

# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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## Killing ourselves

*Treat heroin as a public health crisis*

An allegation last week that an inmate smuggled about a third of an ounce of heroin into Clatsop County Jail is the latest disturbing indication the deadly narcotic is thoroughly entrenched in coastal society.

Worse was news in August about a woman and her unborn baby dying of a heroin overdose in Astoria, a tragedy also involving methamphetamine.

Week after week, month after a month, court cases and news stories testify to the extent heroin has become a destructive factor in our midst. Some — like a 24-year-old from Seaside convicted in June of raping and forcefully injecting heroin into teenage girls — are the very definition of “low-life scum.” Heroin, however, is an infamously equal-opportunity drug, sucking in people of every strata, many of them seeking alternatives to replace legal opioids initially prescribed for legitimate pain problems.

This isn’t a problem confined to the Pacific Northwest. It is a nationwide scourge — even an international one, as Afghan heroin floods much of the world in the wake of ill-considered relaxation of U.S. drug-trafficking policies there. In the Western U.S., most heroin comes from Mexico, while much of it east of the Mississippi comes from Colombia, according to a White House background report. ([www.tinyurl.com/WhiteHouseHeroin](http://www.tinyurl.com/WhiteHouseHeroin))

“Two out of every 1,000 Americans were addicted to heroin in 2013, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, double the rate in 2002,” the *Washington Post* reported in August, as the Obama administration announced a new initiative to try shifting

from punishment to treatment. “There were 8,200 heroin-related overdose deaths in 2013; the number of such deaths per 100,000 people nearly quadrupled between 2002 and 2013.”

According to the *Post*’s summary, the one-year, \$2.5 million plan for the Northeast U.S. will “analyze trends in the overdose data and devise strategies for combating spikes in drug use. ... In addition, the initiative will train first responders on when and how to deploy medication that can reverse opioid overdoses.”

The president proposes an additional \$133 million for next fiscal year to take the next steps toward intervening in overprescription of opioid painkillers. Maybe this will begin narrowing the gateway for later problems with heroin — though there will be a fine line to walk between reining-in overuse of painkillers and increasing the burdens on pain-sufferers, who already jump through regulatory hoops to obtain medication.

American drug policies are in need of a far more thorough re-examination than will be afforded by \$2.5 million — or even \$133 million, in the unlikely event the GOP-controlled Congress agrees to this plan.

The ongoing bankruptcy of federal leadership demands that states, and even local governments, begin developing better ideas. It is time to begin treating heroin as what it is — a nationwide epidemic that requires aggressive public-health solutions.

## Be careful what you wish for

*All cities and towns have a carrying capacity*

When the Hood to Coast manager said the August run might seek an alternative destination to replace Seaside, we stifled the urge to say: “Don’t let the door hit you on the way out.”

But Mike Morgan saves us from such an impolitic statement. The former mayor of Cannon Beach, in a letter published last Friday, states the problem precisely. In the letter (“Move Hood to Coast”) Morgan writes: “Why the Chamber of Commerce wants to turn Seaside into a parking lot in late August defies understanding.” Being the finish line of the Hood to Coast means one thing above all — traffic congestion that easily strangles the town.

Morgan suggests moving the Hood to Coast to late September. For the host town, that makes

sense. His suggestion to move Cannon Beach’s Sandcastle Contest to May or early June is similarly wise.

All cities and towns have a carrying capacity — the number of vehicles and persons it can accommodate. The two events that Morgan addresses stretch the carrying capacity of Seaside and Cannon Beach to the breaking point. There is some profit in those events, although some Seaside merchants would dispute that. But for a number of full-time residents, there is little fun in being a prisoner in your home on a weekend when one is a fool to hit the highway.

There is wisdom in making one’s town attractive to full-time residents. If you do that, travelers will find you. Seaside and Cannon Beach did very well for decades without the benefit of mega-events.

## A no-name house in a quaint village

Somehow, we must accommodate our visitors without destroying the very thing that attracts them here.

My beach house doesn’t have a name.

Unlike some homes in Cannon Beach, Seaside, Gearhart and other parts of the North Coast, it isn’t known as “White Sands,” or “Ocean Vista” or even “Puffins Perch.”

And, unlike those houses, which are all listed with either Airbnb or VRBO (Vacation Rentals By Owner), my house isn’t for rent, either. Not by the night, the week nor the month.

When I spent five weeks this summer in John Day, my friend, Deborah, from Bremerton, Wash., stayed at my house. She invited her own friends to visit. They had a great time.

She would send emails describing their adventures. A couple of times they drove to a marina south of Wheeler where they bought freshly caught and cooked crab and enjoyed a picnic lunch in the sun. Sometimes — before the local fire ban went into effect — they built a bonfire on the beach. They visited Cannon Beach’s farmers market. They shopped in Manzanita and traveled to Astoria.

In one email, Deborah, who apparently was getting tired of local streets clogged with summer’s usual array of cars and visitors, wrote to me, “Now I know why you enjoy the quiet months.”

At the end of her visit, she sent me another email, thanking me for letting her stay in Cannon Beach for a month. Her friends enjoyed their stay, too, and several wanted to return.

“If you ever wanted to, I know you could rent your house out,” Deborah added.

It was something I had never thought about, and, frankly, never want to do. I suppose I could name my house a “Forest Fantasy” and market it as being in a quiet neigh-

## IMPRESSIONS

By  
NANCY  
MCCARTHY



borhood three blocks from Haystack Rock in the quaint village of Cannon Beach.

