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St. Johns Octoberfest

Neighborhood pulls
out the stops for
Saturday fun
See A&E, page 19

Community Treasure

Historic Elks Lodge
continues to serve
See Metro, page 13



The Portland Observer 43

'City of Roses'

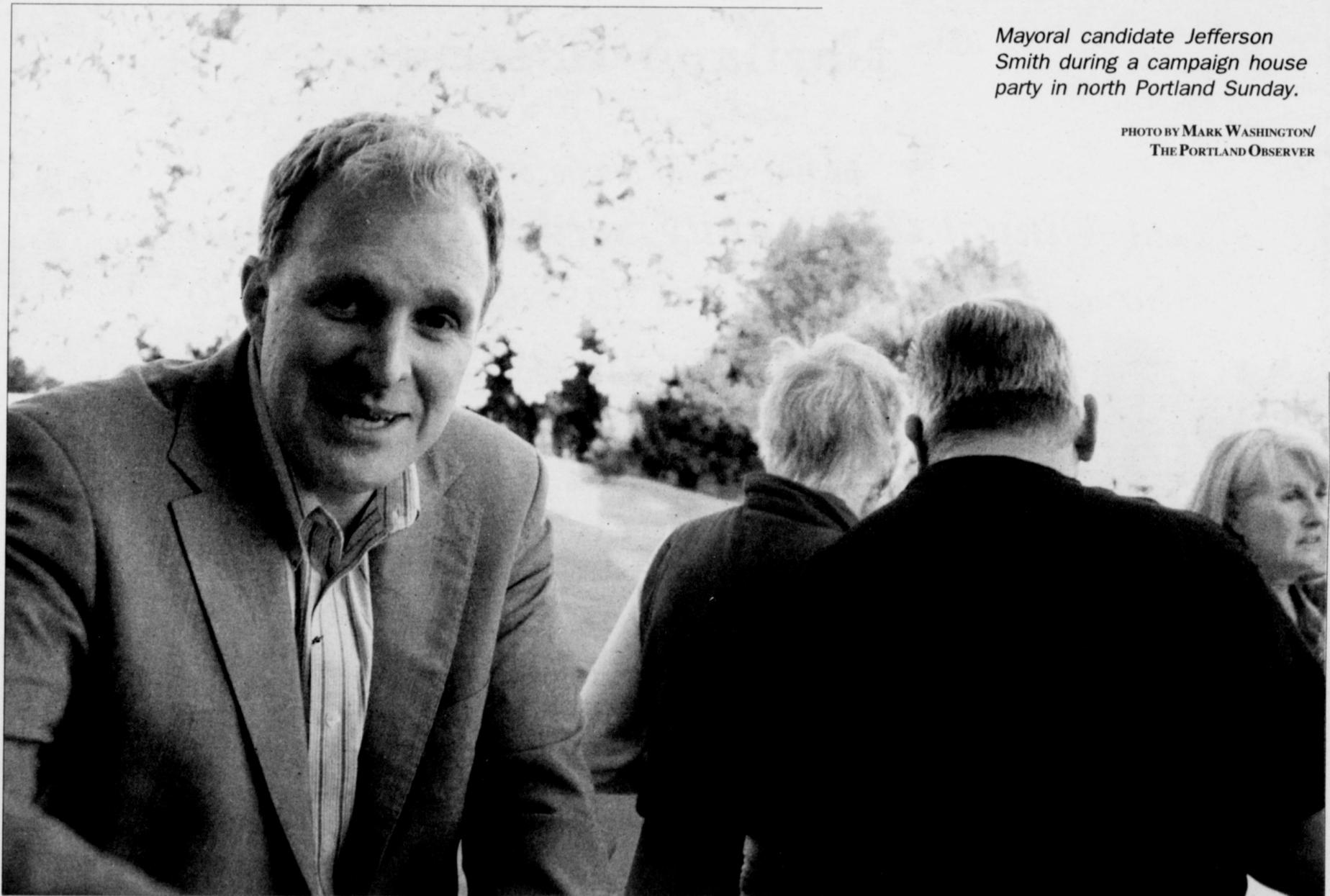


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Mayoral candidate Jefferson
Smith during a campaign house
party in north Portland Sunday.

PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Smith Tries to Shift Tone

Mayoral candidate wants focus back on city issues

BY CARI HACHMANN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Rep. Jefferson Smith was trying to put his campaign for Portland mayor back on track Monday after revelations that he was involved in an altercation with a female when he was a college sophomore at the University of Oregon.

The east Portland lawmaker was struggling to project that he was a better champion for the values and policies important to city residents than his opponent Charlie Hales, a former city councilman. Recent polls show almost a third of Portland voters are still undecided as the Nov. 6 vote-by-mail general election draws closer.

Smith was forced into a news conference Monday to

explain the altercation with a woman who was allegedly intoxicated and came at him swinging, thinking he had pushed her during an off-campus party in Eugene in 1993. Smith was cited for misdemeanor assault.

"Somebody, I didn't know was asleep on the couch. Somebody pushed her off. She came at me and started swinging at me. I tried to get her to stop," he said.

The woman got a cut that needed medical attention. Smith paid for her hospital expenses and did 20 hours of community service for the charge to be dropped.

Last August, Smith was forced to apologize when revelations came to light that he had seven suspensions of his driver's license for failing to appear in court for a number of driving infractions. Another past transgression involved punching a player during a pick-up basketball game.

Even before Monday's news conference, Smith said too much focus had been made on past issues and not enough

time spent talking about the future of the city.

"We are all imperfect people," Smith said, during an interview last week with the Portland Observer.

Since joining the race for mayor last summer, Smith, 38, has dove wholeheartedly into his campaign. He has attended 190 house parties and raised more than a half-million dollars in the campaign.

Smith said a growing and demographically-shifting Portland brings complex issues to the mayor's desk. He doesn't promise that he can fix everything, but assures voters that if anyone is going to do it, he is that person.

"I'm not going to fix all of this stuff, I know--homelessness, achievement gap, income disparities," he said. "But we are going to do everything we can to make things better. And it's going to take the whole community to engage."

continued ▼ on page 11