

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Sunday, December 28

**Birthdays:** Tracey Heidrich • Sharon Tullis

9:00am: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church Mass

9:00am: St. John's Lutheran Worship

10:00am: Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Pierpont (LCMC) worship

10:15am: Emmanuel Lutheran Worship

11:00am: United Methodist Church Worship

7:00pm: Emmanuel Lutheran Choir

## Monday, December 29

No School

**Senior Menu:** Swiss steak with mushroom gravy, mashed potatoes, mixed vegetables, rice and raisins, whole wheat bread.

**Birthdays:** Adam Herman, Barbara Stauch • Connie Stauch • Nicole Osterman • Delbert Hinkelman • Brady Keith • Melissa Locke

6:30am: Emmanuel Lutheran Bible Study

## Tuesday, December 30

No School

**Birthday:** Vera Osness

**Senior Menu:** Lasagna rotini, tossed salad with dressing, oatmeal spice cookie, whole wheat bread.

## Wednesday, December 31

No School

**Senior Menu:** Oven fried chicken, mashed potatoes, winter mix vegetables, buttermilk biscuits, banana pudding with bananas.

**Anniversaries:** Howard & Sue Felkey • Paul & Tina Kosel • Jake & Tiffany Unzen

**Birthdays:** Jill Cutler • Braiden Craig • Brian Koens  
New Year's Eve

12:00pm: Kiwanis meets at the Community Center

## The cardboard/paper

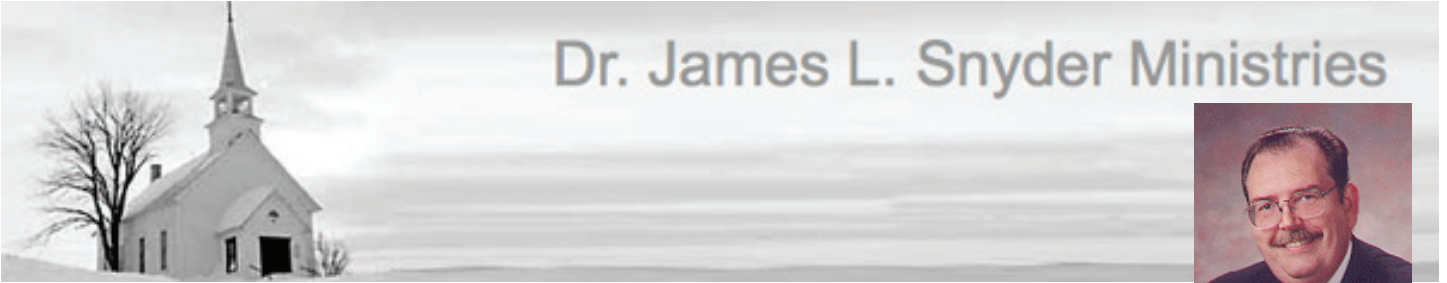
recycling trailer at the school is **OPEN**

## OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is back at 10 East Railroad Ave. Don't forget, there is also a dumpster at the city shop for aluminum cans with the proceeds going to the pool.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



## What It Was, Was Fruitcake

The period between November 1 and January 1 happens to be my favorite time frame. Oh yes, there is the idea of Christmas and Christmas presents and all of that. I certainly enjoy Christmas with my family and friends.

As the oldest person in my family, (I will never mention aloud that the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage is a wee bit older than myself), it is my duty to pay for all of these Christmas presents. By the time January 1 rolls around, I am just about broke.

What good is money if you can't spend it on your favorite people in all of the world? I won't say that my family is the best people in all of the world, although it is true, I just won't say it aloud.

What I do like about this period of the year are the delicacies of the season. It is the time of the year to splurge on the finer elements of life. By that, I mean food. I don't think it's possible to get too much food during this time of the year.

My wife is infamous for looking at me and saying, "Don't you think you've had enough?" Being married as long as I have I only allow her to say, "Don't you think..." And I stop her right there, shake my head vigorously and say, "No I don't think. 'Tis the season not to think." And I'm not bragging or anything,

but when it comes to not thinking I have perfected the art.

I have one rule when it comes to this time of the year. Vegetables are completely off my diet. All year long my wife force feeds these wretched vegetables on me as though it was good for my health. The only thing good for my health is to eat them so that she doesn't badger me as much as she can. But vegetables? At Christmas time?

This time of the year is the time for me to exploit the delicious delicacies of the season. I can't think of any dessert at this time of the year that I don't indulge in and do it right smartly. Whenever I'm invited to a party, I always manage to bring some kind of dessert. And I don't bring the dessert for the host. I bring the dessert for me. When you are at a party, it is not polite not to eat the dessert. And I want to be as polite as I can along this line.

It was a couple days before Christmas when I realized something rather strange. Of course, being who



**MISSING:** A cat in the Fifth Avenue East and Broadway area is missing. His name is Linus. If found or seen please call 397-8517 and ask for Jerry or call 397-2422 and ask for Darlene.

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I am thinking about something strange comes rather normal. But this was something a little different. I turned to my wife and said, "Have you noticed something absent this year during the Christmas season?"

