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Today: Picture retake day

Tomorrow:

**Golden Eagle Cup Debate at
Aberdeen Central High School
Veteran's day Program at 2 p.m. at GHS Gym
Program to be broadcast on GDILIVE.COM**

Good morning from Mitchell!

**Yesterday and today I'm in Mitchell for
the annual safety conference for the city.
Thanks to my wife the girls for doing the
paper route this morning for me.**

**I will have a story on the Sweet 16 Volley-
ball match - unfortunately I left some of it
back in Groton so I'll have to get that done
tonight when I get home.**

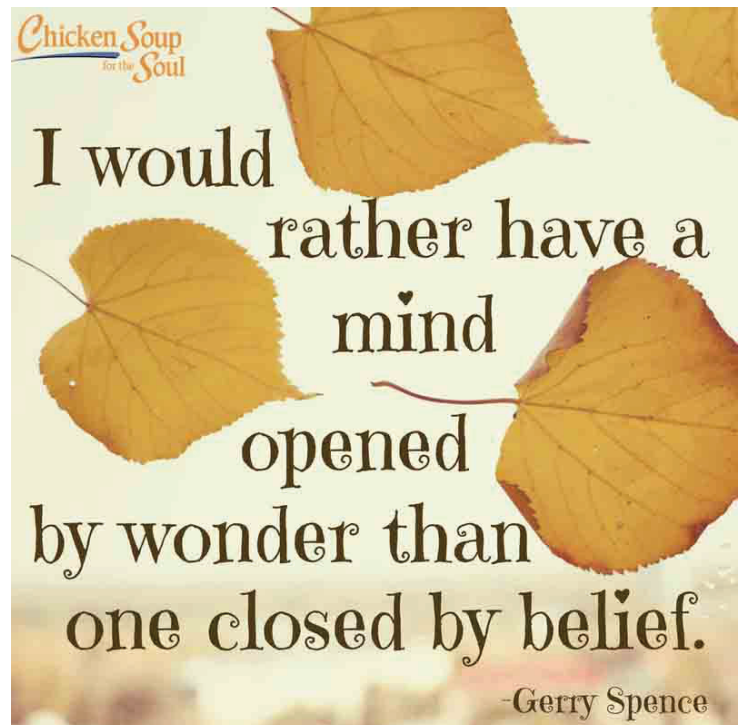
Harry Implement
"Family Owned & Operated Since 1935!"



(605) 395-6421
Ferney

Open: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located at 10 East
Railroad Ave.

The cardboard/paper
recycling trailer at the school is **Open**



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Class B Volleyball Round of 16

[Print Bracket](#)

The eight (8) winners of the Round of 16 contests will be re-seeded for the State Tournament.

#1 Northwestern

Scores: **25 25 25**

Date: 11/7/2017
Time: 6:00 PM CT
Site: Watertown Arena

Scores: 11 10 11

#16 Alcester-Hudson

STATE QUALIFIER

Northwestern

STATE QUALIFIER

Hanson

#5 Hanson

Scores: **25 20 25 25**

Date: 11/7/2017
Time: 6:00 PM CT
Site: Mitchell-Corn Palace

Scores: 22 **25** 20 15

#12 Faulkton Area

#2 Chester Area

Scores: **25 25 25**

Date: 11/7/2017
Time: 5:30 PM CT
Site: Huron Arena

Scores: 10 13 16

#15 Timber Lake

STATE QUALIFIER

Chester Area

STATE QUALIFIER

Deubrook Area

#6 Kadoka Area

Scores: 16 21 24

Date: 11/7/2017
Time: 7:00 PM CT
Site: Chamberlain

Scores: **25 25 26**

#11 Deubrook Area

Seed	School	Seed Pts.
1	Northwestern	47.667
2	Chester Area	46.769
3	Warner	46.345
4	Philip	46.276
5	Hanson	45.654
6	Kadoka Area	45.074
7	Herreid/Selby Area	45.000
8	Burke/South Central	44.233

Seed	School	Seed Pts.
9	Arlington	44.069
10	Kimball/White Lake	44.000
11	Deubrook Area	43.793
12	Faulkton Area	42.192
13	Faith	42.036
14	Bridgewater-Emery	41.920
15	Timber Lake	41.259
16	Alcester-Hudson	40.370

#3 Warner

Scores: **25 25 25**

Date: 11/7/2017
Time: 6:00 PM CT
Site: Madison HS

Scores: 13 14 6

#14 Bridgewater-Emery

STATE QUALIFIER

Warner

STATE QUALIFIER

Herreid/Selby Area

#7 Herreid/Selby Area

Scores: **25 25 25**

Date: 11/7/2017
Time: 7:00 PM CT
Site: Pierre

Scores: 19 17 23

#10 Kimball/White Lake

#4 Philip

Scores: 23 **25 25** 21 10

Date: 11/7/2017
Time: 7:00 PM MT
Site: Spearfish

Scores: **25** 19 8 **25 15**

#13 Faith

STATE QUALIFIER

Faith

STATE QUALIFIER

Burke/South Central

#8 Burke/South Central

Scores: 21 23 **25 25 15**

Date: 11/7/2017
Time: 7:30 PM CT
Site: Mitchell-Corn Palace

Scores: **25 25** 18 12 11

#9 Arlington

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Groton Post No. 39 American Legion



Annual



Turkey Party

Saturday, Nov. 11, 2017

Starting at 6:30 p.m.

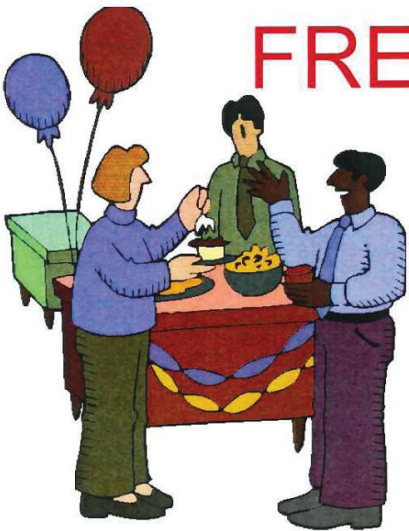
Groton Legion Post Home, 10 N. Main.

Turkey, Ham and Bacon
to be given away

FREE ADMISSION

**DOOR
PRIZE!**

Lunch served
by Auxiliary



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All auto owners!
Save \$2-\$4 /tank
& grow your local economy
by choosing low carbon
Super Premium E30's
94 octane, more power,
same mileage, fewer
carbon deposits, lower
maintenance costs,
slashed benzene & related
genotoxic, carcinogenic
tailpipe emissions;
*see sdfu.org's E30 tab for
info, E30 prices/locations.

***Farmers Union's
PSA: Courtesy Merle
Anderson (Merle is 94
year old founder of Ace
and legendary ethanol
supporter... "because it is
the right thing to do")**

Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling

Team Standings: Jackelopes 5, Shih Tzus 5, Coyotes 5, Cheetahs 4, Chipmunks 3, Foxes 2

Men's High Games: Brad Waage 221, 220, 212, Ron Beldon 205, Roger Colestock 202

Women's High Games: Michelle Johnson 175, Nicole Kassube 171, Lori Wiley 163

Men's High Series: Brad Waage 653, Ron Beldon 546, Roger Colestock 532

Women's High Series: Michelle Johnson 475, Nicole Kassube 469, Vicki Walter 461

Groton Coffee Cup League

Nov. 6 Team Standings: James Valley 23, Ten Pins 19, Kens 16 1/2, Jungle Lanes 13 1/2

High Games: Sandi Bistodeau 253, Joyce Walter 189, Angie Carlson 174.

High Series: Sandi Bistodeau 555, Joyce Walter 490, Vickie Kramp 414.

Conde National League

Nov. 6 Team Standings: Giants 21, Mets 20, Cubs 18 1/2, Pirates 15 1/2, Colts 15, Braves 14.

Men's High Games: Butch Farmen 242, 219; Troy Lindberg 202, 191; Topper Tasdad 179

Men's High Series: Butch Farmen 613, Troy Lindberg 504, Topper Tastad 468.

Women's High Games: Michelle Johnson 195, 189; Nancy Radke 194; Vickie Kramp 167.

Women's High Series: Michelle Johnson 502, Nancy Radke 498, Vickie Kramp 478.

GROTON KIWANIS CLUB

Fifteen members of the Groton Kiwanis Club were present for Wednesday's Kiwanis noon meal meeting.

Steve Simon was program leader, and introduced his brother, Father Brian Simon, now serving at Eden, So. Dak. Fr Simon gave a travelogue of his recent trip to Greece, and Qatar, in the Middle East.

Roger Rix gave a report on the very successful Snow Queen and talent contest, last Sunday. Michelle Mullenburg, Kiwanis Club member, is to be thanked for her work in every aspect of the show.

President Reid Litch will have the program for next week.

Name Changes to the Threatened and Endangered Species List Updated

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission finalized changes to the scientific names of four fish and animal species on the state threatened and endangered lists. These changes are due to taxonomic name changes within the scientific community.

The taxonomic name changes are as follows:

Interior Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum athalassos*) to Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*)

Finescale dace (*Phoxinus neogaeus*) to Finescale dace (*Chrosomus neogaeus*)

Northern redbelly dace (*Phounus eos*) to Northern redbelly dace (*Chrosomus eos*)

Pearl dace (*Marariscus margarita*) to Northern pearl dace (*Margariscus nachtriebi*)

State Park Fee Changes Approved by GFP Commission

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission approved changes to state park campground classifications, as well as some entrance and facility fees at their meeting last week.

The changes now go under review by the Interim Rules Review Committee.

Details of the proposed changes can be viewed online at <http://gfp.sd.gov/agency/commission/>.

Walleye Length Limit on Lake Poinsett Removed

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission removed the 15 inch minimum size restriction for walleye on Lake Poinsett at their November meeting last week. The length limit removal will go into effect on Jan. 1, 2018.

The Lake Poinsett walleye population has a large year class present. Fish growth is slow and walleyes are succumbing to natural mortality prior to attaining 15 inches in length and being available for anglers to harvest.

Aerial Hunting Rule Modified for Nonresidents

PIERRE, S.D. - Nonresident pilots are now able to apply for and obtain an aerial hunting permit from the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP).

Landowners dealing with livestock loss due to predators on their property will now be able to also use nonresident pilots to assist when necessary; providing another option or tool for landowners.

Bighorn Sheep Hunting Season Rule Adjustments Finalized

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission finalized a rule adjustment which would allocate no more than five bighorn sheep licenses for both the 2018 and 2019 hunting seasons.

The actual number of licenses by unit will be determined after the Department concludes its annual bighorn sheep surveys this winter and recommended license allocations are approved by the GFP Commission at the January 2018 meeting in Pierre.

The bighorn sheep hunting seasons will run Sept. 1-Dec. 31 for the 2018 and 2019 seasons.

Rules for Marking Nonmeandered Waters Now Finalized

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission finalized a set of standards for landowners to follow when marking nonmeandered water over private property.

House Bill 1001 requires the department to establish specific standards for markers used to indicate closure of nonmeandered waters to recreational use. The Commission passed the following rules:

1. Nonmeandered water closures shall be marked with buoys or department-supplied signs.
2. Signs and buoys must be placed no further apart than 660 feet.
3. Signs and buoys shall be installed so they are conspicuous.
4. Buoys shall be of polyform design.
5. Buoys shall be red with contrasting 3 inch minimum letters stating: "Closed."
6. Buoy size shall be a diameter of not less than 14.5 inches and a length of not less than 19.5 inches.
7. Signs and buoys are to be installed, removed and maintained by the owner or their designee of the private property.
8. Property corner boundaries located in the water must be marked by signs or buoys.

[Click here to View an image of these markers.](#)

Any landowner who wishes to close the water overlying their flooded land on a nonmeandered water body must mark the water as closed to recreational use and notify the Department within a reasonable time of doing so. Any landowner who wishes to restrict access on a Section 8 nonmeandered lake must petition the GFP Commission to request such closure.

To learn more about the petition process, please visit <http://gfp.sd.gov/fishing-boating/petition-form.aspx>. To view a list of Section 8 nonmeandered lakes please visit http://www.sdlegislature.gov/Statutes/Codified_Laws/DisplayStatute.aspx?Type=Statute&Statute=41-23-8.

GFP Commission Rejects Expansion of Mountain Lion Hunting on Public Land

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission did not adopt their proposal which would have expanded the use of hounds to hunt mountain lions.

The initial request, through the citizen petition process, asked to remove the restrictions of the use of hounds on public land outside of the Black Hills Fire Protection District. In October, the GFP Commission accepted a petition as a proposal which allowed for public input and a public hearing at their November meeting.

After receiving public comment and further discussing the matter, the GFP Commission did not adopt the change. Lion hunting with hounds outside the Black Hills Fire Protection District will remain under the same structure. Pursuits must originate on private land and can culminate on School and Public Lands or Bureau of Land Management properties with the exception of the Fort Meade Recreation Area.

Additional Custer State Park Elk Hunting Opportunity Now Open for Applications

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission increased the number of licenses available for a special Custer State Park antlerless elk hunting season from 20 to 60.

In addition, four new antlerless elk hunting units (for residents only) were established for these antlerless elk licenses allowing department officials to use adaptive management to learn more about the chronic wasting disease (CWD) infection rate of elk inside Custer State Park. This additional harvest will help GFP better understand prevalence rates, reduce numbers where elk congregate and provide additional information to construct season structures for future hunting seasons.

The online-only application period opens today, Nov. 7, and will close on Nov. 15 at 8 a.m. CST.

The additional 40 licenses will be equally distributed through four seasons:

1. CAE-CU3: Dec. 2-10, 2017;
2. CAE-CU4: Dec. 16-24, 2017;

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3. CAE-CU5: Dec. 30, 2017 – Jan. 7, 2018; and

4. CAE-CU6: Jan. 13-21, 2018.

Preference points will be factored into the application process in which successful applicants will lose all accumulated preference points for the Custer Antlerless Elk season and will not be able to re-apply for this season for nine years.

For map details and additional information, visit <http://gfp.sd.gov/hunting/big-game/elk/custer.aspx>.

GFP to Host Meetings on Winter Deer Depredation Programs and Services

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) will host several open house meetings for landowners in central and western South Dakota in the coming weeks; allowing landowners to learn more about winter-time deer depredation programs and services offered by the department.

GFP staff will be on site to provide information, outreach and answer questions related to deer depredation in the following communities:

Akaska - Nov. 15 from 6-8 p.m. CST at the Akaska Community Center

Miller – Nov. 16 from 6-8 p.m. CST at American Bank and Trust

Hereford – Nov. 28 from 6-8 p.m. MST at Hereford Community Hall

Philip – Dec. 7 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. MST at the Philip Ambulance Building

Bison – Dec. 13 from 6-8 p.m. MST at the Grand Electric Social Room

The Miller meeting will provide area landowners the opportunity to meet the new wildlife damage specialist who covers Hand and Buffalo counties.

For more information on the Akaska and Miller meetings, please contact Nathan.Baker@state.sd.us.

For more information on the Hereford, Philip and Bison meetings, please contact John.Kanta@state.sd.us.

SD Symphony launches all new Broadway-style Christmas spectacular

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — Santa will make an early delivery of Christmas spirit into South Dakota this year with the debut of the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra's all-new Broadway-style Christmas spectacular.

'Tis the Season combines stunning vocals, bright lights, six Broadway dancers and holiday hits people know and love into a variety show-inspired production. Just wait until you experience the joy of 18 tap-dancing Santas!

Broadway star Darren Lee, who is touring as the King in the national production of *The King and I*, has been busy directing and choreographing the elaborate production, which arrives at the Washington Pavilion on Dec. 9-10.

John Cudia, a tenor who has played the lead roles in *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *West Side Story* and *Les Misérables*, will share the lead with Tiffany Haas, a soprano who portrayed Glinda in the Broadway and national tour production of *WICKED: The Musical*.

The South Dakota Symphony Orchestra, the South Dakota Symphony Chorus and a 12-voice ensemble will back Cudia and Haas as they perform such holiday favorites as *It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year*, *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, *The Christmas Song*, *Sleigh Ride* and selections from *Polar Express*.

South Dakota Trust Company and Private Trust Company Friends are sponsoring Saturday evening's concert, which begins at 7:30 p.m. The Nordby Family Foundation is sponsoring Sunday's matinee, which begins at 2:30 p.m.

The 2017 Christmas season hasn't begun until you've experienced 'Tis the Season!

