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THE GREENE SCENE

By Senator Leroy F. Greene

'T WAS EVER THUS

Two months. Two months is all I have left of my 36 years as a member of the California State Legislature. I think I could write weekly columns limited to memorabilia between now and my final day of departure which I believe to be December 6, 1998.

I remember my first campaign, running for the Assembly in 1962. There had been a census in 1960 and Sacramento county had grown faster than the average of the state, so the county was changed from two Assembly districts to three, and I ran in the new Assembly district. There were 12 candidates, eight Democrats plus four Republicans vying for the seat. How could I win under those circumstances? I had never played any role in politics prior to deciding to run for the Assembly.

Could I win? Since it was a brand new district, there wasn't any incumbent, nor was there any incumbent machinery with specialized knowledge among the 12 candidates. At that time, I was owner of my own engineering firm, Leroy Greene and Associates, Consulting Engineers. That gave me an advantage. As the boss, my time was flexible. I told my crew that I would see them on rare occasions, but in the meantime I would be walking. I walked for the five months leading up to the primary and the five months between the primary and the general. We had very little money, so there was extremely limited opportunity to use radio television and newspaper ads, or for that matter, mailers of any kind.

So, hating the notion, I understood that if I was serious about

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this, I would have to walk. It could not be done today. Today the fact that there has been so much population growth relative to 36 years ago, plus the fact that women are in the workforce in far greater numbers than ever before, makes walking infinitely more difficult than it was for me. The problem today is, nobody's home.

There were 12 of us. All the others had nine-to-five jobs and could not walk even if they wanted to, except on the weekends.

We eight Democrats were relatively friendly among ourselves prior to the primary election. When I met my Democratic brethren immediately after the primary, their responses were so cold, I thought they would all turn blue. They reminded me of a comment that our Senator at that time, Senator Al Rodda, made. Al told me that the instant that I declared myself a candidate was the same instant that I picked up a number of people as enemies, people I had never heard of, people I would never meet, people who would hate my guts simply because they supported someone else or simply did not agree with me politically. I'm sure that each of us was in the same boat on that one.

Thirty-six years have passed. How different are the issues? They are the same. Some moved up in importance, others down, but still the same issues. Taxes, abortion, gun control, education.

Every generation of candidates toes the same line, faces the same issues and offers the same views, solutions, and responses offered in a hundred previous election campaigns. Each candidate in election after election tells us how he or she is going to solve these problems which continue to exist endlessly.

'Twas ever thus.

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