

A View from Left Field

Election predictions

I have been hounded by the Blackberry Pie Society, a coven of do-gooder progressives down here in Cottage Grove, to blather unproductively about what's at stake politically in Oregon's 2008 races.



Oregon has some pretty intriguing races: U.S. Senate - Incumbent Republican Gordon Smith voted straight-party with the George Bush Republican line for six and a half years; now all the sudden he's a friggin' moderate! Excuse me? Steve Novick and Jeff Merkley in the Democratic primary pose an interesting dilemma. I've supported Novick since the beginning because I believe he presents a greater contrast to Gordon Smith than Merkley. But Merkley's a great guy, and the mainstream Senate Democratic Campaign Committee want to go with Jeff; he's the speaker of the Oregon House and he helped bring Democrats to victory in the Oregon House for the first time in 12 years. Both men are incredibly hard working, salt of the earth types. At the end of the day: I think Gordon's gonna be hard to beat, and I think the only way you beat him is with a strong contrasting candidate: Steve Novick's the man.

Oregon Secretary of State - As important as this position is in everyday Oregon government, it becomes pivotal every 10 years when it weighs in on redistricting of political boundaries in our state.

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Currently, Oregon Democrats are pretty happy with this race: four Oregon Democratic State Senators - Kate Brown (the current Senate Democratic Leader), Brad Avakian, Rick Metzger and Vicki Walker - are running against each other in a primary with no announced Republican opponent in the general election. Of course, the Oregon Senate President, Peter Courtney, is a little nervous, since all four are members of the same caucus that's about to go into a special "supplemental session" of the Oregon Legislature in February - with House Speaker Merkley.

I served with all four senators. I respect them all. I endorsed Kate early; she took the Oregon Democrats from a 10-20 minority in 1996 to an 18-12 majority last session during her leadership. That's enough for me. I'd have no problem with Brad or Rick, Oregon citizens would be well served. I really believe Vicki's done a great job as state senator and we need her to hold that seat.

State Attorney General - Again, a beautiful scenario for Democrats at this moment; two Democrats are running in the primary, and the Republicans have yet to find a candidate. The Democrats are State Rep. Greg McPherson and Lewis and Clark professor John Kroger. Both are smart, hardworking lawyers. I served with Greg in the 2003 legislative session. Greg's dad and granddad served in the Oregon House. His father, Hector, is the father of seminal 1971 land use planning legislation in Oregon. Greg is highly respected by his colleagues, he is principled and bright.

Meanwhile, on the other side, lurking in the darkness beyond the pale of acceptable political behavior in Oregon is Kevin Mannix, three-time statewide loser, former head of the Oregon Republican Party. Kevin has been on a self-described one-man search to find a candidate; latest rumor is that he has found himself ... so to speak ... not biblically.

State Treasurer - This one is bizarre! Apparently, in order to show that any candidate for this office must be totally efficient and penurious, you can only run for this office if you've been a Republican, an Independent and a Democrat. There's only one announced candidate: Ben Westlund is the only guy who fits the bill. Isn't switching parties twice like having transgender surgery twice?

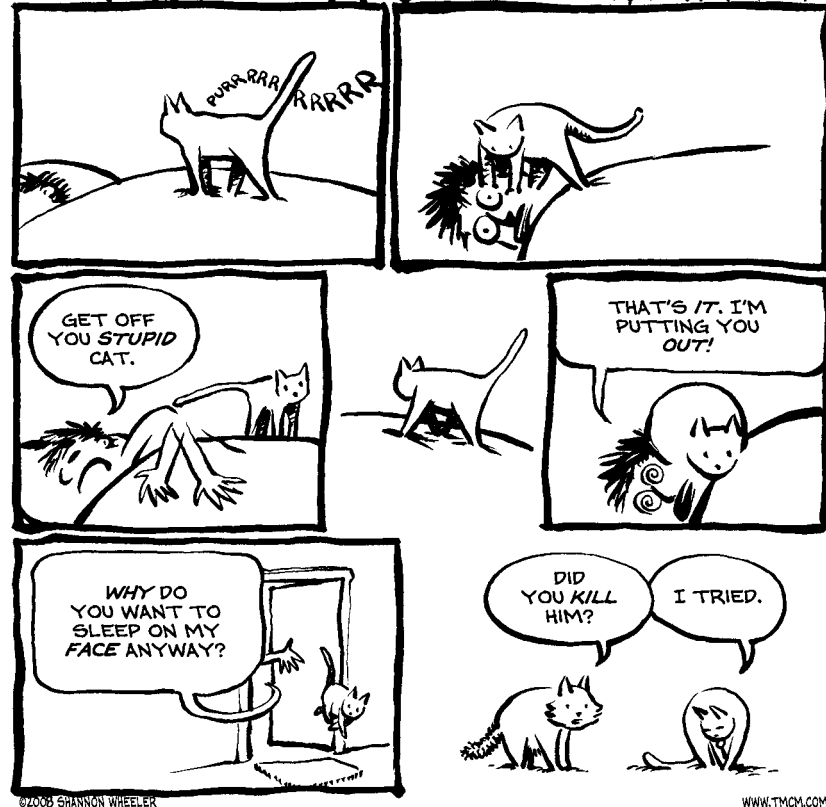
I served with Ben in the House and Senate - if he were a special education student, he'd be what they call a "line of sight" kid: Never let him out of your direct visual contact or interesting and devious things might happen. Ben never saw a deal he didn't like, and Oregon is still paying back federal penalties for his bookkeeping sleights-of-hand with the feds when he was the powerful co-chair of Ways and Means.