Purchase tickets by calling (605) 367-6000, by visiting the Washington Pavilion box office or by going online to <https://www.washingtonpavilion.org/>.

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During the month of October, Groton Area K-12 students collected 1,518 pairs socks for Journey Home, Safe Harbor, and the Salvation Army.

Mrs. Swisher's Kindergarten class collected the highest percentage of socks at the elementary. At the Middle School the 6th graders ran away with the most socks. Both classes will receive a party and the traveling Socktober trophy. .

To put the magnitude of their collection efforts in to perspective our school alone will help over 1,500 men, women, and children, of all ages, keep their feet warm this winter! Last year Groton Area Schools collected 927 pairs of socks. How amazing are those statistics!

Socktober is sponsored by the Groton Area Elementary Student Council.

The Life of Dorothy Schaller



Dorothy A. Schaller, 87, of Brookings, formerly of Bruce, passed away Sunday, November 5, 2017 at the Brookings Hospital. Funeral services will be held at 10:00 am Thursday, November 9, 2017 at Grace Free Lutheran Church, in Bruce, SD. Visitation will be from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm Wednesday at Rude's Funeral Home in Brookings with a prayer service beginning at 6:30 pm.

Dorothy Schaller was born on January 26, 1930, in Groton, SD, the daughter of Herman "Boots" and Evelyn (Semm) Schinkel. Dorothy received her education in Groton, SD, and was a graduate of the Groton High School in 1948. After receiving her education she taught school for several years, worked as a Kirby Vacuum Sales person and then was employed at the Aberdeen National Bank. She was united in marriage to Kenneth Schaller on September 11, 1951, in Groton, SD. After their marriage they farmed near Stratford, SD and later near Ferney, SD. In 1975, they moved to Bruce, SD, where they continued to live until moving into Brookings, SD in 2009.

Dorothy is a member of Grace Lutheran Church where she also served as Deacon, the church circle, American Legion Auxiliary, the Birthday Club, Coffee Club, and the Banner Committee. She spent many hours volunteering at the Neighborhoods at Brookview, where she lived during her final three years. She enjoyed baking, crafts, oil and water painting and especially spending time with family and friends.

She is survived by her husband, Kenneth Schaller, of Brookings, SD; her two sons, Scott (JoAnn) Schaller, of Volga, SD and Loren (Peggy) Schaller, Rapid City, SD. eight grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Dorothy is preceded in death by her parents and her daughter, Carol McKiver.

Today in Weather History

November 9, 1977: An intense early winter storm moved northeast from Colorado to Iowa during the morning of November 9th, and then to Lake Superior by the morning of November 10th. In most areas, the precipitation began late on the 8th as rain with temperatures in the 50s, changing to snow early on Wednesday the 9th, with the storm continuing through Thursday the 10th. In west central Minnesota, some freezing rain also occurred before it changed to all snow. As the storm intensified, the winds in the eastern half of South Dakota increased with some gusts as high as 60-70 miles per hour with widespread

visibilities reduced to zero in blowing snow. In west central Minnesota, north to northwest winds of 60 to 80 mph reduced visibility to zero and piled snow into eight-foot drifts. The temperature dropped rapidly into the 20s. Many roads throughout the eastern part of South Dakota and west central Minnesota were blocked, and the heavy wet snow immobilized snow plows. Many cars and trucks were snowbound on the roads and highways. Approximately 100 cars and trucks were stalled on Interstate 90, east of Murdo. Near Fergus Falls in western Minnesota, two trucks loaded with turkeys became stuck, and half the birds were frozen. Many schools were closed on the 9th and 10th. Snowfall amounts in the eastern half of the state were greater than four inches. A band of heavy snow, ten inches or more, extended from Bridgewater to Howard to Clear Lake into parts of west central Minnesota. The high winds also destroyed a 1400-foot TV tower at Garden City. There was some loss of the corn crop. Sunflowers comprised the greatest loss because they had not been completely harvested. Reports of livestock losses were minimal. Some storm total snowfall amounts include; 15 inches in Watertown; 14 inches in Sisseton; 12 inches in Clear Lake and Wheaton; 10.5 inches in Castlewood; and 9 inches near Raymond and Bryant.

1864: On Election Night, a violent tornado strikes a ferry on Mississippi River near Chester, Illinois blowing away all but the hull. The boiler and engines are found up the bluff. Half of Chester was destroyed, and twenty die during the storm.

1913: The Great Lakes Storm of 1913 was a blizzard with hurricane-force winds that devastated the Great Lakes Region, sinking as many as 19 ships and stranded 19 others. This storm would be the deadliest and most destructive natural disaster ever to hit the Great Lakes.

1926: An estimated F3 to F4 tornado tore through La Plata, Maryland, killing 14 individuals at a small school. This storm caused 17 deaths and injured 65 others..

ROSLYN, SOUTH DAKOTA

4-PLEX FOR SALE

The following real estate is for sale:

Lots Seven (7), Eight (8) and Nine (9), Block Twenty-two (22), Original Plat, Roslyn, Day County, South Dakota;

A/k/a 716 1st Street, Roslyn, South Dakota; st Consisting of lots and 4-plex apartment house, currently unoccupied and has been for five (5) years. Property is to be sold "AS IS". Apartment units have electric baseboard heat and electric hot water heaters. Apartment units also include electric ranges, refrigerators, and washers/dryers.

No warranties are being offered on the appliances ("AS IS").

Interested parties should submit sealed bids to Law Office of Danny R. Smeins, P.C., 506 Main Street, Webster, SD 57274, or hand delivered to the same address prior to 5:00 p.m. on the 14th day of November, 2017. Bids will be opened after the bid deadline, and Seller will identify the bidders that will be invited to raise their bid on the 17 day of November, 2017 at 3:00 p.m. at the Law Office of Danny R. Smeins, P.C. in Webster, South Dakota. Not all bidders will be invited to raise their bid.








Successful bidder will be required to execute a standard Purchase Agreement and make an earnest money deposit.

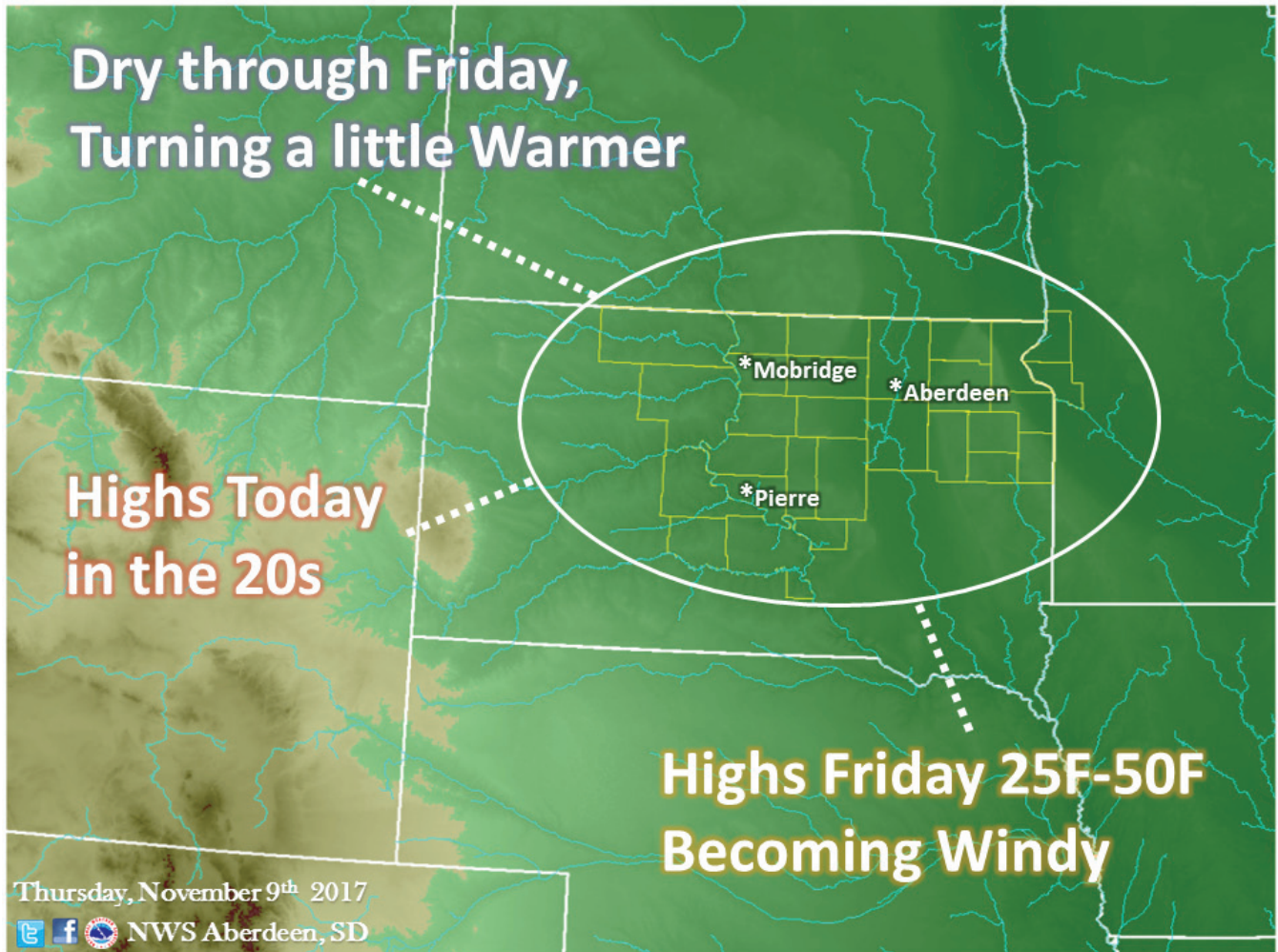
SELLER RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL BIDS.

Direct all inquiries, questions or requests for real estate information to Danny R. Smeins, Attorney at Law, at (605) 345-4875 or (605) 448-5964 or Ray Lardy, Roslyn Homes, Inc., at (605) 228-1597 or Richard Galbraith at (605) 229-0180.

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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Veterans Day	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy and Breezy	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Sunny
High: 22 °F	Low: 10 °F	High: 33 °F	Low: 21 °F	High: 39 °F	Low: 16 °F	High: 35 °F



Published on: 11/09/2017 at 3:53AM

It should remain mostly dry through Friday, along with a bit of a warm up on Friday. Gusty winds will also return on Friday.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 31.6

Low Outside Temp: 14.3

High Gust: 17

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 70° in 1903

Record Low: 0° in 1966

Average High: 44°F

Average Low: 22°F

Average Precip in Nov: .27

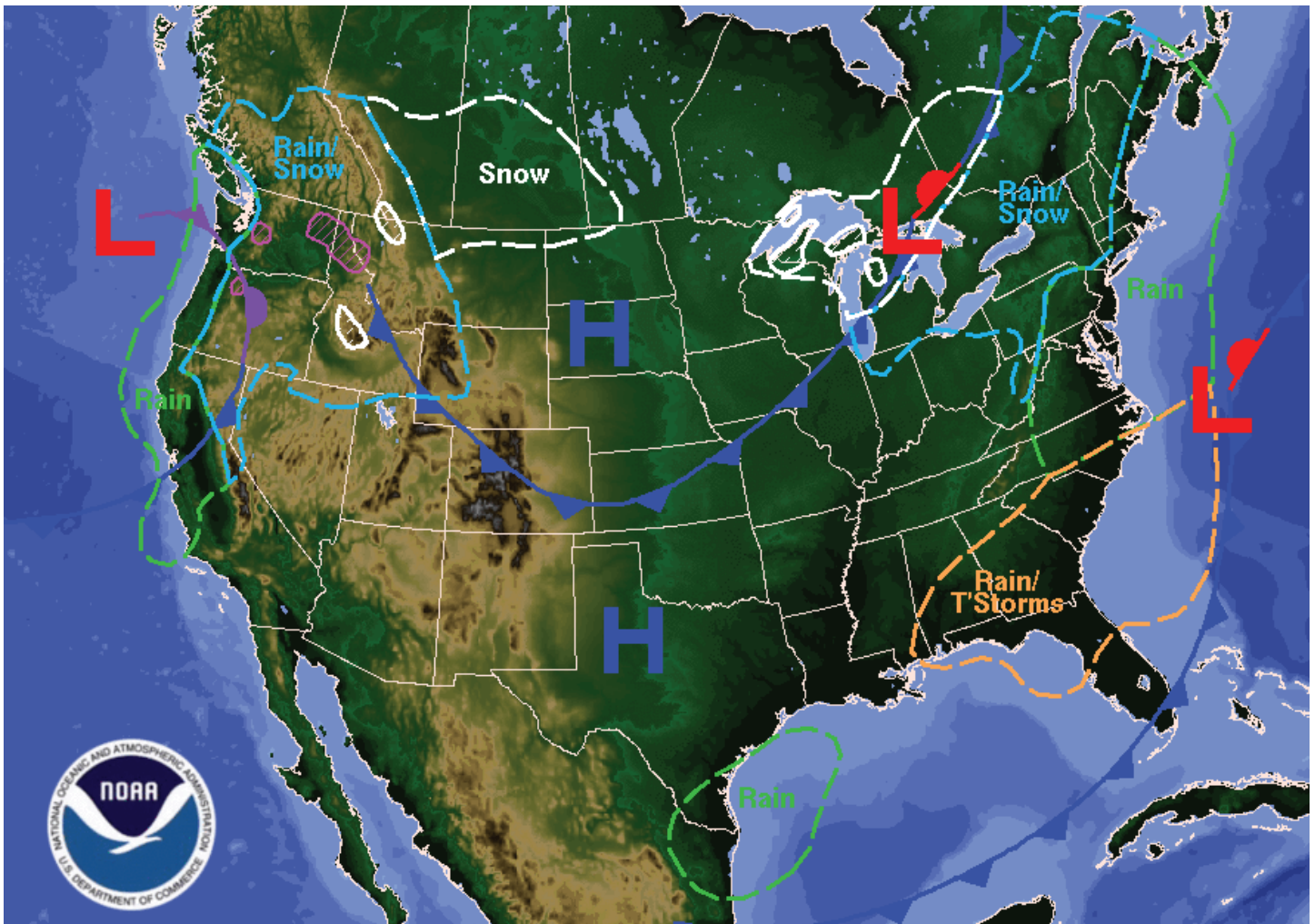
Precip to date in Nov: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 20.74

Precip Year to Date: 13.47

Sunset Tonight: 5:09 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:26 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Thu, Nov 09, 2017, issued 4:58 AM EST

DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center

Prepared by McReynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain

Rain and T'Storms

Rain and Snow

Snow

Flash Flooding Possible (hatched)

Severe T'Storms Possible (hatched)

Freezing Rain Possible (hatched)

Heavy Snow Possible (hatched)

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A SURE SOURCE OF STRENGTH

Are we failures if we fail or do we fail because we are failures?

All of us fail at one time or another or at one task or another. Not because we do not try – because trying is not the problem. It is because we do not make use of the help – or power – that’s available to us from God. God is ready to help us whenever we call upon Him. There are no preconditions.

Sometimes I think that David must have faced more problems than any other person in the Bible. But he knew what to do and where to go when things were about to destroy him. There were times when he was weak from suffering. There were days when doing what God called him to do caused some serious difficulties for him. When he faced these challenges, he knew where to go and what to do!

“Summon Your power, God; show us Your strength, God, as You have done before.”

God provides His strength when we suffer. Paul had no easy life. His life often seemed to go from bad to worse. But God said, “Paul, my grace will be sufficient for every problem you will ever face, my Son’s presence in every cell you occupy and My healing each time you are beaten.”

He gives us strength when He calls us to serve Him. An elderly lady was asked, “Where do you get all of your energy to help so many people?” “Well,” she said, “the first thing I do in the morning is to connect with God’s power through my time of prayer. As I put my hand in God’s hand, I can feel His strength pass into me. Then I can do whatever it is He leads me to do in His name!”

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to believe that no matter what problems we face we can do all things through Your power. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 68:28 Summon your power, God; show us your strength, our God, as you have done before.