"Vegetables?" She said somewhat sarcastically.

"No, something else."

Then I explained what I have not seen this holiday season. They must be around, but I have not run into any this year.

What I have missed this year is the good old fashion Fruitcake. What is the Christmas season without Fruitcake?

There was a time when Fruitcake was everywhere you looked and you couldn't get away from it. Of course, I never tried to get away from Fruitcake. Being the nut that I am, I absolutely love Fruitcake.

I know many people make fun of this holiday delicacy. I'm not one of them. I don't make fun of that which has some special meaning. Only during the holiday season can you get this wonderful, delightful delicacy.

Just think about it for a minute. On the one hand, you have "fruit," and on the other hand, you have "cake." What two things could merge in such a harmonious marriage of deliciousness?

The goodness of the fruit cancels out the badness of the cake.

Now when I say badness of the cake, I'm only quoting my wife. I have never seen a cake that was bad, except the one that I can't eat. Cake is the one thing that makes a gathering worth gathering.

Don't you think it's a little hypocritical for those people who think a cake is bad, and then have it on certain celebrations? For example. How could you have a wedding without having a wedding cake? I could go on from there if you want me to. No matter what the celebration, cake makes it better.

I fondly remember the first time I brought home Fruitcake for our Christmas festivities. I set it on the table and my wife looked at me and said, "What in the world is that?"

I looked at her and smiled one of those smiles that comes to someone who is happy to be doing what he's doing at the time and said, "This is not from the world, my dear, this is from heaven." Then I explained to her what a fruitcake was. I'm not sure she bought the whole story.

**Continues on next page**

## Help Wanted

**Wheatcrest Hills - New Wage Scale - is hiring for PT and FT CNA positions. We are looking for caring compassionate individuals to join our team. CNA certification training class to start in December and January, benefit packages available. Please stop in for application or contact Kristin at 605/448-2251. (1209.1216)**

**SUN DIAL MANOR in Bristol is accepting applications for an RN or LPN. PRN, part time or full time. Small town, home-like facility with new renovations. We offer competitive wages and benefits. We are an equal Employment Opportunity employer and offer a drug free workplace. If interested, please call Connie at 605/492-3615. (121614)**

## Classifieds

**SUNDIAL MANOR in Bristol is accepting applications for a Social Services Coordinator. For more information, please contact Peggy Pearson, Administrator, at 605/492-3615. (121614)**

## Apartments For Rent

ONE AND TWO bedroom apartment for rent. HDS subsidized. Rent includes utilities and heat. No smoking. Pets okay. Contact Darlene Daly at 605/397-8131.

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Life is full of combining things and when combined with other things they take on a new identity. I think life is much like a Fruitcake.

Perhaps Jesus said it best, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:29-30).

When we combine our life with Jesus we take on His identity.

Rev. James L. Snyder is pastor of the Family of God Fellowship, PO Box 831313, Ocala, FL 34483. He lives with his wife, Martha, in Silver Springs Shores. Call him at 1-866-552-2543 or e-mail [jamesnyder2@att.net](mailto:jamesnyder2@att.net) or website [www.jamesnyderministries.com](http://www.jamesnyderministries.com).

## **Mt. Vernon/Plankinton beat Lady Tigers**

Groton Area traveled to Parkston on Saturday to take part of the Parkston Classic. The Lady Tigers lost to Mt. Vernon/Plankinton, 89-44.

Courtney Kurtz led the Tigers with 24 points followed by Carly Wheeting with seven, Audrey Wanner six, Katie Koehler four, Marlee Jones two and Ashley Gibbs one.

Kurtz made three three-pointers and Wheeting made one.

Groton made six of 11 free throws, 13 of 34 two-pointers, four of nine three-pointers, had 16 rebounds with Wanner having five and Wheeting four, four assists with Kurtz having two, six steals with Kurtz having three, Wheeting had one block and Groton had 21 turnovers and 17 fouls.



## Today in Weather History

1985: Strong winds gusted to 40 mph over most of South Dakota and to 60 mph east of the Black Hills. The winds produced areas of blowing snow with near zero visibilities. Buffalo Britton, and New Underwood all reported near-zero visibilities.

2000: Heavy snow of up to 8 inches fell across Traverse County on the 27th and 28th. Wheaton and Browns Valley both reported 8 inches.

2000: Northwest winds of 35 to 50 mph, gusting to around 65 mph, occurred across central and north central South Dakota in the morning. The high winds resulted in blizzard conditions at some locations just east of the Missouri River. Further east, in northeast South Dakota, northwest winds of 30 to 50 mph combined with newly fallen snow to generate blizzard conditions from the morning into the early afternoon hours. Travel was very difficult in many places and many motorists found themselves in ditches. There were also several non-injury accidents.

1879: All 74 lives were lost when a passenger train plunged from the Tay Bridge (Dundee, Scotland) into the Tay Estuary as the middle section of the bridge collapsed. Although the bridge was poorly constructed and had already been weakened in earlier gales (including the pre-existing winds at the time of the tragedy), the ultimate failure is believed to have been caused by two or three waterspouts which were sighted close to the bridge immediately before the accident.

