

Lone wolf dips toe in political waters

Candidates' forum doesn't alter cynic's jaded view of system

455 GOLDEN GATE

BY ED BOWERS

I am headed to the State Building on a beautiful afternoon for a candidates' forum sponsored by the Tenant Associations Coalition and Alliance for a Better District 6 and others, and all I can think about is whether my

to be neutered.

And now for some waiting. I've been at concerts where the audience had to wait because the musicians were late, but it was worth it when they showed up, even if they were drunk.

I wondered why my publisher would send a politically illiterate goofball like me to this event. But I'm unemployed, and all I enjoy doing is writing words, so I'll do anything in pursuit of the muse.

For 18 years I worked hard in California, and it came to nothing. Did politicians get invented yesterday to aid us? Do they help us now?

Perhaps they comfort and help a little if it's in their best interests. Well, good for them. But if you put your life in someone else's hands, I can tell you right now that it won't be your life anymore.

By now there are 27 people in the room besides me. Then 29.

What is the population of San Francisco? Every night there are more people getting lap dances at the Market St. Cinema than come to political presentations that affect their lives. But I guess that says something about politics in this town.

More people start piling in and they all look important. That's good. I don't have to worry about them sitting next to me, crowding me out while I make sarcastic comments about them in my notebook.

Then Angela Alioto enters and sits on the stage. Tough-looking woman, attractive in a hard-core kind of way.

Eventually, the candidates sat on stage before us, and the meeting commenced. Apologies were made for delays. I found this amusing considering that on all the low-paying jobs I've worked, if you are late they consider that a capital offense. But one thing I've learned in this world is that people in power don't have to be accountable for minor infidelities and major cruelties. Unless they're the president of the United States and are considered too liberal.

Then the meeting began. Leland Lee was introduced, and he expressed the opinion that the Tenderloin would be empowered by curbing liquor stores and massage parlors.

What a party pooper.

I hate to tell the facts of life to children, but there has to be somewhere for people to go who do not and cannot cooperate with Puritan Judeo-Christian morality. Otherwise, they will spread out, and you will wake up one night with a case of the crabs. There is a lot of space on this planet, and room for everybody to live their lifestyles.

Let's keep it that way. Unless you want to help by committing yourself in a deeply spiritual and practical manner, stay away from my zone. The Tenderloin is pure snow falling to

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PHOTO BY MARK ELLINGER

Six mayoral candidates make their case for election to the city's top job at a central city platform.

unemployment check will arrive on time.

After I was checked by security for weapons, I entered an auditorium. I tried to sit in the front row, but was told that the first three rows were reserved for VIPs. An anthropologist from outer space could really do a job on the human race and its hierarchy structure. He'd make us look like a bunch of baboons.

My thought processes were interrupted by a middle-age woman with a lovely accent who got a case of the hives when the managers of this affair told her that the first three rows were reserved.

I like nightclubs, and hate auditoriums. I'm deeply spiritual, but I don't go into temples, or churches or shrines. I feel when in them like I am a dog or cat in a veterinarian's office about

asking the first question.

Next a portly man in his 60s enters wearing a plaid shirt, and he, too, tries to sit in the reserved seating. He is ejected, and sits a few seats behind me to my left. He keeps making witty comments, a terminal wit addict. Later, when Angela Alioto came on stage, he commented that if he wasn't gay that he'd go for her like a hound dog in heat.

More people began sitting in the first three rows, including two children who appeared no more than 9 years old and were perhaps registered to vote in Disneyland. Then Leland Lee came in a few minutes later; I'd heard the name, but had no idea what he did.

A lot of people are like me: They are politically apathetic. But there is a reason for that.

Some of the candidates have their say

Angela Alioto: We have a crisis in San Francisco. Money is being spent willy nilly.... Nobody can tell me that \$3.4 million spent to import sand from San Mateo to plant natural plants on the Great Highway at Balboa couldn't have been used for something else having to do with our seniors, our youth, our families, our schools.

I really want you to join me in making this a city of opportunity once again.... We get there by improving the economy of this city. There's people unemployed and underemployed in this city. And we can't fix the budget unless there is more business or revenue being generated here, because then we can tax that revenue as we have done in the past. Secondly, opportunity has to include education starting with preschool. And the third point is we need to make city government part of a solution as opposed to being the problem. We need active, persistent, strong, hands-on leadership.

Tony Ribera: I think we have to look at what's happened to our business community here in San Francisco. It's businesses that give us the bulk of jobs. We're in a situation now where we're losing business to the city of Oakland. As a native San Franciscan it just boggles my mind that anybody would leave this city to go to Oakland. We've created a business-unfriendly attitude. As your mayor, the first thing I would do is

call a business summit to get the business community together and talk about a long-range plan to stimulate things.

On policing in the Tenderloin: We don't have full staffing at the district stations, which is where we need it, where the delivery of services takes place. So I am totally committed to decentralizing the Police Department, putting the officers back into the neighborhoods where they belong.

Tom Ammiano: We need to stop the fraud in and around minority hiring and not have people who say that they're a certain ethnicity and they're just a front, and that just has to stop ... and we have to have people hired from the neighborhoods where the projects are happening.

I want to be the mayor of San Francisco that leads you to a public school system, that is a world-class system. I have introduced a Charter amendment that would cause San Francisco to step up to the plate as far as helping its public school system which has become held hostage by the state. As mayor, I am going to make sure we have an honest and open government ... a professionally managed government. I don't want to appoint people to commissions without your input, I don't want to have department heads without your input, I don't want people on those commissions who are only there because of patronage because

they wrote a big check.

Matt Gonzalez: I am somebody who wants to reform government. I think the next mayor has a great opportunity to try to make government smaller, try to make it more efficient, try to get more money into city services. I think we learned in good economic times that we shouldn't squander the added property tax and revenue that we have.

Michael Denny: We're going to look at the cause of loss...especially manufacturing jobs in San Francisco, and we don't have to look any further than our payroll tax, and prior to that, our gross receipts tax. No business deserves ... to be taxed and penalized for the privilege of hiring people and creating jobs here in San Francisco. Low-skilled people can't find jobs because those jobs don't exist in San Francisco anymore. City Hall can't do anything to fix this problem ... the only thing it can do is get out of the way.

Roger E. Schulke: Do you know if we cut the budget in half we could create at least 30,000 jobs in this city paying over \$30,000 a year? That illustrates how expensive the city government is. People can't afford to live here ... we have a city government that's just sucking the money as much as it can ... you're paying all this money. Where is it going?

— Ed Bowers