

Skull Session – The Race for Supervisor in District Five in Calaveras County

By Ward La Valley | June 1, 2018

Edwin R. Murray-Creek: Welcome back to Skull Session, Calaveras County’s spontaneous and unrehearsed interview program on Calaveras Politics!

Back with us are our regular panelists, Lee Atwater and Louis Howe. Lee was the architect of the elections of both Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, and Louis helped steer Franklin Roosevelt to the Presidency in 1932.

Also with us is [Marj Votaire](#). Marj is a little different kind of guest in that unlike Mr. Howe and Mr. Atwater, Marj has never been a live person. She is a statistical and theoretical abstraction, but she’s as real as $2+2=4$. She represents the rational opinion of the majority of the voters in Calaveras County.

Welcome all!

As we learned in the [D5 Analysis on Free Tri-Tip Dinner](#), this election comes on the heels of last year’s recall of then-incumbent Steve Kearney. That election featured two candidates running again this year – Clyde Clapp, now Supervisor, and Bruce Giudici, who finished third. Also running are Ben Stopper and Greg Gustafson.

Louis, one school of thought has this race pretty close between Clapp, Stopper, and Giudici. There seems to be some agreement that Gustafson hasn’t campaigned hard or effectively enough to be a factor.

Louis Howe: I guess I’m in that school as well.

MC: Since the previous Analysis, there have been a couple of interesting developments ...

Lee Atwater: There’s another school of thought – and that is that Stopper is running away with it.

Louis: Bah. If Stopper is running anywhere, it’s back to the pack. He was fading fast in April. The favored candidate of the two most powerful special interests in Calaveras politics was in danger of not making the run-off.

MC: Well, whether he’s running away with it or catching up, how is he doing it?

Lee: He has more money than the other candidates, a re-tooled narrative, much better advertising, and he’s personally calling voters. That’s getting it done, baby!

Louis: His new narrative seems to be filched from the Calaveras Planning Coalition with all that greenery and sustainability. How come nobody is accusing *him* of being an agent of George Soros and the United Nations?

Lee: Well, if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em!

MC: The other big story breaking out of District Five is the concerted effort by the commercial marijuana interests to discredit Clapp. In a series of mailings to the District, it was suggested that Clapp was guilty of elder abuse, and Clapp is evidently going to Superior Court sometime later this year in

connection with the charges. Is this going to hurt Clapp, help him, or will the effects tend to cancel each other out?

Louis: First of all, the attacks were lacking. There was no smoking gun, no direct *proof* of any wrongdoing by Clapp. Their shrill tone was out of all proportion to the actual ‘evidence’ presented on the mailers, and this I think this could reduce their impact.

Lee: Oh, I think they’ll hurt Clapp, no doubt about it. I agree the mailers lacked a kill shot, but there was enough there, along with Clapp’s other recent missteps, to hurt him.

MC: Marj, what do you think? Did you see the mailers against Clapp?

Marj Votaire: Oh, yes. I am concerned about what is being written about Supervisor Clapp. But, you know, we subscribe to the *Valley Springs News* as well as the *Enterprise*, and his response there made me wonder, who is right? I must say, I don’t know if I’m comfortable that people with a lot of money can say such things about an elected Supervisor like they did. I just wish we had more actual facts. But if it turns out it was just lies and innuendoes – if that’s how it turns out – those people should be ashamed of themselves.

MC: Well, let me ask you – if you were thinking about voting for Supervisor Clapp before the mailings, how about now?

Marj: Well, I admit I would have to think about it. I was very disappointed to read that Supervisor Clapp did not vote to respect the memory of Mr. Stevenot.

Louis: Yes, talk about a self-inflicted wound. All in all, it’s just very hard to know right now if Clapp is holding up or fading under this onslaught of bad news.

MC: Well, if maybe Stopper is surging and maybe Clapp is collapsing, what’s happening with the Giudici campaign?

Lee: You know, for a communist, he seems like a pretty nice guy.

Louis: Oh stop it!! You know damn well Bruce Giudici isn’t a *communist*, he’s an *economist*!! They may rhyme and have a lot of the same letters, but, Lee, really, they aren’t the same thing.

Lee: Very funny. I mean, he’s a Democrat, and that’s at least the same thing as being a socialist.

