

EDITORIAL

Hawks and Doves and War

In peacetime a low voter turnout can be an indication of the public's general satisfaction with the state of their state, or the state of their nation. And while complacency isn't a desirable personal attribute, it does speak well for the general state of affairs.

But complacency must go in times of crisis and in times of war. The gravity of our current situation—the unprecedented terror attacks of 9/11, ongoing military action in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the daily, deliberate threats of new terror attacks on American soil and abroad—calls for serious, engaged citizens. And the American public has responded. Voters are energized, engaged and ready, as they should be, to make a serious choice, to choose a direction.

Most Oregonians remember 1992 when more than 20 percent of voters cast ballots for Ross Perot. With the election already decided in favor of Clinton by the time polls began to close in the West, it's reasonable to assume that many of those Perot votes were “why not?” votes, throwaways.

But that won't work this election. This is a wartime election and the direction we choose, the man we choose to lead us, matters. And many Oregonians will vote by mail long before most polls around the country even open.

So how many times have we been faced with this serious choice for our country? And how did we decide?

In 1812 James Madison won his second term just after war broke out with England. As the war escalated in 1814, the British burned the White House and the Capitol in Washington DC. But by 1815, the war ended successfully and Madison's term ended peacefully.

In 1864 Abraham Lincoln faced a tough re-election fight against Gen. George McClellan, the young Napoleon. A war-weary nation nearly decided against their incumbent leader in favor of his general, who had been fired for his reluctance to engage in battle.

In 1944 Franklin Roosevelt won a closer than expected race against Dewey for his fourth term in office. Despite his length of time in office and failing health, the country stayed the course during WWII, hoping to end the war under consistent leadership.

In 1952 the presidency was open. Gen. Dwight Eisenhower faced Adlai Stevenson during the Korean War. The country chose their military general and voted in a Republican for the first time in 20 years.

In 1968 the presidency was open again. At the height of the Vietnam War, both candidates spoke about peace—Hubert Humphrey (running from Johnson's failed war record) and the Democrats were dove-ish on the war, and Richard Nixon claimed to have

a “secret plan for peace.” The country voted for party change, a crack down on rioters, and Nixon’s vision to end the war.

What can we learn from history? Maybe 200 years later, 60 years later, 40 years later, everything has changed. But maybe not.

In all three instances with an incumbent in office, the nation held the course through the waging war. And in the open races, the country chose the more “hawkish” candidate to bring the war to conclusion.

Probably the most significant parallel appears between the Lincoln-McClellan election and this year’s Bush-Kerry election. The nation is war-weary and the incumbent is somewhat unpopular due to the war. The opponent is known for his military service, but also for his personal disdain for war.

It’s equally striking that in both elections the war tears at the nation’s soul, pitting citizen against citizen, brother against brother. But oddly enough, in this election we’re not just talking about Iraq, we’re also talking about Vietnam. And Bush didn’t bring it up; Kerry did.

Voters are curious about Kerry’s obsession with his Vietnam War record and his blithe dismissal of his 20 years in the U.S. Senate. Nearly 40 years later, most veterans and citizens alike have put to rest their conflicts over Vietnam. Said former Green Beret Tom Whitehouse to the *Oregonian*, “Veterans don’t go back and revisit these things and nitpick what happened.”

Many political watchers find it highly unusual that Kerry made his four-month Vietnam service the highlight of his bio film, his convention appearance, and indeed his whole campaign. They find it unusual, because, like Gen. McClellan, Kerry served his country, but as a reluctant warrior at best. Upon returning from Vietnam service, Kerry railed against not just our presence in Vietnam, but also, in testimony before Congress, he accused his fellow soldiers there of atrocities. Until recently his picture hung next to Jane Fonda’s in a Vietnam museum honoring those who helped *against* the Americans.

Why the inconsistent, almost irrational behavior? Why highlight service in a war the candidate considered immoral? Why focus on a skill area, that the candidate clearly finds repugnant?

And given the nation’s voting history, why take the role of McClellan in a race against a Lincoln?

There’s only one explanation. From the time he was a young man John Kerry plotted his political career based on a different historical figure—John Kennedy. He was thorough enough in his plans to take his video camera to war with him, careful enough to get a Swift boat assignment to capture the JFK similarity. And though he publicly despised the

war and those who fought it, he was careful to keep records, photos and contacts from his short service for later political use.

