

# OPINION

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# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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## SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

# An inspiration for fine reporting

Longtime friend Abbott “Kit” Combes, a former editor at the New York Times Magazine, bequeathed me his collection of journalism, memoirs, biographies and autobiographies: Harrison Salisbury, James Reston, Katharine Graham, among many. Political journalist Jack W. Germond penned perhaps the most colorful title, “Fat Man in a Window Seat,” an on-the-road recounting of politics in backcountry.

Whether a big newspaper superstar or a small-town journalist, reporting is reporting, with the same toolkit at the Washington Post or the Cannon Beach Gazette. Only the megaphone is different — and even that is changing with the widening reach of regional papers online.



**R.J. MARX**

I thought of Combes — who died in 2012 — after reading Seymour M. Hersh’s “Reporter,” a new book from Knopf.

Hersh had what the great early 20th-century editor William Allen White called “the vitriolic pen,” not to be wielded lightly.

Publishers loved and hated Hersh’s high-stakes, high-profile exposés that demanded rigorous fact-checking and occasionally legal counsel. Readers found his revelations tantalizing but unsettling.

But he managed his decades-long career as a great voice for independent, effective journalism, defying party labels and equally respected on both sides of the aisle. He was the first U.S. journalist inside Hanoi during the Vietnam war.

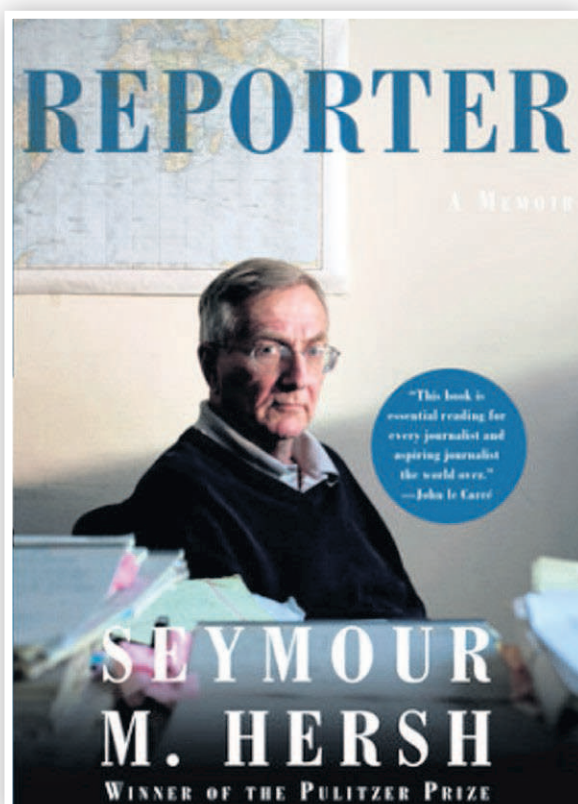
Hersh blew the lid off President Nixon’s secret bombing of Cambodia and shocked readers with revelations of CIA assassination attempts throughout the world.

He detailed a massive, illegal domestic intelligence operation against the antiwar movement, leading to the formation of the Church Committee in 1976 to examine abuses by intelligence agencies.

Hersh traced the CIA’s supply of chemical weapons used by Saddam Hussein in Iraq’s 1980s war against Iran and debunked official versions of Iraq’s chemical weapons arsenal in 2002.

### ‘Smitten’

As a teenager in Chicago’s south suburbs, Hersh was



Knopf

‘Reporter,’ by Seymour M. Hersh.

about to enter his father’s dry cleaning business when a community college professor recognized his writing talents and paved the way to his entry to the University of Chicago.

“I could always write — say exactly what I wanted to say in one take — and that ability got me through college with better grades than I deserved,” Hersh recalls in “Reporter.”

That skill would serve him well in the world of journalism.

He worked for Chicago’s City News Service, tutored by cynical editors and reporters wise to “the Chicago way,” a beat where the cops were on the take and the mob

ran the city.

The City News reporters, with rare exception, ignored the corruption and in return were given access to crime scenes and allowed to park anywhere they wished as long as they displayed a press card on the dashboard, according to Hersh.

The young reporter “was smitten” with his profession.

Hersh learned journalistic rules that would be rules that we should all live by: “If your mother says she loves you, check it out. The guys on the streets who did not get their facts straight or were consistently being out-reported did not last long.”

The best way to tell a story, no matter how significant or complicated, “was to get the hell out of the way and write it,” said the man who broke details of Lt. William Calley Jr.’s shooting of 109 Vietnamese civilians in 1969. Twenty-six American soldiers were charged with criminal offenses in the aftermath, but only Calley Jr., a platoon leader, was convicted.

The story “made a lot of people irrational,” Hersh reflects. It was to be among his first to shine a light on the government’s costly military secret operations, a path from Vietnam to Cambodia, Panama and the Middle East.

