

# Ready or not, here comes the future

No one I know is looking forward to four months of presidential campaigns. As if we haven't had enough.

Even though I thought I'd had read enough about Donald Trump, I succumbed to an opinion piece in *The Washington Post* last week.

Morbid curiosity drew me to the headline: "I hate Donald Trump. But he might get my vote." The author was Jim Ruth, a retired financial adviser.

The opening of Mr. Ruth's piece was a meditation on disturbing changes in American culture — on campuses and in the media.

The essence of Ruth's rationale was: "Short of not voting at all — still an option some of us are considering — (Trump) is the only one who appears to want to preserve the American way of life as we know it."

That line hit a chord with me. I've heard this a lot. But the difficulty of wanting things not to change — or wanting things to be how they once were — is that none of us get to have that. History is sprinting onward, like it or not.

The evangelical writer Michael Gerson has offered this reflection on America and the business of wanting a return to the past. "Historically speaking, nations defined by ethnicity, motivated by grievances and looking backward to a golden age are commonplace." Gerson adds that, "What has been different about the United States is its remarkable ability to make a nation out of nations."

Political stability, it seems to me, is what people prize in the United States. We know that when we wake up in the morning the electricity will come on, the roads will be clear and there won't be a violent overthrow of our various governments. If you have come to America from a less stable country, that value is even higher.

Gov. Tom McCall looks at the Surfsand Motel in Cannon Beach that ignited the discussion of Oregon's beach laws in 1967.

Submitted Photo



Author Alvin Toffler, gestures during his talk on the Fourth Wave at the Astrobiology Roadmap Workshop in Mountain View, Calif., in 1998.

Of course, there are some Americans who nurture political and even violent turmoil (think Malheur National Wildlife Refuge). But the majority of Americans aren't keen on having armed revolutionaries in our midst.

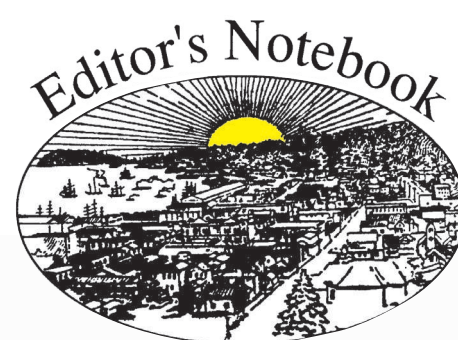
Gerson's observation about the resilience of American political culture is reassuring. If you travel around America just a bit, you gain a sense of just how starkly different our regions are.

The current issue of *Texas Monthly* contains an extensive article about Larry McMurtry, the writer whose novels have defined Texas. Wrote Skip Hollandsworth: "McMurtry has by turns elevated and eviscerated (Texas) with the kind of marrow-piercing observations only ever allowed native sons."

Hollandsworth describes McMurtry's response to the intense quiet of the prairie and of how that solitude can generate great real-life characters. Once I saw the late Oregon Gov. Tom McCall's boyhood home in Terrebonne, I sensed the remoteness of that place generated McCall's outsized character.

McCall had the capacity to lead Oregon through a very tumultuous period (the 1970s) and move our state into the future.

During the third year of McCall's administration, Alvin Toffler brought out a seminal work called *Future Shock*. Noting the book's 40th anniversary in *The New York Times*, Farhad Manjoo describes the relevance of Toffler's warnings. "In Mr. Toffler's coinage, future shock wasn't simply a meta-



**Tom McCall had the capacity to lead Oregon through a very tumultuous period.**

phor for our difficulties in dealing with new things. It was a real psychological malady, the 'dizzying disorientation brought on by the premature arrival of the future.' And 'unless intelligent steps are taken to combat it,' he warned, 'millions of human beings will find themselves increasingly disoriented, progressively incompetent to deal rationally with their environments.'"

Manjoo adds: "In rereading Mr. Toffler's book, as I did last week, it seems clear that his diagnosis has largely panned out, with local and global crises arising daily from our collective inability to deal with ever-faster change."