Louis: No. No. No. It is not the same thing. Democrats believe in free markets, but we know that markets cannot be free if they are not also fair. And vice-versa. Freedom and fairness are the two sides of the same coin -- there is no such thing as a one-sided coin.

Lee: There you go, tying the hands of American Enterprise and stifling American Business with more smothering regulations! More uncertainty!! Anti-growth!!! Socialism!!!! George Soros!!!!

Marj: What does any of that have to do with being a Supervisor from District Five?

MC: Indeed, Marj. What about it, Lee?

Lee: Everything! A lot! In a way ... (mumbling) ... it speaks to character ...

Louis: What? What was that Lee? If this election turns out to be about character, I think Bruce Giudici is in pretty good shape.

Lee: Ha! Why? Because he has a dog?

Louis: No, because he's been consistent and straightforward; he's a family man who works hard and plays by the rules. And, he's, uh, how can I put this delicately, considerably more *politically independent* than the "surging Stopper."

Lee: You mean his campaign doesn't have hardly any money! Ha!

Louis: "Surging Stopper," if he finds himself running in November, will need to be ready for some real questions about *his* consistency, *his* values, and especially *his* political independence. He's taken over \$5,000 – damn near half of all the money he's raised -- from out-of-County labor unions.

Lee: You can't fool me. Just because Giudici sounds intelligent, seems decent, has good values, and has a good platform, that doesn't change the fact he's a Democrat.

Louis: Can you even hear yourself?

Lee: Look, I'm going to come right out and say it – he's a liberal, and nobody I know is going to vote for him and that's all there is to it. Case closed. Don't confuse me with any more of your facts.

MC: Marj, what about you? Could you vote for Giudici?

Marj: Lee sounds just like my husband Frank, after he's watched a little too much TV.

Lee: What's that supposed to mean?

Marj: Well, you know, Frank sits in his chair, and he has his cocktail, and right after Hannity he starts raving about liberals. Gracious me, I don't like them either, but I still think they're *people*. And if a liberal runs for Supervisor, and he's a good family man, and he seems honest and has good ideas, well, I suppose I *might* vote for him.

Lee: Wait a minute ...

Louis: I think Steve Wilensky, in District Two, showed that even liberals could get elected Supervisor in Calaveras County.

Marj: Oh yes, Wilensky! I remember him! I liked him very much! Whatever happened to him?

Lee: Oh please ...

MC: Supervisor Wilensky chose not to run for re-election in 2012 after serving two terms. I believe he's now involved in forest restoration projects. I think.

Well, let's move on. It's time for predictions. Marj, ladies first – do you care to make a prediction on the order of finish in District Five?

Marj: Oh no. I'm just not ... that way, if you'll excuse me. I express the opinion of the rational majority ...

Lee: Except there ain't no such thing ...

Marj: ... to the extent that it exists, and I'm not able to make predictions.

MC: Fair enough. Okay Louis, give us your order of finish in District Five.

Louis: This is a tough one. As I've indicated I'm skeptical that the Stopper surge is anything more than the labor unions and the commercial interests doing their best to get their guy elected. But, I'm not sure their message has gotten down to the grassroots. I'm also skeptical that the attacks on Clapp have made him uncompetitive. And I think Giudici is doing better than people realize because his campaign has worked hard going door-to-door.

Lee: Stopper is *personally*, making phone calls, not robo-calls.

Louis: And that's a big deal, I get it. But do we know how effective Stopper is over the phone? He does not enjoy the reputation of being a charismatic type of guy.

MC: And?

Louis: Okay ... I don't know ... if only Giudici had raised more money ...

Lee: But he didn't

Louis: I think the top three will all be within a few percentage points, but I'm going out on a limb and saying that Giudici squeaks into first, then Clapp finishes in second by a nose over Stopper. Stopper never caught on with the grassroots. And Gustafson is in single digits.

Lee: Dream on, buttercup. Stopper wins easily, but maybe, probably, although you never know, not by 50%. A collapsed Clapp finishes a distant second, with Giudici and Gustafson fighting it out for last.

Marj: I think I agree with Lee, except I hope Giudici does better than that because he seems like such a nice man ... oops, I wasn't supposed to say that ...

MC: Let me ask one final question: would any of you, to use an expression, "bet the house" on your prediction?

Louis & Marj: Oh, no!

Lee: Oh, hell no!!!

MC: For Skull Session, I'm Edwin R. Murray-Creek. Good night, and good luck.