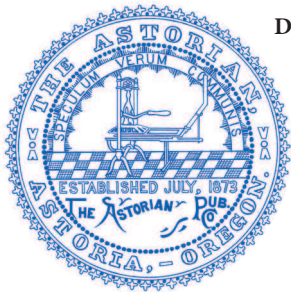


THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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Colin Murphey/EO Media Group

Coast Guard personnel performed routine maintenance on one of their helicopters last week in a hangar at Air Station Astoria.

Put America first by really supporting the Coast Guard

‘America First’ remains an empty slogan, judging by an absence of White House and congressional interest in replacing the Coast Guard’s fleet of increasingly antique helicopters.

It’s a tribute to the Coast Guard’s pragmatic can-do attitude that aging Sikorsky MH-60Ts well beyond their original intended service limit are still doing well at a variety of tough missions. Most recently, Coast Guard personnel played essential roles in rescuing Americans whose homes were smashed by series of powerful hurricanes, a life-and-death responsibility that depends on reliable equipment.

That the helicopters are capable of so much — so far, at least — is a testimonial to the hard and smart work outlined in a story last week by The Daily Astorian’s Edward Stratton (“Maintenance never stops for Coast Guard helicopters,” Sept. 19). Locally, Air Station Astoria’s three MH-60Ts have all logged more than 13,000 hours in the air — 3,000 hours longer than they were meant to. Keeping each safely flying requires 24.4 hours of maintenance for every hour in flight. To the surprise of no one who lives here, corrosion is a main issue, with the aircraft subjected to climatic extremes in this salty place.

Colin Murphey’s photographs accompanying our story are remarkable for showing just how well local Coasties care for these aging helicopters. With recent classic car shows in Seaside and Ocean Park freshly in mind, the attention lavished on the MH-60Ts is reminiscent of a car fanatic restoring their mechanical baby not just once, but over and over and over again.

Shockingly, the Coast Guard has been directed to keep these already well-used aircraft flying at least until 2035 — by which time they will in many cases be decades older than the brave pilots and crews we’ll expect to operate them. This is a travesty and ought to be unacceptable to all Americans and our elected leaders.

Always among our most successful and cost-efficient federal agencies, the Coast Guard currently is housed in the vast Department of Homeland Security, to which it was moved after the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks. It makes a certain amount of sense to place it in that bureaucracy, as it almost by definition is tasked with defending our coasts. However, it also performs many tasks that aren’t related to national defense. In our area, it is perhaps most famous for search-and-rescue missions, but also is key to maintaining aids to safe navigation, overseeing commercial shipping in various ways, and a host of other functions.