1999: From the 26th to the 28th two incredibly powerful wind storms tore through northern and western Europe. Winds were over 100 mph in France, Germany, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Devastation to trees, power grids, and buildings was widespread. 140 people lost their lives.

2003: A severe snow storm hit northern California and southern Oregon. As much as 2 feet of snow fell along Interstate 5 closing a 150-mile stretch of the highway, stranding hundreds of travelers. Winds from the storm caused power outages to more than 200,000 customers. One man died of a heart attack after helping other drivers.

1839 - The third storm in two weeks hit the northeastern U.S. It brought two more feet of snow to Hartford, CT, and Worcester, MA. Whole gales swept the coast causing many wrecks. (David Ludlum)

1897 - The temperature at Dayville, OR, hit 81 degrees to establish a state record for December. (The Weather Channel)

1924 - Iowa experienced its coldest December morning of record. Morning lows averaged 25 degrees below zero for the 104 weather stations across the state.

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1955 - Anchorage, AK, was buried under 17.7 inches of snow in 24 hours, a record for that location. (28th-29th) (The Weather Channel)

1958 - Albuquerque, NM, received 14.2 inches of snow to establish a 24 hour record. (28th-29th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A winter storm produced heavy snow in the Upper Mississippi Valley and the Upper Great Lakes Region. Up to twenty inches of snow buried southern Minnesota, and 20 to 40 mph northwesterly winds produced snow drifts six feet high, and reduced visibilities to near zero at times in blowing snow. There were a thousand traffic accidents in Michigan during the storm, resulting in thirty-five injuries. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Strong winds behind a cold front claimed three lives in eastern Pennsylvania, and injured a dozen others in eastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey and Maryland. Winds gusted to 87 mph at Hammonton NJ and in the Washington D.C. area. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Squalls continued to bring snow to the Great Lakes Region, with heavy snow reported near Lake Superior and Lake Ontario. Syracuse NY received 8.5 inches of snow to push the total for the month past their previous December record of 57 inches. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)






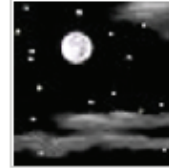

2003 - A severe snow storm hit northern California and southern Oregon. As much as 2 feet of snow fell along Interstate 5 closing a 150-mile stretch of the interstate, stranding hundreds of travelers. Winds from the storm caused power outages to more than 200,000 customers in California and Oregon. One man died of a heart attack after helping other drivers. (CNN)

2004 - Los Angeles (downtown) broke a daily rainfall record for the month of December (5.55 inches). This was the third wettest calendar day in Los Angeles since records began in 1877.

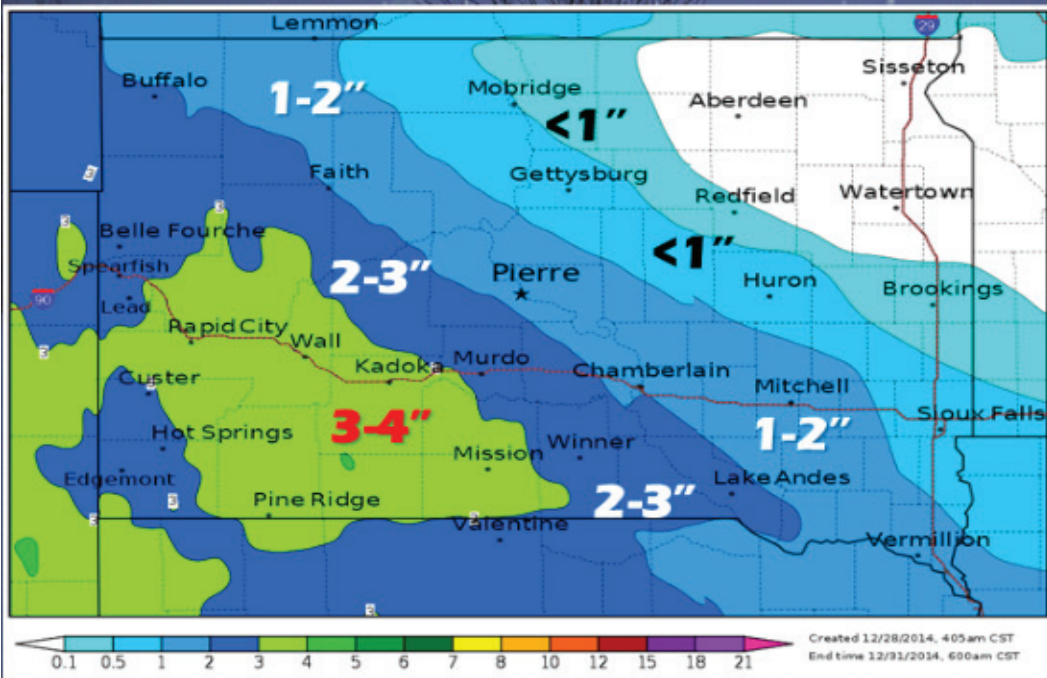
2005 - An outbreak of severe thunderstorms across portions of the southeast United States on the 28th produced hail, high winds and a few tornadoes. The states of Georgia and Tennessee were the most affected. (NCDC)


