

John Kerry with Francisco Paz, Jeff Sirianni, Josh Therien and Todd Wallenbech at Marché Aug. 12.



# KERRY SLEPT HERE

## Tales of baseball, tobacco and Possibly the Next President.

BY FRED TAYLOR

John Kerry slept in my room on his visit to Eugene Thursday night. Well, I think he did, maybe. I'm certain he slept on the same floor of the Valley River Inn as I would have slept on, but didn't. Let me explain.

For years when my wife, Georga, and I have visited Eugene we've stayed at the Valley River Inn. It is an attractive place, with rooms overlooking the river. Recent years we've stayed on the third floor, which has a special attraction. Although it costs more, you get chits for a discount for breakfast and after 5 pm you can walk down the hall and get a free drink or two and some snacks. And in some of the rooms you can smoke.

So a couple of weeks before our latest visit I made a reservation for one of those

rooms, and even got a confirmation. But when we showed up, that room not only wasn't available — "We had a problem with that room," the reservation clerk told me, but wouldn't explain further — and neither were any other rooms on the third floor.

I was miffed, and showed it, but took a second-floor room that doesn't offer the discount breakfast, the free drinks or allow smoking. (Now all you anti-smoking folk saying, "Serves him right," just hold on. Tobacco plays an important role in this story)

Thursday about 6 pm we went to the Emeralds game. It was a good game; there was some swell infield defense (only one error) and two double plays, and they won 9-7. They certainly didn't look like a team that had lost 34 games.

### I digress.

We got back to the hotel about 10 pm and there were about 50 people standing around the main entrance, obviously waiting for something or somebody. When I spotted a tiny group of people holding Bush-Cheney signs, all became clear: John Kerry, Possibly the Next President, was expected and he and his staff had taken over the entire third floor.

So we stood around, too. And stood, and stood. The rumor, later confirmed by the mainstream press, was that he was having a late dinner at Marché, which is the sort of place you'd expect Possibly the Next President to eat.

In the meantime, the Bush-Cheney folk demonstrated, sort of. At one point there were a dozen in the group, and none of them

looked old enough to vote and some of them absolutely weren't. They shouted insults about Kerry, but their young voices were so screechy you couldn't understand them. They sang the Star Spangled Banner and America the Beautiful, badly. And they yelled insults across the road at the presumed Kerry supporters, a few of whom returned them. But as demonstrations go, it wasn't much. I speak as a veteran observer of real demonstrations — like riots. Close questioning of the presumed Kerry supporters revealed that a lot of them were there out of curiosity, hoping to see Possibly the Next President but not yet supporters. Some of the Bush-Cheney people had really small children with them. At that time of night, wouldn't you think the Family Values folk would have had the kiddies home in bed?

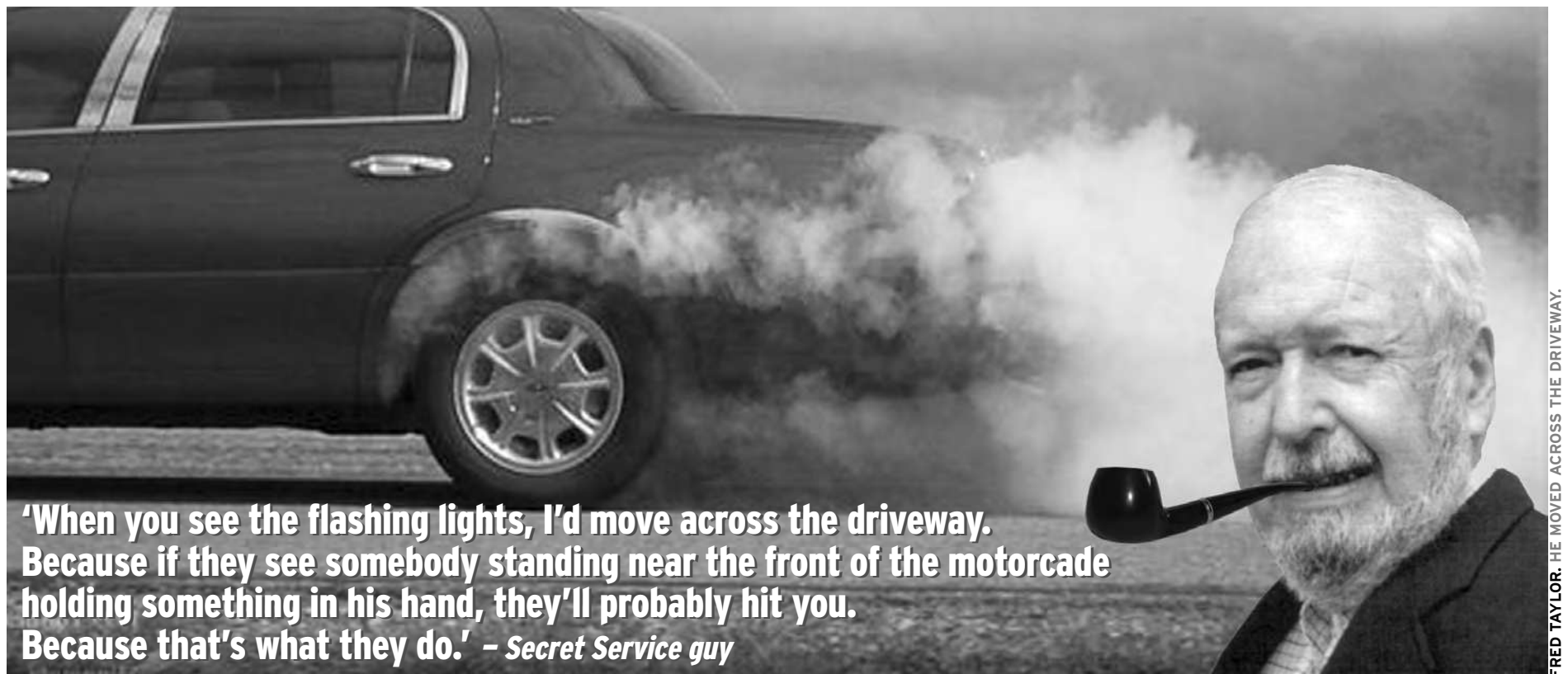
### I digress.

The first exciting thing that happened was a Budget rent-a-truck pulling up in front of the main entrance to the inn. On the side it said something to the effect "Don't Use Packing Tape for Dangerous Practical Jokes," which seems like good advice. (My notes are a little unclear on the exact wording). I was pleased to see the Democrats were using a Budget truck; shows good fiscal sense.

The truck was jammed with luggage, which was all unloaded. One of the most bulky said "CBS News — Urgent," so you knew this was the real deal, not just someone moving. And you could tell it was a presidential campaign trip because a little while after the truck was unloaded and left it came back, and about half the luggage was loaded back on. Obviously someone has sent word that the stuff wasn't going to be used tonight and take it back to the Kerry airplane out at the airport.

After that excitement, we stood around some more. The next big excitement was when the press bus arrived and about 50 of the grottiest people you ever saw got off. They were so grotty I knew it was the press. But I didn't see any famous faces, although that's not too surprising. Since I rarely watch television I wouldn't have recognized them anyway.

But it wasn't the press bus after all; it was a group of baseball fans from LaCrosse, Wisc., on a tour of baseball stadiums and games across the country. No wonder they looked grotty; they'd been in eight states and



**'When you see the flashing lights, I'd move across the driveway. Because if they see somebody standing near the front of the motorcade holding something in his hand, they'll probably hit you. Because that's what they do.'** — Secret Service guy

FRED TAYLOR: HE MOVED ACROSS THE DRIVEWAY.