2018 Groton SD Community Events

- Groton Lion's Club Bingo- Wednesday Nights 6:30pm at the Groton Legion (Year Round)
- 11/18/2017-3/31/2018 Groton Lion's Club Wheel of Meat- Saturday Nights 7pm at the Groton Legion (Fall/Winter Months)
- 1/28/2018 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm
- 3/24/2018 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 5/5/2018 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday in May)
- 5/28/2018 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Program at the Cemetery, Lunch to follow at the American Legion (Memorial Day)
- 6/14/2018 Transit Fundraiser (Middle Thursday in June)
- 6/15/2018 SDSU Golf at Olive Grove
- 6/16/2018 Triathlon (Saturday before Father's Day)
- 7/4/2018 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
- 7/22/2018 Summer Fest (4th Sunday in July)
- 9/8/2018 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 10/6/2018 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/12/2018 Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/31/2018 Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
- 11/10/2018 Groton American Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)

- Best Ball Golf Tourney
- SDSU Golf Tourney
- Sunflower Golf Tourney
- Santa Claus Day
- Fireman's Stag
- Tour of Homes
- Crazy Dayz/Open Houses
- School Events

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) _ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Wednesday:

Dakota Cash
01-02-12-14-23
(one, two, twelve, fourteen, twenty-three)
Estimated jackpot: \$42,000

Mega Millions
Estimated jackpot: \$71 million

Powerball
12-14-20-21-34, Powerball: 22, Power Play: 2
(twelve, fourteen, twenty, twenty-one, thirty-four; Powerball: twenty-two; Power Play: two)
Estimated jackpot: \$75 million

South Dakota initiative backer sees path despite Ohio defeat

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A key supporter of a proposed prescription drug ballot measure says a South Dakota campaign could be successful despite a similar initiative's overwhelming failure in Ohio after the pharmaceutical industry spent big to stop it.

South Dakota backer Rick Weiland said Wednesday that the Ohio initiative's fate shows "Big Pharma" will do whatever it takes to defeat such a plan.

The industry spent an estimated \$70 million to oppose the Ohio measure in Tuesday's election.

The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America says Ohio voters rejected the "flawed proposal" because of the devastating consequences it could have had on state residents.

The South Dakota initiative would prohibit state agencies from paying more than the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for prescription drugs.

Backers have submitted signatures to get on the 2018 ballot.

Coast Guard: 2 injured in fire on platform in Gulf of Mexico

LAFAYETTE, La. (AP) — Two workers were injured when a fire broke out on an oil production platform in the Gulf of Mexico early Wednesday, according to the Coast Guard.

The Coast Guard said in a statement that 46 workers were evacuated from Shell International Ltd.'s Enchilada platform to a lifeboat after the fire broke out about 1:20 a.m. The platform is about 185 miles (300 kilometers) southwest of New Orleans.

The two injured workers were flown by helicopter to a hospital in Galveston, Texas. A 54-year-old man had burns and a concussion and a 29-year-old man had a sprained wrist and a concussion, the Coast Guard said.

A "light sheen" was spotted in the water north of the platform after the fire started, according to the Coast Guard.

Shell spokesman Philip Robinson said all of the workers who were aboard the platform were safely evacuated to a nearby vessel or another Shell-operated platform in the area.

Shell said in a statement that its platform was safely shut down.

"No harm to people or the environment is ever acceptable and Shell deeply regrets that this incident

occurred," the company's statement says.

By noon, the fire had been reduced to a small flame coming from a pipe on the platform, the Coast Guard said.

The Coast Guard and U.S. Interior Department's Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement were investigating the cause of the incident.

South Dakota corrections ends snow shoveling program

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's Corrections Department is ending a snow shoveling program that has served the elderly and disabled for 16 years, leaving some communities uncertain as winter nears.

The department made the announcement Tuesday, a day after the first snowfall in Sioux Falls, the Argus Leader reported .

The cost of supervising the minimum-security inmates performing the community service in Sioux Falls, Yankton, Pierre and Rapid City has grown too high, said Denny Kaemingk, secretary for the Corrections Department.

Inmates would respond to shoveling calls outside regular business hours. It would often require the department to pull in correctional officers to supervise on their off-duty hours or pay them overtime, Kaemingk said.

"On nights, evenings and weekends, we're down to essential staff already," he said.

Staffing issues in Sioux Falls and Rapid City have put the program at risk of not responding quickly enough for residents to avoid municipal fines for unshoveled walkways.

"If we're going to do something, we want to do it right," said Darwin Weeldreyer, community services director for the department.

Between 350 and 400 addresses are on the list of properties statewide that need assistance clearing driveways and sidewalks, said Michael Winder, spokesman for the department.

Those in Sioux Falls who need assistance clearing driveways would connect to the agency's service through the 211 Helpline Center. The center has a list of 90 people who are unable to shovel or pay someone to shovel. With the department ending the program, the properties have no reliable source of volunteer labor.

"They're pretty much it," said Janet Kittams-Lalley, the center's director. "The Scoop It program will not be able to operate without the inmates."

Information from: Argus Leader, <http://www.argusleader.com>

Daugaard administration anticipates 'lean' state budget year

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Dennis Daugaard's administration said Wednesday that lower-than-expected tax collections will require a lean state spending plan for South Dakota's upcoming budget year.

Daugaard spokeswoman Kelsey Pritchard said in an email that the administration wouldn't have specific details to offer until the governor's December budget address to the Legislature.

The Republican governor will outline early in December his fiscal year 2019 budget proposal. The legislative session that starts in January and ends in late March is Daugaard's last as governor.

Lawmakers will revise the current year's budget and shape the next one during the upcoming 2018 session.

"I think that we have the ways and means in order to meet our obligations and ensure that the folks that need to be cared for are cared for and that we can provide money for education," said Republican Sen. Larry Tidemann, chairman of the Senate Committee on Appropriations. "I'm not overly concerned."

State figures released this week show revenues for the first four months of the current budget year are roughly \$8.3 million, or 1.5 percent, below expectations due in large part to short sales tax receipts. Sales tax is the state's main revenue source.

Lawmakers also dealt with sluggish state tax collections in the 2017 legislative session. But South Dakota ended the 2017 budget year with a surplus built on state spending reductions after Daugaard asked agencies to cut spending in the face of weaker-than-anticipated revenues.

Jail sentences for inmates who damaged jail

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — Two inmates have been sentenced to prison for damaging the Brown County Jail. Twenty-nine-year-old Chad Neal, of Rapid City, and 21-year-old Tanner Dvorak, of Sioux Falls, both pleaded guilty to felony damage to property for plugging toilets at the jail with laundry bags last May. The vandalism flooded part of the jail and caused more than \$1,100 in damage.

The Aberdeen American News says Neal was sentenced to two years in prison. Dvorak was given five years in prison with credit for about 200 days served. Both were ordered to pay restitution.

Information from: Aberdeen American News, <http://www.aberdeennews.com>

Tennessee city unveils tribute to wildfire first responders

PIGEON FORGE, Tenn. (AP) — A Tennessee city has reunited first responders to unveil its tribute to their work battling deadly wildfires last year.

Pigeon Forge tourism officials say 39 of the 64 fire stations that aided the city in November 2016 watched Tuesday as officials revealed a permanent tribute wall. More than 300 first responders were invited.

The artwork titled "For Those Who Answered the Call" is in the city's Patriot Park. Nashville-based designer Josh Ford etched images of Pigeon Forge, the Great Smoky Mountains and first responders inside of a heart within a 4,400-pound (1,995-kilogram), 10-foot-by-10-foot (3 meter-by-3-meter) stainless steel wall. The other side lists the agencies, businesses and organizations that aided the community.

The fire last year contributed to 14 deaths and up to \$2 billion of damage around the Gatlinburg tourism region.

About 71,000 deer taken during first 2 days of gun season

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — The Department of Natural Resources says Minnesota hunters registered about the same number of deer during the first two days of the gun season as in the same period last year.

The DNR says of the 70,724 deer registered, 57 percent were bucks compared with 67 percent during the first weekend of the hunt last year.

The agency predicts about 200,000 deer will be taken during this year's hunt. The total harvest last year was about 173,000. The deer season in most of the state continues through Nov. 12. The northern rifle zone season continues through Nov. 19. The late southeast season runs Nov. 18 to Nov. 26.

The muzzleloader season begins Nov. 25 and ends Dec. 10.

Snow hampers North Dakota farmers still harvesting

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — Snow in North Dakota over the past week hampered farmers trying to wrap up the late-season harvest.

The federal Agriculture Department says in its weekly crop report that cold weather also put an end to fall field work.

The corn harvest in the state is 59 percent complete, and the sunflower harvest is 72 percent done.

Winter wheat planting is 96 percent done, and 92 percent of the crop has emerged.

In the ranching community, pasture and range conditions are rated 58 percent poor or very poor. Stock water supplies are 55 percent short or very short.

South Dakota soybean harvest ends; most winter wheat emerged

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The soybean harvest has wrapped up in South Dakota, and the harvest of other late-season crops has advanced.

The federal Agriculture Department says in its weekly crop report that the corn harvest is 61 percent

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complete, the sunflower harvest 69 percent done and the sorghum harvest 73 percent complete.

The winter wheat crop is 95 percent emerged, with more than half of the crop rated fair to good.

In the ranching community, pasture and range conditions are rated 52 percent poor or very poor. Stock water supplies are 49 percent short or very short.

Yankton County commissioners ask for conflicts probe

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — Two Yankton County commissioners have asked for an investigation into their own potential conflicts of interest over concentrated animal feeding operation permitting.

The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan reports that Commissioner Todd Woods made the first request of State's Attorney Rob Klimisch. Commission Chairman Don Kettering also asked for an inquiry into his own associations.

Kettering says the move was in response to accusations that he and Woods, through work with First Dakota National Bank, have been improperly involved with hog operation requests before the board.

Kettering says the two commissioners want to get the issue "out on the table" and have it reviewed. Kettering says he wouldn't benefit from production agriculture through his banking work.

The commission on Tuesday approved a conditional-use permit for a 2,400-head finisher swine facility near Mission Hill.

Information from: Yankton Press and Dakotan, <http://www.yankton.net/>

Suspect flees, 60 mph in Mitchell

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — A man with a lengthy criminal record fled from authorities after he was believed to be under the influence of drugs while at the Davison County Courthouse for an appearance.

Mitchell police say when a sheriff's deputy approached Brian Mattke at the courthouse he fled on foot Tuesday. The deputy pursued Mattke who got into his car and sped away. Authorities say he was driving more than 60 mph through residential streets.

The Daily Republic says officers did not pursue the vehicle for safety reasons. Mattke is at large. He has a long record, including eluding police and reckless driving.

Information from: The Daily Republic, <http://www.mitchellrepublic.com>

Students connect to culture at Grand Teton National Park

By MELISSA CASSUTT, Jackson Hole News And Guide

JACKSON, Wyo. (AP) — The kids stand in a circle, zipping up jackets and clutching blankets they'd hauled off the school bus that brought them to Grand Teton National Park from the Wind River Reservation.

They're admittedly having a hard time concentrating and have already been warned once by their principal, Mrs. Elberta Monroe, to behave. She repeats the command in Arapaho, "Teitooonhehi."

It's an overcast and rainy September morning, but energy buzzes among the 33 11- and 12-year-olds, most of the sixth-grade class from Arapahoe Middle School. For many it was the first time they had taken the three-hour ride to Jackson, a field trip arranged in part to connect the Northern Arapaho students to the cultural and historical heritage of the park.

Park Ranger Sarin LoMascolo holds up a small display of tools, some made of a glassy black rock, and asks the students if they know what she's holding.

"They're arrowheads!" a few say in unison.

Their first assignment of the three-day trip is to hunt for some of the same in the park, and they split into groups. Teachers are given guides that explain the rocks and shapes the kids hope to discover. They set off on a hunt, plopping down to examine rocks, occasionally shouting out, "Sarin! Mrs. Park Ranger Lady!" when they think they've found something.

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Many are disappointed to find they've unearthed broken river rocks. Emily Petty, one of the teachers on the trip, discovers she's picked up a piece of dried scat — eliciting giggles from her students and an eye roll from her.

A few, like 11-year-old Shawn Bell, find artifacts and show the flakes of obsidian to their classmates.

"It was quite an experience for these young kids," teacher Ron Oldman says. "I don't think they'd ever been to a national park before.

"This place has a lot of significance to us."

The trip was a step forward in a burgeoning relationship between the Northern Arapaho tribe and Jackson, a connection the tribe and Jackson Hole Wild have been fostering for the past several years.

Jackson Hole Wild helped arrange a field trip last year as well, welcoming nearly 250 kindergartners through fifth-graders to ScienceFest, a one-day science festival hosted at the Center for the Arts.

"When you start to think about all the opportunities that all the kids in Jackson have it becomes really evident that with a little additional work you can expand that circle to really, really make a difference on a broader level," Executive Director Lisa Samford said.

Based largely on interest from the students, the programming expanded this year to a three-day, two-night field trip for the sixth-grade class at Arapahoe Middle School. The excursion corresponded with the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival, bringing students into a few screenings, again opening the doors to ScienceFest, but also adding tours of the recycling center and Vertical Harvest.

The program, Samford said, is a community effort not only to connect the tribe to the resources and learning opportunities in Jackson Hole, but to cultivate enrichment and an connection between Jackson students and the Arapaho students.

"What we're really trying to build together is something that has some staying power over time, and has immense potential for mutual enrichment," she said. "We want to create opportunities for continued relationships that will be built over time, are really built on this notion of mutual respect and engagement. We are all the same."

Thus far the partnership has brought Arapaho students to Jackson twice, but Samford envisions Jackson students making the trip to the reservation one day. She also sees potential for exchanged storytelling or otherwise interacting through the arts, be it dance or theater.

For many of the students — most, the teachers said — the trip to Jackson was the farthest they had traveled from the reservation.

"Many of them haven't even been past 20 miles," Petty said. "It's nice for them to see their history spans farther than Arapahoe and that town."

While LoMascolo led the discussion about arrowheads and tipi rings in the park, tribe elder Mary Ann Duran and Oldman, the Arapaho language and culture teacher, identified animals and geological features in Arapaho, a language both said has been largely lost on the younger generation.

"I've been giving them language classes," Oldman said.

Moose: hinen'ehii. Elk: hiiwox'uhuuu. Grizzly: nonookuneseet.

The students know a few words, some phrases, but none speaks it fluently. Outside of school, few speak it regularly.

"That's why I'm on this trip," Duran said. "(The language) is gone.

"We've taught almost 40 years and we have not even produced a speaker," she said. "Not one speaker at all. We can teach it and teach it and talk it in the schools, but when they get home, their parents don't know it."

But she saw a spark of hope as she watched the kids explore Grand Teton.

"Some of them will be interested," she said.

The teachers work on whipping up a batch of Indian tacos in the kitchen at St. John's Episcopal Church, while Duran waits for the group to calm so she can tell an Arapaho tale she learned as a child.

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Despite a 4-mile hike on the National Elk Refuge, the sixth-graders still have a lot of energy.

Eventually the students settle in and listen. She tells them the story of the "Star People."

"A long time ago, storytelling was something that I would really look forward to. That was the only entertainment we had," she says. "I don't want our history to get lost. I don't want our stories to get lost."

They listen intently.

The story and the trip to Grand Teton are some of the most poignant parts of the trip, even if the students can't quite put that into words.

"You get to learn new things about how people lived here and how people survived," says Jordan Black, 11, about Grand Teton National Park, a place he had visited before. "It's nice how people want us to come. Some schools don't do things like we do."

"I think a lot of them connected with that," says Keith Spoonhunter Sr., a parent who was on the trip with his daughter, Kylaya. "That's where they seemed to be paying the most attention."

The long-term impact, however, is unlikely to come for years yet.

"I like that there's a connection between the reservation and Jackson," he says. "But for a lot of them, this is their first time here."

Information from: Jackson Hole (Wyo.) News And Guide, <http://www.jhnewsandguide.com>

Trump, Xi present united front despite differences

By JILL COLVIN and JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — President Donald Trump sought to present a united front with Chinese President Xi Jinping following two days of meetings Thursday, despite lingering differences over trade and North Korea.

On trade, Trump criticized the "very one-sided and unfair" trade relationship between the U.S. and China. But he stopped short of castigating Xi, saying he doesn't blame the country for having taken advantage of the U.S. in the past.

Trump said China "must immediately address the unfair trade practices that drive" what he said is a "shockingly" large trade deficit, along with barriers to market access, forced technology transfers and intellectual property theft. "But I don't blame China," he said. "After all, who can blame a country for being able to take advantage of another country for the benefit of its citizens?"

To applause, Trump said: "I give China great credit."

His Secretary of State Rex Tillerson offered a blunter assessment of China's trade surplus with the United States, which in October widened by 12.2 percent from a year earlier, to \$26.6 billion. The total surplus with the United States for the first 10 months of the year was \$223 billion.