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TODAY	TONIGHT	MONDAY	MONDAY NIGHT	TUESDAY	TUESDAY NIGHT	WEDNESDAY
						
Chance Flurries High: 14 °F	Mostly Cloudy Low: -4 °F	Cold High: 2 °F	Partly Cloudy Low: -12 °F	Cold High: 1 °F	Mostly Clear Low: -9 °F	Sunny High: 17 °F


## Light Snow Today, Much Colder for Monday - Tuesday



**Today**  
  
 Teens and 20s

**Monday**  
  
**COLD**  
 0 to 10 above

**Tuesday**  
  
**COLD**  
 0 to 5 above

**Wednesday**  
  
**COLD**  
 Teens and 20s

### Snowfall Amounts Today - Tonight

A cold front sliding southward will bring scattered flurries to locations along and north of Highway 12 this morning. Then another storm system moving across western South Dakota will bring light accumulating snowfall to the Missouri River valley this afternoon. Snowfall amounts of 1 to 4 inches are possible by Monday morning. Much colder temperatures are on the way for Monday and Tuesday with highs only in the single digits above zero.



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## Yesterday's Weather

**High:** 22.8 at 2:24 PM

**Low:** 2.1 at 7:29 AM

**Wind Chill:**

**High Gust:** 17 at 12:42 PM

Precip: 0.00

## Today's Info

**Record High:** 57° in 1898

**Record Low:** -24° in 1924

**Average High:** 23°F

**Average Low:** 3°F

**Average Precip in Dec.:** 0.45

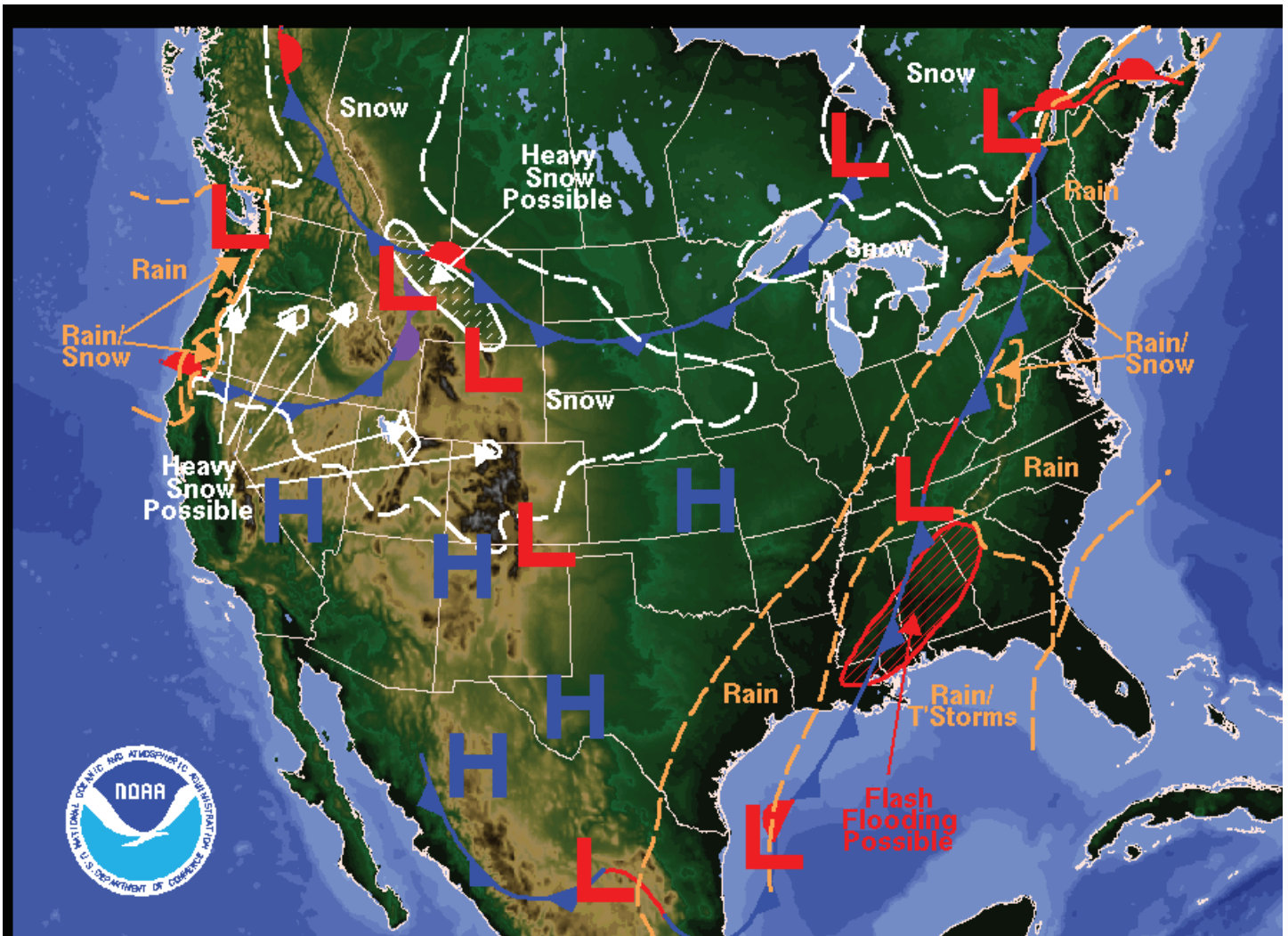
**Precip to date in Dec.:** 0.00

**Average Precip to date:** 21.65

**Precip Year to Date:** 13.99

**Sunset Tonight:** 4:58 p.m.

**Sunrise Tomorrow:** 8:13 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Sun, Dec 28, 2014, issued 3:39 AM EST  
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center  
Prepared by Ryan based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts





## WHEN HEAVEN CAME DOWN

A little girl took her first elevator ride with her father. When they arrived at the top floor, he asked, "What did you think of that? Did you like it?"

"I don't know, Daddy," she replied. "It was kind of funny. We got into this little house, and then the upstairs came down."

An amusing little story, isn't it? But that's exactly what happened when God sent His Son into the world. God sent His Son into the world to give us life and light, hope and healing, grace and goodness.

We are expected to do the same through Him. We are to take the message of salvation to others, light up the dark pathways of those who are still blinded by sin, give hope to those who are unable to see past their problems, show grace to those who are burdened beyond measure and demonstrate goodness to those who are in need by sharing our possessions with them.

It is not enough that we know God's "Golden Rule." He expects us to live it every day of our lives.

**Prayer:** Help me, Dear Jesus, to live as You lived and do as You did that I might give to others what You gave to me. May I take a little bit of heaven to others because You brought all of heaven to me. In Your Name. Amen.

**Scripture for Today:** John 10:9-18 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

## Saturday's Scores The Associated Press

### Boys Basketball

Minneapolis Henry, Minn. 102, Mitchell Christian 53

West Central 79, Tea Area 72

### Entringer Classic (Brookings)

Chester 69, Castlewood 49

Colman-Egan 52, Dell Rapids St. Mary 38

Dell Rapids 60, Sioux Valley 48

Deuel 59, Lake Preston 52

Elkton-Lake Benton 72, Garretson 69

Estelline 53, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 50

Flandreau 71, Deubrook 58

Hamlin 54, DeSmet 48

Madison 68, Arlington 66

### Huron Classic

James Valley Christian 73, Faulkton 50

Wolsey-Wessington 72, Ethan 35

### Lance Buseman Classic

Beresford 52, Viborg-Hurley 42

Tiospa Zina Tribal 58, Centerville 56

### Marshall Tournament

Sioux Falls Lincoln 63, Marshall, Minn. 55

### Mobridge Rotary Classic

Herreid/Selby Area 72, McIntosh 56

Little Wound 66, Mobridge-Pollock 51

Standing Rock, N.D. 68, Timber Lake 56

### NSU Wolves Classic

Strasburg-Zeeland, N.D. 69, Webster 58

### Snowball Classic

Colome 59, Newell 42

Gregory 68, Wall 17

### Girls Basketball

Bowman County, N.D. 62, Harding County 42

Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 47, Red

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Cloud 45

## **Huron Holiday Classic**

James Valley Christian 54, Potter County 48

Jones County 64, Mitchell Christian 26

McIntosh 68, Iroquois 21

## **Mobridge Rotary Classic**

Herreid/Selby Area 61, Lyman 30

Mobridge-Pollock 55, South Border, N.D. 47

Timber Lake 48, Strasburg-Zeeland, N.D. 45

## **Parkston Classic**

Chester 53, Corsica/Stickney 50

Ethan 48, Sully Buttes 42

Hanson 49, Highmore-Harrold 40

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 89, Groton Area 44

Parkston 52, Aberdeen Roncalli 40

St. Thomas More 73, Tri-Valley 50

Wagner 64, Dell Rapids 60

## **Snowball Classic**

Bennett County 57, Newell 56

Colome 39, Dupree 23

Wall 50, Platte-Geddes 42

Winner 91, St. Francis Indian 32

## **2 dead following rollover crash in southeast SD**

MARION, S.D. (AP) — Two people are dead following a rollover crash in southeast South Dakota.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol says 76-year-old Harold Hofer and 73-year-old Phyllis Hofer, both of Marion, died of injuries sustained in the Friday crash.

Authorities say Harold Hofer was driving a pickup truck on 273rd Street, about four miles west of Marion, when he crossed the opposite lane of traffic and entered the ditch causing the vehicle to roll. Authorities say neither the driver nor passenger Phyllis Hofer was wearing a seatbelt.

The crash remains under investigation.

## **2 mountain lions killed during season's 1st day**

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Wildlife officials in South Dakota say two mountain lions were killed during the first day of the season within the Black Hills Fire Protection District.

The season began Friday and will conclude on March 31, unless the harvest limit of 75 total mountain lions, or 50 female lions, is reached prior to that date. The mountain lion season outside of the Black Hills district runs year-round.

One of the lions killed Friday was a 102-pound female estimated to be 8 years old. The other lion was a 151-pound male estimated to be 10 years old.