In spite of candidates' promises, we can't have the past back. We only get the future. The question is whether we'll get leaders — in the White House and Congress — who will help us prepare for that future.

—S.A.F.



## FBI Director Comey: A theory about why he did it

By CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER  
*Washington Post Writers Group*

WASHINGTON — Why did he do it?

FBI Director James Comey spent 14 minutes laying out an unassailable case for prosecuting Hillary Clinton for the mishandling of classified material.

Then at literally the last minute, he recommended against prosecution.

This is baffling. Under the statute (18 U.S.C. section 793(f)), it's a felony to mishandle classified information either intentionally or "through gross negligence." The evidence, as outlined by Comey, is overwhelming.

Clinton either sent or received 110 emails in 52 chains containing material that was classified *at the time*. Eight of these chains contained information that was top secret. A few of the classified emails were so marked, contrary to Clinton's assertion that there were none.

These were stored on a home server that was even less secure than a normal Gmail account. Her communications

were quite possibly compromised by hostile powers, thus jeopardizing American national security.

"An unclassified system was no place for that conversation," said Comey of the classified emails. A rather kind euphemism, using the passive voice. In plainer, more direct language: It is imprudent, improper and indeed illegal to be conducting such business on an unsecured private server.

Comedy summed up Clinton's behavior as "extremely careless." How is that not gross negligence?

Yet Comey let her off the hook, citing lack of intent. But negligence doesn't require intent. Compromising national secrets is such a grave offense that it requires either intent or negligence.

Lack of intent is, therefore, no defense. But one can question that claim as well. Yes, it is safe to assume that there was no malicious intent to



Charles Krauthammer

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injure the nation. But Clinton clearly intended to set up an unsecured private server. She clearly intended to send those classified emails. She clearly received warnings from her own department about the dangers of using a private email account.

She meant to do what she did. And she did it. Intentionally.

That's two grounds for prosecution, one requiring no intent whatsoever. Yet Comey claims that no reasonable prosecutor would bring such a case. Nor has one ever been brought.

Not so. Just last year, the Justice Department successfully prosecuted naval reservist Bryan Nishimura, who improperly downloaded classified material to his personal, unclassified electronic devices.

The government admitted that there was no evidence that Nishimura intended to distribute the material to others. Nonetheless, he was sentenced

to two years of probation, fined and forever prohibited from seeking a security clearance, which effectively kills any chance of working in national security.

So why not Hillary Clinton? The usual answer is that the Clintons are treated by a different standard. Only little people pay. They are too well connected, too well protected to be treated like everybody else.

Alternatively, the explanation lies with Comey: He gave in to implicit political pressure, the desire to please those in power.

Certainly plausible, but given Comey's reputation for probity and given that he holds a 10-year appointment, I'd suggest a third line of reasoning.

When Chief Justice John Roberts used a tortured, logic-defying argument to uphold *Obamacare*, he was subjected to similar accusations of bad faith. My view was that, as guardian of the Supreme Court's public standing, he thought the issue too momentous — and the implications for the country too large — to hinge on a decision of the court. Especially after *Bush v. Gore*, Roberts wanted to keep the court from overturning the political branches on so monumental a piece of social legislation.

I would suggest that Comey's thinking, whether conscious or not, was similar: He did not want the FBI director to end up as the arbiter of the 2016 presidential election. If Clinton were not a presumptive presidential nominee but simply a retired secretary of state, he might well have made a different recommendation.

Prosecuting under current circumstances would have upended and redirected an already yearlong presidential selection process. In my view, Comey didn't want to be remembered as the man who irreversibly altered the course of American political history.

And with no guarantee that the prosecution would succeed, moreover. Imagine that scenario: You knock out of the race the most likely next president — and she ultimately gets acquitted! Imagine how Comey goes down in history under those circumstances.

I admit I'm giving Comey the benefit of the doubt. But the best way I can reconcile his reputation for integrity with the grating illogic of his Clinton decision is by presuming that he didn't want to make history.

I don't endorse his decision. (Nor did I Roberts'.) But I think I understand it.



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