"I think the best way to characterize it is that while we appreciate the long hours and the effort that our Chinese counterparts have put into those trade discussions, quite frankly in the grand scheme of a \$3- to 500 billion trade deficit, the things that have been achieved are pretty small," Tillerson told reporters in Beijing.

He said that, that, "in terms of really getting at some of the fundamental elements of why this imbalance exists, there is still a lot more work to do."

Tillerson also acknowledged that there were differences "tactics and the timing and how far to go with pressure" on North Korea. But he insisted that the two countries were on the same page.

"There is no disagreement on North Korea," he said.

Trump and Tillerson's comments came during Trump's second and final day in China and after lengthy meetings with Xi. The day included announcements that the U.S. and China had signed agreements valued at more than \$250 billion for products including U.S.-made jet engines, auto parts, liquefied natural gas and beef.

Such contract signings are a fixture of foreign leader visits to Beijing and are intended to defuse foreign complaints about China's trade policies.

Trump had made narrowing the multibillion-dollar U.S. trade deficit with China a priority for his adminis-

tration. During the presidential campaign, he accused China of "raping our country" on trade and pledged to minimize the countries' trade imbalance.

For his part, Xi promised a more open business environment for foreign companies in China and said his country was committed to further opening its economy to foreign investment.

"China will not close its doors" and will open them "even wider," he said, pledging that foreign companies in China, including American ones, would find the market "more open, more transparent and more orderly."

The United States and other trading partners have been pressing Beijing to give their companies more access to its state-dominated economy. But it remains unclear how far China will go to fulfill its pledges. Previous U.S. administrations have hailed market-opening promises only to be left disappointed.

North Korea remained a focus of the talks. Before arriving in China, Trump had delivered a stern message to Beijing, using an address in South Korea to call on China, North Korea's biggest trade partner, to do more to confront and isolate the antagonistic nation. That included urging China to fully implement U.N. Security Council resolutions aimed at depriving the North's government of revenue for its nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

Trump on Thursday appeared far more conciliatory, thanking China for its efforts and saying he'd been encouraged by his conversations.

"China can fix this problem easily. And quickly. And I am calling on China and your great president to hopefully work on it very hard," Trump said. "If he works on it hard it will happen."

Before the meetings, China rolled out the red carpet for Trump, treating him to an elaborate welcome ceremony on the plaza outside the Great Hall of the People before the leaders turned to their private talks.

Trump looked on approvingly as a Chinese honor guard played the national anthems of both countries, cannons boomed and soldiers marched. He clapped and smiled as children waving U.S. and Chinese flags and flowers screamed and jumped wildly.

Trump said the welcome "was truly memorable and impressive and something I will never forget."

Trump was also feted at a state dinner that featured a video montage of the president's visit, as well as footage of his granddaughter, Arabella, the daughter of Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner, singing a traditional Chinese song in Mandarin.

On Friday, Trump heads to Danang, Vietnam for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation conference — the first of two conferences he'll attend on his trip to Asia.

While Trump had told reporters he expected to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of the conference, Tillerson said the two sides had never agreed to hold a formal one-on-one meeting. He said the two sides were still discussing whether they had "sufficient substance" to talk about.

Associated Press writers Christopher Bodeen in Beijing and Darlene Superville and Ken Thomas in Washington contributed to this report.

Follow Colvin on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/@colvinj> and Lemire at <http://twitter.com/@JonLemire>

IS militants evacuate last stronghold in Syria to government

By SARAH EL DEEB, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Islamic State militants withdrew Thursday from their last stronghold in Syria, a strategic town near the border with Iraq, following a government offensive that has effectively left the extremist group's fighters dispersed in villages and small towns in the desert.

The Syrian military declared the town liberated after intense battles that killed a large number of militants, including leaders. The military said they are still chasing other IS militants in different directions in the desert.

"The liberation of Boukamal is of great importance because it is a declaration of the fall of this group's project in the region generally and the collapse of its supporters' illusions to divide it, control large parts of the Syria-Iraq borders and secure supply routes between the two countries," said Army spokesman

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Gen. Ali Mayhoub in a televised statement.

Syrian pro-government media said Syrian troops had clashed with remnants of IS militants in the town after they entered it late Wednesday. On Thursday, they reported the town clear of IS fighters.

Pro-Syrian media reported the town was liberated. Al-Ikhbariya TV's journalist reported from the road to the town, joyfully breaking out on camera: "Daesh is finished. Live."

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said government forces and allied troops, including Iraqi forces who linked from across the border, are combing through Boukamal after IS militants withdrew.

With the collapse of IS in Boukamal, Islamic State militants have no major territorial control in Syria and Iraq and are believed to have dispersed in the desert west and east of the Euphrates River. U.S. officials estimated that there were between 2,500 and 3,500 IS militants around Boukamal and that leading members of the group were also believed to have taken refuge in the town. The group has a small presence near the capital Damascus.

IS has suffered consecutive defeats at the hands of separate but simultaneous offensives in Iraq and Syria by the Russian-backed Syrian forces and allied militias as well as U.S.-backed Iraqi and Syrian fighters.

Despite its fall, the group's media apparatus has remained active and its fighters are likely to keep up their insurgency from desert areas.

The swift fall of Boukamal in eastern Deir el-Zour province was accelerated after Iraqi forces seized Qaim, the town across the border last weekend, also controlling a strategic crossing between the two countries.

A senior Iraqi official said there was an agreement Tuesday to send Iraqi paramilitaries to Syria to take part in the Boukamal operation, adding that the Syrians were to supply them with weapons and gear. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to reporters.

An Iraqi spokesman for the Popular Mobilization Forces has told The Associated Press last week that his forces, part of the Iraqi security forces, will participate in the operation and will head north to protect the borders and secure the road from Iran to Lebanon.

Boukamal is the last urban center for the militants in both Iraq and Syria where Syrian troops —backed by Russia and Iranian-supported militias — and U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces are vying for control of the strategic border town.

Washington is wary of increasing Iran influence in the area and has backed the SDF in their bid to uproot IS from the borders with Iraq. The proximity of forces in the area has raised concerns about potential clashes between them as they approach Boukamal from opposite sides of the Euphrates River, and now from across the border with Iraq.

It was not clear if the government seizure of the town means the end of the race for control of territory previously held by IS.

So far the Kurdish-led SDF have focused on the area east of the Euphrates, seizing a number of oil and gas fields and securing large swathes of areas along the border with Iraq, as well as the newly liberated Raqqa city.

Associated Press writer Sinan Salah in Baghdad contributed to this report

Pomp and flattery: Asia rolls out the red carpets for Trump

By JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Honor guards marching in unison in colorful uniforms. Elaborate state dinners with celebrity guests. Gaggles of children, jumping and screaming along with endless praise.

The first half of President Donald Trump's whirlwind tour to Asia has been an exercise in the art of flattery, as world leaders woo the man who was introduced at the South Korean National Assembly as the "leader of the world."

"They are not ignorant that this is a president who is particularly responsive to flattery," said Lindsey Ford of the Asia Society Policy Institute in Washington, who said the Chinese, in particular, would "absolutely go over the top" trying to stroke the president's ego.

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The pomp and pageantry began in Japan, where Trump was welcomed to the grand Akasaka Palace with a welcome ceremony that featured a maze of red carpets, an honor guard and marching band.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who has gone out of his way to strike up a personal friendship with Trump, also treated the president to a round of golf at Japan's premier course, complete with a champion golf partner and a taste of home: a hamburger lunch made with American beef.

Abe also presented Trump with a hat signed by both leaders that read: "Donald and Shinzo, Make alliance even greater," a play on Trump's campaign theme.

At a banquet dinner that featured another golf champion and a pop star admired by Trump's granddaughter, Abe talked about the close relationship the two had forged.

"When you play golf with someone not just once, but for two times, the person must be your favorite guy," Abe said.

In South Korea, President Moon Jae-in laid it on even thicker in what he said was the first state visit by an American President in 25 years. South Korea's welcome ceremony at Seoul's Blue House featured soldiers dressed in colorful costumes and a gaggle of children who shouted with glee upon Trump's arrival, greeting him like he was Asia's Justin Bieber.

There was more flattery in the meetings, where Abe celebrated the one-year anniversary of Trump's election victory with plenty of praise.

"I believe it has not been one year yet, your time in office," said Moon, "but you are already making great progress on making America great again, as you have promised on the campaign trail."

Then came a banquet that had the feel of a campy wedding, complete with a custom logo that read, "We Go Together," and a photo montage of Trump and Moon's happiest moments together. No matter the pair had only met once, and that many of the photos featured the same scenes, shot from different angles. As guests entered the ballroom, Trump's inauguration song, Frank Sinatra's "My Way," played.

World leaders appear to have learned quickly that Trump responds well to grand displays. In Saudi Arabia earlier this year, Trump was greeted like a returning king — the roadways lined with his photo. In France, Trump was welcomed as an honored guest at the annual Bastille Day military parade. Trump liked the display so much he proposed holding his own in the U.S.

But the most elaborate welcome may have come from China, which poured on the pageantry beginning with an arrival ceremony that was lavish even by China's standards. Heads of state are usually given a low-key reception at the airport. Not Trump.

He and the first lady were greeted by Chinese and American dignitaries as soldiers stood stiffly at attention and a band played martial music. Dozens of children jumped up and down, chanting "welcome, welcome."

Trump and his wife were then whisked to a private tour of the Forbidden City, Beijing's ancient imperial palace, where they clapped along during an outdoor opera. Children in colorful costumes at one point shouted to Trump: "Welcome to China! I love you!"

On Thursday came the piece de resistance, a welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People that featured an honor guard of hundreds. The welcome left Trump wowed.

"The hosting of the military parade this morning was magnificent. And the world was watching," Trump said, claiming he'd received from across the world. "Nothing you can see is so beautiful."

Trump was also honored at a state banquet that included a video with highlights from Xi's April visit to Florida and clips from Trump's trip.

"The Chinese have figured out how to play Trump: flatter him," said Mike Chinoy, an expert on East Asia policy at the U.S.-China Institute at the University of Southern California. "And there's nothing the Chinese do better than wow foreign diplomats."

Associated Press writer Jonathan Lemire contributed to this report.

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10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

Your daily look at late-breaking news, upcoming events and the stories that will be talked about today:

1. 'I GIVE CHINA GREAT CREDIT'

The U.S. president criticizes the "very one-sided and unfair" trade relationship between Washington and Beijing, but says he doesn't blame China for having taken advantage of the U.S.

2. TPP TALKS KICK OFF AT APEC

Talks aimed at salvaging a Pacific Rim trade pact rejected by Trump resumes on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

3. DEMOCRATS SEE WINS AS MOMENTUM FOR 2018 STATE ELECTIONS

In elections around the country, Democrats flipped about two dozen state legislative seats, a key in the redistricting process.

4. WHY TAX REFORM IS IMPORTANT TO GOP

Republicans contend that the party's electoral fortunes next year hinge on whether they succeed in their dream to redraft the nation's complex, inefficient tax code.

5. A HOLLYWOOD ENDING FOR THE TIMES

Kevin Spacey is being cut from Ridley Scott's finished film "All the Money in the World" and replaced by Christopher Plummer just over one month before it's supposed to hit theaters.

6. 'FIND MY LV HERO'

Nearly six weeks after the Las Vegas massacre, a Facebook page to help victims find the people who aided them has led to at least 25 connections.

7. NORTH KOREA, CAUTIOUSLY, GOES ONLINE

A two-tiered system allows the elite and hackers to surf with relative freedom, but the masses are kept inside a national intranet, sealed off from the outside world and carefully surveilled, AP learns.

8. IS MILITANTS EVACUATE LAST STRONGHOLD IN SYRIA

The fall of Boukamal, a strategic town on the border with Iraq, means remaining extremists are currently holed up in small towns and villages along the border with Iraq and in the Syrian desert.

9. WHO ARE MOST LIKELY TO SEEK LOAN RELIEF

Students who attended for-profit colleges filed more than 98 percent of the requests for student loan forgiveness alleging fraud by their schools, government data show.

10. CMA AWARDS EMOTIONAL, POLITICAL

Country music's big night offered powerful moments focused on unifying America during a year dominated by gun violence, divisive politics and natural disasters.

Kim Jong Un's North Korea is cautiously going online

By ERIC TALMADGE, Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP) — Ever so cautiously, North Korea is going online.

Doctors can consult via live, online video conferencing, and lectures at prestigious Kim Il Sung University are streamed to faraway factories and agricultural communes. People use online dictionaries and text each other on their smart phones. In the wallets of the privileged are "Jonsong" or "Narae" cards for e-shopping and online banking. Cash registers at major department stores are plugged into the web.

It's just not the World Wide Web. This is all done on a tightly sealed intranet of the sort a medium-sized company might use for its employees.

The free flow of information is anathema to authoritarian regimes, and with the possible exception of the African dictatorship of Eritrea, North Korea is still the least Internet-friendly country on Earth. Access to the global Internet for most is unimaginable. Hardly anyone has a personal computer or an email address that isn't shared, and the price for trying to get around the government's rules can be severe.

But for Kim Jong Un, the country's first leader to come of age with the Internet, the idea of a more wired North Korea is also attractive. It comes with the potential for great benefits to the nation from

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information technology — and for new forms of social and political control that promise to be more effective than anything his father and grandfather could have dreamed of. It also allows for the possibility of cyber-attacks on the West.

Pyongyang's solution is a two-tiered system where the trusted elite can surf the Internet with relative freedom while the masses are kept inside the national intranet, painstakingly sealed off from the outside world, meticulously surveilled and built in no small part on pilfered software.

The regime created, in other words, an online version of North Korea itself.

SURFING THE INTRANET

Rising from Ssuk Island in the Taedong River, which divides Pyongyang east and west, is a building shaped like a colossal atom.

The "knowledge sector" is a key priority for Kim Jong Un, and the sprawling, glassy Sci-Tech Complex, a center for the dissemination of science-related information throughout the country, is one of his signature development projects. It houses North Korea's biggest e-library, with more than 3,000 terminals where factory workers participate in tele-learning, kids in their bright red scarves watch cartoons and university students do research.

Pak Sung Jin, a 30-year-old postgraduate in chemistry, came to work on an essay. It's a weekday and the e-library is crowded.

Unlike most North Koreans, Pak has some experience with the Internet, though on a supervised, need-only basis. If Pak needs anything from the Internet, accredited university officials will find it for him. As a scholar and a scientist, Pak says, it's his patriotic duty to be on top of the most up-to-date research.

He echoes the official condemnation that the Internet has been poisoned by the American imperialists and their stooges. "There ought to be a basic acceptance the Internet should be used peacefully," he says.

Today, he is relying on the Internet's North Korean alter ego, the national intranet.

Below a red label that states his black "Ullim" desktop computer was donated by Dear Respected Leader Kim Jong Un, what's on Pak's screen is for North Korean eyes only. The IP address, 10.76.1.11, indicates he's on the walled-off network North Koreans call "Kwangmyong," which means brightness or light.

Using the "Naenara" browser — the name means "my country" but it's a modified version of Firefox — Pak visits a restaurant page, his university website, and cooking and online shopping sites.

There are very few actual sites on Kwangmyong. An official at the Sci-Tech Center said they number 168.

They are spread across separate networks for government agencies, schools and libraries, and companies. It's all domestically run, though government-approved content culled from the Internet can be posted by administrators, primarily for researchers like Pak.

North Korea's national intranet concept is unique and extreme even when compared with other information-wary countries. China and Cuba, for example, are well known for the extent of control the government exerts over what citizens can see. But that is done primarily through censorship and blocking, not complete separation.

Like most North Korean computers, the desktops at the Sci-Tech Complex run on the "Red Star" operating system, which was developed by the Korea Computer Center from Linux open-source coding.

Red Star 3.0 has the usual widgets: the Naenara browser, email, a calendar and time zone settings, even "kPhoto" (with an icon that looks a lot like iPhoto). Older versions featured a Windows XP user interface but it now it has a Mac design, right down to the "spinning beach ball" wait icon.

Versions of Red Star that have made it out of North Korea and into the hands of foreign coding experts also reveal some rather sinister, and for most users invisible, features.

Any attempt to change its core functions or disable virus checkers results in an automatic reboot cycle. Files downloaded from USBs are watermarked so that authorities can identify and trace criminal or subversive activity, a security measure that takes aim at the spread of unauthorized content from South Korea, China and elsewhere.

Red Star also uses a trace viewer that takes regular screenshots of what is being displayed. The screen-

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shots can't be deleted or accessed by the typical user but are available for checking if a trained government official decides to take a look.