The state has had a residents-only mountain lion season since 2005. Unlimited licenses for the season can be obtained through the South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks Department.



## Apartment fire in SD starts in bathroom trash bin

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The fire department in Sioux Falls says no one was injured in a Saturday blaze that began in a bathroom trash bin at an apartment complex.

Sioux Falls Fire Rescue officials say the fire in the trash bin caused the water pipe under the sink to melt and sprayed out the fire. They say the building does not have a sprinkler system and the damage was contained to one apartment.

The fire department is reminding residents to make sure that all materials are extinguished before throwing them away.

## AP News in Brief

### AirAsia plane with 162 on board missing while flying from Indonesia to Singapore

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — A massive sea search was underway for an AirAsia plane that disappeared Sunday while flying from Indonesia to Singapore with 162 people on board through airspace possibly thick with dense storm clouds, strong winds and lightning, officials said.

More than 12 hours later, shocked family members huddled at the Surabaya airport from where the Airbus A320 had taken off, awaiting any news of the jetliner operated by an airline whose parent company is based in Malaysia. It is the third incident involving Malaysia this year following two of the worst aviation tragedies that hit Malaysia Airlines -- in March Flight 370 disappeared with 239 people and in July Flight 17 was shot down over Ukraine, killing all 298 people on it.

Indonesia and Singapore launched a search and rescue operation for Flight 8501 near Belitung island in Java Sea over which the jetliner lost contact with ground traffic control, about 42 minutes after taking off from Surabaya, Indonesia's second largest city. The flight had completed a little less than half of its journey time to Singapore.

"We hope we can find the location of the plane as soon as possible, and we hope that God will give us guidance to find it," Djoko Murjatmodjo, Indonesia's acting director general of transportation, told reporters. "We don't dare to presume what has happened except that it has lost contact,"

He said the last communication between the pilot and air traffic control was at 6:13 a.m. (2313 GMT Saturday) when the pilot "asked to avoid clouds by turning left and going higher to 34,000 feet (10,360 meters)." It was last seen on radar at 6:16 a.m., and a minute later was no longer there, he said.

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### Missing AirAsia flight is 3rd Malaysia-linked air incident this year

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — The disappearance Sunday of AirAsia Flight 8501 was the third air incident this year involving Malaysia, where budget carrier AirAsia is based. Here's a look at the two other disasters, as well as the latest missing flight, which went missing with 162 people aboard less than an hour after taking off from Surabaya, Indonesia, for Singapore.

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#### MALAYSIA AIRLINES FLIGHT 370

The disappearance of the Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 on March 8 triggered one of modern aviation's most perplexing mysteries. Flight 370, carrying 239 people from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, vanished without a trace, sending searchers across vast areas of the Indian Ocean. An initial multi-national op-

eration to locate the wreckage far off Australia's west coast turned up empty, without a single piece of debris found.

After a four-month hiatus, the hunt resumed Oct. 4 with new, more sophisticated equipment, including sonar, video cameras and jet fuel sensors aboard three ships that will spend up to a year in a desolate stretch of the sea, about 1,800 kilometers (1,100 miles) west of Australia.

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## **More than 20,000 officers from across the US attend NYPD funeral that's tense at times**

NEW YORK (AP) — Thousands of police officers, state troopers, sheriff's deputies and others from law enforcement agencies big and small across the country gathered at the New York City funeral of a slain officer killed with his partner in a brazen daytime ambush a week ago.

The sea of blue uniforms stretched for blocks outside the Christ Tabernacle Church in Queens on Saturday, as police helicopters flew above in a missing-man formation and Officer Rafael Ramos' body was carried by pallbearers in a casket draped in the New York Police Department flag. The NYPD estimates more than 20,000 officers attended.

"When an assassin's bullet targeted two officers, it targeted this city and it touched the soul of an entire nation," Vice President Joe Biden said in his eulogy.

But the somber day, reminiscent of the bond New Yorkers shared after the Sept. 11 attacks and Superstorm Sandy, was not without tension.

During the eulogy, a few hundred officers outside the church turned away from giant screens showing de Blasio, who has been harshly criticized by New York police union officials as a contributor to a climate of mistrust that preceded the killings of Ramos and his partner, Wenjian Liu.

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## **Head of Afghan police training says high casualties are deadly cost of doing the army's job**

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — When brothers Amir and Mosha Jan joined Afghanistan's police two years ago they believed that their patriotic duty was more important than obeying their father, who did not want his only sons joining the ranks of a police force on the front lines of the war against the Taliban.

The father's worst fears came true earlier this year, when gunmen on a motorcycle opened fire on the two brothers as they patrolled the streets of the one-time Taliban capital Kandahar. "Two Taliban on a motorcycle started firing at us," Amir, 25, said. "My brother was shot dead on the spot." Mosha was 23 years old.

As U.S. and international combat troops leave Afghanistan after more than 13 years fighting the Taliban, Afghan policemen are dying in record numbers as they perform dangerous tasks usually reserved for the military, according to the head of the European-funded mission to train the police force.

