

A Eugene Treasure

What you might not know about Betty Taylor

They broke the mold when Betty was born — she’s one of a kind! Deciding to support Betty Taylor’s re-election to the Eugene City Council Ward 2 is fairly simple: Not only is she a home-town hero, respected across Oregon and in Washington, D.C., she’s really the only qualified candidate in the race, by far. Her civic resume goes back decades and is unmatched, probably unprecedented in both quality and breadth in the current or any council in Eugene’s modern history.

Taylor currently serves on the prestigious Board of the National League of Cities (NLC), a body which represents each U.S. city — well over 200 million citizens. The League of Oregon Cities mounted a successful campaign last year to elevate Taylor to that post, which puts her on the cutting edge of national urban policy representing Eugene and Oregon.

Taylor’s list of local leadership roles is a mile long: president of the City Council, chair of Lane Regional Air Pollution Agency, Police Commission, McKenzie Watershed Council, chair of the Human Services Commission, Workforce Partnership Board, Lord Leebrick Theatre’s first board, etc.

Mayor Kitty Piercy has endorsed her and says “Betty has tirelessly represented her ward with great integrity.” Taylor has won the backing of all leading conservation groups. She has strong union support and deep ties to the UO community. County Commissioner Pete Sorenson calls her “the conscience of the council,” and former congressman Jim Weaver calls her “the most valuable member of the Eugene City Council.”

Taylor is known for being the council’s leader for education and human rights and for standing up to unchecked ugly sprawl, against automatic tax giveaways to out-of-state developers and for her persistent efforts to preserve the Amazon headwaters. Her sympathy for homeless citizens and for abandoned and injured companion animals is unsurpassed on the council.

What few citizens know, however, is her fascinating and compelling life story. Her life path through the Great Depression is a story of great hardship in a close-knit family facing starvation and homelessness. It is the stuff of a John Steinbeck novel and a profile of overcoming great odds.

Her early years were spent in rural Tennessee, Kentucky and southern Illinois. One day her father lost a finger, and his job, loading concrete on a river barge. Faced with destitution, the family was saved by grandparents sending a sack of flour and a bag of unripened green apples. The family moved to where jobs — stripping tobacco, picking strawberries — could be found. At one point, the family lived in the attic of relatives before finally moving to southern Illinois, where her father found steady employment in the depth of the Depression.

Throughout these hardships was an abiding deep family bond, and a love for reading had Betty trying to devour every book in her small town’s library. Her mother dreamed that one day Betty would earn a bachelor’s degree, a rarity at that time. Betty went on to earn a Ph.D. in English, becoming a noted scholar and having a long career teaching English at the high school, community college and university levels.

Her civic leadership dates back to the mid-1950s and the McCarthy era when she started a citywide civil rights discussion group and TV program in Illinois, enlisting local ministers and lawyers. She spearheaded the Sangamon Conservation Council in the 1960s, fighting to protect open spaces and riparian resources. Since then she has supported the Sierra Club, ACLU, NAACP, Audubon Society, NOW, League of Women Voters and dozens of local and national candidates. She came to Eugene in 1979, falling in love with the city’s artistic, political and tolerant social community.

Taylor is being challenged by developer and resource extraction forces who have poured money into the campaign of Ward 2 newcomer Juan Carlos Valle, whose supporters read like a Who’s Who of Republican big donors. Valle has a thin civic resume, having recently resigned as chair of the Police Commission in the face of reported impending demands for his resignation from members dissatisfied with his leadership style. Taylor has shown grace in not exploiting Valle’s embarrassing difficulties, preferring to press her issues instead.

Development and real estate forces want to remove the often 4-4 progressive-conservative Council split. Taylor is incredibly vital, regularly climbing Mount Pisgah with her retriever Lucy and attending dozens of meetings each month, attending her Unitarian Church, bringing city staff for field inspections when neighbors voice alarm and taking leadership roles on the NLC.

We can’t afford to lose this remarkable, decent and innovative leader from the Eugene City Council. ■

Scott Bartlett is a long-time civic activist and volunteer who served on the Lane County Budget Committee for 17 years and was elected twice to the Electoral College of the U.S.

mirrors attempt to distract voters from the facts and true issues facing the future EPUD Board. Voters should look past the negative and unfounded personal attacks and research the issues at hand and the true track records of those running.

Ron Davis is a long time resident of Cottage Grove, a devoted husband, friend and grandfather with years of successful public service experience. He is a man of integrity and honesty. Ron served on the EPUD Board from 1981 to 1994. He is well aware of the issues facing EPUD and the problems that have plagued the utility in recent years. In particular, a lack of transparency and accountability has undermined EPUD’s reputation as a progressive public utility.