Outside North Korea, Android phones have a similar trace-viewer feature, noted Will Scott, who taught computer science at the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology in 2013 and is now a doctoral student at the University of Washington. But the Red Star version reflects the regime's very specific surveillance and violation-busting priorities. It doesn't collect much more than the Android would; however, it is designed to make getting at that information easier for a local authority who isn't an expert programmer.

Scott said the North has been "very effective" in using such technology to serve its goals.

Nat Kretchun, deputy director of the Open Technology Fund, said the kinds of censorship and surveillance software in Red Star and the mobile operating systems of phones and tablets reveal a new information control strategy.

Under Kim Jong Un's predecessors, the flow of information was primarily controlled through a resource-intensive human network — the State Security Ministry's "thought police," for example, or Pyongyang's iconic traffic controllers — that kept tabs on what people were up to. But the advent of the Internet and advances in communication technology poked holes in that strategy, particularly among the better educated, younger and more affluent, the very segment of society that could be most likely to pose a political threat.

So, while maintaining its old school tactics on the ground and enforcing the blackout of the global Internet, North Korean officials have learned to adapt by using the online devices themselves as yet another tool for surveillance.

"In North Korea cell phones and intranet-enabled devices are on balance pro-surveillance and control," said Kretchun, who has been studying North Korea's relationship to the Internet for years.

THE AZALEA SMART PHONE AND THE RYONGHUNG IPAD

The most common online experience for North Koreans isn't on a laptop or desktop. It's on a smart phone.

A decade ago, only a small cadre of select regime and military officials had access to smart phones. Now, according to the main provider's most recent financial reports, there are an estimated 2.5-3 million mobile phones in North Korea, a country of 25 million.

The rapid spread of mobile phones is one of the biggest success stories of the Kim Jong Un era. After a couple of false starts, the North's foray into mobile telecoms began in earnest in 2008 under Kim Jong Il. But it has truly blossomed over the past five years with the introduction of 3G services, thanks in large part to two foreign investors — Loxley Pacific of Thailand and Egypt's Orascom Telecom Media and Technology.

Like the walled-off intranet, North Korea's phones deny access to the outside world.

Local phones allow North Koreans to call and text each other, play games, surf the domestic intranet and access some other services. Users have hundreds of ring tones to choose from, and can get weather updates, look words up in dictionaries and snap selfies. But they cannot receive or place calls to numbers outside that network — the rest of the world, in other words.

It's easy enough for North Koreans to buy phones, though the phones must be registered and approved. A good "Pyongyang" or "Arirang" model smart phone costs from \$200 to \$400. More basic phones go for much less, especially if the phone is second-hand.

On the second floor of the Pottonggang IT center, a clerk stands behind a glass display cabinet filled with tablets and USB flash drives. Signs on the wall behind her advertise anti-virus software and apps to put on mobile phones, which they can do by Bluetooth at the store. One of the most popular apps is a role playing game based on "Boy General," a locally created hit anime series. It costs \$1.80.

Foreigners in North Korea are relegated to a different network and cannot make calls to, or receive calls from, local numbers. They can buy local phones if they want, but the devices will be stripped of the apps and features that they normally carry and securely coded so that the apps can't be added on later. Wi-fi use is banned for North Koreans, and tightly restricted and monitored to block surreptitious piggybacking on foreigners' signals.

North Korea undoubtedly imports and rebrands some of its IT products. But over the past few months, two companies have generated quite a stir among Apple fans with products billed to be wholly domestic:

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the "Jindallae (Azalea) III" mobile phone and the "Ryonghung iPad."

The gadgets' insouciant similarity to Apple products, and the flat-out appropriation of the "iPad" name, isn't especially surprising. Kim Jong Un likes Apple products — he has been photographed with a MacBook Pro on his private jet, and even had a 21-inch iMac on the desk beside him when state media showed him reviewing a nuclear "U.S. mainland strike plan" four years ago.

It seems North Korean coders have also lifted some ideas from Apple.

Outside experts believe a program similar to what Apple uses in its OS X and iOS is believed to be the basis of the booby-trap that thwarts attempts to disable security functions in Red Star. It's now a staple on North Korean phones. And by 2014, all mobile phone operating systems had been updated to include the watermarking system to reject apps or media that don't carry a government signature of approval.

It's the same mechanism used by Apple to block unauthorized applications from the App Store, but in North Korea's case serves instead to control access to information.

"The stakes are infinitely higher in North Korea, where communications are monitored and being caught talking about the wrong thing could land you in a political prison camp," Kretchun noted.

WIRED ELITES AND CYBERSOLDIERS

While blocking off the masses, North Korea allows more Internet access to a small segment of society, including the country's elite and its cybersoldiers.

To create a snapshot of the online behavior of the elite, U.S.-based cyber threat intelligence company Recorded Future and Team Cymru, a non-profit Internet security group, analyzed activity in IP ranges believed to be used by North Korea from April to July this year. They found that the limited number of North Koreans with access to the Internet are much more active and engaged in the world and with contemporary services and technologies than many outsiders had previously thought, according to Priscilla Moriuchi, Recorded Future's director of strategic threat development and a former NSA agent.

"North Korean leaders are not disconnected from the world and the consequences of their actions," she said.

How deep the access goes isn't known. Recorded Future and Team Cymru officials contacted by The AP refused to comment on details of their dataset, including how many "elite" users were observed and how foreign tourists or residents in the North were excluded.

Even so, it stands to reason at least some members of the North Korean leadership have the access they need to keep up on world events and that specialist agents are allowed to monitor and cull intelligence from the internet.

There is also strong evidence that North Korea allows people involved in hacking or cyber operations the access necessary for a deep engagement in cyberattacks and cybercrime.

According to the FBI, the North's bigger hacks include the recent WannaCry ransomware attack, which infected hundreds of thousands of computers in May and crippled parts of Britain's National Health Service. It has been linked to attacks on the Bangladeshi central bank last year and on banks in South Korea going back to 2013. There was also the 2014 hack of Sony Pictures over the release of the "Interview," a black comedy that graphically portrayed Kim Jong Un being killed. U.S. authorities recently dubbed North Korea's cyber presence "Hidden Cobra."

Weaponizing cyberspace is a logical option for the North because it can be done at relatively low cost and at the same time denied, according to a Congressional report submitted in August.

Pyongyang has denied hacking allegations, but the ability to carry out sophisticated cyber operations is a powerful military weapon in the hands of a state. Just as assuredly as North Korea is developing its nuclear and missile capabilities, most experts assume, it's honing its cyber warfare tool box.

Beau Woods, the deputy director of the Cyber Statecraft Initiative at the Atlantic Council, cautioned of a "preponderance of question marks" regarding North Korea's cyber skills. But he warned of how potentially devastating a more cyber-active North Korea could be.

Those concerns are turned on their head back at the Sci-Tech Center in Pyongyang.

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Pak, the chemist, supports the official line in North Korea that the increasing danger of cyberattacks and slanderous Internet propaganda comes from the U.S. against Pyongyang. The government says that justifies "protective" walls to shield the masses from aggressive propaganda, and virtually requires extensive cybersecurity measures in the name of national defense.

"Don't you see how severe the anti-Republic slander of our enemies on the Internet is?" Pak said, although the restrictive policies make it difficult for him to carry out his research. "There are a lot of cases where the Internet is being used to raise hostility against us."

Talmadge has been the AP's Pyongyang bureau chief since 2013 and has traveled to the North more than 40 times. Follow him on Twitter at EricTalmadge and Instagram @erictalmadge.

Catalan lawmakers testifying in separatist rebellion probe

By ARITZ PARRA, Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Six Catalan lawmakers were testifying Thursday before a Spanish judge over claims that they ignored Constitutional Court orders and allowed an independence vote in Catalonia's regional parliament.

The Catalan parliament's speaker, Carme Forcadell, was the first to be questioned by Supreme Court judge Pablo Llarena and two prosecutors. Together with five other members of the parliament's governing body, she faces possible charges of rebellion, sedition and embezzlement.

Under Spanish law, the crimes are punishable with up to 30 years of imprisonment.

The judge is set to decide after questioning them if any preventive measures, including ordering them to be taken into custody, are to be applied while the investigation continues.

The Oct. 27 independence declaration in the Catalan parliament was boycotted by most opposition lawmakers but held despite previous court rulings. It was passed by 70 votes to 10 in the 135-seat legislative body.

Shortly after, Spain's central authorities seized control of the wealthy northeastern region, making it the first time in four decades since the end of Gen. Francisco Franco's dictatorship that Madrid removed powers from any of the country's 17 regions.

Spain removed the regional government, dissolved the parliament and called a new regional election for Dec. 21.

Catalonia's deposed regional president, Carles Puigdemont, and four of his dismissed Cabinet members fled to Brussels, where they are fighting Spanish arrest and extradition orders.

In a letter posted on social media Thursday, the five made a call for support for pro-secession parties in Catalonia's upcoming regional election.

"It's time to drive away from the (Catalan) institutions those who want to own them with a coup d'etat," Puigdemont tweeted, referring to Spain's decision to take control of Catalonia's powers.

Puigdemont, who is likely to run as the candidate for his center-right PDeCAT party, says he went to Belgium to rally European support for the Catalan cause and that he's not trying to evade justice.

Although no country has publicly sided with them so far, their presence in the Belgian capital is sowing divisions among politicians. In Thursday's letter, the Cabinet criticized the European Union for turning a blind eye to the Catalan plight.

"The time that we spend behind Spanish bars or in exile won't be in vain if we remain united in the defense of Catalonia and in denouncing the democratic decadence of Spain," the letter said.

Eight members of the now-dismissed Catalan Cabinet and two activists have already been jailed as the country's National Court studies whether to charge them with various crimes related to an alleged roadmap to achieve secession from Spain.

One more official was released on bail, but remains a suspect in the investigation.

Forcadell remains the parliament's president, heading a commission of two dozen lawmakers during the transitional period to next month's polls.

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The Supreme Court judge delayed her questioning for more than a week after attorneys argued that they weren't given enough time to prepare the defense.

Around 100 supporters chanted "You are not alone" as the lawmakers entered the Supreme Court building in central Madrid on Thursday, while police kept at bay a handful of anti-independence protesters carrying Spanish flags and shouting "You don't fool us, Catalonia is Spain."

Fina Surina, 48, had traveled overnight for nine hours from the Catalan town of Besalu to accompany the lawmakers.

They "are making a great personal sacrifice in the long-run struggle for independence," she said.

Catalonia, with 7.5 million people, represents a fifth of Spain's gross domestic product. Polls shows that Catalans are roughly evenly divided over whether to seek independence or remain part of Spain.

The regional separatist authorities claimed a banned Oct. 1 secession referendum gave them a mandate to declare independence.

Trump cooperates with Chinese effort to control image

By **JOE McDONALD, Associated Press**

BEIJING (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump was a cooperative partner for Beijing's sweeping efforts to control the message of his heavily choreographed visit to China.

Trump and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, took no questions at an event Thursday billed as a news briefing, a reduction of already minimal press interaction during previous visits by American leaders.

During a 2014 visit by then President Barack Obama, Xi took a symbolic single question from a reporter for a Chinese state newspaper. He brushed off an American reporter's question about whether Beijing might ease restrictions on journalist visas, saying vaguely that media outlets had to obey China's laws.

Trump, who has called the media the "enemy of the American people," also took no questions during an event at which Chinese companies signed contracts to buy American jetliners, soybeans and other goods.

Trump's visit comes at a time when he faces uncomfortable questions at home about Russia and possible gun controls following deadly mass shootings.

Xi almost never takes questions from reporters.

"Both of them are sensitive and vigilant about the media," said Zhang Lifan, an independent political analyst in Beijing. "They worry there might be some tricky questions that would embarrass them."

Meanwhile, as state television showed Trump and Xi visiting the imperial palace in Beijing, censors scrubbed comments about Trump's visit from China's lively internet forums.

Reports by official Chinese media including the ruling Communist Party's main newspaper, People's Daily, dominated posts on the popular Twitter-like microblog service, Sina Weibo.

The comments function on most posts, which often attract witty remarks by Chinese internet users, appeared to have been disabled or limited. Only a few dozen "carefully chosen" comments with positive messages were allowed.

According to Free Weibo, a site that tracks online censorship, posts that were deleted include humorous comments about the remarkable lack of traffic congestion in Beijing as Trump's motorcade passed Tiananmen Square.

Others asked whether Trump was able to get on Twitter, which China's internet filters block the public from seeing. (Answer: Yes, he was.)

The censorship showed the government's "lack of confidence," said Zhang.

"If they had enough confidence, why be so sensitive about people's criticisms?" he said.

Pence, Abbott attend vigil for victims of church shooting

By **JIM VERTUNO and EMILY SCHMALL, Associated Press**

SUTHERLAND SPRINGS, Texas (AP) — Vice President Mike Pence joined Texas Gov. Greg Abbott at a memorial service for the victims of Sunday's massacre at a small-town Texas church.

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Pence told the crowd Wednesday evening that the shooting at the First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs was the worst mass shooting at a church in American history and called the gunman "deranged."

"Whatever animated the evil that descended on that small church, of the attacker's desire was to silence their testimony of faith, they failed," the vice president added.

Abbott began the service by praying "for healing and for help."

The governor said that Texans come together at times of crisis and tragedy. "It's what we do," Abbott said. People in the crowd responded "amen."

He also proclaimed Tuesday a statewide day of prayer.

Authorities have reviewed video from inside the church where a gunman killed more than two dozen, including footage that shows the assailant shooting victims in the head during Sunday services, a U.S. official said Wednesday.

The official's account of the video is consistent with statements made by survivors of the attack. The official was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity.

The same U.S. official confirmed that the attacker's cellphone was an iPhone and that the FBI had not yet asked Apple for help obtaining data from the device.

The church regularly recorded its services, and the footage investigators have seen shows several minutes of the attack because there was "no one to turn it off," according to a law enforcement official who has seen the video. The official also spoke on condition of anonymity because that person was not authorized to speak publicly about an ongoing investigation.

The law enforcement official was among those who went inside the First Baptist Church after the attack and said several of the pews were overturned, although it was unclear if that was from the attack or from rescue efforts. Bullets had splintered the walls and pews, leaving shards of wood all over the floors.

Pence arrived in Texas on Wednesday, visiting wounded victims at a San Antonio hospital and later meeting families of the dead in Floresville, not far from Sutherland Springs.

Pence went from table to table at a high school library attempting to console devastated family members. "The whole country is praying over you," he told one man who lost his sister-in-law.

He stopped to talk with John Holcombe, whose family was decimated by the shooting. Holcombe, who suffered shrapnel wounds, lost his wife Crystal — who was pregnant with their first child — three of her children, his parents, a brother and a toddler niece.

Pence hugged 7-year-old Evelyn Holcombe, who managed to survive by running out of the church during the attack.

Earlier Wednesday, Pence said that President Donald Trump had ordered federal agencies to provide extensive help to the investigation, including 100 on-site FBI agents.

The agent in charge of the FBI's San Antonio division said Tuesday agents had not been able to retrieve data from Devin Patrick Kelley's cellphone.

In a statement Wednesday evening, Apple said it's offered the FBI technical advice after learning the bureau was trying to access the phone. The company said the FBI had not requested its assistance.

Depending on the model of iPhone and what security features it had, FBI agents might have had a short window to use alternative methods to access its data.

For instance, if the iPhone used Apple's Touch ID fingerprint sensing system, agents could have tried placing the dead gunman's finger on the phone to unlock it. But that would only have worked within 48 hours of the last time the phone was locked.

Meanwhile, more details emerged about the gunman's past. School records showed that Kelley was a disciplinary problem in high school.

In fall 2006, Kelley's sophomore year, he was suspended and sent to an alternative school for two months after an unspecified drug-related incident.

He was suspended twice as a junior and three times as a senior for reasons including "insubordination," "profane language/gestures" and "dishonest/false records."

With each passing year at New Braunfels High School, his grades slipped as well, according to the records.

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A B-student overall as a freshman, he failed several classes by his senior year and ended up ranked 260 out of 393 students in his graduating class in 2009. He finished with a 2.3 grade-point average.

The records also listed attention deficit hyperactivity disorder as one of his medical conditions.

A former friend said Kelley asked her for sexual favors and prevented his first wife from communicating with her friends. Kelsey Huckaby told Austin television station KTBC that Kelley was "kind of controlling of his girlfriends" in high school.

Huckaby said she lost contact with Kelley until he responded to a Facebook post she made in April asking for a place to stay for her and her boyfriend. She said Kelley offered to let them stay in a trailer on his property if she performed weekly "sexual favors" for him.

