

Title: You Gotta Have Friends: Candidates for Governor Reach Across the Aisle
by Victoria Taft
April, 2002

INTRODUCTION

There may be a Red America and a Blue America, as the last national election pointed out, but the great political divide of course is a bit more complicated to explain than that. Even in Oregon politics where the big “L” Left of Multnomah County meets the Right of the ‘burbs,’ there’s a blurry blot of purple where Red and Blue, Left and Right, bleed into one another. It’s a smudge of crossover area where both sides meet and sometimes even agree.

This is a story that begins in that blurry blot of purple somewhere out there in the middle. It's an introduction to the six major candidates for Governor of Oregon and their friends who come from the other side of the political tracks—the other side of that blob.

Left-wing Ted Kulongoski considers ultra-righty Craig Campbell a guy he can count on. The respect is returned. Law and order conservative Kevin Mannix has spent most of his adult life calling crusty liberal, State Senator Peter Courtney, a friend and colleague. Former State Treasurer and Democrat Jim Hill “cracks” jokes with his longtime “backer” chiropractor (and Republican) Verne Saboe from Albany. Moderate Republican Jack Roberts throws wide left to former U of O football player-turned Lane County Commissioner Bobby Green, for a completion of mutual respect and friendship. Lefty Bev Stein can count on support from one small business owner and Republican Kathleen Lansing. Former Portland School Board member, Republican Ron Saxton, counts as one of his biggest fans and supporters downtown liberal kingmaker, Sho Dozono.

This time you won’t be hearing what the candidates think or the next soundbite they want to toss out; this is about the company they keep. This isn’t about L-left and R-ight; this is about L-eadership and R-espect. Because you can tell a lot about a person by their friends. Ya gotta have friends.

YOU GOTTA HAVE FRIENDS

BEV STEIN(D) and KATHLEEN LANSING (R)

Kathleen Lansing is no Democrat. In fact she describes herself as being raised in small business. Lansing runs Lansing Linoleum Company out on SE Foster Rd. in Portland, the same company her father ran when she was growing up. Says Lansing, “I’m from what I refer to as a ‘mixed marriage.’ My mom was a Republican, to the right of Ronald Reagan; my dad was a Democrat. He was a trustee of the union, and she was always mad.”

Maybe it was that upbringing, and seeing the marriage work, but when she met Bev Stein five or six years ago while working on a board for Workforce Development, she was impressed, impressed enough to become friends. Lansing figured out fast that Stein was a Democrat and says, “Some of her ideas...well...but we share so many values.”

What impressed Lansing? She says, “The thing about Bev is she is intelligent enough to listen and take in all the ideas and points of view and come up with a position that allows everyone to come together regardless of politics. She cares more about results for people than about politics in the end. Solutions that are people-oriented, that’s her appeal.

“I do plan to vote for Bev. I checked out the roster and none of them had a strong enough position to draw me more than someone I’ve seen in action.”

As Lansing chatted talked about Stein’s busy campaign style and also about her family’s work in their 53-year-old flooring business, she remarked, “We think we work as hard as Bev does.” Anyone in small business knows—that’s a compliment.

“Of all possessions a friend is the most precious.” —Herodotus

JACK ROBERTS (R) and BOBBY GREEN (D)

Bobby Green got to know Jack Roberts when, years ago, Roberts beat him out for a job. Both were vying for an appointment to fill a vacancy on the Lane County Commission. Green says the best man got the job.

“I went back and listened to the tapes of the interviews. Jack had all the right answers. Still does. That’s why I think he’ll be a great governor.”

Humbling and kind words, considering Green is no slouch in political circles in Eugene. Green has been well known in Eugene, first as a U of O football player and later as a City Council member. He’s since been named to fill Robert’s spot on the Commission when Roberts left to become Oregon’s Labor Commissioner. They’ve been close ever since. The two see each other at the usual political confabs but also huddle up at University of Oregon football games.

Green has studied Jack for years.

“I look at what people say they’re going to do and match it with what they actually do. Jack does what he says he’ll do and he does it with intelligence and a sense of humor.”

Green is even considering paying Roberts the highest compliment he can: switching parties to vote for Roberts in the Republican primary.

“I’m not caught up in the political gamesmanship between the R’s and the D’s. I look at the candidate. Jack exceeds the class. He’s the best candidate. He’s ready. He has a plan

and a vision to go with it. If [voters] knew him like I do, they'd back him."

"The only way to have a friend is to be one." —Ralph Waldo Emerson

KEVIN MANNIX (R) and PETER COURTNEY (D)

It's hard to remember back when law and order conservative Kevin Mannix and liberal curmudgeon Peter Courtney were on the same political side. Still, State Senator Courtney says it hasn't changed their relationship—too much, anyway.

"Kevin and I have known each other forever. I think we knew each other before we were born. I think the fact that our kids went to the same schools, we constantly run into each other in non-political arenas, his son shared a locker with my son for a year, they played soccer together, they were altar servers at the same time at the same mass. I came from the East Coast and lived below the Mason-Dixon line; he is," he pauses for effect, "a Vahjinyun. We know each other, probably understand each other; we probably don't play political games with each other..." Courtney could go on with his litany of things he has in common with Mannix.

