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Staff Photo by Mike Bonoff

Wavy Gravy holds Mathew Kleinman at campaign rally.

Nobody's perfect for presidency

The man in the clown face stood on UT's West Mall Monday, red nose glistening in the sun, working the crowd of several hundred Nobody supporters.

Nobody is running for president. The man in the clown suit isn't Nobody. Don't be mistaken. Nobody is nobody. The man in the clown suit is Wavy Gravy, of Berkeley, Calif., and he's Nobody's Fool. That's his title in the campaign.

Curtis Spangler, 35, of San Francisco, is Nobody's campaign manager. He was there for the rally. Nobody wasn't on hand, however. And don't ask me Who's on first.

"WHO ABOLISHED THE draft?" Wavy Gravy hollered to the throng.

"NOBODY," the crowd responded as one.

"Who lowered your taxes?"

"NOBODY."

"Who has all the answers?"

"NOBODY."

And so on, after which somebody with a microphone interviewed a set of toy plastic chatter teeth that was sitting in an otherwise empty chair. The teeth represented Nobody, but they weren't really Nobody either.

THIS IS NOBODY'S second campaign, by the way. Nobody ran for president in 1976, as well. That year, Spangler, Wavy Gravy, 11 other people, three dogs and a live chicken toured the United States, whipping up support for Nobody.

They figure they did pretty well. Spangler says only about 40 percent of Americans eligible to vote voted in the '76 presidential election, which he says means about 60 percent of them voted for Nobody.

The political swings are done in a 1948 Greyhound bus named Nobody One. The campaigners, most of whom come from a commune called the Hog Farm that is headquartered in Berkeley, live on the bus and survive by selling bumper stickers, T-shirts, and buttons that have cartoons of Nobody on them.

"That pays for our diesel fuel, our food and our cigarettes," Spangler explained. "We don't make any money, we're simply out there working for Nobody."

WHY NOBODY? Why not Somebody? Simple. Gravy, Spangler and crew don't like Somebody, and are proud of Nobody's record.

"Look at some of the things Nobody has done for the country," Spangler said. "Nobody fed the hungry and the destitute. Nobody's freed the hostages.

"Nobody's put an end to world hunger. Nobody has put an end to nuclear power. Nobody has figured out a safe disposal method for nuclear waste. Nobody has brought peace to our time.

"Nobody should have that much power. Nobody knows you when you're down and out. Nobody knows the trouble I've seen. Nobody lives forever.

"Nobody has cleaned up our environment. Nobody keeps all his campaign promises. Nobody is perfect. Nobody cares. And if Nobody wins, nobody loses."

THERE IS A NOTE of the serious in this madness. Spangler says that Nobody is analogous with None of the Above, a phrase the group wants put on the presidential ballot.

"If we could get enough people to vote for Nobody, a.k.a. (also known as) None of the Above, it might force a situation where the American people would have to choose Somebody decent to lead them," he said.

Nobody could argue with that logic, but sometimes Nobody supporters run into people who don't find their act amusing.

"**ONE TIME WHEN WAVY** was at the Democratic convention some Secret Service people threw him up against a wall," Spangler said. "When they frisked him, they found the chatter teeth in his back pocket.

"Wait," Wavy told them. "Our leader is about to speak." "Get on out of here," one of the Secret Service people said at the time. "You're too weird to arrest."

What if Nobody loses in '80?

"We'll probably run Nobody again in '84, then quit," Spangler said. "The truth of the matter is that if Somebody would do some of these things I've mentioned, for example get the hostages released, then Somebody could take credit for them and Nobody could move on to something else."

But, as of yet, nobody has. So Nobody's staying in politics, for the time being.