

Skip to content

# Why my junior high rival continues to haunt me even now

Sep. 6, 2024 at 10:45 am | Updated Sep. 6, 2024 at 10:45 am



McDermott remembers tension around mentioning climate change on-air, and then silence around the subject began to thaw. (Courtesy M.J. McDermott)

By [M.J. McDermott](#)

*Special to The Seattle Times*

It was 1972. Richard Nixon was president. The Watergate break-in had just happened.

Seventeen miles from the Watergate Hotel, another political scandal was brewing. It was



---

Opinion

**The Seattle Times**

---

Maryland, we stayed put. At LBJH, I finally had friends. What I didn't know was that I also had an enemy.

At first, the only other candidate was captain of the wrestling team. Then a new student declared that he was running for president, too. An outspoken classmate named Steve Milloy announced he was the new student's campaign manager. I felt confident the presidency was mine. But the winner was ... the wrestler. I was so disappointed.

A few days after the election, Steve walked up to me and said, "I just want you to know that I talked [the student] into running for president because I knew it would split the vote and YOU would LOSE." *[Editor's note: Steve Milloy denies this occurred.]*

After high school, I never saw or thought about Steve at all.

Fast-forward 30 years. By 2007, I was living in Seattle. I had degrees in theater arts and atmospheric sciences. Put communications together with weather, and what do you get? I was working as a meteorologist at local TV station KCPQ. I sometimes mentioned global warming with my weather forecast. I got angry emails from climate-denying viewers, and rude comments from some of the producers.

That summer, I decided to attend my 30th high school reunion back in Maryland. When my old friend Ann heard I was coming, she emailed me with words that made my blood run cold: “Guess what Steve Milloy is doing now?” I hadn’t thought of him in 30 years. “Google him,” she said.

I did, and this is from his Wikipedia page: “Steven J. Milloy is a lawyer, lobbyist, author and Fox News commentator. Milloy is the founder and editor of the blog [junkscience.com](https://www.junkscience.com). Milloy’s career has been spent denying the results of science that government agencies rely on for protecting the public.”

I had become a broadcast meteorologist who reported on climate change, and Steve had become a Fox News commentator working against “the scientific consensus on climate change.”

I had two feelings about seeing him — curiosity and dread. I needn’t have worried. Even though his name tag was on the table when I arrived at the reunion, he did not show.

In my 20 years as a meteorologist in Seattle, I witnessed our climate change. When I started on air in 2000, I rarely talked about heat waves. From 1894 to 2009, the hottest it had ever been in Seattle was 100 degrees.

Then on July 29, 2009, it hit 103. On June 26, 27 and 28, 2021, it hit 102, 104 and 108. Normal for those days is 74. In 2013, only 31% of Seattleites had air conditioning. Now over 50% of us do. Along with this never-before-felt heat, there was never-before-

breathed wildfire smoke. I stopped receiving angry emails when I mentioned climate change. Producers asked me to talk more about it. The climate had changed around climate change.

Meanwhile, Steve appeared as an “expert” on Fox News a few more times. He wrote two books vilifying environmentalists and the EPA. In 2016, he served on former President Donald Trump’s Environmental Protection Agency transition team. During the Trump administration, nearly 100 environmental rules were officially reversed, revoked or otherwise rolled back.

Why does Steve Milloy haunt me? I guess I just don’t understand him. He has a degree in natural sciences from Johns Hopkins, and he went to law school. How could he have studied science, real science, and be against the “scientific consensus of climate change?” Was it just to make money as a lobbyist, commentator and expert witness? What a dangerous combination he is, then — a scientist who can argue like a lawyer.

In January of this year, a Politico journalist interviewed him about Trump supporters and climate change. Steve said, “The approach is to go back to all-out fossil fuel production and sit on the EPA.”

The earth is warming. The climate is changing. But one thing that has not changed is Steve Milloy. Once a disrupter, always a disrupter.

***M.J. McDermott** is a retired meteorologist who did TV weather on Northwest Cable News and Q13 News for over 20 years. She holds a degree in atmospheric sciences from the University of Washington.*

 [View 26 Comments / 26 New](#)