There are a lot of people on the North Coast who have given plenty of thought to the idea of renting out their houses to perfect (and, as it turns out, not so perfect) strangers for hundreds of dollars a night and thousands of dollars a month.

According to its website, VRBO has at least 1,359 vacation rentals on the North Coast from Neskonowin to Astoria. Of those, Cannon Beach has 148; Seaside, 238; Gearhart, 82; and Astoria, 13.

The practice of renting out a house in a small town like Cannon Beach or Gearhart has proven so popular that permanent residents who live next to these houses are starting to complain.

In Gearhart, where the City Council has spent nearly two years developing an ordinance to regulate vacation rentals, the problem has pretty much gotten out of control, according to residents who must listen to the loud parties, watch the untended garbage fly out of the cans and maneuver around the numerous parked cars overflowing the streets.

Cannon Beach has strict ordinances regarding rentals, but with so many visitors in town and so many local homes being advertised on the websites, it’s questionable as to whether the ordinances — especially the one restricting rentals to one reservation every 14 days on homes that aren’t in the city’s rental “lottery” — are being enforced.

**Pretty soon the very thing that attracts visitors may disappear forever.**

## Obama’s humiliating Syria debacle

By CHARLES  
KRAUTHAMMER  
*Washington Post Writers Group*

“Russia hits Assad’s foes, angering U.S.”

— *Headline, Wall Street Journal, Oct. 1*

WASHINGTON — If it had the wit, the Obama administration would be not angered, but appropriately humiliated.

President Obama has, once again, been totally outmaneuvered by Vladimir Putin.

Two days earlier at the United Nations, Obama had welcomed the return, in force, of the Russian military to the Middle East — for the first time in decades — in order to help fight the Islamic State.

The ruse was transparent from the beginning. Russia is not in Syria to fight the Islamic State. The Kremlin was sending fighter planes, air-to-air missiles and SA-22 anti-aircraft batteries. Against an Islamic State that has no air force, no planes, no helicopters?

Russia then sent reconnaissance drones over Western Idlib and Hama, where there are no Islamic State fighters. Followed by bombing attacks on Homs and other opposition strongholds that had nothing to do with the Islamic State.

Indeed, some of these bombed fighters were U.S. trained and equipped. Asked if we didn’t have an obligation to support our own allies on the ground, Defense Secretary Ashton Carter bumbled that Russia’s actions exposed its policy as self-contradictory.

Carter made it sound as if the Russian offense was to have perpetrated an oxymoron, rather than a

provocation — and a direct challenge to what’s left of the U.S. policy of supporting a moderate opposition.

The whole point of Russian intervention is to maintain Assad in power. Putin has no interest in fighting the Islamic State. Indeed, the second round of Russian air attacks was on rival insurgents opposed to the Islamic State. The Islamic State is nothing but a pretense for Russian intervention. And Obama fell for it.

Just three weeks ago, Obama chided Russia for its military buildup, wagging his finger that it was “doomed to failure.” Yet by Monday he was publicly welcoming Russia to join the fight against the Islamic State. He not only acquiesced to the Russian buildup, he held an ostentatious meeting with Putin on the subject, thereby marking the ignominious collapse of Obama’s vaunted campaign to isolate Putin diplomatically over Crimea.

Putin then showed his utter contempt for Obama by launching his air campaign against our erstwhile anti-Assad allies not 48 hours after meeting Obama. Which the U.S. found out about when a Russian general knocked on the door of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and delivered a brusque demarche announcing that the attack would begin within an hour and warning the U.S. to get out of the way.

In his subsequent news conference, Secretary Carter averred that he found such Russian behavior “unprofessional.”

Good grief. Russia, with its inferior military and hemorrhaging economy, had just eaten Carter’s lunch, seizing the initiative and exposing American

powerlessness — and the secretary of defense deplores what? Russia’s lack of professional etiquette.

Makes you want to weep. Consider: When Obama became president, the surge in Iraq had succeeded and the U.S. had emerged as the dominant regional actor, able to project power throughout the region. Last Sunday, Iraq announced the establishment of a joint intelligence-gathering center with Iran, Syria and Russia, symbolizing the new “Shiite-crescent” alliance stretching from Iran across the northern Middle East to the Mediterranean, under the umbrella of Russia, the rising regional hegemon.

Russian planes roam free over Syria attacking Assad’s opposition as we stand by helpless. Meanwhile, the U.S. secretary of state beseeches the Russians to negotiate “de-conflict” arrangements — so that we and they can each bomb our own targets safely. It has come to this.

Why is Putin moving so quickly and so brazenly? Because he’s got only 16 more months to push on the open door that is Obama. He knows he’ll never again see an American president such as this — one who once told the General Assembly that “no one nation can or should try to dominate another nation” and told it again last Monday of “believing in my core that we, the nations of the world, cannot return to the old ways of conflict and coercion.”

They cannot? Has he looked at the world around him — from Homs to Kunduz, from Sanaa to Donetsk — ablaze with conflict and coercion?

Wouldn’t you take advantage of these last 16 months if you were Putin, facing a man living in a faculty-lounge fantasy world? Where was Obama when Putin began bombing Syria? Leading a U.N. meeting on countering violent extremism.

Seminar to follow.

*Nancy McCarthy is the retired editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette.*



Charles  
Krauthammer

**The ruse was transparent from the beginning.**

### Where to write

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