Ron will help the EPUD Board return to the core values of innovation, efficiency, transparency and accountability. While we have no wish to denigrate his opponents, we are sure that Ron’s commitment to excellence and integrity make him the best choice for the EPUD Board.

*Jay & Valerie Frasier
Creswell*

WRITE IN MULIER

When the residents of Lane County cast their ballots this year, they will be electing a judge to Position 7 of the Circuit Court District 2 through a write-in ballot. I would urge them to write in the name Vincent Mulier on their ballots.

Mulier is a defense attorney currently serving the people of Eugene and I have had the honor of being one of his students at Portland State University where he teaches philosophy. I’ve taken two of the courses that he has taught, “Philosophy of Sex and Love” and “Morality of Punishment.” Through my conversations with him, I have found him to be a man of great principle with the highest of respect for the rights and the dignity of all persons and a thoughtful person who has put great deliberation into his moral stances. Consequently he is a strong friend of marriage equality, the environment and the rights of labor.

There are more staid figures in this race, more conventional established ones, but there is no one more thoughtful, no one of greater integrity, and no one who represents such a bold and principled alternative to the judicial status quo as my good friend and professor. I hope that when the good people of Lane County cast their ballots this year, they do so by writing in Vincent Mulier as their choice for Circuit Court Judge, District 2, Position 7. He would be a tireless advocate for their rights and for our beautiful Oregon.

*Michael Patrick Wright
Portland*

POT IS VALID MEDICINE

The U.S. government granted a patent on cannabinoids as antioxidants and neuroprotectants, Patent #6630507, on Oct. 7, 2003. Cannabis is medicine that helps brain-injured folks. It’s that simple. Vote “yes” on Ballot Measure 80.

*Joe Canfield
Eugene*

MIXED-UP PRIORITIES

EW staff writer Shannon Finnell accuses Springfield City Councilor of making

“xenophobic and offensive” comments about Centro LatinoAmericano (“50 Shades of Betty,” 10/25). Then in the same piece she asserts that “the demographics of the Eugene City Council will be ugly” if it ends up being mostly male or all-white.

I sometimes forget that such statements and attitudes are not offensive to liberals, those stalwart defenders of tolerance.

I’ve always felt that qualifications matter most for those in public office. I’ll respectfully remind said liberals of what happened not long ago when Eugene hired two police officers primarily on the basis of their ethnicity instead of their qualifications.

*Jerry Ritter
Springfield*

REAL CHANGE NEEDED

Yeah, hooray, Pat Driscoll. You couldn’t have said it better [Letters, 10/25]. Voting for Obama is being an active participant in the farce of our two party, so-called democracy. Only when progressives decide to vote for a third or a fourth or a sixth party which truly represents them will there be any hope for real change.

This time around, Jill Stein’s platform deserves our votes, Barack Obama’s doesn’t.

*Georgette Silber
Springfield*

WAKE UP, CHARLIE!

EW’s endorsements remind me of Charlie Brown trying to kick the football that Lucy is holding. Just like Charlie Brown, EW swings ever-optimistically, hoping the Democrats will be the progressive liberal saviors of EW’s dreams. Wake up, Charlie Brown! Lucy will pull the football away at the very last moment and you’ll be flat on your back.

EW’s rote party-line endorsements are no less predictable than the R-G’s and no more inspiring. Voters who want to cast their ballots for peace, sustainability and a genuine democracy do have choices in this election but you wouldn’t know it by either the EW’s or the R-G’s endorsements.

I cannot vote for a presidential candidate who supports expanding coal and oil production and whose “foreign policy” keeps winding up killing kids in Third World countries. I’m voting for Green Party presidential candidate and Harvard-educated activist Jill Stein. And I’m voting for Pacific Green Party candidate Seth Woolley for secretary of state because Oregon needs campaign finance reform and a secretary of state who will use his role on the State Land Board to properly steward our state’s precious forests.

*Blair Bobier
Corvallis*

MISSING THE MUSIC

A recent EW featured a grand total of three musical event write-ups for the entire week, and the limited genres covered are predictable. I do not believe this reflects Eugene’s abundant and diverse music scene, and it is a poor use of space. Over a dozen events could have been highlighted in this allotment of space with fewer, more direct wording.

As a music producer and music fan, I do not believe the entertainment features live up to the Weekly’s otherwise stellar