Afghanistan's war is as hot as it has been since the U.S.-led invasion following the Sept. 11 attacks overthrew the Taliban. The international combat mission ends on Dec. 31, leaving the Afghan security forces in charge after leading the fight since the middle of last year.

Some 5,000 members of Afghanistan's security forces — army, police and armed rural defense units — have died this year fighting the Taliban, according to Karl Ake Roghe, the outgoing head of EUPOL, the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan.

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## **North Korea blames US for Internet shutdown amid Sony hacking row, compares Obama to a monkey**

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea blamed its recent Internet outage on the United States on Saturday and hurled racially charged insults at President Barack Obama over the hacking row involving the movie "The Interview."

North Korea's powerful National Defense Commission, which is headed by country leader Kim Jong Un and is the nation's top governing body, said Obama was behind the release of the comedy that depicts Kim's assassination. The commission described the movie as illegal, dishonest and reactionary.

"Obama always goes reckless in words and deeds like a monkey in a tropical forest," an unidentified spokesman at the commission's Policy Department said in a statement carried by the country's official Korean Central News Agency.

The White House's National Security Council declined to comment Saturday.

North Korea has denied involvement in a crippling cyberattack on Sony Pictures but has expressed fury over the comedy. Sony Pictures initially called off the release of the film, citing threats of terror attacks against U.S. movie theaters. Obama criticized Sony's decision, and the movie opened this past week.

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## **FAA nears long-awaited drone rules, but key decisions on drones likely to come from Congress**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration is about to propose long-awaited rules for commercial drone operations in U.S. skies, but key decisions on how much access to grant drones are likely to come from Congress next year.

Federal Aviation Administration officials have said they want to release proposed rules before the end of this month, but other government and industry officials say they are likely to be delayed until January. Meanwhile, except for a small number of companies that have received FAA exemptions, a ban on commercial drone flights remains in place. Even after rules are proposed, regulations are unlikely to become final for two or three years.

That's too long to wait, say drone industry officials. Every year the ban remains in place, the United States loses more than \$10 billion in potential economic benefits that drones could provide, according to the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International, a trade group.

"We need some sort of process that allows some of the low-risk operations," said Jesse Kallman, the head of regulatory affairs for Airware, a drone technology company backed by Google Ventures. "I think Congress understands that and hopefully they'll take steps in the coming year to address that."

That appears to be what some key lawmakers have in mind. "We in Congress are very interested in UAS," Rep. Bill Shuster, R-Pa., chairman of the House Transportation and Committee, said at a hearing this month, referring to unmanned aerial systems, or drones. "We understand UAS are an exciting technology with the potential to transform parts of our economy. ... It is our responsibility to take a close look."

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## **Turk who shot John Paul II lays flowers on tomb in St. Peter's Basilica in surprise visit**

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Turkish gunman who shot and wounded John Paul II in 1981 laid white



flowers Saturday on the saint's tomb in St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican officials said.

The surprise visit by Mehmet Ali Agca, believed to be his first time in the Vatican since the assassination attempt, lasted a few minutes, a Vatican spokesman, the Rev. Ciro Benedettini, said. As with other flowers left by visitors to the tomb, the blossoms were later removed by basilica workers.

Benedettini said there are no legal matters pending against Agca in the Vatican and he was free to visit. Agca's trip came on the 31st anniversary of his meeting with the pope.

John Paul, who forgave his attacker, visited Agca in a Rome prison on Dec. 27, 1983, and later intervened to gain Agca's release in 2000. Agca was extradited to Turkey for the 1979 killing of a Turkish journalist and he completed a 10-year sentence there in 2010.

When Agca was apprehended after shooting the pontiff in St. Peter's Square during a public audience, the Turk said he acted alone. Later he suggested Bulgaria and the Soviet secret services masterminded the attack on the Polish-born pontiff, whose championing of the Polish Solidarity labor movement alarmed Moscow.

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## **Yes-We-Can president faces twilight of maybes, still ambitious but power fading**

WASHINGTON (AP) — It was supposed to be a joke. "Are you still president?" comedian Stephen Colbert asked Barack Obama earlier this month.

But the question seemed to speak to growing weariness with the president and skepticism that anything will change in Washington during his final two years in office. Democrats already are checking out Obama's potential successors. Emboldened Republicans are trying to push aside his agenda in favor of their own.

At times this year, Obama seemed ready to move on as well. He rebelled against the White House security "bubble," telling his Secret Service detail to give him more space. He chafed at being sidelined by his party during midterm elections and having to adjust his agenda to fit the political interests of vulnerable Democrats who lost anyway.

Yet the election that was a disaster for the president's party may have had a rejuvenating effect on Obama. The morning after the midterms, Obama told senior aides, "If I see you moping, you will answer to me."

People close to Obama say he is energized at not having to worry about helping — or hurting — Democrats in another congressional election on his watch. He has become more comfortable with his executive powers, moving unilaterally on immigration, Internet neutrality and climate change in the last two months. And he sees legacy-building opportunities on the international stage, from an elusive nuclear deal with Iran to normalizing relations with Cuba after a half-century freeze.

