

6-1-2008

Interview with Dave Romero

Nishan Havandjian

California Polytechnic State University - San Luis Obispo, nhavandj@calpoly.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/moebius>

Recommended Citation

Havandjian, Nishan (2008) "Interview with Dave Romero," *Moebius*: Vol. 6: Iss. 1, Article 12.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/moebius/vol6/iss1/12>

This Interview is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Liberal Arts at DigitalCommons@CalPoly. It has been accepted for inclusion in Moebius by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@CalPoly. For more information, please contact mwyngard@calpoly.edu.



Dave Romero

INTERVIEW WITH DAVE ROMERO

Mayor

Dave Romero has been the mayor of San Luis Obispo since 2002. A resident of SLO since 1956, he holds a degree in civil engineering from the University of New Mexico.

Moebius: What made you decide to run for mayor of San Luis Obispo?

DR: I ran for the San Luis Obispo City Council (after retiring as Public Works Director) to continue my involvement in influencing the direction of the city. I ran for Mayor when term limits prevented a direct continuation after eight years as a Councilmember.

Moebius: So, did you accomplish what you set out to do?

DR: My broad goal for the past 50-plus years has been to positively influence the direction of the city, and that has been accomplished.

Moebius: What have been your major accomplishments?

DR: Accomplishments in which I have made a major contribution in my 50-plus year career include the following (in chronological order):

- a) Construction and funding Whale Rock Dam, which has assured water supplies for Cal Poly, the Men's Colony and the City since the early '60s.
- b) Continued improvement of the City (streets, bridges, sewer systems, water systems, flood protection, public buildings, parking structures, bus systems, parks, Farmer's Market and downtown).
- c) Development and improvement of Mission Plaza.
- d) Joint (Cal Poly, the City and the Foundation) development and successful operation of the Performing Arts Center.
- e) Cooperative project (four cities and the county) to construct a pipeline from Lake Nacimiento to our communities. This will provide for our water needs for the next 40 to 50 years (This project is now under construction.)
- f) Achieve an efficient, well-run City Council and staff that will provide a

high level of service to our residents. This has gradually occurred during the 14 years I have been on the City Council, but especially during my six years as mayor.

Moebius: If some of your goals did not come about, to what do you attribute their failure?

DR: Failures were brought about by lack of political will or a misguided public. Failures which I feel saddest about (over 50 years):

- a) Inability to progress toward planning and construction of a Highway 1 by-pass that would relieve the ever-increasing congestion on Santa Rosa Street.
- b) Inability to protect the city from major floods. Through many years of effort we have upgraded to handle about a 20-year storm, but not a 100 year storm, which was my goal.
- c) Voters overturning City Council action to participate in the State Water Project. This has caused the city to expend many millions of dollars to find another source of water (Nacimiento), which is more than twice as expensive, thus leaving us with very high water rates.
- d) Voters overturning City Council approval of the Marketplace Project that would have constructed a regional shopping center (huge sales tax generator), complete with interchange (Prado Road) on vacant property south of the City.

Moebius: Do you think citizens are attuned to what the Council is about?

DR: I believe most city residents are generally aware of what the Council is about. A small minority are interested and involved on an ongoing basis, but most become involved only on issues which directly affect them.

Moebius: What are the major concerns of SLO residents?

DR: Citizens are very concerned about quality of life in SLO. This reflects in activities regarding growth, traffic congestion, preservation of the environment, taxes and level of city services.

Moebius: Are these issues similar to that of Cal Poly students who have a large presence in the community?

DR: I believe Cal Poly students are primarily interested in school activities, including social aspects. They are interested in transportation and traffic congestion to the extent that it affects them, and in entertainment available in the area. They are interested in the cost and availability of rental housing and in shopping that serves their needs.

Moebius: Is the City Council aware of issues facing Cal Poly students?

DR: I believe the City Council is quite cognizant of issues facing college students because of the Student/City Liaison Committee (SCLC), the Mediation Program, and our constant interaction with Cal Poly.

Moebius: What are some of the college student issues that the Council has tackled?

DR: The city designed and operates its bus system around the needs of Cal Poly students. The city has zoned much property near the campus for multiple housing to accommodate students. The city provides free mediation services to students. A good share of the city's infrastructure (streets, sidewalks, bike lanes, sewer and water systems) are provided near the campus primarily to serve student needs.

Moebius: What do you see as the town/gown issues?

DR: Perennial issues with students primarily relate to conflicts between the lifestyles of students and neighborhood residents. This includes noise, parties, overcrowding, parking and behavior. The city spends endless hours attempting to moderate and mediate these differences. The Student Neighborhood Assistance Program (SNAP) carried out by students under police direction has been a big help.

Moebius: Students frequently complain that the community has negative attitudes toward them. Do you find the complaints justified?

DR: I believe the community has a *positive* attitude about students, welcoming their vitality, enthusiasm and general contribution to city prosperity. Negative feelings come from conflicting lifestyles. They need to be worked out between the individuals involved.

Moebius: Are there any new approaches to the town/gown problems?

DR: We will be having a statewide "Town Gown" conference in our city this year.

Moebius: Is there another position you might enjoy apart from being mayor?

DR: I have often said that being mayor of San Luis Obispo is the best elected job in California. If I were not mayor, I would probably be in a private municipal engineering practice. ☺

Interview on behalf of Moebius conducted by Nishan Havandjian, Winter 2008.