Elections 2010: How’d It Happen?

By Rande Davis

In thinking about general elections, I had a flashback to a hair-raising experience I had in high school in 1964. That’s a rather odd juxtaposition, I know, but somewhat understandable when you realize most of my high school years were in Binghamton, New York which is famous for being the home of IBM and Rod Serling. When you grow up in a community that has such a wide cultural spectrum with the straight-laced, crew-cutted, white-shirted, thin-tied IBMer culture on the one hand, and the wild, totally out-of-the-box imagination of the creator of the *Twilight Zone* on the other, it’s no wonder I have a thought process more in line with a pinball machine than dominos.

Anyway, getting back to my high school days, one afternoon I found myself the fourth person in the back seat of a car being driven by someone I hardly knew at the top of Smith Hill. I can’t tell you how many people have found their last moments on this Earth somewhere on the dangerous curves of Smith Hill, but I’m sure it is more than just a few.. From that hill, you can look down about a half mile toward the Chenango River. It’s steep, very steep. It has more turns and changes in direction than a drunken sailor leaving a bar.

As the driver started down the hill, the car began to accelerate. I mean, really accelerate, going faster than anyone in the car thought possible. At times I was sure we were only one bump away from going airborne. At first, I remember thinking, Who is this guy? He was nice enough to give me a ride to my hoped-for destination, but did I really know him? The faster he was taking us down hill, the more I realized, Nope, don’t know ’im at all. At each curve and bump I kept thinking, He’s only sixteen, how much experience at driving can he have? Halfway down the hill, I realized I had made a terrible, terrible mistake, and all I wanted was for him to hit the brakes, pull over, and let me out. After closing my eyes, gritting my teeth, and making all kinds of mental deals with God, I found that he had finally taken us all the way to the bottom. Right then and there, I vowed never to let an inexperienced, lead-footed driver, someone I really didn’t even know, drive me anywhere again.

To my way of thinking, a way that I admit is a bit bizarre, that’s why the voters have so resoundingly rejected the direction and speed of change we have experienced. Better to be a car momentarily in a ditch than one driving off a cliff.