Also Wednesday, the Texas Department of Public Safety released an official list of those killed in the rampage. The eight male victims and 17 female victims ranged in age from 1 to 77. Eight of the fatalities were children or teenagers. The oldest of them was 16.

Authorities said the 26 dead also included the unborn baby of a woman who was killed.

All the victims died at the scene, except for one child who died at a San Antonio-area hospital.

Eleven people remained hospitalized with wounds they suffered in the attack.

Associated Press writers Michael Balsamo in Los Angeles and Matt O'Brien in Providence, Rhode Island, contributed to this report.

Democrats see wins as momentum for 2018 state elections

By **DAVID A. LIEB** and **CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY**, Associated Press

Sweeping Democratic victories in Virginia and key gains in other 2017 state legislative races have lifted Democratic hopes of even bigger wins in next year's midterm elections, as they seek a greater voice in how political districts will be redrawn for the decade to come.

Democrats won the governors' offices in Virginia and New Jersey on Tuesday, erased a previously dominant Republican majority in the Virginia House of Delegates and won a special election that gave them control of the Washington state Senate.

All told, Democrats flipped about two dozen state legislative seats around the country Tuesday and have now gained at least 30 seats previously held by Republicans since President Donald Trump won election last year, reversing several years of Republican momentum.

"In general, this is a rebuke of Republican governance of states," said Jessica Post, executive director of the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee. She added: "The other thing it said is we can win all across the country."

The fight for control of legislative chambers matters not only for policies on health care, taxes and education, but also because the legislature in most states determines how future congressional and state legislative districts are drawn. The next round of redistricting will take place after the 2020 Census, and both parties are focused on controlling as many states as possible by then.

Republicans swept to power in many states in the 2010 elections, just in time to use their new authority during the last round of redistricting. Since then, Republicans have gained more than 900 state legislative seats nationwide.

This year's Democratic victories are "a very small step forward" by comparison and have largely come in "seats, that by all rights, they probably should have had already," said Matt Walter, president of the Republican State Leadership Committee.

Heading into Tuesday's elections, Republicans controlled more than two-thirds of all state legislative chambers, including full control of both chambers and the governor's office in about two dozen states. By comparison, Democrats had complete control in only a half-dozen states. Just five states had legislatures where each party controlled one chamber, and several of those involved bipartisan coalitions.

During the past year, Democrats have launched a coordinated effort to chip away at Republican dominance from lower-level offices on up. It's been aided by the National Democratic Redistricting Committee, which is chaired by former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder.

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Democratic Party leaders pointed to Tuesday's results as the fruits of their revamped strategy.

Democratic National Committee Chairman Tom Perez told reporters on a conference call that 33 groups worked in Virginia to help elect Democrats, doubling the number of voter contacts from four years ago. Various Democratic entities poured millions of dollars into races there and elsewhere.

Democrat Ralph Northam won the Virginia governor's race, and Democrats whittled the Republicans' 66-34 House majority down to a near even split with several races still too close to call. Most of the Democrats' gains came in districts that had voted for Democrat Hillary Clinton over Trump in last year's elections.

The Democratic legislative candidates were aided by a large voter turnout in the governor's race. Anti-Trump sentiment motivated lot of voters who previously didn't take an interest in governor's races, Republican consultant Chris Jankowski, an architect of the GOP's 2010 REDMAP redistricting project, told attendees Wednesday at a Harvard University redistricting conference.

Democrats would have won even more Virginia House seats had the districts not been gerrymandered so heavily in favor of Republicans, said Kelly Ward, executive director of the National Democratic Redistricting Committee.

"It shouldn't take tsunami-level elections in order to maybe tie — maybe — in the House of Delegates," Ward said at the Harvard conference.

Nonetheless, Democrats say the large swing in Virginia shows it's possible for them to flip other chambers next year, including the Colorado Senate, Michigan House and both chambers of the Minnesota Legislature.

Democrat Phil Murphy's victory in Tuesday's race for New Jersey governor, replacing termed-out Republican Gov. Chris Christie, means Democrats will hold the trifecta of the chief executive office and both legislative chambers, where they picked up even more seats Tuesday.

Democrats also regained control of both houses of the Washington state Legislature, when Manka Dhingra won a special election that flipped the balance of power in the state Senate. More than \$8.7 million was spent on the race, including about \$5.9 million by third-party groups. That made it the most expensive legislative contest in the state's history.

In special elections in Georgia, Democrats claimed three seats previously held by Republicans — all three in suburban areas.

GOP strategist Chip Lake, a Georgia-based political consultant, said Republicans "are hemorrhaging college-educated voters in the suburbs" but added that Democrats also face hurdles revealed by their 2016 losses and should be careful about celebrating too much.

For Republicans to bounce back nationally, it will be crucial for the GOP-led Congress to pass a tax overhaul and address problems surrounding health care, he said.

"Absent that, what we saw yesterday could be a precursor of what happens in 2018," Lake said.

Follow David A. Lieb at: <http://twitter.com/DavidALieb> and Christiana A. Cassidy at http://twitter.com/AP_Christina

Trump optimistic on trade, North Korea after China talks

By JILL COLVIN and JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — President Donald Trump on Thursday criticized the "very one-sided and unfair" trade relationship between the U.S. and China, but stopped short of castigating Chinese President Xi Jinping by saying he doesn't blame the country for having taken advantage of the U.S.

Speaking after the announcement of new business deals between U.S. and Chinese companies, Trump said China "must immediately address the unfair trade practices that drive" what he said is "shockingly" large trade deficit, along with barriers to market access, forced technology transfers and intellectual property theft.

"But I don't blame China," he said. "After all, who can blame a country for being able to take advantage of another country for the benefit of its citizens?"

To applause, Trump said: "I give China great credit."

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Trump's comments came during his second day in China and after lengthy meetings with Xi. The day included announcements that the U.S. and China had signed agreements valued at more than \$250 billion for products including U.S.-made jet engines, auto parts, liquefied natural gas and beef.

Such contract signings are a fixture of foreign leader visits to Beijing and are intended to defuse foreign complaints about China's trade policies.

Many of the contracts signed Thursday appeared to represent purchases that Chinese mobile phone makers, airlines and other customers would have made anyway, but were saved to be announced during Trump's visit. It was unclear if the pledges extend beyond a U.S.-China trade agreement announced in May that featured LNG and beef exports to China.

The deals are "a way of distracting from the fact that there's been no progress in China on structural reform, market access or the big issues that the president has tried to make progress on with regard to China," said Elizabeth Economy, the Asia studies director at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Trump had made narrowing the multibillion-dollar U.S. trade deficit with China a priority for his administration. During the presidential campaign, he accused China of "raping our country" on trade and pledged to minimize the countries' trade imbalance.

China's trade surplus with the United States in October widened by 12.2 percent from a year earlier, to \$26.6 billion, according to Chinese customs data released Wednesday. The total surplus with the United States for the first 10 months of the year rose to \$223 billion.

For his part, Xi promised a more open business environment for foreign companies in China and said his country was committed to further opening its economy to foreign investment.

"China will not close its doors" and will open them "even wider," he said, pledging that foreign companies in China, including American ones, would find the market "more open, more transparent and more orderly."

The United States and other trading partners have been pressing Beijing to give their companies more access to its state-dominated economy. But it remains unclear how far China will go to fulfill its pledges. Previous U.S. administrations have hailed market-opening promises only to be left disappointed.

Xi also described U.S.-China relations as standing at a "new historic starting point," and declared: "The Pacific Ocean is big enough to accommodate both China and the United States."

Before arriving in China, Trump had delivered a stern message to Beijing, using an address to the National Assembly in South Korea to call on China, North Korea's biggest trade partner, to do more to confront and isolate the antagonistic nation. That included calling on China to fully implement U.N. Security Council resolutions aimed at depriving the North's government of revenue for its nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

"You cannot support, you cannot supply, you cannot accept," he said.

Trump on Thursday appeared far more conciliatory, thanking China for its efforts and saying he'd been encouraged by his conversations.

"China can fix this problem easily. And quickly. And I am calling on China and your great president to hopefully work on it very hard," Trump said. "If he works on it hard it will happen. There's no doubt about it."

It was an optimistic tone that Trump stuck throughout the day. Earlier, he'd said he looked "forward to many years of success and friendship working together to solve not only our problems, but world problems, and problems of great danger and security."

"I believe we can solve almost all of them, and probably all of them," he said.

China is increasingly disenchanted with North Korea's nuclear weapons development, but remains wary of using its full economic leverage over its traditional ally. It fears triggering a collapse of the North's totalitarian regime that could cause an influx of refugees into northeastern China and culminate in a U.S.-allied unified Korea on its border.

Before the meetings, China rolled out the red carpet for Trump, treating him to an elaborate welcome ceremony on the plaza outside the Great Hall of the People before the leaders turned to their private talks.

Trump looked on approvingly as a Chinese honor guard played the national anthems of both countries, cannons boomed and soldiers marched. He clapped and smiled as children waving U.S. and Chinese flags and flowers screamed and jumped wildly.

The day before, Trump and first lady Melania Trump spent the first hours of their visit on a private tour

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of the Forbidden City, Beijing's ancient imperial palace. It's usually teeming with tourists but was closed to the public for the presidential visit.

Trump said Thursday the welcome "was truly memorable and impressive and something I will never forget."

Associated Press writers Christopher Bodeen in Beijing and Darlene Superville and Ken Thomas in Washington contributed to this report.

Follow Colvin on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/@colvinj> and Lemire at <http://twitter.com/@JonLemire>

Christopher Plummer to replace Kevin Spacey in Getty film

By LINDSEY BAHR and JAKE COYLE, AP Film Writers

LOS ANGELES (AP) — In a wholly unprecedented move, Kevin Spacey is being cut from Ridley Scott's finished film "All the Money in the World" and replaced by Christopher Plummer just over one month before it's supposed to hit theaters.

People close to the production who were not authorized to speak publicly said Wednesday that Plummer is commencing reshoots immediately in the role of J. Paul Getty. All of Spacey's scenes will be reshot, the people told The Associated Press. Co-stars Mark Wahlberg and Michelle Williams are expected to participate.

Scott, who is known to be an efficient director, is intending to keep the film's Dec. 22 release date.

The director's publicist Simon Halls confirmed the switch late Wednesday.

The film was originally set to have its world premiere at the AFI Fest in Los Angeles on Nov. 16 but was pulled earlier this week amid the sexual harassment reports surrounding Spacey, who has also been fired from "House of Cards" and dropped by his talent agency and publicist.

"All the Money in the World" was primed for a plush awards season release from distributor Sony Pictures Entertainment and its advertising campaign, which prominently features Spacey, has been public for about a month already. But its plans have been in question since Spacey's reputation has diminished over the past week with harassment allegations growing daily.

The film chronicles the events surrounding the kidnapping of 16-year-old John Paul Getty III and his mother's attempt to convince J. Paul Getty, his billionaire grandfather, to pay the ransom.

The 87-year-old Plummer was reportedly Scott's first choice for the role of J. Paul Getty, but the director was pressured into casting a bigger name. Plummer is probably best known for "The Sound of Music." He won his first Oscar in 2012 for the film "Beginners."

One of the people close to the production said that Scott's plan caught Sony by surprise, but the studio is supporting the switch.

A guide to the 2017-18 college hoops season

By JOHN MARSHALL, AP Basketball Writer

North Carolina closed out the 2016-17 season by holding off upstart Gonzaga for its sixth national championship.

April seems so long ago now.

College basketball has undergone a major shift since the Tar Heels cut down the nets, most notably a federal probe into shady recruiting practices that ensnared several prominent programs.

The changes have come on the court, too, with teams losing key players, star freshmen filling their places, new coaches taking over prominent programs.

To get you ready for the season, which starts on Friday, here's a rundown of the top teams, players and coaches for 2017-18:

TOP TEAMS

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Duke. No. 1 with another one-and-done in Marvin Bagley III joining Grayson Allen.
Michigan State. Could be Tom Izzo's most talented team with Miles Bridges back. He's gone deep into March with less.

Arizona. Allonzo Trier and freshman big man Deandre Ayton headline what could be Sean Miller's best shot at making the Final Four.

Kansas. Rebuild is not in the vocabulary in Lawrence. More like reload.

Kentucky. Coach Cal has another batch of budding pros, even if they will be the youngest he's had in Lexington.

TOP PLAYERS

Bridges, Michigan State. Was one of college basketball's best last season. Should be better after skipping out on a shot at the NBA.

Bonzie Colson, Notre Dame. Double-double machine will carry the Irish far.

Trier, Arizona. One of the nation's best scorers and clutch players.

Jalen Brunson, Villanova. Scores, shoots, dishes, leads. Can't ask for much more.

Joel Berry II, North Carolina. Last season's Most Outstanding Player of the Final Four will miss the start of the season after punching a wall and breaking his hand, but watch out when he gets back.

KEY NONCONFERENCE GAMES

No. 1 Duke vs. No. 2 Michigan State, Nov. 14 in Chicago. A 1-2 matchup this early is a great way to get the season rolling.

No. 4 Kansas vs. No. 5 Kentucky, Nov. 14 in Chicago. Talk about a marquee doubleheader nightcap in the Windy City.

No. 1 Duke at Indiana, Nov. 29. Blueblood battle in Bloomington.

No. 14 Notre Dame at No. 2 Michigan State, Nov. 30. Bonzie Colson vs. Miles Bridges? We'll take that every day.

No. 16 Louisville at No. 5 Kentucky, Dec. 29. Always epic.

THE FRESHMEN

Michael Porter Jr., Missouri. He's 6-foot-10, scores, shoots, gets to the rim, has NBA scouts following his every move.

Bagley, Duke. Graduated early to start college. The Blue Devils are thankful he did.

Ayton, Arizona. He's 7-1, 260 pounds and an NBA-ready game that should translate well in the desert.

Mohamed Bamba, Texas. Opposing shooters will need to be wary when the Longhorns' big man is around the basket.

Hamidou Diallo, Kentucky. Enrolled last January in hopes of joining the Wildcats for the second half of the season. The extra practice time should help him have a huge impact on a team full of potential impact players.

NEW COACHES

Archie Miller, Indiana. Looks like the perfect fit to turn the Hoosiers around.

David Padgett, Louisville. Inherits turmoil with the firing of Rick Pitino, but has a talented roster to work with.

Cuonzo Martin, Missouri. Left Cal for Columbia. The addition of Porter will ease his transition.

Chris Holtman, Ohio State. Did well at Butler. Takes over the reins in Columbus after Thad Matta retired.

Brian Dutcher, San Diego State. Taking over for a legend is never easy, but Dutch was Steve Fisher's right-hand man for years.

More AP college basketball: <http://collegebasketball.ap.org> and http://www.twitter.com/AP_Top25

US at climate talks may be like unhappy dinner guest

By **SETH BORENSTEIN, AP Science Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — How's this for awkward? The United States has a delegation at international climate talks in Bonn that will be telling other nations what they should do on a treaty that the president wants no part of.

President Donald Trump has promised to withdraw the U.S. from the 2015 Paris climate pact where nations set their own goals to reduce the emissions of heat-trapping gases, but because of legal technicalities America can't get out until November of 2020.

"It's like having a guest at a dinner party who complains about the food but stays anyway," said Nigel Purvis, who worked climate issues in the State Department for Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush — and dealt with a similar situation.

In 2001 Purvis was a climate negotiator for the U.S. State Department when the new president, George W. Bush, had pulled out of a landmark global warming agreement the previous administration had championed.

The U.S. position is not just awkward, it's potentially bad for the environment, scientists say.

Most of the Bonn meeting will be coming up with rules on how countries report emissions of heat-trapping gases and how transparent they are. The United States used to be the leading force in pushing for tougher rules and more openness, Purvis and other experts said. The rules probably won't be as strong now, Purvis said.

"If it's left to Chinese leadership, which is what's left, you will have less transparency," said Massachusetts Institute of Technology management professor Henry Jacoby, who co-founded the Joint Program on the Science and Policy of Global Change.

The United States government is becoming increasingly isolated on climate change. On Tuesday, the Syrian government, mired in war and the last United Nations country not to sign the Paris accord, announced it would sign the pact. That means the United States will be alone when it pulls out.

State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert responded to the Syrian decision by attacking its government. "If the government of Syria cared so much about what was put in the air, then it wouldn't be gassing its own people," she said.

