

GROUND GAME

THE ROAD TO NOVEMBER 6, 2012
BY NANCY WEBBER

IN DEEP WATER

Climate change issues cry for attention

When I rear-ended an SUV at the Hollywood on-ramp to I-95 on Thursday afternoon, I had no traction. Really. That's not an excuse. There were at least 4 inches of water — seawater — on the road. I-95 is 3 miles from the ocean, but there it was flooding up and out of the storm drains onto the freeway entrance. On streets from downtown Miami to Palm Beach, the water was more than 6 inches deep in some places.

Since the accident I've learned that during an extreme high tide, such as the one that occurred on Wednesday, the storm water pipes in Hollywood, and many other south Florida cities, can become submerged in seawater. It's the by-product of a changing sea level along Florida's south coast. In the past 70 years, since the storm drain system was constructed, the sea level has risen more than 8 inches and it is expected to rise another 9 to 24 inches in the next century.

The woman whose car I hit wasn't particularly interested in a conversation about climate change or gravity, but at least several newspaper editors and environmental groups want the presidential candidates to talk about it. The Union of Concerned Scientists and others were standing ankle deep at the corner of 10th and Alton in Miami Beach, while I was navigating the on ramp, pleading with the presidential candidates and debate moderator, Bob Shieffer, to talk about the dilemma. More the 120 scientists and local government officials have signed a letter to the candidates urging the topic to be included in the final debate in Boca Raton this week. By the time you read this, we'll know if their pleas were heard.

Storm drains are only the most visual indication of the subterranean crisis that faces south Florida. More than five million people live in the Miami metropolitan area on land that, at its highest elevation, is only 6 feet above sea level. The city of Miami estimates that its costs alone will be \$206 million to combat the current sea levels.

The letter to the candidates says: "Because Florida is so densely populated, it is estimated 40 percent of the population and housing units at risk from sea level rise in the nation are here, in the state of Florida."

In March of this year, Yale and George Mason Universities released the results of a survey, *The Political Benefits of Taking a Pro-Climate Stand in 2012*. The researchers asked voters in swing states several questions: do they worry about climate change (55 percent of Democrats polled answered "yes," as did 46 percent of Independents and 33 percent of Republicans); would it influence their vote (57-49-44); should it be a priority (79-60-61), and should we invest in reducing it (73-63-49). When nearly 50 percent of the Republicans in swing states agree that solving a problem is worth a public investment, the problem is worth talking about.

For Gov. Romney, the challenge is to reverse course yet again. He mocked the president during the Republican convention for promising to address climate change and he has taken the Americans for Tax Reform pledge not to raise taxes at any time under any circumstances. ATR founder Grover Norquist has defended the pledge saying, "I don't want to abolish government. I simply want to reduce it to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub." Romney has to convince us that he understands that climate change is a significant concern and that it is worth spending federal dollars to address it.

For President Obama, he can get a little wonky and tell us what he's already done — increased fuel efficiency standards as a part of the auto bailout, cut carbon emissions across the energy sector, increased investments in clean energy and weatherization. But he also needs to passionately remind us of the Colorado fires last summer and the ongoing acceleration of the polar ice melt. Then he needs to look in the camera and, adapting a familiar phrase, he needs to say, so that everyone understands he means it, "I hear you, Florida, and if you give me another term, the whole world will hear you."

Oh, and he could put in a good word for me to a certain judge in Broward County. ■