His early experience as a reporter in Chicago “kept me from falling into a funk when my work was being savaged, as it occasionally was,” he writes. “I would survive any criticism of a story I knew to be true.”

### ‘Doing his thing’

Hersh repeatedly turned down offers to take an editorial desk job or to settle in at one place for too long. But he was to maintain the respect of his peers and the grudging admiration of government officials and journalistic peers.

Again and again, it was Hersh’s stories — and his publishers’ willingness to run them — that deserve praise in a world too eager to break for the next commercial or to kowtow to whoever holds office.

Hersh’s advice to reporters is fundamental, and serves well newsrooms large and small:

“I learned early in my career that the way to get someone to open up was to know what I was talking about and ask questions that showed it.”

Note to Kit Combes: I’m adding this to the bookshelf.

R.J. Marx is The Daily Astorian’s South County reporter and editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Take a stand and vote ‘no’ on Measure 105

On the ballot this November, Measure 105 would rescind Oregon’s 30-year-old sanctuary law, and align our state with the racist policies of the Trump administration. The ballot measure intentionally uses language that preys on fear, and plays on the narrative that immigrant equals criminal.

Passage of this measure would divert resources from our local communities to do the job of federal law enforcement, straining budgets that are already tight. It will also further isolate immigrant communities and compromise the safety of us all.

Clatsop County Sheriff Tom Bergin has penned a joint letter from sheriffs around Oregon in support of Measure 105. He erroneously suggests that the sanctuary statute somehow prevents local law enforcement from pursuing immigrants who commit crimes.

Erin McKee, co-director of Immigrant Rights Project, Oregon Justice Resources Center, states that “this letter signed by 16 sheriffs is nothing short of open hostility towards communities of color, immigrants, and non-citizens. As Oregonians, we should reject such fear based rhetoric and myths, and support policies grounded in facts, dignity and compassion.”

The North Coast takes pride in its immigrant heritage, and our community is a reflection of the many waves of immigrants who have arrived here over the years. I urge everyone to take a stand and pledge to vote ‘no’ on Measure 105; we value the contributions of our immigrant neighbors, and hate should not be tolerated on the North Coast.

MONICA PEARSON  
Astoria

### Ward 1 voters have a great choice

Recently, I joined dear friends David Drafall and Roger Rocka for some coffee and a chat at the Blue Scorcher Bakery & Cafe. This was their first meeting with an opportunity to sit down and talk.

Astorian in Ward 1, you are in the enviable position of having two wonderful citizens as candidates to be your City Council representative. I have known these gentlemen for decades as friends and dedicated volunteers.

What they talked about is up to them to share. I will say that they agreed their campaigns will remain upbeat, issues-oriented, and with no need for any negativity, as they seemed to find respect for each other and considerable agreement about the needs of the citizens right here in river city.

How refreshing to know you Astorians and your neighbors, like me, will most certainly be well served by a man who has already demonstrated love, care and concern

for the vital well-being of this place we all cherish. These guys know the issues, and are solutions-oriented.

Astoria, you can’t lose. Unless, like playing the lottery, you don’t participate. Please play well with others, and vote this fall. Every vote counts here!

TESSA JAMES SCHELLER  
Warrenton

### Deeply grateful for Sen. McCain’s service

John McCain, American hero, says it all. For the current president of the land of the free and home of the brave to dare to raise our flag from half mast, back to the top, was a slap in the face to all our fighting troops.

He openly said Sen. McCain wasn’t a hero because all he’d done was be a prisoner of war. I say let’s put this man who doesn’t understand, let alone know, about the sacred laws of this country, be put in a replica of the Hanoi Hilton and get a taste of part of what made Sen. McCain an American Hero.

I am infuriated and disgusted with any president who would be so flippant with his words and actions. Actions speak louder than words. God bless you and comfort your family at this time, senator. I for one, am deeply grateful for your service.