In a not-so subtle jab at Trump, French President Emmanuel Macron plans a separate "One Planet Summit" in Paris to push his "Make Our Planet Great Again" agenda on Dec. 12, the anniversary date of the climate accord. He invited more than 100 world leaders to his event, but not Trump. Instead, he invited lower level U.S. diplomats.

"The rest of the world needs to get on and negotiate ... and treat the U.S. as more of an observer in the process and the U.S. should act that way," said Greenpeace International Director Jennifer Morgan, who has been at these negotiations for more than 20 years.

That's not what the U.S. plans.

As meetings started on Monday, U.S. negotiator Trigg Talley said, "The president has made clear that we will engage countries on energy and climate change related issues and we look forward to working with colleagues and partners to advance the work here over these two weeks and beyond."

The administration is hosting a panel on "the clean and efficient use of fossil fuels and nuclear power," White House Deputy Press Secretary Raj Shah said Tuesday. "It is undeniable that fossil fuels will be used for the foreseeable future, and it is in everyone's interest that they be efficient and clean."

Of the major fossil fuels, coal is by far the biggest climate change culprit. In 2014, coal accounted for 46 percent of the globe's carbon dioxide emissions, but was only 29 percent of its energy supply, according to the International Energy Agency.

Three U.S. governors, some mayors, corporate leaders and students will also be attending the Bonn talks.

"We have one major major player who is on the sidelines," California Gov. Jerry Brown told The Associated Press. "The rest of us will do everything we can to keep advancing efforts and keep doing what is needed to reduce carbon emissions. There is no time to wait."

Nashville, Tennessee, Mayor Megan Barry said, "the power lies within cities ... we know that we can make a significant difference with or without the federal government."

If the U.S. remains out of the Paris accord and tries to dismantle President Obama's initiatives to curb emissions, the Earth will warm by an additional one or two tenths of a degree, said Glen Peters, a Norwegian scientist who is part of the Global Carbon Project.

Scientists say that even a few tenths of a degree of warming can have dramatic impacts on ecosystems and even day-to-day life for people.

Purivs said "countries will be frustrated and resentful" toward the Trump administration at the negotiations. But he added: "Many nations will understand the rules of the Paris agreement are going to be more important and more durable than any U.S. administration and there will be a strong desire to get it right."

Frank Jordans in Berlin, Maria Murru in Rome and Matt Lee and Zeke Miller in Washington contributed to this story.

Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @borenbears . His work can be found here .

Authorities review video of small-town Texas church attack

By JIM VERTUNO and EMILY SCHMALL, Associated Press

SUTHERLAND SPRINGS, Texas (AP) — Authorities have reviewed video from inside the small-town Texas church where a gunman killed more than two dozen people, including footage that shows the assailant shooting victims in the head during Sunday services, a U.S. official said Wednesday.

The official's account of the video is consistent with statements made by survivors of the attack. The official was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity.

The same U.S. official confirmed that the attacker's cellphone was an iPhone and that the FBI had not yet asked Apple for help obtaining data from the device.

The church regularly recorded its services, and the footage investigators have seen shows several minutes of the attack because there was "no one to turn it off," according to a law enforcement official who has seen the video. The official also spoke on condition of anonymity because that person was not authorized to speak publicly about an ongoing investigation.

The law enforcement official was among those who went inside the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs after the attack and said several of the pews were overturned, although it was unclear if that was from the attack or from rescue efforts. Bullets had splintered the walls and pews, leaving shards of wood all over the floors.

Vice President Mike Pence arrived in Texas on Wednesday, visiting wounded victims at a San Antonio hospital and later meeting families of the dead in Floresville, not far from Sutherland Springs.

Pence went from table to table at a high school library attempting to console devastated family members. "The whole country is praying over you," he told one man who lost his sister-in-law.

He stopped to talk with John Holcombe, whose family was decimated by the shooting. Holcombe, who suffered shrapnel wounds, lost his wife Crystal — who was pregnant with their first child — three of her children, his parents, a brother and a toddler niece.

Pence hugged 7-year-old Evelyn Holcombe, who managed to survive by running out of the church during the attack.

Earlier Wednesday, Pence said that President Donald Trump had ordered federal agencies to provide extensive help to the investigation including 100 on-site FBI agents.

The agent in charge of the FBI's San Antonio division said Tuesday agents had not been able to retrieve data from Devin Patrick Kelley's cellphone.

In a statement Wednesday evening, Apple said it's offered the FBI technical advice after learning the bureau was trying to access the phone. The company said the FBI had not requested its assistance.

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Depending on the model of iPhone and what security features it had, FBI agents might have had a short window to use alternative methods to access its data.

For instance, if the iPhone used Apple's Touch ID fingerprint sensing system, agents could have tried placing the dead gunman's finger on the phone to unlock it. But that would only have worked within 48 hours of the last time the phone was locked.

Meanwhile, more details emerged about the gunman's past. School records showed that Kelley was a disciplinary problem in high school.

In fall 2006, Kelley's sophomore year, he was suspended and sent to an alternative school for two months after an unspecified drug-related incident.

He was suspended twice as a junior and three times as a senior for reasons including "insubordination," "profane language/gestures" and "dishonest/false records."

With each passing year at New Braunfels High School, his grades slipped as well, according to the records.

A B-student overall as a freshman, he failed several classes by his senior year and ended up ranked 260 out of 393 students in his graduating class in 2009. He finished with a 2.3 grade-point average.

The records also listed attention deficit hyperactivity disorder as one of his medical conditions.

A former friend said Kelley asked her for sexual favors and prevented his first wife from communicating with her friends. Kelsey Huckaby told Austin television station KTBC that Kelley was "kind of controlling of his girlfriends" in high school.

Huckaby said she lost contact with Kelley until he responded to a Facebook post she made in April asking for a place to stay for her and her boyfriend. She said Kelley offered to let them stay in a trailer on his property if she performed weekly "sexual favors" for him.

Also Wednesday, the Texas Department of Public Safety released an official list of those killed in the rampage. The eight male victims and 17 female victims ranged in age from 1 to 77. Eight of the fatalities were children or teenagers. The oldest of them was 16.

Authorities said the 26 dead also included the unborn baby of a woman who was killed.

All the victims died at the scene, except for one child who died at a San Antonio-area hospital.

Eleven people remained hospitalized with wounds they suffered in the attack.

Associated Press writers Michael Balsamo in Los Angeles and Matt O'Brien in Providence, Rhode Island, contributed to this report.

US tightens travel rules to Cuba, blacklists many businesses

By JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans seeking to visit Cuba must navigate a complicated maze of travel, commerce and financial restrictions unveiled Wednesday by the Trump administration, part of a new policy to further isolate the island's communist government.

Now off-limits to U.S. citizens are dozens of Cuban hotels, shops, tour companies and other businesses included on a lengthy American blacklist of entities that have links to Cuba's military, intelligence or security services. And most Americans will once again be required to travel as part of heavily regulated, organized tour groups run by U.S. companies, rather than voyaging to Cuba on their own.

The stricter rules mark a return to the tougher U.S. stance toward Cuba that existed before former President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro restored diplomatic relations in 2015. They come as President Donald Trump tries to show he's taking action to prevent U.S. dollars from helping prop up the Cuban government.

"These measures confirm there is a serious reversal in bilateral relations which has occurred as a result of the decisions taken by the government of President Donald Trump," said Josefina Vidal, the top Cuban diplomat for North America.

Still, the policy is only a partial rollback of Obama's changes. Cruise ship visits and direct commercial flights between the countries will still be permitted. Embassies in Washington and Havana stay open.

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The rules are designed to steer U.S. economic activity away from Cuba's military, intelligence and security services, which dominate much of the economy through state-controlled corporations. The goal is to encourage financial support for Cuba's growing private sector, said senior Trump administration officials, who briefed reporters on a conference call on condition they not be quoted by name.

To that end, the Treasury Department said it is expanding and simplifying a license that allows some U.S. exports to Cuba despite the embargo. They include tools and equipment to build or renovate privately owned buildings.

"We have strengthened our Cuba policies to channel economic activity away from the Cuban military and to encourage the government to move toward greater political and economic freedom for the Cuban people," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said.

Trump announced his new policy in June during a speech in Miami's Little Havana neighborhood, the cradle of Cuban-American resistance to Castro's government. The administration took several months to finalize the details of the new rules, which will take effect Thursday.

The new policy maintains several categories of travel to Cuba that are permitted despite the embargo, which carries on decades after the Cold War's end. Americans can still travel on educational and "people to people" trips as well as visits designed to support the Cuban people by patronizing privately owned small businesses that have popped up across the island in recent years.

But those traveling to support Cuba's people must have a daylong schedule of activities designed to expose them to Cubans and steer dollars toward citizens, such as renting rooms in private homes. Those on organized, "people to people" or educational visits must be accompanied by a representative of the U.S.-based group organizing the trip.

Vidal, the Cuban diplomat who was the public face of Cuba's opening with the United States during the Obama administration, said the policy would harm Cuba's economy, American citizens and U.S. businesses. The rules were also quickly denounced by travel groups and proponents of closer U.S. ties to the island.

"Cuba is still open for business," said Charel van Dam of the Cuba Travel Network. "It is still possible for people to travel, but I think these announcements will serve mainly as something to scare off people who want to visit."

Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., a vocal advocate of improved U.S.-Cuban relations, noted the announcement came as Trump was in China pushing more U.S. business engagement with another communist-run country. "The hypocrisy of the White House ideologues is glaring," Leahy said.

The rules come amid deep strains in the U.S.-Cuba relationship stemming from invisible, unexplained attacks that have harmed more than two dozen U.S. government personnel in Havana since 2016. The attacks led the Trump administration to order most of its diplomats to leave Cuba in September and issue a sweeping travel warning urging Americans to stay away.

Officials insisted that the new, tougher rules had no connection to the attacks. The U.S. first complained to Cuba's government about the attacks in February, four months before Trump announced his broader policy intentions.

Some exceptions will accommodate Americans who already plan to visit Cuba. Those who booked "people to people" trips before Trump's June announcement will be exempt, along with Americans who organized education trips before the rules start on Thursday. Business deals already reached with entities on the prohibited list will be allowed to proceed.

It's unclear how aggressively the U.S. will police the new rules. Officials said they would use information obtained from several U.S. agencies to catch violators, who could be subject to penalties and criminal prosecution.

The blacklist bars business with the large military-run corporations that dominate the Cuban economy. These include GAESA and CIMEX, holding companies that control most retail business on the island; Gaviota, the largest tourism company; and Habaguanex, which runs Old Havana.

It also targets a new cargo port and special trade zone outside the city of Mariel that has been the focus of Cuba's efforts to draw foreign investment in manufacturing and distribution.

Blacklisted hotels include the Manzana Kempinski, which opened with great fanfare this year as Cuba's

first to meet the international five-star standard.

The overall impact on American business with Cuba will likely be limited. Trade is sparse. Many American travelers already stay at hotels not on the no-go list, and the company that imports most American food products to Cuba is similarly unaffected.

Bringing home limited quantities of rum and Cuban cigars is still allowed, officials said.

Associated Press writer Michael Weissenstein in Havana contributed to this report.

Reach Josh Lederman on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/joshledermanAP>

AP source: Jones threatens Goodell deal after Elliott ban

By BARRY WILNER, AP Pro Football Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones has threatened to sue the NFL over a proposed contract extension for Commissioner Roger Goodell, a dispute apparently sparked by star running back Ezekiel Elliott's six-game suspension over alleged domestic violence, a person with knowledge of the situation told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

Jones told the six owners on the compensation committee he had hired high-profile attorney David Boies and was prepared to sue if the group voted to extend Goodell's deal, the person told the AP. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because no one has been authorized to reveal details.

Jones also has expressed disapproval with the structure and compensation in the contract extension, another person familiar with the proposed lawsuit says. That person also spoke on condition of anonymity for the same reason.

The actions of Jones were first reported by The New York Times.

All 32 owners voted in May to extend Goodell's contract and authorized the compensation committee to work out the details. Goodell suspended Elliott in August after a yearlong NFL investigation. Prosecutors in Ohio declined to pursue the domestic violence case.

Jones, who is not on the compensation committee but is one of the most powerful owners in the league, has expressed frustration over the NFL's pursuit of criminal matters with its own investigators.

Asked on his radio show last week if he wanted Goodell to remain commissioner, Jones avoided a direct answer and said Elliott was a "victim of an overcorrection" because of the NFL's mishandling of former Baltimore running back Ray Rice's domestic case involving his then-fiancee.

Goodell's initial suspension of two games was sharply criticized because of a video showing Rice dragging an unconscious Janay Palmer from an elevator. Another video later surfaced of Rice punching Palmer in the face, and he was suspended indefinitely. The suspension was lifted by an arbitrator, but Rice never signed with another team.

"I can show you many positive things that this commissioner, Roger, has done, is doing and I can show you some of the things that he wants to take back," Jones said on his radio show Oct. 31.

"This is a very example of it. I'm sure he'd like to take back his initial Ray Rice stance and a few others. He's in the process of having tried to correct that and in doing so, Zeke is a victim of an overcorrection."

The NFL hired former New York prosecutor Lisa Friel to help shape the stronger policy on domestic violence that came out of the Rice incident. The updated policy included the league's ability to investigate cases on its own regardless of law enforcement's involvement.

Prosecutors in Elliott's case cited conflicting evidence when deciding not to pursue the case. The NFL's probe continued for a year after that decision. Jones said his running back has been treated unfairly, and Elliott has denied the allegations of his ex-girlfriend under oath.

"I am very troubled by the swings that we've had," Jones said on his radio program. "His swing of judgment has been unbelievable from the Ray Rice thing all the way up to one or two games, all the way to the six-game suspension when you've truly got a debate. In our legal system it has to be stronger than that for somebody who has done it."

Goodell's decision to suspend Elliott prompted weeks of twists and turns in courtrooms from Texas to Louisiana to New York. A three-judge panel in New York has a hearing Thursday to consider another injunction to stop the suspension. Elliott, on his third legal reprieve, has played all eight games for the Cowboys.

"We make the commissioner in the NFL the most powerful person that I know of as to the organization and it's constituency, so it's a big deal not only when we're hiring, but when we extend him," Jones said after a game in Washington two weekends ago. "So there's a lot of consideration to it, and it shouldn't surprise anybody."

AP Pro Football Writer Schuyler Dixon in Frisco, Texas, contributed to this report.

More AP NFL: <http://www.pro32.ap.org> and http://www.twitter.com/AP_NFL

Boy with rare disease gets brand new skin with gene therapy

By **MARIA CHENG, AP Medical Writer**

LONDON (AP) — Doctors treating a critically ill boy with a devastating skin disease used experimental gene therapy to create an entirely new skin for most of his body in a desperate attempt to save his life.

Two years later, the doctors report the boy is doing so well that he doesn't need any medication, is back in school and even playing soccer.

"We were forced to do something dramatic because this kid was dying," said Dr. Michele De Luca of the University of Modena in Italy, who got a call for help from the German doctors treating the boy.

The boy, then 7, was hospitalized in June 2015 with blisters on his limbs, back and elsewhere. He quickly lost about 60 percent of the outer layer of his skin and was put into an induced coma to spare him further suffering. Doctors at Children's Hospital at Ruhr University in Bochum, Germany, tried skin grafts from his father and donor skin, but all failed.

"He was in severe pain and asking a lot of questions," the boy's father said in a video provided by the hospital "Why do I suffer from this disease? Why do I have to live this life? All children can run around and play, why am I not allowed to play soccer? I couldn't answer these questions."

The boy's parents asked about experimental treatments, and De Luca and his colleagues were contacted. They had previously used gene therapy to produce a small piece of skin in a similar case. They told the family that the boy's precarious state meant that he might not survive the complicated surgeries needed to save him.

"It was a tough decision for us, but we wanted to try for (our son)," the boy's father said. The family asked that their names not be used to protect the boy's privacy.

The boy had a rare, incurable skin disease called junctional epidermolysis bullosa, caused by genetic mutations. People with the disease lack critical proteins that attach the outer layer of the skin to the inner layer, resulting in fragile skin with almost constant blisters and open sores.

To fix that, the doctors took a small piece of the boy's skin from an area that was OK. In the lab, they added a normal version of his bad gene to his skin cells. They grew sheets of the boy's skin, in much the same way skin grafts are grown for burn victims.

In total, they grew close to a square meter of skin (9 square feet.) The lab-grown skin was then transplanted onto the boy in three operations, ultimately covering 80 percent of his body. Ten days later, the new skin was already beginning to grow, De Luca said. After eight months, the doctors said that nearly all of the boy's skin had been generated by the modified stem cells.

