

# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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## Doing it for the home team

*What are Steve Fulton and Bill Hunsinger's motives?*

The Port of Astoria Commission is a reliable source of entertainment for many of our readers. Our reports on these charades would be funny if they weren't so costly.

The events described by Edward Stratton in the Aug. 26 edition are the latest installment. Faced with an urgent state of Oregon demand to improve its stormwater disposition, the Port needed to move ahead with a solution.

In picking a contractor for the job, Conway Construction was the low bidder. However, Conway had omitted a key element of the job in its bid. But even when that was added in, Conway was well under the bid from Big River Construction. Conway is based in Ridgefield, Washington, while Big River is Astoria-based.

A majority of the commission favored the low bidder. But as Stratton reported, "Commissioners Stephen Fulton and Bill Hunsinger called foul on Conway Construction's contract, saying the company had been unfairly allowed to fix omissions in its initial bid to the detriment of Big River.

"Fulton said the Port should discuss the issue more, adding he doesn't think Conway is

qualified if they didn't already know about groundwater issues."

After the Port's lawyer assured the commission that readjusting a bid in light of new information is legal, commissioners voted 3-2 to contract with Conway.

Self-dealing and cronyism are the bane of all ports, but it has run especially deep in the culture of the Port of Astoria. It is widely understood that Hunsinger is on the Port Commission to represent the interests of the longshore union and that Fulton represents his employer, Martin Nygaard. There is nothing illegal about that, so long as commissioners declare their conflicts of interest. But there is a larger detriment to Fulton's and Hunsinger's myopic approach. It effectively takes two commissioners out of the line-up. Instead of playing a role in setting larger policy, these two operate by a different playbook. That appeared to be the case in this most recent incident.

## Boneyard Ridge buy a tremendous step

Purchase of Boneyard Ridge on Tillamook Head last week by the North Coast Land Conservancy is a tremendous step forward in protecting one of the Pacific Northwest's most iconic coastal landscapes.

Comprising a little more than half a square mile of acreage, the former commercial tree farm is next to the Elmer Feldenheimer State Natural Area and Ecola State Park and west of the land conservancy's Circle Creek Habitat Reserve in the Necanicum River floodplain west of U.S. Highway 101.

A much smaller cousin to The Nature Conservancy of Washington's Ellsworth Creek preserve and Willapa National Wildlife Refuge in Pacific County, the assembled 3,500-acre block of Tillamook Head lands will create a large enough area to cushion wildlife from disruption. Through long-term management choices, Boneyard Ridge and neighboring forests will be restored to something more resembling

presettlement conditions, with a healthy variety of plants and animals.

A trail system is being planned to permit public access to parts of the ridge. The purchase was widely supported, garnering a \$524,000 grant from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, \$500,000 from an anonymous donor, and contributions from more than 120 additional donors.

As the population grows on the North Coast and elsewhere west of the Cascades this century, we won't be able to preserve everything, and few would want to. Clearly, a concerted effort is required to encourage additional housing in our increasingly popular area. But steps like Boneyard Ridge conservation will help to ensure that we maintain all-important connections to the natural world.

These are islands of continuity in a fast-changing world. We all are grateful for the foresight, generosity and diligence involved in creating such natural preserves.

# What's the case for Hillary?

By CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER  
*Washington Post Writers Group*

WASHINGTON — "The best darn change-maker I ever met in my entire life."

So said Bill Clinton in making the case for his wife at the Democratic National Convention.

Considering that Bernie Sanders ran as the author of a political revolution and Donald Trump as the man who would "kick over the table" (to quote Newt Gingrich) in Washington, "change-maker" does not exactly make the heart race.

Which is the fundamental problem with the Clinton campaign. What precisely is it about? Why is she running in the first place?

Like most dynastic candidates (most famously Ted Kennedy in 1979), she really doesn't know. She seeks the office because, well, it's the next — the final — step on the ladder.

Her campaign's premise is that we're doing OK but we can do better. There are holes to patch in the nanny-state safety net. She's the one to do it.

It amounts to Sanders lite. Or the short-lived Bush slogan: "Jeb can fix it." We know where that went.

The one man who could have given the pudding a theme, who could have created a plausible Hillaryism was Bill Clinton. Rather than do that — the way in Cleveland Gingrich shaped Trump's various barstool eruptions into a semi-coherent program of national populism — Bill gave a long chronological account of a passionate liberal's social activism. It was an attempt, I suppose, to humanize her.

Well, yes. Perhaps, after all, somewhere in there is a real person. But what a waste of Bill's talents. It wasn't exactly Clint Eastwood speaking to an empty chair, but at the end you had to ask: Is that all there is?

He grandly concluded with this: "The reason you should elect her is that in the greatest country on earth we have always been about tomorrow." Is there a rhetorical device more banal?

Trump's acceptance speech was roundly criticized for offering a dark, dystopian vision of America. For all of its exaggeration, however, it reflected well the view from Fishtown, the fictional white working-class town created statistically by social scientist Charles Murray in his 2012 study "Coming Apart." It chronicled the economic, social



AP Photo/Andrew Harnik

Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton and former President Bill Clinton arrive for a rally at McGonigle Hall at Temple University in Philadelphia Friday.

and spiritual disintegration of those left behind by globalization and economic transformation. Trump's capture of the resultant feelings of anxiety and abandonment explains why he enjoys an astonishing 39-point advantage over Clinton among whites without a college degree.

His solution is to beat up on foreigners for "stealing" our jobs. But while trade is a factor in the loss of manufacturing jobs, even more important, by a large margin, is the emergence of an information economy in which education, knowledge and various kinds of literacy are the coin of the realm. For all the factory jobs lost to Third World competitors, far more are lost to robots.