NANCY GLARUM  
Warrenton

### Constitutional amendment for succession is in order

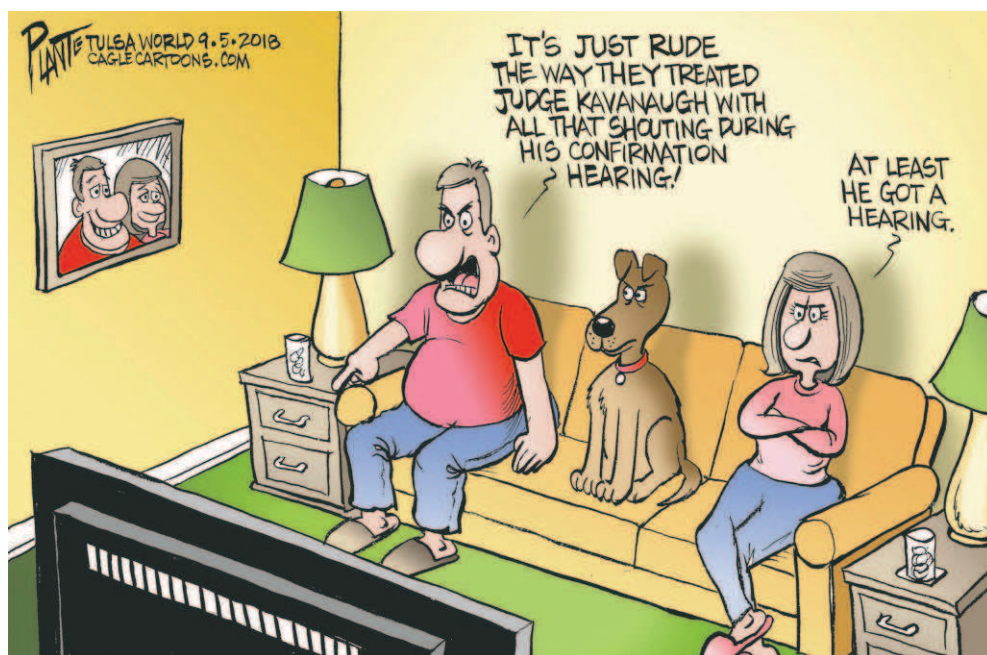
The letter to the editor, “Award Oval Office to 2016’s second-place finisher” (The Daily Astorian, Aug. 28), expressed a novel and worthy idea of how to handle situations such as our nation finds itself.

To impeach President Donald Trump would bring an even more sinister president. One who could be re-electable. The writer’s notion of succession is more appropriate for a situation in which corruption or foreign intervention, or both, have resulted in the election of a president, or any other political leader. A constitutional amendment is in order.

TOD LUNDY  
Astoria

### Proposed new county jail has great potential

I have resided within Clatsop County since 1971. During that period of time I was employed as an Oregon State Peace Officer with the University of Oregon assigned to Job Corps, a member of the Astoria Police Department and a part-time jail deputy. Working in this field of law enforcement, I had occasion to become involved in the workings of the Clatsop County jail.



I am familiar with many of the problems of the working conditions that staff have had to contend with. The cramped space where staff is required to work, the lack of living space that prisoners have to share, and the ongoing conditions that sometimes cause safety concerns for both staff and those incarcerated.

We have a great opportunity to move the jail from its confined area to a facility presently known as the former North Coast Youth Correctional facility, located just a few blocks from the sheriff’s office. I have visited these buildings many times while serving on the Warrenton-Hammond School Board, attending work sessions and graduation ceremonies of the youth who completed their certificate of learning.

The buildings have great potential to hold and help and treat prisoners. Sheriff Tom Bergin, a strong proponent of remodeling the youth facility for our jail, and leading the movement to lead presentations to promote the bond throughout Clatsop County, has my strong support. I ask our citizens to look at all accessible information and attend discussions that may help inform.

MELVIN (MEL) JASMIN  
Warrenton

### Revised hotel design is not progress

Great. I see a new design for the latest cookie-cutter hotel has been advanced. They cut it out looks like a cannery. We already have a Cannery Pier Hotel, which venerates our history, hires local contractors, and keeps and spends its money locally; so please don’t patronize us.

What will Astoria get from this proposal? We’ll get an out-of-town developer who reaps millions (maybe he can afford that yacht in the San Juans).

We’ll get some minimum-wage jobs, with no benefits. Outstanding. There should be a ready supply of workers right across the

street, as the current motels slowly go out of business. That should yield some derelict property, which every city needs more of.

We can trade river vistas and working waterfront property for out-of-town enrichment: Entrepreneurship at its finest.

Coupled with the existing corporate hotels, we can lose more of our unique identity. Close your eyes, and you can be in Anywhere, America. But you can use your rewards.

Did I mention that we might even earn a new spotlight for us all to enjoy? Now that’s progress.

CHRIS CONNAWAY  
Astoria

### Why is Seaside school project over budget?

The Seaside Convention Center expansion project is being completed on budget. The Seaside school project is already almost 25 percent over budget. Is this \$23 million-plus underestimate because the school planners are incompetent, or they lied to us in order to get the tax measure passed?

I fear it is the latter. Either way, shame on them.

ANNA PERRAULT  
Seaside

### Use cloth bags when shopping

As a former resident of Warrenton, I read with interest the debate about plastic bags versus paper bags (“North Coast looks to ban plastic bags,” The Daily Astorian, Aug. 27).

I bought my first cloth Fred Meyer bag in Warrenton. I got three more in Oregon City. The bags are washable and will hold a heavy load, including wet produce. Fred Meyer (Kroger) needs to manufacture and sell more of these bags to customers. I also use them at Safeway. Wise up, folks, and go green.

GREER GILLILAND  
Oregon City