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## **US mission in Cuba, focal point for tensions and quiet diplomacy, to become embassy amid thaw**

HAVANA (AP) — A half-century after Washington severed relations with Cuba, the United States' seven-story mission looms over Havana's seaside Malecon boulevard as the largest diplomatic outpost in the country.

Cuban guards stand at close intervals on the street outside, and islanders line up by the thousands each year for a shot at a coveted visa.

The gleaming U.S. Interests Section suddenly is poised to become an even more important presence

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in Cuba as the two countries negotiate the first phase of their historic detente — transforming the complex into a full embassy that would reflect the Obama administration's hopes of new influence on the communist island.

Roberta Jacobson, assistant U.S. secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs, will be the highest known U.S. administration official to visit in decades when she comes next month for annual talks on migration that will now also focus on the details of re-establishing full diplomatic relations.

The discussions are expected to cover expanding staffing in the two countries' interests sections and letting diplomats travel outside their respective capitals without having to ask permission.

## Today in History

### The Associated Press

Today is Sunday, Dec. 28, the 362nd day of 2014. There are three days left in the year.

#### Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 28, 1944, the musical "On the Town," with music by Leonard Bernstein and book and lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, opened on Broadway.

#### On this date:

In 1612, Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei observed the planet Neptune, but mistook it for a star. (Neptune wasn't officially discovered until 1846 by Johann Gottfried Galle.)

In 1832, John C. Calhoun became the first vice president of the United States to resign, stepping down because of differences with President Andrew Jackson.

In 1846, Iowa became the 29th state to be admitted to the Union.

In 1856, the 28th president of the United States, Thomas Woodrow Wilson, was born in Staunton (STAN'-tun), Virginia.

In 1917, the New York Evening Mail published "A Neglected Anniversary," a facetious essay by H.L. Mencken supposedly recounting the history of bathtubs in America.

In 1937, composer Maurice Ravel died in Paris at age 62.

In 1945, Congress officially recognized the Pledge of Allegiance.

In 1961, the Tennessee Williams play "Night of the Iguana" opened on Broadway. Former first lady Edith Bolling Galt Wilson, the second wife of President Woodrow Wilson, died in Washington at age 89.

In 1973, the Endangered Species Act was signed into law by President Richard Nixon. Alexander Solzhenitsyn published "The Gulag Archipelago," an expose (eks-poh-SAY') of the Soviet prison system.

In 1984, the TV soap opera "The Edge of Night," which first aired on CBS, then on ABC, ended a 28-year run with its final episode. Movie director Sam Peckinpah, 59, died in Inglewood, California.

In 1989, Alexander Dubcek (DOOB'-chek), the former Czechoslovak Communist leader who was deposed in a Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968, was named president of the country's parliament.

In 1999, Clayton Moore, television's "Lone Ranger," died in West Hills, California, at age 85.

**Ten years ago:** The U.S. Agency for International Development said it was adding \$20 million to an initial \$15 million contribution for Asian tsunami relief as Secretary of State Colin Powell bristled at a United Nations official's suggestion the United States was being "stingy." Activist and author Susan Sontag died in New York at age 71. Actor Jerry Orbach died in New York at age 69.

**Five years ago:** Al-Qaida in Yemen claimed responsibility for a Christmas Day attempt to blow up a U.S.-bound airliner. A bomb blast killed at least 44 people in a Shiite procession in the southern Pakistan city of Karachi. In Argentina, two men turned away from Buenos Aires were wed in Ushuaia (oo-SWY'-ah), the world's southernmost city, in Latin America's first same-sex marriage.

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**One year ago:** Iraqi troops detained a Sunni lawmaker, Ahmed al-Alwani, a prominent organizer of Sunni protests in Anbar, on terrorism charges for inciting violence against Shiites. Film, television and stage actor Joseph Ruskin, 89, died in Los Angeles.

**Today's Birthdays:** Comic book creator Stan Lee is 92. Former United Auto Workers union president Owen Bieber is 85. Actor Martin Milner is 83. Actress Nichelle Nichols is 82. Actress Dame Maggie Smith is 80. Rock singer-musician Charles Neville is 76. Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., is 70. Sen. Tim Johnson, D-S.D., is 68. Rock singer-musician Edgar Winter is 68. Actor Denzel Washington is 60. Country singer Joe Diffie is 56. Country musician Mike McGuire (Shenandoah) is 56. Actor Chad McQueen is 54. Country singer-musician Marty Roe (Diamond Rio) is 54. Actor Malcolm Gets is 50. Actor Mauricio Mendoza is 45. Comedian Seth Meyers is 41. Actor Brendan Hines is 38. Actor Joe Manganiello is 38. Actress Vanessa Ferlito is 37. Rhythm-and-blues singer John Legend is 36. Actress Sienna Miller is 33. Pop singer Kasey Sheridan (Dream) is 28. Actor Thomas Dekker is 27. Actress Mackenzie Rosman is 25. Pop singer David Archuleta is 24. Actor Miles Brown (TV: "black-ish") is 10.

**Thought for Today:** "Let no one underestimate the need of pity. We live in a stony universe whose hard, brilliant forces rage fiercely." - Theodore Dreiser, American author (born 1871, died this date in 1945).