had just come from two days in Seattle.

So we stood around some more and time was marching on; it was now 11 pm. Possibly the Next President was having a really leisurely dinner. This is where the tobacco (promised above) comes in and it's really interesting. I was standing opposite the main entrance, away from the gawkers because I was smoking my pipe and I was being considerate of others. That's when a really tall Secret Service guy, with a shaved head, came over to me and said, "You're OK, you're smoking a pipe and you're OK. But 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." He was serious.

I really appreciated his advice because you know,
IF A SECRET SERVICE GUY HAS TO MAKE A DECISION IN A SPLIT SECOND WHETHER TO STOP OR RUN OVER A GUY, WHAT HIS DECISION IS GOING TO BE.

I didn't make up those quotes. People in the newspaper business don't do that.

I really appreciated his advice because you know, if a Secret Service guy has to make a decision in a split second whether to stop or run over a guy, what his decision is going to be.

The Secret Service guy (you can always tell them because they wear that thing in their ear) was really a nice guy. He's been in the Secret Service for seven years and loves the work; he works three weeks on and three weeks off. He became an agent because he was a Missouri state trooper and when Pope John Paul visited the state he was assigned to his security and decided he wanted to do that sort of thing for the feds. He was about to tell me some more interesting things but his cell phone rang and he had to leave.

The time now was 11:30 pm and those little children were getting sleepier and crankier by the minute. They really should have been home in bed. The crowd had actually thinned out a bit, probably because some ill-informed person (me), relying upon another ill-informed person had been saying that he thought Possibly the Next President had slipped in the back door while we were distracted by Budget trucks and press buses that weren't; he'd seen a limo down by the rear door, which is on the same side of the inn as the main entrance but down the parking area a ways.

But then, at 11:45 p.m., there were the flashing lights, and three motorcycle cops and a lot of really big , black SUVs and I got across the driveway really quick. And at the same time, miraculously, the crowd doubled, tripled and then quadrupled. A lot of them were wearing red T-shirts that said: Democratic National Committee and everybody — except the Bush-Cheney folk — started cheering and TV cameras came crowding around because the real press bus had slipped in unnoticed in the Valley River Mall parking lot and unloaded this rabble.

And right in front of us, Possibly the Next President popped out of his SUV and started working the line (that's what we press people call it when the candidate walks down the line of spectators shaking hands and saying hello). And he really worked it, didn't seem in a hurry at all, and acted like he really wanted to talk to people. Which is what good politicians are good at. And the Bush-Cheney folk got so interested they stopped booing and shouting slogans.

He looked good; he has gray hair, which you probably already know, and was wearing a dark jacket and a blue shirt with an open collar — and I had to rely on the mainstream press for this because I couldn't see him down that far — chino pants or something like them. He looked, if you will excuse the expression, very Ivy Leagueish, which might not be a good thing. (In fact, since nobody believes the press is objective anymore, I'll say this: he looks a lot more like a president than that little guy with the big ears who's filling the spot now).

He did talk to people, particularly an attractive, young Bush-Cheney girl with deep cleavage who probably was old enough to vote, though 18-year-olds rarely do. I didn't hear the conversation but afterwards I talked to her and she explained they talked about when life begins (at conception) and abortion. She's opposed and he thought it was a state issue, not federal. (I think that's what they talked about. To tell the truth, I didn't take any notes and my memory is bad. I had a pen but no paper and the Bush-Cheney people wouldn't give me one of their placards to write on. They were pretty small, anyway. She said everyone in America has the right to express their opinion. I don't know whether she meant herself or Kerry; possibly both.

After 10 minutes or so John Kerry waved goodbye and escorted by a crowd of cops and Secret Service walked down to the rear entrance of the inn and disappeared into it and went up to the third floor and went to bed in what was supposed to be my room, maybe.

But as Possibly the Next President headed toward bed, out of another SUV popped Teresa Heinz Kerry, and she started working the line too, but it was a very short line and she didn't stay long before she headed toward bed. She looked very nice but I haven't a clue what she was wearing. Probably expensive.

And everybody went home. And I went to bed, feeling really good. Because even though I couldn't smoke in my room, didn't get a free drink and had to pay the full rate for my breakfast, I had done my bit for John Kerry by letting him sleep in my room, maybe.

P.S. Friday morning two bike cops were patrolling the bike path between the inn and the river and one of the cops' bike broke and he was last seen pushing it down the path. His chance to help protect Possibly the Next President, maybe his only chance, and his bike breaks. How discouraging. Probably made in China. **EW**

Fred Taylor knows something about Possibly the Next Presidents, having scrutinized them through his 30-year career as reporter and managing editor of The Wall Street Journal. He also knows a bit about baseball, writing first as sports editor of the Oregon Daily Emerald at the UO and next in the sports department of The Oregonian. In 1986 Taylor left the mainstream, moving from New York to North Bend and six years later joined the alternative press as part-owner of Eugene Weekly. Luckily, he was in Eugene last week for the EW board meeting.

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