

BRENT
BATTEN

OPINION

Crist rumors were true after all

The knock against Charlie Crist is you just don't know who he is. Republican? Democrat? Independent?

Turns out, maybe he just doesn't know who he is, either.

Crist's visit to the Naples Daily News on Monday spurred a trip down Memory Lane, to a 2007 interview I did with then-Florida Democratic Party Chairwoman Karen Thurman.

This was years before Crist, then the newly elected governor, changed his party affiliation from Republican to independent then, in a run to regain the office, to Democrat.

The article that resulted from that interview started out:

"By now, you've probably heard the rumor about Gov. Charlie Crist. Well, it's not true.

"Someone who would know has spoken, dispelling it once and for all. The informant acknowledges that there is some basis for the rumor and even admits to perpetuating it herself from time to time, just as a joke or a rallying cry to like-minded fellow travelers.

"But ultimately, Karen Thurman concedes, it's nothing more than a rumor. Charlie Crist is not a Democrat."

Some of Crist's early initiatives — putting state money toward stem cell research and making it easier for convicted felons to have their voting rights restored were two examples cited by Thurman — drew praise from Democrats and criticism from Republicans.

His push for Citizens Insurance to take on more hurricane policies at artificially low rates to spare residents from the private market drew this rebuke from *The Wall Street Journal*: "His campaign to socialize Florida's insurance market has placed the Sunshine State one big hurricane away from financial disaster."

He vetoed one bill that would have required expectant mothers to have an ultrasound before getting an abortion and another that tied teacher pay to student performance. Both had been passed by the Republican-controlled Legislature.

Thurman joked that Crist urged her to get more Democrats elected so he could achieve his agenda. He never came right out and said that, "but I think indirectly, he kind of has," she said.

In 2009 he famously hugged Barack Obama on stage in Fort Myers in celebration of the passage of the president's economic stimulus plan.

He told the cheering crowd, "This is about ... helping America and reinvigorating our economy."

As a Republican, Crist was someone Democrats

See BATTEN, 5A

Florida governor race



HECTOR GABINO/EL NUEVO HERALD

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, left, chairman of the Republican Governors Association, and Florida Gov. Rick Scott visit a GOP field office Wednesday in Miami.

Scott gets some big-time support

Race gets nastier as candidates spend big money on negative ads

By Matt Dixon

Scripps-Tribune Capital Bureau

What do you get when you combine "dirty strip club dollars," "fraud files" and an ad highlighting a booze-soaked, expletive laced tirade?

Answer: The current landscape of the race to become the next governor of Florida, the nation's soon-to-be third-largest state.

From the outset, both Gov. Rick Scott and former Republican Gov. Charlie Crist, running for his old job as a Democrat, had sky-high name identification with state voters. It meant the two campaigns could go negative early, and they have spent record amounts

Charlie
Crist

of campaign cash doing just that.

The toxic tone has been in place for months, and it has taken its toll. In a recent Quinnipiac University poll, only 39 percent of respondents said Scott was trustworthy, a number that was at 37 percent for Crist.

"They have been throwing so much mud that they both are covered in it," said Peter A. Brown, assistant director of the Quinnipiac University Poll.

That mud has gotten

See ADS, 5A

■ New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie helps Florida governor campaign in Miami-Dade

By Jenna Buzzacco-Foerster

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Four weeks, four visits.

That's the promise Chris Christie made to Floridians at a campaign stop Wednesday in Miami-Dade.

"There's no more important governor's race to me than the one here in Florida," the New Jersey Republican said.

Christie, the chairman of the Republican Governors Association, spent Wednesday afternoon campaigning with Gov. Rick Scott. The pair stopped at two campaign field offices in South Florida — in Boca Raton and in the Miami area — to meet with volunteers and supporters.

"He's working hard to make sure we elect Republicans all across the country," said Scott. "And there's no race he cares more about than the great state of Florida."

Scott faces Democrat Charlie Crist, the state's former Republican governor, in the Nov. 4 general election.

The South Florida swing marks

INSIDE

Attorney general candidate sues Scott over finances 6A

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Subscribers can listen to Rick Scott and Chris Christie's speeches and watch them greet supporters in Miami.

Participate in a live chat during the Rick Scott and Charlie Crist gubernatorial debate Friday with politics reporter Jenna Buzzacco-Foerster and Tallahassee Bureau Chief Matt Dixon.

Christie's second visit since September to campaign with Scott.

He's not just showing up in the Sunshine State to rally support for Scott. This year the RGA has contributed \$14.5 million to Let's Get to Work, the political committee affiliated with Scott.

Heather Maxwell, a Miami resident, was among those in the crowd during

See CHRISTIE, 5A

Daily News photographer wins top video honor



CRAIG EDELMAN

Dania Maxwell won the grand prize in this year's Southern Newspaper Publisher's Association video awards for her 6-minute, 30-second video on Ethan's Arbelo's two-year struggle with cancer.

By Kristine Gill

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The first time Daily News photographer Dania Maxwell followed her 11-year-old subject into the bathroom to photograph him brushing his teeth, Ethan Arbelo was confused.

"He thought it was really weird," Maxwell said. "Toward the end, as I became a part of that family, he was heading into the bathroom and said 'I'm going to brush my teeth if you want to come.'"

Maxwell's 6-minute, 30-second video on Ethan's two-year struggle with cancer, which captured some of the most intimate details of the child's life, won the grand prize in this year's Southern Newspaper Publisher's Association video awards. The SNPA holds an annual contest with video categories for breaking news, features, sports and enterprise work. Maxwell submitted in the features category and also won the overall award for \$1,000 in prize money.

Judges called Dania Maxwell's piece "painfully beautiful" and the "clear winner" in the pool of contestants.

naplesnews.com/ ethansjourney

Read "Little Man and the Pursuit of Happiness" and see Dania Maxwell's award-winning video.

"I think it's a good way to get the story out to reach a wider audience," Maxwell said of the contest.

Maxwell, a staff photographer since July 2012, started the project a month after she began working at the paper. The three-part print and photo series, called Little Man and the Pursuit of Happiness, ran in the Daily News in August.

"We couldn't be more proud of Dania," said Daily News President and Publisher Bill Barker. "It speaks to her talent, dedication and passion. She represents the best of the Naples Daily News and our community."

Judges called Maxwell's piece "painfully beautiful" and the "clear winner" in the pool of contestants.

Ethan's mother, Maria Arbelo, was the first to view the finished video.

"She cried and said it was really beautiful," Maxwell said. "And that it was nice to remember things, not that they were lost for her, but because seeing them in a video kind of cements those memories for you."

"We are beyond proud of Dania. The award speaks to her talent, dedication and heart for those in need," Daily News Editor Manny Garcia said. "She's a gifted storyteller and her photos and videos are beyond powerful. The honor also speaks to the top-shelf work that the Naples Daily News delivers."