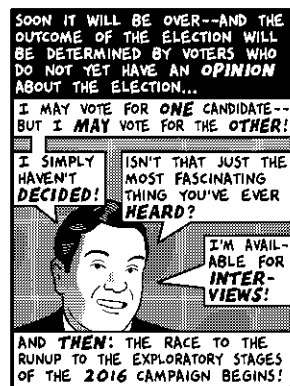
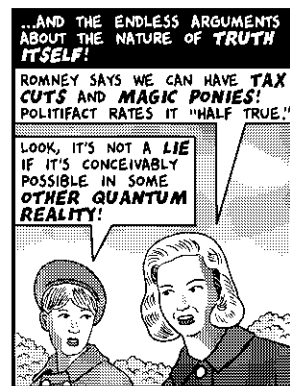
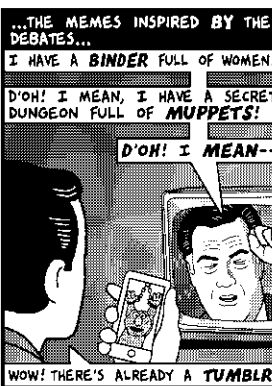
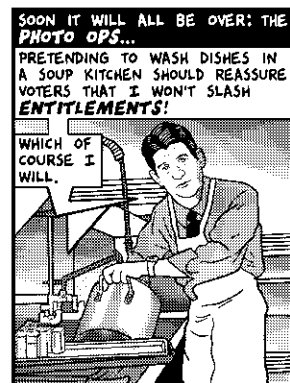
Nancy Webber of Eugene is a longtime Oregon political activist and author of Ground Game, a new book that chronicles her time in the field offices of the 2008 Obama campaign. The book is available at Amazon Kindle, iBook, Kobo and Inkwater Press.

LETTERS

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

THE END IS NEAR



WILL COUNCIL ACT?

The Eugene City Council is slowly, painfully, somewhat incoherently inching its way toward considering the proposal by Opportunity Village Eugene (OVE) to set up a self-governed village for homeless people, somewhat modeled after successful villages in other cities.

Most of the council is trying to talk about OVE without ever mentioning its name, which is strange to watch. They clearly see this as a political hot potato and are running scared, afraid of some of their constituents who hate the homeless and don't want them in their neighborhoods — even though the homeless are already there.

As the American economy has steadily declined since the early 1970s, with working-class jobs automated or exported to Asia, classism has replaced racism as our country's dominant form of bigotry. The increasing number of people dropping off the economic edge threatens the right-wing view of how society works. It also scares people, consciously or not, as they realize they could be next. So they react with denial and blaming the victim.

It will be interesting to see if the council has the guts to act on OVE and actually do something about homelessness, or if, as in the 1960s civil rights movement, we will have to turn to the streets and the courts for a solution.

Lynn Porter
Eugene

KINDNESS @ RESPECT

I worked in court with Judge Alan Leiman for eight of my over 30 years as a Eugene Municipal Court employee. I also lost a loved one at the hands of a drunk driver. Judge Leiman was always fair and impartial and he believed that politics or social standing had no place in the courtroom. He treated everyone who worked at the court with kindness and respect.

Alan Leiman was a strong advocate for more consistent DUII sentencing and defendant accountability. He devoted

countless hours outside of his law practice and work as a judge to reducing the number of impaired drivers on Lane County roads. As a 13-year volunteer Juvenile Court judge and as a past moderator of the Victim Impact Panel, Alan has demonstrated a true commitment to keeping our community safer. Please join me in writing in Alan Leiman for Position 7 of the Lane County Circuit Court.

Deborah Weaver
Springfield

TIME FOR A CHANGE

I am a retired teacher myself. I have lived in Eugene for about 10 years, formerly from New York City, continue to be a faithful member of the Democratic Party and consider myself a progressive. I have listened carefully to Juan Carlos Valle speak about his vision. While Betty Taylor has served Ward 2 well on some issues important to members of our Ward, what seems missing from her agenda is a vision for the future growth of our community. How wonderful it would be for Ward 2 to have a Latino man with a personal and quite compelling story of his own to represent us to help us move forward. It's time for a change and I believe Juan Carlos can move us forward.

Julie Beck
Eugene

NOT THE CHANGE WE NEED

From my prospective serving as the vice president of Southeast Neighbors and the Eugene Planning Commission, Betty Taylor is the right choice to for Ward 2. She understands our needs socially, economically and environmentally and she has proven this through her actions with her many years of service on council.

I have deep concerns about Mr. Juan Carlos Valle; take a look at who is funding his campaign. Donations are funneled through a PAC called Community Action Network. Some of the contributors are Delta Sand and Gravel, Seneca and a number of investment companies.

Valle has a fair amount of pro-