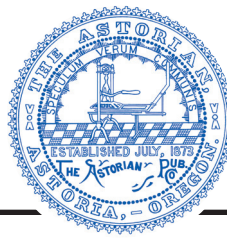


OPINION



the Astorian

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WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

The journalist-politician has worked well for Oregon

It is unfortunate that Nicholas Kristof won't be on the Oregon Democratic primary ballot for governor. Kristof and former state Sen. Betsy Johnson were the two candidates who did not neatly fit into the tradition of electing Democrats beholden to public employee unions. As the former Republican Secretary of State Dennis Richardson once said during conversation at The Astorian, "The public employees unions run the statehouse."



STEVE FORRESTER

In different ways, Kristof and Johnson would have brought fresh ideas to this race for governor. Johnson has yet to flesh out her message, but Kristof's was clearly about human welfare – the vast swath of displaced and damaged Oregonians. His nationally published articles and books are about the travail of common people in turbulent times. One of those books is about drug addiction among Oregonians whom Kristof knew while growing up in this state.

Some referred to Kristof's national and international journalism as though that made him a novelty candidate. But Oregon has enjoyed good luck with journalist-politicians. Three of our prominent officeholders have been journalists. One of those was Oregon's most consequential governor of the 20th century.

Charles Sprague owned the Oregon Statesman newspaper in Salem. As editor, he wrote editorials and a widely read front-page column, "It Seems to Me." He became Oregon governor in 1939 and served through 1943. Sprague was a Republican in the Theodore Roosevelt Progressive tradition. His defense of civil liberties put him at odds with the GOP's right wing.



Mark Graves/The Oregonian

The Oregon Supreme Court upheld a determination by the secretary of state that Nicholas Kristof, a former New York Times columnist, does not meet the residency requirement to run for governor.

Today's Oregon Republican Party would turn their backs on the man. To learn more about Sprague, read Floyd McKay's biography, "An Editor for Oregon: Charles A. Sprague and the Politics of Change."

Tom McCall and Richard Neuberger were journalists of a different sort, but they had a symbiotic relationship. McCall began as a sportswriter

in Idaho and became one of Oregon's most prominent television journalists, as a news analyst for KGW-TV. Neuberger's prodigious output appeared in The Oregonian, from the time he was 18, and subsequently in national magazines that collectively reached a broad demographic.

Conservation was a paramount value – a theme in many of Neuberger's articles. By the time he was elected to the U.S. Senate as a Democrat, Neuberger had built a national constituency among conservationists, and they were elated at his victory. Brent Walth in "Fire at Eden's Gate" describes Neuberger as McCall's "role model." When Neuberger died at the age of 47 in 1960, McCall took up the cause of conservation and became Oregon's most prominent conservationist.

In other words, Oregon's three prominent journalist officeholders carried positive, inspirational values into the arena and left their mark.

The important distinction between Neuberger and Kristof is that Neuberger served in the Oregon House of Representatives and the state Senate prior to the U.S. Senate. Neuberger had done a legislative apprenticeship – all of which he wrote about.

Nonetheless, it would have been useful to have an injection of Kristof's perspective in the race that lies ahead.

Steve Forrester, the former editor and publisher of The Astorian, is the president and CEO of EO Media Group.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Impeachment

The Oregon Constitution is the only one lacking an impeachment provision. House Joint Resolution 203 is designed to correct this error. It provides impeachment of elected executive branch officials.

The resolution is in state Rep. Barbara Smith Warner's House Rules Committee. She is reluctant to give the bill a hearing, and needs encouragement to do so. It has a bipartisan group of senators and representatives sponsoring it.

Having two bad governors in succession underscores the need for this law.

ERIN BRUCE THURBER
Sweet Home

Inappropriate development

Permit me to add my voice to Ed Overbay's call ("One and only location," The Astorian, Feb. 17) for the city to back off plans to turn Heritage Square over to commercial developers instead of honoring a long-held promise to make it a much-needed public square.

I agree we need more affordable housing, but there are many other locations for this purpose, some of which even have adequate parking.

As for the planned mental health facility at the same site, aren't there already enough troubled individuals haunting the downtown district?

Housing and treatment are worthy goals, but surely there are sites more appropriate than shoehorning them into what should be a commemorative, peaceful community space.

One has to wonder why the big push for this inappropriate development, and what part the almighty dollar is playing.

I concede the city will never be the same as it was when I settled here 50 years ago, but I urge Astorians to push back against this slow but steady march into unrecognizability.

JOHN F. CROWLEY
Astoria

Near hysterical

It's easy to miss Astoria, until one reads the many near hysterical responses to the proposed development of Heritage Square into lower-income housing, and a better space, and for many mental health clients.

It seems that while Astoria is quickly removing or renaming the obvious visual evidence to Astoria's prejudicial past, many of its citizens are repurposing the same irrational fears and slanders that fueled those prejudices.

I remember an anecdote a friend told me. A haggard, disheveled man was sitting on a bench along Astoria's Riverwalk. A woman stopped and said to him, "We don't like your kind around here." His "kind" was third-generation Columbia River worker. He was one of my friend's deckhands.

It's as if Astoria's white ancestors were mostly proper middle-class citizens, and not people driven from their home countries because of things like poverty and

prejudice.

The U.S. treatment of those with mental divergences from the present norms, or emotional and mental challenges, is arguably the greatest moral failing of our time.

While people are enjoying their right to speak out against a proposed development, so many others are being deprived of their right to quality mental health care and affordable housing.

MICHAEL A. MILLER
Salem

Seeing forests and trees

In his Feb. 12 letter to the editor in The Astorian, "Time and money," Chris Connaway, of the International Longshore

and Warehouse Union Local 50, demonstrates his leadership, loyalty to union members and concern for the community.

Naturally he wants the best for his union members and the timber industry that has provided them with years of employment. However, his call for another log export facility in Astoria is out of touch with the direction the city and county are headed.

It is generally agreed by analysts that the economic future of Astoria will be driven by tourism, recreation and livability. The notion that a log export facility would lead to an economic boon for the city seems dubious and self-serving.

Exporting raw logs to China in recent years has closed numerous Oregon mills, forcing mill workers onto unemployment and has driven up the cost of finished

lumber.

Connaway's characterization of Clatsop County as a "Third World, colonial, plantation" without its own log exporting misses the mark. That epithet belongs to the state of Oregon, which is allowing the sale of our natural resources to China, an insatiable country that long ago deforested its own lands. Log exports on the Columbia River are literally selling our state down the river.

Rather than not being able to "see the forest for the trees," as Connaway suggests, the Port administration, our county and city representatives, and the majority of the citizens, are collectively sending the message that we want to see more forests and fewer fallen trees.

ROGER DORBAND
Astoria



KUPER
PoliticalCartoons.com

"It wasn't a mandate fellas, it was just a recommendation."