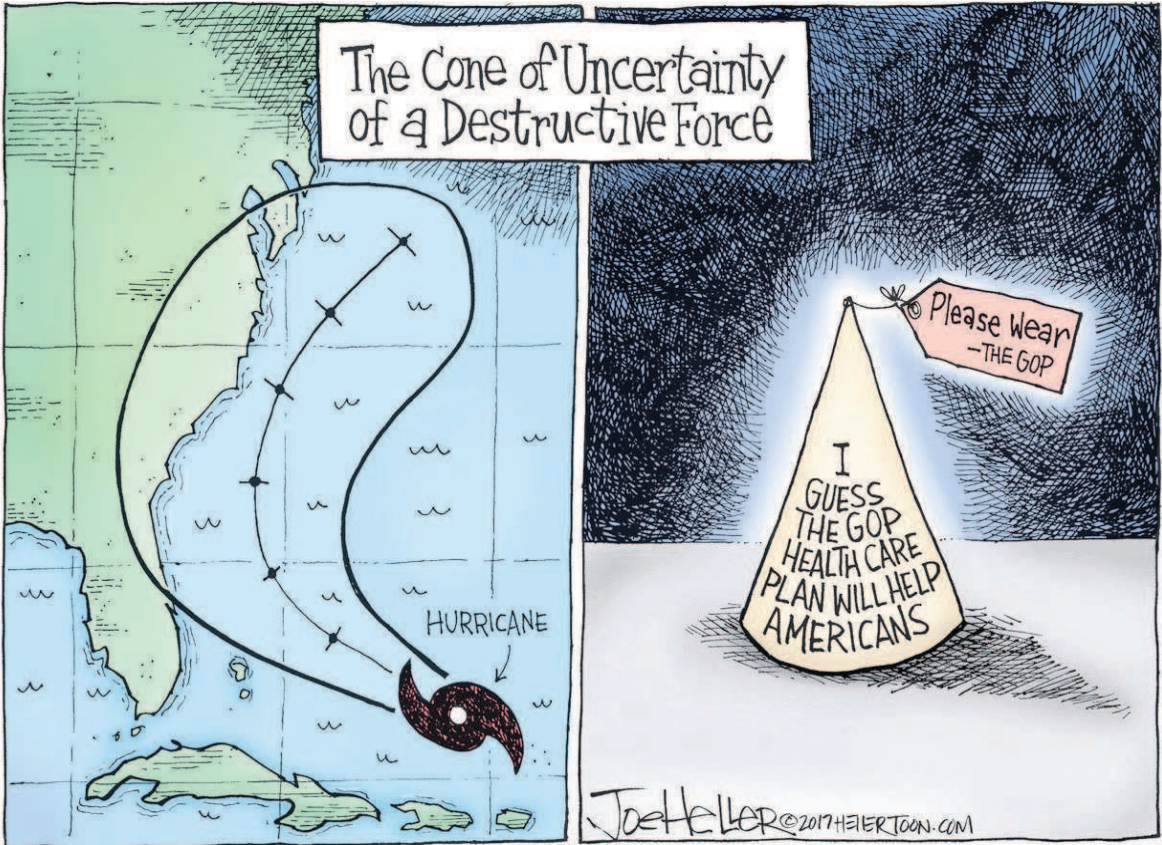
Though it no longer part of the armed services run by the Pentagon, our story described how the Coast Guard is lumped with the Army and Navy for purposes of procuring a next-generation helicopter, perhaps the Army’s Future Vertical Lift. This strategy may in part be a deliberate effort at economizing by Coast Guard leadership. But it shouldn’t have to be left in the position of waiting to ride the coattails of the Army or anyone else.

We live in complicated times, in which America’s coastlines face growing climatic threats. We are, in a way, gaining a new coastline to defend as arctic sea ice retreats and creates an active new shipping channel through the Arctic Ocean. Illicit drug shipments and refugee crises will be doing nothing but increasing along our southern border. To deal with all this, plus unforeseen emergencies, will require much of the Coast Guard. And it deserves much better than hand-me-downs from the military.

President Donald Trump and his supporters are attached to the “America First” mantra. Where better to start than to really stand up for the Coast Guard, which saves lives right here at home? For a fraction of a percent of the Pentagon’s budget, we could provide advanced equipment and support — and raises — for the brave men and women who defend our shores and waterways. We should immediately do so.

Waiting until 2035 for basic equipment isn’t an acceptable option.

OPINION



The coming war on business

By DAVID BROOKS  
*New York Times News Service*

The only time I saw Sam Francis face to face — in the Washington Times cafeteria sometime in the late 1980s or early 1990s — I thought he was a crank, but it’s clear now that he was at that moment becoming one of the most prescient writers of the past 50 years. There’s very little Donald Trump has done or said that Francis didn’t champion a quarter century ago.



In a series of essays for conservative magazines like *Chronicles*, Francis hammered home three key insights. The first was that globalization was screwing Middle America. The Cold War had just ended, capitalism seemed triumphant, and the Clinton years seemed to be an era of broad prosperity. But Francis stressed that the service economy was ruining small farms and taking jobs from the working class.

His second insight was that the Republican and conservative establishment did not understand what was happening. He railed against the pro-business “Economic Men” who thought GDP growth could solve the nation’s problems, and the Washington Republicans, who he thought were infected with the values of the educated elites.