These two, "Peter and Kevin," (Courtney often refers to himself in the third person) are not friends per se.

"Friends are Marines who fought together. I don't use the word 'friends' like others do."

Still they've been colleagues. Mannix was in Courtney's Democratic caucus where they had only one political blow up (on a bill regarding artificial insemination).

Would he vote for Mannix? Courtney says, "That's an unfair question. Kevin changed uniforms, but at least he did it in a decent and nice way: when he got out of office. One thing about Kevin, he doesn't play sides—he just cares about getting things done. He's very formidable."

"True friends stab you in the front."—Oscar Wilde

TED KULONGOSKI(D) and CRAIG CAMPBELL(R)

"The Campbells have a fairly big reputation for being conservative which is fairly well-earned."

Craig Campbell's eyes sparkle. He's enjoying the moment, knowing he's just uttered a whopper of understatement.

Campbell works in his father's lobbying and political consulting company, The Victory Group. Conservative warhorse Larry Campbell is arguably the most politically powerful man in Oregon's capitol. That his son would say a few kind words about the opposition party's leading candidate must gall him.

During 1994 and 95, then-Oregon Attorney General Kulongoski hired Craig Campbell as a Special Assistant Attorney General to smooth over the transition between pre and post Measure 11 juvenile crime laws.

"Ted's goal is to solve the problem at hand, not take political advantage of it. Anytime you bring juvenile justice providers and children's advocates together you only have about 50 different factions sitting at the same table." Campbell laughs at the memory of it and then continues, "Ted was able to bring them together under a single plan."

Would he cross over to vote for him?

"You won't see me changing voter registration to vote for him in the primary, but, well, in the general [election]? I could give you a cheesy answer and say, 'Well I'll see who our candidate is,' but..." He pauses and then announces, "Nah, I can't answer that."

"Life without a friend is death without a witness." —Spanish proverb

JIM HILL(D) and VERNE SABOE(R)

"If I wanted to leave my seven-year-old for the night in the care of a babysitter, who would it be? Jim Hill is the only one."

Some people judge politicians on whether they'd let them date their daughters, make their bank deposits, or how they match up to their pet issues, but Albany chiropractor Verne Saboe has come up with his own criteria and Jill Hill fits right in.

"Jim Hill has an air of integrity about him. I can't explain it. He's honest. He's conservative on money issues—he's more a Republican on money issues than a Democrat," he explains.

But then as Saboe observes, he's "barely" a Republican himself.

"I vote for the person and not the party. I'm a moderate to liberal Republican."

Saboe has known Hill since 1981 when the then-fledgling politician was running for a state representative's spot in the Oregon Legislature. He's watched as Hill has climbed the ranks to State Treasurer and now Governor.

“I’ve always just liked the guy. He’s good on our issues, too.”

Saboe is a chiropractic neurologist who, as a member of both the national and state chiropractic boards, lobbies politicians on all matters chiropractic.

“I don’t know if I’d switch parties and vote for him [in the primary]. Probably, though. I’d love to see him matched up against Mannix in the general.

“Now that would be a race.

“Hill would win.”

“A friend whose hopes we cannot satisfy is a friend we would rather have as an enemy.”
—Friedrich Nietzsche

RON SAXTON(R) and SHO DOZONO(D)

Sho Dozono could well be called Mr. Portland. As the recent chair of the Chamber of Commerce, head of Azumano Travel, founding member (along with Ron Saxton) of the Portland Public Schools Foundation, a member of the Sports Authority, and friend to nearly every member of the Oregon congressional delegation, Dozono has gained considerable clout.

Dozono helped raise money to bail out the Portland Public Schools during the mid-90’s and even convinced the mayor to pony up some cash from the city (perhaps with a little persuasion from his daughter, Elisa, the mayor’s former spokeswoman). Dozono organized Oregon’s goodwill flight to New York after the September 11th terrorist attacks. He even carried the Olympic torch through the streets of Portland. The guy is connected.

So what’s this big D Democrat doing backing the likes of Republican Ron Saxton?

“I’ve seen [Ron’s] leadership close up when we worked together [on school funding]. When he said he would run for governor I thought it was fantastic that someone of his caliber would choose to give up his private practice and jump into the public sector.”

Saxton not only is happy for the support of a friend, he’s happy for the political juice Mr. Portland brings to his campaign. He insists, however, Dozono is not whispering Demodogma in his ear. “She’s made no effort at all to lobby me on issues. I think that’s a sign of friendship and respect for my abilities.”

“Friendship is almost always the union of a part of one mind with the part of another, people are friends in spots.” —George Santayana

In this May's primary race for governor of Oregon, six people are considered major candidates: Jim Hill, Ted Kulongoski and Bev Stein for the Democrats and Kevin Mannix, Jack Roberts and Ron Saxton for the Republicans.

They need all the friends they can get, in order to give Oregon all the leadership we need.

No doubt each of them is hoping to make a friend of you.

"Making friends for the world to see
Let the people know, you got what you need
With a friend at hand you will see the light
When your friends are there, then everything's all right." — Elton John