Don't get me wrong, he's a great guy, I love him. I watched him courageously battle cancer, never losing his resolve or his sense of humor. He's a good man. I'm just sayin', he's a "line of sight" guy. Besides, I'm not sure he could do much harm over there in the Treasurer's office anyhow because I ain't quite sure what the Treasurer does.

Former State Sen. Tony Corcoran is a member of the state Employment Appeals Board and co-founder of the Hot Air Society of South Lane, Eugene and Springfield (HASSLES). The views expressed herein are those of a private citizen of Oregon.

How to Be Happy

by Shannon Wheeler



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A POSITIVE MODEL

Regarding your Dec. 27 cover story on homelessness, I would like to respond by sharing a hopeful shelter model. On Nov. 15 the Corvallis Homeless Shelter coalition opened the doors of a former sorority building as a men's cold weather shelter.

The shelter operates through March 15 with volunteers. Each week a different community organization staffs two or three greeters who open up the shelter at 7 pm and interact with guests for four hours. At 11 pm another volunteer arrives to accompany our only paid staff person who attends the shelter from 11 pm to 7 am. In addition, the organization of the week provides a snack for each evening. Granted, the capacity of this shelter is small; nevertheless, it is a viable community model.

Although most of the organizations supporting this model are faith-based, there is no proselytizing. The faith-based organizations represent a wide range of diverse communities that have come together to meet the shelter needs of those less fortunate. In addition to faith-based groups, other community organizations are welcome and have participated in the sheltering experience.

Actually, the model does more than shelter homeless men. The shelter puts the community in touch with each other. It provides opportunities for real-people-to-real-people interactions. Although the shelter is open for only four months, the acquaintances last longer. Sincere caring and concern, once individuals have allowed themselves to connect, is proving to be a powerful and hopeful force.

Aleita Hass-Holcombe
Corvallis

Mayor Piercy is offering Eugene almost more than we deserve, a mayor who knows the importance of bridging the ideological divides that are preventing us from moving forward on many critical issues.

Far too many of Eugene's left-leaning activists seem to be holding onto a playbook that hasn't been revised since 1969. While indeed we must defend our fair city from over-development, we also must work with those whom we don't always agree. We have a seat at the table; now we have to use it wisely.

I have seen our mayor lead our city in a productive direction by avoiding using ideological labels and being willing to work with all the people we need to have a productive and sustainable city.

It is not always necessary to contradict the R-G, and in this case I think it was flat-out wrong and sounded even a little mean-spirited. I think all of us who want to see positive, sustainable change in our Emerald City should be a little kinder to those who give their heart and soul as Piercy does, for a job that offers so little compensation. A woman of her talents could be leading an organization that pays her much, much more. She has nothing to gain from this job she's taken (and hasn't tried to exploit her position for financial gain). I'd be surprised if Piercy had any political ambitions beyond Eugene at this point (though I'd be delighted to support her if she did).

We could at least appreciate our honest, ethical, compassionate, hard working, and (dare I say it) liberal leaders who actually get things done. We have few enough; let's not drive them away.

Rose Wilde
Eugene

PIERCY'S VALUE

While I appreciate the difference in perspective that EW brings to our local media scene, compared to the R-G, I disagree with EW's characterization of our mayor as more moderate or even conservative.

OVERRIDING CONCERN

In regards to the Slant bit on Al Gore and global warming in the Jan. 10 EW: It seems to me that there should not even be a debate. I am not saying Global Climate Change (GCC) is really happening due to