

Beloved Political Satirist Is New Hampshire Icon



January 24, 2024 **by Dan McCue**

CONCORD, N.H. — He showed up with a large black boot on his head.

Standing in the back at a Dean Phillips event, behind a bank of television cameras, he listened respectfully as the congressman-turned-presidential candidate made a pitch for voters' support.

Boot aside, his overall appearance defied description.

He wore multiple neckties, one of them bearing the image of a rubber chicken, dressed mostly in black and had a serious gray beard. Overall he almost looked like a character you'd see at a Renaissance fair.

"You know Vermin Supreme, don't you?" asked Mark Nozell, a professional Santa Claus, making the introduction.

"He's a fixture on the New Hampshire political scene," Nozell said.

Vermin smiled. Extended his hand. "We'll talk later," he said.

And then he was gone. But never really gone.

There he was during the last weekend before the New Hampshire primary, at a Marianne Williamson meet and greet, outside a Nikki Haley rally or being barred from entering Donald Trump's Nashua campaign headquarters.

Vermin even has a small display amongst the political paraphernalia in the visitor center of the New Hampshire statehouse.



(Photo by Dan McCue)

In short order, it became a near obsession to speak with him. But the opportunity, strangely enough, never seemed to materialize. That is until we encountered him outside the Doubletree Hotel in

Manchester, ground zero for the press and presidential campaigns in the run-up to the primary.

“Vermin!!!!” we yelled from our rental car.

“Ohhhhhh man. I have your card. But I haven’t had a chance to call you,” he said.

“It’s fortuitous that we meet here,” he added.

Meanwhile, a videographer accompanying Vermin Supreme filmed the entire encounter on his cellphone.

Eyeing a Trump campaign bus parked at the end of the block, we made a beeline to use it as our backdrop.

“People love me,” Vermin said when asked to explain himself.

“Here in New Hampshire?”

“Around the world, actually,” he said.

“People love an anti-authoritarian goofball and that is me all over,” he said, “making fun of and having fun with the authority figures of the day and getting up close to all the candidates and screwing with the Secret Service and the police who are trying to prevent me from doing that.”

As it happened, Vermin was on the Democratic ballot as a presidential candidate, having paid the \$1000 filing fee the state charges for the privilege.

“It’s true,” he said as a Danish film crew hurried down the street to where we were standing.

“People can actually vote for me in the primary,” he said.

Naturally the assembled press wanted to know what he'd do if actually elected president.

"Well, I have a four-point platform," Vermin said. "The points are as follows: First, free ponies for all Americans. This is the basis of a federal pony identification system. You must have your pony with you at all times.

"I also stand for time travel research. I will be going back in time and killing Hitler, and of course, I'm for mandatory toothbrushing laws, making toothbrushing mandatory," he said.

The Danish film crew backed away.

"So what's with the boot?" we said.

"Well, the boot on the head is a simple yet elegant and a very effective tool that I have discovered allows me to amplify my free speech voice ... literally, millions of times ... and communicate with millions of people around the world," Vermin replied.

"Indeed, the boot stands for all that is good in America; namely, the ability to wear a damn boot on your head if you so desire.

"And, of course, it is also a signifier, giving people I'm about to meet a little bit of a warning that what they might be on the receiving end of may, or may not, be linear," he said.

"I think one of the most beautiful things about wearing this boot is you can take a photograph of me at any time and in any place ... And if you show that photograph to a kid they are going to say, 'That man has a boot on his head.' Because it's not right. It doesn't conform to their perception of the use of a boot.

"And that's why I do it; because it drives that level of attention," he said.

Vermin has been running for president since 1992 and has formally appeared on the New Hampshire ballot since 2008, following a move from his native Massachusetts.

Asked to assess the run up to the New Hampshire primary, Vermin said it struck him as “very sedate.”

“A very sedate year for sure,” he said. “I guess it’s the lack of candidates. Oftentimes we have like ... hordes of candidates up here, which keeps it a little more interesting.

“But obviously, ultimately, it’s the Democratic National Committee’s fault for trying to push South Carolina in front of New Hampshire. But it has been quieter than is typical of a New Hampshire primary.

“Did a lot of political tourists decide it wasn’t worth it and stay home? I don’t know,” he said.

“It is unfortunate, though,” Vermin continued. “They put Joe Biden in a position where he couldn’t campaign here. He couldn’t even be on the ballot here.

“Which is good for me, of course,” he said.

How so?

“Oh, I’ll be coming in a solid third, I do believe. Yeah, no doubt, And that will allow me to move on to South Carolina,” he said.

And what did he make of the Republican primary, where everyone but Nikki Haley had dropped out of the race and most had endorsed Donald Trump.

“It’s not a surprise. Although I will take credit for forcing Ron DeSantis out of the race,” Vermin said.

“I don’t know if you saw my little dance at his campaign stop the other day, but I sort of took over the stage,” he said. “People went crazy on the right-wing blogosphere. They thought DeSantis had invited me on stage for some reason and they were giving him a lot of crap for it.

“Other people were like, ‘That guy got up on stage! DeSantis’s security sucks. Can’t he do anything right?’ So I do think I was the nail in his coffin, that last burst of crazy publicity that he did not need.”

Before we let Vermin go, we asked one more thing. What was with the multiple neckties.

“The neckties? Well each one represents each of my opponents. And each time I beat one, I remove one of the ties. When I have no ties left, I will be president of the United States,” he said.

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