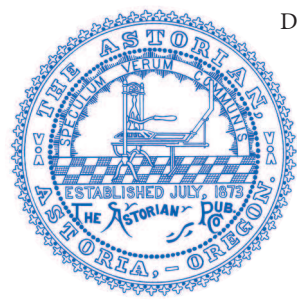


THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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OUR VIEW



Beth Nakamura/The Oregonian

Kelli Stewart, right, celebrates with Maureen Valdez outside the Mark O. Hatfield United States Courthouse after the leaders of an armed group who seized a national wildlife refuge in rural Oregon were acquitted Thursday in the 41-day standoff that brought new attention to a long-running dispute over control of federal lands in the U.S. West.

Feds fail to prove conspiracy theory

Last week, an Oregon jury made a stunning decision. They found seven occupiers of the Malheur Wildlife Refuge, on trial for conspiracy, not guilty.

Even Bundy supporters — the ones who said the U.S. court system was rigged and Judge Anna Brown was a government stooge — were surprised. They whooped and hollered and celebrated a momentous upset in a federal court of law.

But the celebration didn't last long. Ammon Bundy's attorney yelled at the judge, resisted federal marshals, was stunned with a Taser and arrested. It was a shocking end to a shocking case, one that (depending on your point of view) exemplified government overreaction to dissent, or the occupiers' unwillingness to respect the rule of law.

Now that the dust has cleared, we can talk briefly about the facts of the trial — what went wrong for the prosecution and what the defense did right. It seems clear, thanks to interviews with anonymous jurors, that no one in the jury box bought into the prosecution's arguments that the occupiers on trial had "conspired" to do anything.

Which raises the question, why did the government choose to level that charge? And why did the government not follow up its charge of "conspiracy to impede government workers" with the substantive "impeding government workers?" Those on trial freely admitted that they took over the refuge, and government workers were not able to do their jobs during the weeks-long occupation.

The conspiracy decision was an error, perhaps because of overconfidence of prosecutors that bordered on arrogance.

The Bundys and their defense teams were able to make long political arguments, which were sometimes persuasive and sometimes not, yet were always imprinting on the jury that there were ulterior motives to the occupation. They showed that impeding government workers wasn't planned, it was just an extra little side effect of their protest.

Another problem with the government's case was presenting all seven defendants together. While a jury could have found some defendants guilty of one crime and others not guilty of the same crime, the trial tied all their fates more tightly together.

And we surely wouldn't have wanted to put David Fry, a mentally unstable young man who only picked up a gun when he was considering self harm, behind bars for years. Perhaps sympathy for his plight rubbed off in a helpful way for the Bundys.

Yet some decisions remain head-scratchers.

For instance, Ken Medenbach — arrested after driving a vehicle that did not belong to him — was found not guilty of theft. Can you imagine anyone, anywhere, being found behind the wheel of a stolen car and getting off scot-free?

It's clear who the winners and losers of this case were in the courtroom. But it's not so clear what the effect will be for those outside of it. What will it mean for federal employees in rural Oregon, for anti-government militias, for forest collaboratives, for Native protesters in the Dakotas, for the next occupation of federal land, be it in the middle of nowhere or in the middle of the National Mall?

That remains to be seen. But this will not be the last time you hear about the occupation trial and the verdict — it will reverberate in rural Oregon for some time.

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Hillary's travails, male tormentors

By FRANK BRUNI
New York Times News Service

Weiner or no Weiner, Hillary Clinton is likely to be our next president.

But she can't seem to escape insatiable men.

She married one — for better, for two terms in the White House, for impeachment.

She's in the climactic week of a grotesque battle with another. If she prevails, his boasts of sexual aggression will partly be why.

And if she fails? Again there's a priapic protagonist. The FBI wouldn't be examining Anthony Weiner's laptop if he hadn't invited so many strangers to examine his lap, and her fate is enmeshed once more with the wanton misdeeds of the weaker sex.

Over so many of her travails hangs a cloud of testosterone.

Milestone

No woman before her earned a major party's presidential nomination, drawing this close to the Oval Office. Should she reach that milestone and make that history, she'd probably also work with a Congress in which there are more female lawmakers than ever before.

But her journey doesn't only reflect the advances of women. It has also been shaped by the appetites and anxieties of men. (Maybe the two dynamics go hand in hand.) And it has exposed gross male behavior while prompting fresh examples of it. Prominent men on the edge of obsolescence have never acted so wounded, so angry, so desperate. Yes, Newt Gingrich, I'm looking at

you, though you'll have to wait your turn while I assess your master.

Donald Trump's candidacy is an unalloyed expression of male id: Yield to me, worship me, never question the expanse of my reach, do not impugn the majesty of my endowment. It's less a political mission than a hormonal one, and it harks back to an era when women were arm candy and a man reveled in his sweet tooth.

His archaic masculinity is her opportunity: a stroke of good fortune in a presidential bid with plenty of bad luck, too. When he seethed that she was a "nasty woman," he might as well have been offering to carry her luggage into 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.

Not the first time

It's hardly the first time that a man's cravings colored her fate. How much of her Achilles'-heel defensiveness is a byproduct of her marriage to Bill? When he was governor of Arkansas and when he ran for president in 1992, there were constant rumors of his philandering and a ceaseless effort to keep them from spreading. She learned early on to see the media as invasive, her opponents as merciless, and privacy as something to be guarded at all costs. That doesn't excuse her use of a private email server as secretary of state, but it does help to explain it.