In 1991, when his political mentor, Pat Buchanan, was contemplating a presidential bid, Francis told him to break with the conservative movement. “These people are defunct,” Francis told Buchanan. “Go to New Hampshire and call yourself a patriot, a nationalist, an America Firster, but don’t even use the word ‘conservative.’ It doesn’t mean anything anymore.”

His third insight was that politics was no longer about left versus right. Instead, a series of smaller conflicts — religious versus secular, nationalist versus globalist, white versus nonwhite — were all merging into a larger polarity, ruling class versus Middle America.

“Middle American groups are more and more coming to perceive their exploitation at the hands of the dominant elites. The exploitation works on several fronts — economically, by hypertaxation and the design of a globalized economy dependent on exports and services in place of manufacturing; culturally, by the managed destruction of Middle American norms and institutions; and politically, by the regimentation of Middle Americans under the federal leviathan.”

Middle American voters, he wrote, were stuck without a party, appalled by pro-corporate Republican economic policies on the one hand and liberal cultural radicalism on the other. They swung to whichever party seemed most



AP Photo/Evan Vucci

President Donald Trump listens during a meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Palace Hotel during the United Nations General Assembly Thursday in New York.

likely to resist the ruling class, but neither party really provided a solution. “A nationalist reaction is almost inevitable and will probably assume populist form when it arrives. The sooner it comes the better.”

The Buchanan campaign was the first run at what we now know as Trumpian populism. In a profile of Francis called “The Castaway,” Michael Brendan Dougherty smartly observed that Buchanan and Francis weren’t just against government. They were against the entire cultural hegemony of the ruling class.

**As the tech behemoths intrude more deeply into daily life and our very minds, they will become a defining issue in American politics.**

Francis wrote a wickedly brilliant 1996 essay on Buchanan, “From Household to Nation”: “The ‘culture war’ for Buchanan is not Republican swaggering about family values and dirty movies but a battle over whether the nation itself can continue to exist under the onslaught of the militant secularism, acquisitive egoism, economic and political globalism, demographic inundation, and unchecked state centralism supported by the ruling class.”

Francis urged Buchanan to run an unorthodox campaign (of the sort Trump ended up running) and was ignored. “If Buchanan loses the nomination, it will be because

his time has not yet come,” Francis wrote. The moment would end up coming in 2016, 11 years after Francis’ death.

Francis’ thought was infected by the same cancer that may destroy Trumpism. Francis was a racist. His friends and allies counseled him not to express his racist views openly, but people like that always go there, sooner or later.

The Civil War was an open wound for many in his circle, and in 1994 Francis told a conference, “The civilization that we as whites created in Europe and America could not have developed apart from the genetic endowments of the creating people, nor is there any reason to believe that the civilization can be successfully transmitted to a different people.”

He was fired by The Washington Times and cast out of the conservative movement by William F. Buckley and others.

When you look at today’s world through the prism of Francis’ work, a few things seem clear: Trump is not a one-time phenomenon; the populist tide has been rising for years. His base sticks with him through scandal because it’s not just about him; it’s a movement defined against the so-called ruling class. Congressional Republicans get all tangled on health care and other issues because they don’t understand their voters. Finally, Trump may not be the culmination but merely a way station toward an even purer populism.

Trump is nominally pro-business. The next populism will probably take his ethnic nationalism and add an anti-corporate, anti-tech layer. Google, Facebook, Amazon and Apple stand for everything Francis hated — economically, culturally, demographically and nationally.

As the tech behemoths intrude more deeply into daily life and our very minds, they will become a defining issue in American politics. It wouldn’t surprise me if a new demagogue emerged, one that is even more pure Francis.

LETTERS WELCOME

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All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar and, on occasion, factual accuracy and verbal verification of authorship. Only

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Letters written in response to other letter writers should address the issue at hand and, rather than mentioning the writer by name, should refer to the headline and date the letter was published. Discourse should be civil and people should be referred to in a respectful manner. Letters referring to news stories should also mention the headline and date of publication.

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