

The Weather Man

CLIFF MASS

[UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
ATMOSPHERIC SCIENCES PROFESSOR]

01 SCIENCE

TV WEATHERCASTERS

Jeff Renner and Steve Pool may enjoy more celebrity and bigger paychecks than Cliff Mass—but their former professor has built a loyal fan base. For the past eight years on his Friday KUOW radio spot, Mass, 54, a University of Washington atmospheric sciences professor, has delivered the weather in ways that go intriguingly beyond mere weekend high and low temps.

The Long Island, New York, native, whose academic claims include studying the atmospheric conditions of Mars with Carl Sagan, earned his Ph.D. at the UW in 1978 and accepted a professorship in 1981.

And talk about the ultimate in weather-forecasting feats: Mass was part of the team that created a comprehensive computer simulation study, unveiled earlier this year, of future global warming effects on Puget Sound. Forecasting lighter snowpacks, cloudier springs and more summer days of 90 degrees or higher, it made

the front page of *The Seattle Times*. “A lot of people were working on the issue of global warming,” says Mass of the project’s early roots. “But it was obvious to me we had the ability, knowledge and computer power to create a model for the region.”

Currently, Mass is involved in another ambitious project that re-examines, through so-called probroadcasting (probcast.com), how weather is forecast. Rather than determining one temperature high and one low per day, Mass and his colleagues focus on probabilities by taking scores of continuous measurements throughout the day that result in real-time weather conditions.

Mass has no trouble understanding the appeal weather has in our city.

“There’s just something special about the weather—especially the way you experience it,” muses Mass. “It’s almost religious in nature—the intensity of strong weather.” *Todd Matthews*

BIGGEST INFLUENCE: “I would have to say Carl Sagan and Richard Reed—a leader in early weather forecasting.”

02 POLITICS

>> PETER THE GREAT

PETER STEINBRUECK

[COUNCILMEMBER, SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL]

PETER STEINBRUECK IS A man who knows his way around a plan. So when the mayor first proposed hiking the height cap for residential buildings downtown, the architect-turned-councilmember took careful aim and took his time.

“The proposal made by the mayor was a height and density scheme that was pretty much driven by the developers,” observes Steinbrueck. “There’s much more to building community than simply raising heights.” So, after enlisting Vancouver, B.C.’s, vaunted city planners for recommendations, Steinbrueck—the council’s chair of urban development and planning—tied our higher heights to higher fees due from developers (shooting from \$10 to \$18.94 per net square foot) to benefit affordable housing and community amenities such as parks, and to the same green building standards Steinbrueck helped secure for all public works back in 1999. His efforts ensured that the city’s highest-rising condo project, Fifteen Twenty-One Second Avenue, will be the first private, residential tower in Seattle built under Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver standards.

Want to see Steinbrueck bridle? Ask him if Seattle’s policymaking process suffers from an overly involved public. “I would much rather live here where people demand civic involvement and responses from their electeds,” says the 48-year-old Lake City resident and father of two, “as opposed to a place where there’s such apathy that you can’t get anyone to attend a meeting.” What else would you expect from the son of the late Victor Steinbrueck, the architect whose legendary voters’ initiative saved the Pike Place Market from demolition in the 1960s? And his let’s-hear-from-the-people, studious approach hasn’t exactly hurt his popularity. Up for election for his fourth term in 2007, Steinbrueck’s winning margins have edged up every cycle (taking 83 percent of the vote his last election).

“The way I see it,” reflects Steinbrueck. “I have transferred my practice as an architect to the design of our city at a time when we’re experiencing unprecedented growth, redevelopment, civic works... [I am] acting as a client on behalf of the public.” *Shannon O’Leary*