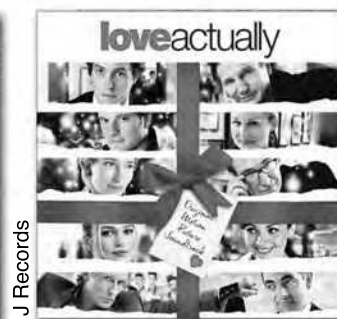
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