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I will vote as long as I can breathe

My memories around the first time voting are hazy, but I do know it was 1980 and I was just 22.

The Republican presidential challenger, Ronald Reagan, had just trounced “my” candidate, Democratic incumbent Jimmy Carter, but I don’t recall being too concerned. A junior at the University of Oregon, I likely was more absorbed with classes, my new job waiting tables at a campus night-spot and a very appealing man I had just begun dating — and not necessarily in that order.

I suspect voting seemed little more than an amusing novelty. In other words, I took for granted the most fundamental of democratic rights.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness ...

I came of age in the ‘70s when the women’s movement, led by feminists such as Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan, was greatly responsible for leading millions of American women, including my mom, into the workforce.

The Equal Rights Amendment had been resurrected in 1972. Girls could even wear pants (finally) to public school in rainy Salem, where I grew up. As the Virginia Slims cigarette commercial at the time proclaimed, “You’ve come a long way, baby.”

Whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government.



Joan Herman serves on the Astoria City Council.

Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Yet another 30 years or so would pass before I learned there actually had been an earlier, so-called first wave of feminism. I was developing a course in women’s literature at the community college where I taught, when my readings introduced me to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and other ardent suffragists of the mid-19th century.

But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them (women) under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government ...

To our 21st-century eyes, Stanton and Anthony certainly do not fit the superficial, preconceived notions of what a “feminist” looks like. A por-

trait of Stanton, in particular, a wife and mother of seven children, shows her hair tightly curled and her body covered by the high-necked, demure fashion of the time.

Appearances can be deceiving. Stanton, Anthony and other 19th-century feminists, including some men (notably, the great 19th-century orator, abolitionist and escaped slave, Frederick Douglass), kicked off the women’s movement at the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, where Stanton’s “Declaration of Sentiments,” a clever co-opting of another “Declaration,” was read.

The italicized passages interspersed throughout my essay come from Stanton’s “Declaration.” Thomas Jefferson’s version certainly did not include the words “and women” to grant them

equality alongside men, meaning white men.

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation ... we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of these United States.

Stanton and Anthony died in 1902 and 1906, still years before American women would actually gain the right to vote. Instead, their descendants in the women’s suffrage movement, both in the U.S. and U.K., took up the cause, enduring ridicule, imprisonment, hunger strikes and in some cases, beatings, before finally witnessing the 19th Amendment’s ratification in 1920.

The Founding Mothers of the women’s rights movement were especially in the forefront of my mind when I, myself, filed to run for office in 2018. They did not have that choice.

Nearly 40 years and dozens of elections after casting my first ballot, I had hoped to vote for another Elizabeth this coming November. I had hoped to witness her, or even another female candidate, sworn in as the first woman president of the United States. I will have to wait at least another four years, perhaps longer. I won’t hold my breath.

But I will continue to vote for as long as I can breathe. And each time, I will offer a silent thanks to all the women — and men — who worked tirelessly to give me that right.

Joan Herman serves on the Astoria City Council. This guest column is one of several being published by The Astorian in August to mark the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which guaranteed women the right to vote.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

What a guy

I am a mother, a grandmother and a great-grandmother.

On Aug. 10, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Children’s Hospital Association announced that more than 97,000 American children have tested positive for coronavirus in the last two weeks of July.

The same day, President Donald Trump had a news conference in which he declared that children are immune to the virus. Really?

Seems he’s mighty ambitious to have children back in school, so their parents will go back to work and change the statistics in the dreary business market, and improve his sinking ratings.

He is willing to put our children at risk. He is willing to expose our children to suffering and/or death. What a guy.

MARY TANGUAY WEBB
Astoria

Remember when?

Years ago, there was a Maytag ad showing the Maytag serviceman sitting at his bench, hands upon his cheeks, wondering when he was going to get a call for a repair.

I got you thinking how often our Lord sits, hands upon his cheeks, wondering when he is going to get a call from one of us for a repair. How often many of us — in need of a repair, be it a sickness, a separation, a fear or just a simple concern — neglect to call upon our Lord and master repairman, who gives us his word:

“Call upon me and I will answer” and “cast all your cares upon me.”

JIM BERNARD
Warrenton

Eradicate socialism

A clear 2020 election strategy of the Republican Party is the promise to rid America of all forms of socialism. It claims that socialism leads to communism, and hence must be rooted out.

However, it is seldom made clear what this rooting out process entails. One has to search below the surface slogans to find this out. The main claim is that socialism seeks to control and disempower people — to soften them up, and then to enslave them.

For example the claim, “control health



LETTERS WELCOME

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care and you control the people” is the reason given to justify the discontinuation of Medicare and Medicaid. The same kind of argument is directed against Social Security, welfare and public education. They all represent devious means to enslave a free people.

So what Republicans really mean when they say they will rid America of socialism is that they will end Social Security,

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. Send via email to editor@dailyastorian.com, online at bit.ly/astorianletters, in person at 949 Exchange St. in Astoria or mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR., 97103.

Medicare, Medicaid, welfare and public education. Let us have no illusions about the Republican intent.

President Donald Trump has already taken steps to defund Social Security, and has promised to gut it, should he be reelected. The Affordable Care Act, Medicare and Medicaid are all under attack, and are in danger should Republicans keep the White House and Senate.

Save Social Security. Save Medicare and Medicaid. Save America.
JOHN ROGAN
Tillamook

Grow up

Using a recent letter writer’s logic, if a town built a dam to stop flooding, but only built it half of the way across the river, and had worse floods again the next spring, then ergo, dams don’t work, and may have made it worse.

As long as we have less than everyone wearing masks, we will have infections spreading. Wearing a mask is to stop the wearer from infecting others, not to stop others from infecting the wearer.

Grow up. We live in a society that gives us certain rights to live freely within it, but that also comes with responsibility to keep yourself and others safe. Wear the mask, and maybe we can get back to normal.

JIM TRUDEAU
Astoria