Her husband converged with Gingrich in Washington in the 1990s, and when Gingrich's Republican troops conquered Congress in 1994, it was widely characterized as the revenge of angry white men, whose provocations included her assertiveness. The president and Gingrich were both portraits of epic neediness. They were as impulsive and messy as little boys. They were destined to torment each other, and did.

The humiliations that she suffered — and the public sympathy that she reaped — were inextricable from the dueling displays of male vanity around her.

Fast forward two decades. While there are still angry white men and they favor Trump, it appears that there aren't enough to counter her advantage with women, who are poised to get the president of their wishes. Not everyone is taking this well.

Just days after Trump called Clinton a "nasty woman," Gingrich lashed out at Megyn Kelly of Fox News for being unduly "fascinated with sex," a rich remark from a thrice-married man with a record of affairs. He wasn't just a pol jousting with a journalist. He was a portly, toppled despot aghast at how stubbornly an intelligent woman refused to defer to him. He was an aged Everyman, reeling at changed roles and altered rules.

Around the country there are Senate and House races with a similar flavor: older man, younger woman, stew of resentments. In Illinois, Sen. Mark Kirk, 57, made fun of the Thai heritage of his challenger, Rep. Tammy Duckworth, 48, and when I watched the exchange, I wondered if the tension between them was a function of gender as well as race.

In Florida, Rep. John Mica, 73, dismissed Stephanie Murphy, the 37-year-old college professor who is running against him, as a "nice lady" who just isn't ready for prime time.

Maybe he has always been that big a boor and having a female opponent just made it obvious. But Clinton gets under Trump's skin in a way that male rivals didn't. In that sense, her gender is not a weakness but a weapon.

It's about time.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bond answers

As parents and business owners, we have discussed the Seaside school bond measure with many friends. Here are our answers to the questions most asked, all having to do with the price tag.

Question: \$99 million is a lot for our district. Why no government help?

Answer: Remember the 2008 Bridge to Nowhere? A federal earmark ban fiasco resulted. Sens. Wyden and Merkley have gone to bat for us to no avail. But we are first in line to receive \$4 million with bond passage.

Question: If it doesn't pass who pays for building repairs?

Answer: We do. Taxpayers pay \$300,000 to \$500,000 yearly to patch decaying buildings. Over \$30 million is needed to correct electrical, plumbing, heating and roofing. It doesn't begin to address seismic worries; just a \$30 million Band-Aid clapping together steady disintegration.

Question: I'm a retiree; why pay for something I don't need?

Answer: Even fixed-income folks have a right to quality medical care, recreational centers, dedicated law enforcement, all deserving a top-notch staff. Professionals we want to attract need assurance their families will thrive.

"How good are your schools?" is the first real estate question. Discouraging skilled newcomers with impoverished schools encourages them to look elsewhere. Who, then, buys? Well-heeled persons wanting a vacation home, not a doctor. When you create a community in which only the wealthy can afford to live, is that truly a community?

Living across the street from the

Gearhart Elementary School tsunami assembly area, we often watch the students march past during evacuation drills. We waved to them as they recently paraded by. One youngster called out, "We are practicing for when the Big One comes!" We nodded. He then asked, "When it does come, my idea is: Can we come stay at your house?"

Don't our children deserve a better plan than this?

KARIN WEBB
 Gearhart

Jones for council

Dear city of Astoria Ward 4 community members: I want to share with you my support for Bruce C. Jones for City Council. I know I do not live in your ward, but every ward in this city is my community. I respect people who move into a community and make it almost instantly their home. Bruce and his family moved here in 2011, and five years later he is willing to get into the unforgiving world of public service.

Yes, I am impressed by his years of service with the U.S. Coast Guard, but I am more impressed by his service as a community volunteer on the boards of directors of the United Way of Clatsop County (2011-2014), Friends of the Astoria Armory (president since 2014), and Friends of the Astoria Column (2014-2016), a trustee of the Columbia River Maritime Museum and his service to the Astoria Library Foundation.

My friends in Ward 4 shared with me that Bruce had visited them, and I thought that showed great interest and passion for his community. He is willing to learn about his neighbors and I am pretty sure, new friends.

Bruce is a honest person looking to engage with his community in difficult issues, who is willing to listen to them and compromise.

I support Bruce C. Jones for City Council, and you should, too.

NORMA HERNANDEZ
 Astoria

Shortman for mayor

Bob Shortman is running for Mayor of Gearhart. I encourage you to vote for him.

I am a homeowner in Gearhart, and have been regularly attending public meetings for several years, all the while watching our local government at work. I think Bob would be a great person to lead the city councilors as mayor.

He knows Gearhart, having lived and worked there for many decades. He has volunteered countless hours for the community. He has raised children in Gearhart. He understands Gearhart's unique coastal community with the idyllic coastline, and just a short distance away, the busy U.S. Highway 101 thoroughfare.

He appreciates the present and historic mix of businesses and of homeowners — those who are in Gearhart full-time, those part-time, and the many people who have vacation homes. Every community has a unique mix of inhabitants. Bob appreciates that.

Bob listens and will continue to listen, and additionally will seek out information and expertise on issues pertinent to Gearhart — before forming personal opinions. He holds the community first, with no preconceived personal agendas.

KATHERINE SCHROEDER
 Gearhart