Hard to run against higher productivity. Easier to run against cunning foreigners.

In either case, Clinton has found no counter. If she has a theme, it's about expanding opportunity, shattering ceilings. But the universe of discriminated-against minorities — so vast 50 years ago — is rapidly shrinking. When the burning civil rights issue of the day is bathroom choice for the transgendered, a flummoxed Fishtown understandably asks, "What about us?" Telling coal miners she was going to close their mines and kill their jobs only reinforced



Charles Krauthammer

**Why is she running in the first place?**

white working-class alienation from Clinton.

As for the chaos abroad, the Democrats are in see-no-evil denial. The first night in Philadelphia, there were 61 speeches. Not one mentioned the Islamic State or even terrorism. Later references were few, far between and highly defensive. After all, what can the Democrats say? Clinton's calling card is experience. Yet as secretary of state she left a trail of policy failures from Libya to Syria, from the Russian reset to the Iraqi withdrawal to the rise of the Islamic State.

Clinton had a strong second half of the convention as the Sanders revolt faded and as President Obama endorsed her with one of the finer speeches of his career. Yet Trump's convention bounce of up to 10 points has given him a slight lead in the polls. She badly needs one of her own.

She still enjoys the Democrats' built-in Electoral College advantage. But she remains highly vulnerable to both outside events and internal revelations. Another major terror attack, another email drop — and everything changes.

In this crazy election year, there are no straight-line projections. As Clinton leaves Philadelphia, her lifelong drive for the ultimate prize is perilously close to a coin flip.

## What does it mean to love America?

By PAUL KRUGMAN  
*New York Times News Service*

It has been quite a week in politics.

On one side, the Democratic National Convention was very much a celebration of America.

On the other side, the Republican nominee for president, pressed on the obvious support he is getting from Vladimir Putin, once again praised Putin's leadership, suggested that he is OK with Russian aggression in Crimea, and urged the Russians to engage in espionage on his behalf. And no, it wasn't a joke.

I know that some Republicans feel as if they've fallen through the looking glass. After all, usually they're the ones chanting "USA! USA! USA!" And haven't they spent years suggesting that Barack and Michelle Obama hate America, and may even support the nation's enemies? How did Democrats end up looking like the patriots here?

But the parties aren't really experiencing a role reversal. Barack Obama's speech Wednesday was wonderful and inspiring, but when he declared that "what we heard in Cleveland last week wasn't particularly Republican," he was fibbing a bit. It was actually very Republican in substance; the only difference was that the substance was less disguised than usual. For the "fanning of resentment" that Obama decried didn't begin with Donald Trump, and most of the flag-waving never did have much to do with true patriotism.

Think about it: What does it mean to love America? Surely it means loving the country we actually have. I don't know about you, but whenever I return from a trip abroad, my heart swells to see the sheer variety of my fellow citizens, so different in their appearance, their cultural heritage, their personal lives, yet all of them — all of us — Americans.

That love of country doesn't have

to be, and shouldn't be, uncritical. But the faults you find, the critiques you offer, should be about the ways in which we don't yet live up to our own ideals. If what bothers you about America is, instead, the fact that it doesn't look exactly the way it did in the past (or the way you imagine it looked in the past), then you don't love your country — you care only about your tribe.

And all too many influential figures on the right are tribalists, not patriots.

We got a graphic demonstration of that reality after Michelle Obama's speech, when she spoke of the wonder of watching her daughters play on the lawn of "a house that was built by slaves." It was an uplifting and, yes, patriotic image, a celebration of a nation that is always seeking to become better, to transcend its flaws.

But, all many people on the right — especially the media figures who set the Republican agenda — heard was a knock on white people. "They can't stop talking about slavery," complained Rush Limbaugh. The slaves had it good, insisted Bill O'Reilly: "They were well fed and had decent lodgings." Both men were, in effect, saying that whites are their tribe and must never be criticized.

This same tribal urge surely underlies a lot of the right's rhetoric about national security. Why are Republicans so fixated on the notion that the president must use the phrase "Islamic terrorism," when actual experts on terrorism agree that this would actually hurt national security, by helping to alienate peaceful Muslims?

The answer, I'd argue, is that the alienation isn't a side effect they're



Paul Krugman

**Surely it means loving the country we actually have.**

disregarding; it's actually the point — it's all about drawing a line between us (white Christians) and them (everyone else), and national security has nothing to do with it.

Which brings us back to the Vlad-Donald bromance. Trump's willingness to cast aside our nation's hard-earned reputation as a reliable ally is remarkable. So is the odd specificity of his support for Putin's priorities, which is in stark contrast with the vagueness of everything else he has said about policy. And he has offered only evasive nonanswers to questions about his business ties to Putin-linked oligarchs.

But what strikes me most is the silence of so many leading Republicans in the face of behavior they would have denounced as treason coming from a Democrat — not to mention the active support for Trump's stance among many in the base.

What this tells you, I think, is that all the flag-waving and hawkish posturing had nothing to do with patriotism. It was, instead, about using alleged Democratic weakness on national security as a club with which to beat down domestic opponents, and serve the interests of the tribe.

Now comes Trump, doing the bidding of a foreign power and inviting it to intervene in our politics — and that's OK, because it also serves the tribe.

So if it seems strange to you that these days Democrats are sounding patriotic while Republicans aren't, you just weren't paying attention. The people who now seem to love America always did; the people who suddenly no longer sound like patriots never were.