Kerry hardly seems to notice that history has given him an entirely new, and different, set of circumstances. With his political stage pre-set, Kerry doesn't seem bothered by the turmoil he has created by re-igniting the internal clashes over Vietnam. In fact, he and other liberals seem almost eager to rehash the old fights and reopen all the old wounds.

But no matter how much John Kerry wants to pretend that he's John Kennedy, he's still John Kerry. And no matter how much he wants to rehash the painful arguments over Vietnam, this war is the War on Terror. Politicians can emulate historical figures but they must live in the reality of their own time.

While Kerry's whole campaign has a quaint late-60s retro feeling to it, George Bush moves forcefully (too forcefully for some) to shape the nation's future foreign policy and national security.

The United States is at war and the nation's voters have a serious choice to make. The last time they faced similar circumstances, they chose Lincoln—quiet, and at the time, considered inarticulate, uneducated, too bent on war. Today the union survives.

May we choose seriously, and choose well.

The Eastside Guy

A Pair to Draw To

By Dave Lister

How about that Portland Mayor's race? "Diamond Jim" Francesconi versus "Teflon Tom" Potter. Geez, somehow I can't see myself cracking a Pabst Blue Ribbon with either one of those guys.

Before the Primary, Francesconi put the touch on every suit in downtown Portland for donations, raised close to a million bucks, and was promptly walloped by Potter, whose only platform in the primary was that he *wouldn't* take any money. Kinda makes Commissioner Sten and Auditor Blackmer's "clean money" campaign finance reform look a little silly; seems you can't buy an election in Portland after all.

So what happens after the primary? "Diamond Jim" cans his campaign team, throws on his Birkenstocks, jumps on his Vespa and tears squealing off in the tightest left turn we've seen in Portland since Ivancie told the cops to turn in their axe handles. He tries to force a police reform resolution through the council, gets his wrist slapped for bureau meddling, and leaves all the suits wondering just what planet he's from. I'll betcha the Francesconi fundraiser mailing round two didn't do so hot.

Meanwhile "Teflon Tom," who's probably as surprised as anybody that he made the primary cut, decides he better come up with something new; he can't ride that \$25 contribution limit all the way to the general election. He secures the endorsement of commissioner "Water Boy" Erik Sten and is quoted in the August 10th *Oregonian* as saying "I want to shift the thinking of the community from being reactive to proactive."

Now there's a notion. Maybe while he's at it he could "shift the paradigm" and keep everything "sustainable." In the first days of his mayorship Potter says he plans to become the CEO of the City, take over every bureau, and straighten this mess out. Commissioner Saltzman chuckles that it might be a little challenging for one person long term, and Commissioner Leonard quips that he's "always wanted to learn play golf."

And what about the issues? Francesconi says he opposes burying the reservoirs and Potter says "me too." Francesconi says he wants to increase racial diversity in the police department and Potter says "me too." Francesconi says he wants to help small business to create jobs and Potter says "me too." Do we detect a pattern here?

So Francesconi decides he'll have to go after Potter on his record. Problem is, *what record?*

Does anyone really remember anything about Tom Potter as police chief, other than him being a guy with nice hair and a lesbian daughter? Those ex-police chiefs are all kind of a blur to me. Potter, Moose, Harrington, Kroeker. Portland runs through Chiefs of Police faster than sewage into the Willamette on a heavy rain day.

So the other day Francesconi runs some radio spots saying that way back when Potter didn't properly reprimand some cop who took 23 shots at a fleeing suspect.

Twenty-three shots? I don't know about you, but it seems to me the only bad thing you could say about Potter over that incident is that maybe he didn't run a very good target range. I'll bet 9mm ammo for those Glocks isn't cheap; seems like a little accuracy would go a long way toward helping out the taxpayers on the police budget. I never did hear if the cop hit the guy, but it turned out that Francesconi was the alleged suspect's lawyer after the incident.

Anyway, the press screams bloody murder over the attempted mudslinging, the *Oregonian* tells Francesconi to "turn in his shovel" and the Portland Police Association pulls their endorsement. Francesconi defends himself by comparing his examination of Potter's record with presidential candidate John Kerry's questioning of "Bush's failed strategy."

Hey, a public Bush-bashing and the loss of the Police Association endorsement. Maybe I've got it wrong. Maybe Francesconi really *does* know how to get elected in Portland after all.

But what the heck do I know. I'm just an Eastside guy.