



Mayor Jim Torrey answers questions from reporter Edward Russo.

Publicity Stunt

Torrey used write-in to push conservative agenda.

Eugene's Republican Mayor Jim Torrey squeezed every last drop of media attention he could get out of three weeks of headline grabbing speculation that he would run as a write-in candidate for mayor against Kitty Piercy.

With cameras from three TV network affiliates and *The Register-Guard* trained on him, Torrey waited until 15 minutes into his speech to answer the question of whether he was running, the reason the media were there. But first, Torrey used the spotlight to continue to pump himself and his conservative agenda, as he had done in a host of stories about the write-in over the past three weeks.

- Torrey claimed he was a political "moderate." In fact, Torrey's voting record is far right. In the past five years, Torrey broke tie council votes 13 times, always siding with big business and developers against the environment, livable planning and efforts to reform corporate welfare and increase government accountability.

- Torrey claimed he was a political "bridge builder." But while Piercy has reached out to business and development interests to be a "mayor for all Eugene," Torrey has never made a similar effort to reach out to environmentalists and government reform advocates.

- Torrey claimed he had brought "civility" to the city council. But Torrey, one of the city's most controversial mayors, has applied his call for civility to only his political opponents. He sat in his car and did not question the police pepper spraying and gassing of tree sitters on June 1, 1997. He instead praised police for the attack. He did not criticize the Gang of 9 for its attack ad campaign against council progressives. Instead he went on local conservative talk radio to join the attacks. Even now, Torrey refuses to acknowledge that Piercy is the city's mayor-elect. Such a display of incivility by a sitting mayor for his/her replacement is unprecedented in Eugene.

- Torrey tried to take credit for a number of city successes, including the new library, fire, parks and schools measures. But Torrey was not the leader and initiator of any of these campaigns, and they passed thanks to harder work done by many other councilors and citizens. Torrey didn't take credit for the dramatic failure of the Eugene Police Department under his tenure, which has twice lost police building votes and is now embroiled in an officer sex abuse scandal.

At the press conference, Torrey used the spotlight to continue to push his conservative agenda: divert money from schools and services to fund corporate and developer tax breaks and give-aways; divert money from city services for an unpopular, extravagant new police station; and damage a protected wetlands park to build a freeway to serve land speculators and urban sprawl.

Not until he'd exploited media attention to get all his plugs in did Torrey announce, with slow, baited words, "I will" (pause) "not be a candidate for mayor of Eugene."

Asked why he dragged out the announcement in his speech and for the last three weeks for so long, Torrey admitted that he did it to call attention to his conservative issues, like building the wetland freeway. "I didn't think the issues were sufficiently surfaced and discussed in the primary," he said.

The publicity stunt worked like a charm. Over the past three weeks when Torrey was supposedly musing a run-in, *The Register-Guard* gave the Republican and his developer supporters a total of 17 articles and editorials, almost all with a positive spin. That's more coverage than the 15 stories the paper gave the May mayor's race when there were five actual declared candidates.

Piercy bested all the candidates with 52 percent of the vote, avoiding a runoff and earning her a spot as the only name to appear on the November ballot. But at his press conference, Torrey refused to acknowledge that Piercy's election meant any kind of voter mandate for her moderate campaign in support of both a strong economy and environment. Torrey claimed turnout in the election was low, "I don't think that vote indicates what direction" the city should go in, he said.

However, 3,683 more people voted for Piercy in May than voted for the West Eugene Parkway in 2001, when the wetland freeway squeaked by with a 1 percent margin. Torrey has repeatedly claimed that vote represents a strong mandate to build the parkway. But in her campaign, Piercy openly said she opposed the project, and won.

Was Torrey's write-in stunt part of the Republican's campaign for another elected office, perhaps secretary of state or Congress? Torrey refused to answer the question from *Eugene Weekly* at the press conference. Instead, he questioned whether *EW* would endorse him, and said he would only answer questions from reporters whose coverage he liked.

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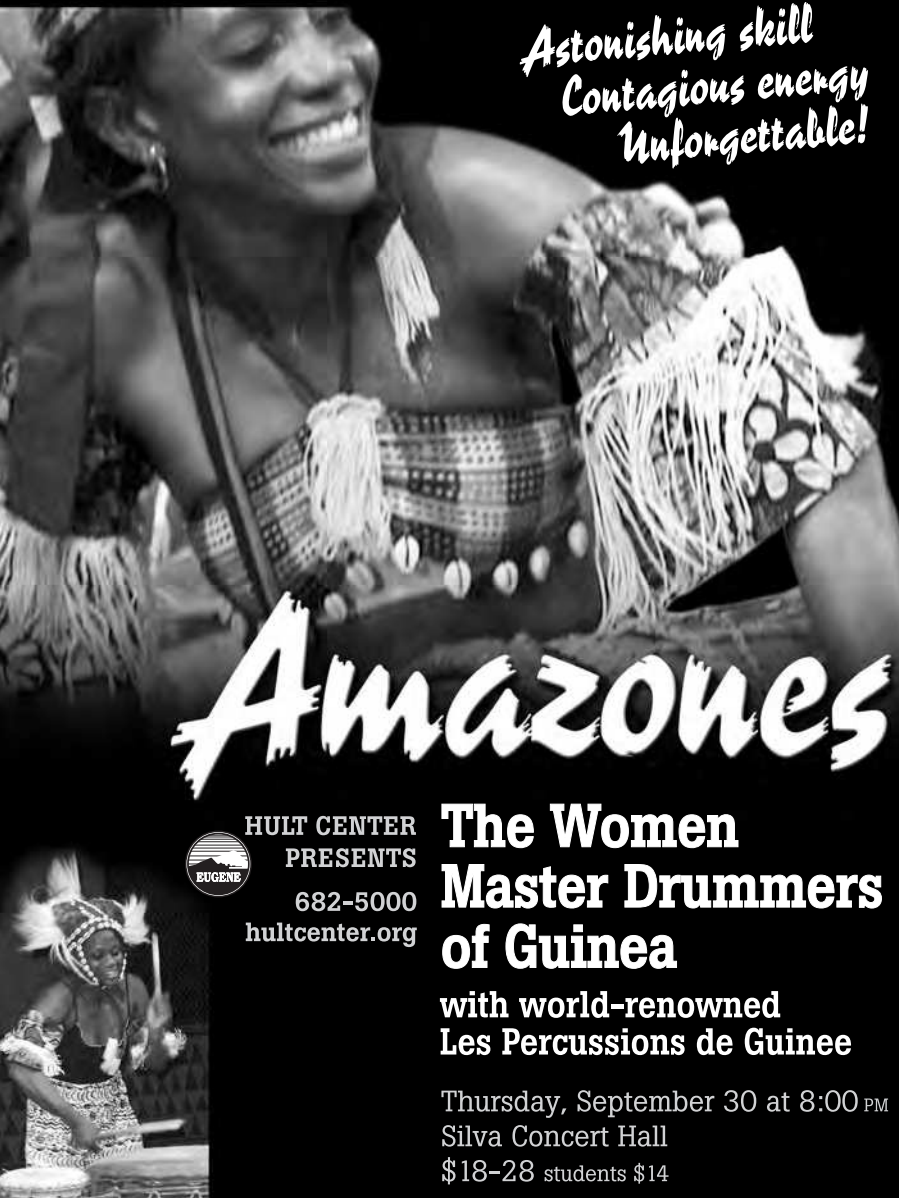


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