



# Bigger than the bear

**T**hirty years ago next month I was working in the Siuslaw News darkroom on a Saturday afternoon, just days it seems after my wife and I arrived in Florence from the Midwest. Publisher Dave Holman hired me off the street just a couple of weeks earlier.

**Robert Serra**  
Editor

That Saturday, Dave called me out of the darkroom to meet one of his old friends who was running for the Oregon House of Representatives. Dave and his crony were huddled in Dave's front office to discuss campaign strategies.

"Bob, I'd like you to meet Wilbur Terynik," Dave said. I shook Wilbur's hand and asked him how his race was going. I wished him good luck.

I knew at the time that I had just shaken the hand of someone special. There's a certain aura that some people have. It has something to do with self-confidence and not self-importance. About common sense, not brilliance.

About honesty, not bombast.

Soon after, I became the newspaper's news editor and I came to know Wilbur quite well over the years, as I covered the Florence City Council and Port of Siuslaw. At the time I first met him, Wilbur had been a port commissioner for 11 years and had been elected to the city council a year earlier.

Wilbur, 50 in 1976, had plenty to say back then about his aspirations for state office. Among his comments were that he was against having lobbyists serve on state commissions, and he opposed annual sessions of the legislature.

"As soon as you get elected, you start running again," Wilbur was quoted as saying in a May 20 story about his race. He added that the cost to the people and the number of bills would be staggering in an annual session.

"The biggest thing for the legislature to do is to take a look at runaway state spending. The brand new programs are a bunch of bologna. There should be no more newly-appointed commissions until someone takes a look at the ones we've got."

Wilbur proposed taking a look at each agency every five years to evaluate its effectiveness. He also pointed out the "chronic unemployment on the Oregon coast. We have fine resources and a fine work force, but we get zero help from the State of Oregon. They just keep dreaming up new programs and taxing people and there's no way for the people

to pay the taxes with their income." He suggested the state enact a revolving fund for economic development.

He also said the state should take a look at the poorly written criminal laws and "pay attention to the laws already on the books instead of introducing 2,500 new ones. They should be tightened up to where they're not subject to all sorts of loose interpretations."

Wilbur ran for office on the Republican ticket and was unopposed in the primary. One of his campaign slogans as he toured the district on the back of a Chevy pick-up with a giant stuffed Kodiak bear was, "The only thing bigger than my bear is your taxes." His election was endorsed by his good friend and former governor U.S. Sen. Mark O. Hatfield. Later in November, Wilbur was defeated for House District 38 by incumbent Max Rijken of Newport.

Thirty years later, last week to be exact, Wilbur was feted at the Florence Events Center for his long years of work on behalf of the Oregon coast and its people. In true fashion, Wilbur brushed aside credit for his accomplishments.

"I was embarrassed when I heard about this and I'll tell you why. No single person ever accomplished anything by himself. It's impossible."

Wilbur now, as then, is bigger in life than the bear in the back of his truck.