So far, no problems have been detected. De Luca said the boy will be monitored closely for skin cancer and other potential issues.

"This kid is back to his normal life again," one of the German doctors, Dr. Tobias Rothoelt, said Wednesday. "That's what we dreamed of doing and it was possible."

Details of the case were published Wednesday in the journal *Nature*.

"This takes us a huge step forward," said Dr. Peter Marinkovich of Stanford University School of Medicine,

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who has done related work. He said it was impressive that De Luca and colleagues were able to make such large amounts of viable skin after correcting the genetic defect.

But he noted the approach might not help in more serious cases, which often have tricky complications, like skin blistering in the lungs. Marinkovich said many patients don't survive beyond age 2 and that using the treatment for babies could be even riskier.

Dr. Holm Schneider warned that some severely ill patients might have an extreme reaction to skin transplants with an added gene.

"The immune system might recognize this new gene as something foreign to be attacked and destroyed," said Schneider, of the University Hospital Erlangen in Germany. Still, he said the approach was worth trying in dying patients.

The boy and his family later visited De Luca and the other Italian doctors involved in his treatment.

"The parents are very grateful and say their life has completely changed," De Luca said, recalling how the boy spontaneously began taking off his clothes. "The boy was so happy with his new skin that he wanted to show off."

This Associated Press series was produced in partnership with the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Trump isolationism allows China to fill Southeast Asia void

By FOSTER KLUG, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — When Chinese leader Xi Jinping said last month that "no country can afford to retreat into self-isolation," he might as well have been talking about Donald Trump as the U.S. president makes his first official visit to Southeast Asia.

As Trump steers his administration's focus inward, China has stepped into what many see as a U.S.-sized void left behind in the region, boosting cooperation on infrastructure, security and trade, flooding eager countries with tourists and offering itself up as a model for developing nations with sometimes dodgy rights records.

China's rise in influence, and the perceived decline of the United States by some in the region, is all the more extraordinary because Beijing has often been seen as an arrogant bully in Southeast Asia, where it is mired in disputes over competing claims in the South China Sea.

Throughout the region, countries have looked at Xi and Trump and found more stability and reassurance from the Chinese president, said Richard Heydarian, a Manila-based Asia specialist and author.

"America is clearly on a downward trajectory in terms of its influence in the region," Heydarian said. "Donald Trump comes in and he sounds even more protectionist than China. So you have a strange, in fact surreal, situation whereby China is now presenting itself as the guardian of the global economic order."

A look at how new approaches from Trump and Xi have countries in Southeast Asia attempting a sometimes awkward balancing act:

TRUMP: "RADICALLY DIFFERENT"

Perhaps Trump was always destined to come up short in any Asia comparison with his predecessor, Barack Obama, whose childhood was partly spent in Indonesia and Hawaii.

Obama, who hosted Southeast Asian leaders last year in the United States, made much of a supposed "pivot" of U.S. attention back to Asia after what his administration portrayed as years of neglect.

The biggest signal that Trump appeared willing to cede ground to China came shortly after his January inauguration, when he withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal, saying he preferred one-on-one pacts that brought more benefits to the United States.

Obama had presented the deal among Pacific Rim countries, including Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei and Singapore, as symbolic of U.S. commitment to the region — and a crucial curb of Chinese power.

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As the remaining TPP countries discuss ways to do the deal without Washington, critics say Trump's protectionism will allow China to establish greater inroads.

During a recent trip to Washington, Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong nicely summarized the dilemma many in the region face because of a "radically different approach" under Trump.

The Chinese, Lee said, will pursue their objectives "assiduously, quietly farming away, and they will make friends and influence people whether or not you (the United States) are there, and if you are not there, then everybody else in the world will look around and say, 'I want to be friends with both the U.S. and the Chinese, and the Chinese are ready and I will start with them.'"

Trump is set to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Vietnam, where he may offer up a broader Asia policy, and meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in the Philippines.

A scheduled meeting with Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte could be a good signal on how Trump may be received in the region.

Duterte, who rejected Trump's White House invitation earlier this year, recently told reporters in the Philippines, a U.S. treaty ally, that he would welcome Trump as "the important leader on this side of the planet."

XI: STANDING "TALL AND FIRM"

During his speech last month at the twice-a-decade Communist Party congress, Xi, who has cemented his status as China's most powerful leader since Mao Zedong, declared that his nation "now stands tall and firm in the East."

China's judgment that the U.S. is in decline, which can be traced to the onset of the global financial crisis in 2009, "is even more certain today, as it sees U.S. global leadership eroding under President Donald Trump," Bonnie Glaser and Matthew Funaiolo, China experts at the Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank in Washington, wrote recently.

Part of the explanation for China's rise in Southeast Asia is Beijing's decision last year to "proactively moderate" its positions on the South China Sea, which it claims nearly in its entirety, said Shi Yinong, an international relations expert at Renmin University of China.

Beijing has also made progress because of what its critics call a willingness to support countries in the region accused of systematic human rights abuse or corruption.

China's huge shipments of aid and investment to Cambodia help to enable long-serving Prime Minister Hun Sen's authoritarianism and repression of the press and political opposition.

Thailand's military rulers, who ousted an elected government in a 2014 coup, have cultivated ties with Beijing as a counterbalance to a disapproving West.

Xi's biggest move in the region, the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, seeks to link China to Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Africa, Europe and beyond with a sprawling network of roads, railways, ports and other economic projects.

There have been worries about political and economic interference as Beijing pitches one part of that effort — a high-speed rail system — to Southeast Asian nations.

But negotiations in Indonesia and Thailand "notably suggest that rather than acting as a bully and imposing its conditions on host countries, China has actually shown a great degree of flexibility and compromise," according to research and interviews conducted by China experts Agatha Kratz and Dragan Pavlicevic.

As Chinese money, influence and political pressure flood the region, many countries struggle with how far into Beijing's sphere, and away from Washington, it's wise to go. Complicating the debate is strong anti-Chinese sentiment in certain areas.

As a result, some countries have reserved judgment on Trump, raising the stakes for his Southeast Asia trip.

"They hope the Trump administration will be committed more to their region, but they do not want to take a stand or harm their relations with China," Shi said.

Associated Press writers Stephen Wright in Jakarta, Indonesia and Gillian Wong in Beijing contributed to this report.

Barack Obama shows up in Chicago for jury duty; not chosen

By DON BABWIN, Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Former President Barack Obama, free of a job that forced him to move to Washington for eight years, showed up to a downtown Chicago courthouse for jury duty on Wednesday morning. Then he heard the words most prospective jurors pray for: You're dismissed.

The 44th president's motorcade — considerably shorter than the one when he lived in the White House — left his home in the Kenwood neighborhood on the city's South Side and arrived at the Richard J. Daley Center shortly after 10 a.m.

Obama — wearing a dark sport coat, dress shirt, but without a tie — waved to people who gathered outside.

Shortly before noon, Cook County Chief Judge Timothy Evans told reporters that the former president had not been selected for jury duty. But Obama was ready to serve if told to do so, Evans said.

In fact, Obama was also summoned in 2010 but that was during the period when he was the most powerful leader in the world, and he was able to postpone reporting, according to his spokeswoman, Katie Hill.

On Wednesday, Obama did get the prospective juror experience of sitting through a decades-old, 20-minute video in which Lester Holt— now the anchor of NBC Nightly News but back then on local news —explained the ins and outs of jury duty.

Obama's experience was a bit different than the others who watched the video. When he arrived there was a feeding frenzy as crowds of people inside the courthouse took photos and videos of the former president. As happens most days, would-be jurors brought books, but on Wednesday some people brought books Obama had authored in hopes he might sign them. He obliged them and posed for photographs, Evans said.

"Look at this. Did you know I was coming?" he asked one man who held a copy of Obama's "Dreams From My Father."

Thomas Pearson, who took the video and called the experience of shaking hands with Obama "the best thing I experienced in my entire life," said he wasn't going to show up for jury duty until his mother texted him that Obama would be there.

For his troubles, Obama is in line to receive \$17.20 — the daily rate of pay for performing this civic duty. Hill said that the former president would donate it to Cook County.

Obama is the highest-ranking former public official to be called to jury duty in Chicago. But he is not the first former president to be called to jury duty. In 2015, former President George W. Bush answered the jury duty call in Dallas. He was not selected to sit on a jury. And in 2003, former President Bill Clinton reported for jury duty in federal court in New York City. He also was not selected.

Nor is Obama the first famous Chicago resident to be called to jury duty. In 2004, Oprah Winfrey was on a Chicago jury that convicted a man of murder. A decade later, Lawrence Tureaud, better known as Mr. T, showed up to a suburban Chicago courthouse for jury duty, sporting his usual mohawk, but without the gold chains for which he is known. Mr. T was not chosen to sit on a jury.

Associated Press Writer Alina Hartounian contributed to this report.

Puerto Rico reports increase in overall deaths after storm

By DANICA COTO, Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — The pace of deaths quickened on Puerto Rico immediately after Hurricane Maria — well beyond the number of deaths officially attributed to the Category 4 storm.

Officials in the U.S. territory on Wednesday reported the island had an average of 82 deaths a day in

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the two weeks before Maria hit Sept. 20. The average increased to 117 deaths a day through the rest of the month, but the rate then fell below usual in October.

"The truth is, that's not normal," said Jose Lopez Rodriguez, a demographer with the island's Demographic Register. "We saw a difference, and it was a significant difference."

The territory's government has said 55 people died during the hurricane or later as a direct result of the storm, which knocked out power across the island.

The overall daily death figures hint that the storm could have caused other, harder-to-detect fatalities as well, though officials at the government's forensic institute said they did not have evidence to attribute them to Maria. They also rejected some media reports that suggested hundreds of people had died as a direct result of the hurricane.

"Those figures of 200, 400, 1,000 — no. Those deaths have not been reported to the institute," said Edwin Crespo, director of the island's Bureau of Forensic Science. "The institute has no reason to hide bodies."

Crespo said death certificates sent to his agency involving natural deaths didn't state whether a lack of power could have been a factor. "If the hospital or doctor didn't make the connection," he said, then paused before adding: "We weren't there."

Hector Pesquera, secretary of Puerto Rico's Department of Public Safety, acknowledged that some deaths classified as natural possibly might have been linked to the hurricane.

"Yes, they could have occurred," he said. "We cannot deny that categorically."

Wanda Llovet, director of the Demographic Register, said a total of 2,838 deaths were reported for September, a 20 percent increase from the 2,366 deaths reported for the same month in 2016 and up from 2,242 in September 2015.

But, she said, the number of deaths last month totaled 2,119, which was down about 10 percent from 2,353 in October 2016 and 2,379 in October 2015.

Pesquera said the government does not plan to investigate whether any deaths should have been classified as having a link to the hurricane.

"Why would there be an investigation?" he asked, saying a doctor would not risk losing his license by signing an erroneous death certificate.

Halladay was flying plane low, witnesses tell safety board

By **ANDREW DALTON** and **TERRY SPENCER**, Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Roy Halladay was flying his tiny sport plane low over the Gulf of Mexico shortly before it slammed into the water and killed the retired star pitcher, witnesses told federal investigators.

National Transportation Safety Board Investigator Noreen Price said Wednesday that Halladay's ICON A5 experienced a "high-energy impact" with the water. She said both flight data recorders were recovered and the plane did not have a voice recorder.

She said Halladay had been a licensed pilot since 2013 and logged about 700 hours of flight time before Tuesday's crash near Tampa. She said a preliminary report on the cause likely will be issued in seven to 10 days, but the full investigation could take up to two years.

Price said it was too early to say whether Halladay's crash was related to two earlier crashes this year of A5s, one of them that killed both the plane's chief designer and test pilot.

"Every accident is different. They are very complex. So as we move forward in the factual finding phase, if we see anything that we believe might connect it to previous accidents, we will certainly look at that. And if we see anything that we think is unsafe, we will make recommendation immediately," Price said during a news conference in New Port Richey.

The 40-year-old former Toronto Blue Jays and Philadelphia Phillies pitcher had been the proud owner for less than a month of his ICON A5, and was among the first to fly the model. In one of many enthusiastic tweets about the plane, Halladay said it felt "like flying a fighter jet."

Rolled out in 2014, the A5 is an amphibious aircraft meant to be treated like an ATV, a piece of weekend

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recreational gear with folding wings that can easily be towed on a trailer to a lake where it can take off from the water.

"The way that a lot of people described it is a Jet Ski with wings," Stephen Pope, editor-in-chief of Flying magazine, told The Associated Press. "It's really a play thing."

The man who led the plane's design, 55-year-old John Murray Karkow, died while flying an A5 over California's Lake Berryessa on May 8, a crash the NTSB attributed to pilot error.

In other tweets, Halladay said he had dreamed about owning one of the planes. He said in video on the company's website that he had to talk his wife into letting him get one. The son of a corporate pilot, Halladay had been forbidden to take up aviation until the two-time Cy Young Award winner retired from baseball after the 2013 season.

Pope said "the plane itself is great." But he had concerns about Halladay, a relatively inexperienced pilot, taking the craft out over water at low altitude. The plane, however, was marketed as a craft that could do that.

"They still think that that's the way the airplane should be flown, and there are people in aviation who completely disagree with that," Pope said. "They think you should not have a low-time pilot flying low over water. That's a recipe for disaster."

Low flying was part of the problem when Karkow, the designer, crashed, according to federal investigators. Karkow was killed along with passenger Cagri Sever, the company's newly hired director of engineering.

The NTSB blamed pilot error for the crash, saying Karkow mistakenly entered the wrong canyon while flying over a California lake and was unable to correct in time, striking the canyon wall.

Another A5 crashed in April, making a hard landing in the water off Key Largo, Florida, injuring the pilot and his passenger. The pilot told investigators the plane descended faster than he expected.

Halladay's ICON A5 went down around noon Tuesday off the coast of Florida, Pasco County Sheriff Chris Nocco said.

Dalton reported from Los Angeles and Spencer from Fort Lauderdale. Associated Press Writer Robert Jablon in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

More AP baseball: <https://apnews.com/tag/MLBbaseball>

Gleeful Democrats see political wave; GOP says not so fast

By STEVE PEOPLES, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Jubilant Democrats across America are declaring their big election victories in Virginia and New Jersey — their first of the young Trump era — mark the beginning of an anti-Trump surge that could re-shape the balance of power in Congress in 2018. Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer says he can "smell a wave coming."

Not so fast, Republicans said Wednesday. But they acknowledged that setbacks in Virginia, New Jersey and elsewhere on Tuesday created new urgency for the GOP to fulfill its list of campaign promises before voters head back to the polls next year. They, along with President Donald Trump, have failed to demolish "Obamacare" and now are straining to approve a far-reaching tax overhaul despite controlling the White House and both houses of Congress.

"If anything, this just puts more pressure on making sure we follow through," House Speaker Paul Ryan said at an event hosted by the Washington Examiner. He added, "I think it simply means we've got to deliver."

Whether the president's party delivers or not, there is clear cause for concern for a Republican Party that would lose its House majority if Democrats gained 24 seats next fall.

Tuesday's results left little doubt that Trump's dismal approval ratings can drag down Republican allies, particularly those serving in states he lost last November. And even if his ratings show signs of improvement, history suggests that the first midterm elections for any new president often lead to major gains

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for the opposing party.

An early string of Republican retirement announcements in competitive districts across Florida, New Jersey and Arizona adds to the GOP's challenge.

"We're taking our country back from Donald Trump one election at a time," Democratic National Committee Chairman Tom Perez said in a Wednesday conference call. "This is not just one night. It is a trend." Added Schumer, the New York Democrat: "Our Republican friends better look out."

Trump declared that the blame for Tuesday's losses was not his.

"Ed Gillespie worked hard but did not embrace me or what I stand for," the president tweeted as he toured Asia.

Actually, Gillespie, a mainstream Republican who lost the Virginia governor's race, had taken up Trump-like positions on such issues as Confederate monuments, NFL players' national anthem demonstrations and the dangers of Hispanic gangs. Trump endorsed him but was not invited to campaign in the state in recent weeks.

Republican National Committee Chair Ronna Romney McDaniel had a different view from Trump's.

"I absolutely think any candidate should be embracing the president," she said, "and I think Ed did."

As for Tuesday's longer-term significance for the Democrats, both parties' leaders know that much can change in the year before voters decide the 2018 midterm elections. And Republicans enjoy a redistricting advantage that limits the number of truly competitive House races, thanks in large part to GOP routs during Barack Obama's eight years in office.

Also, Democrats wrestle with their own party strife, pitting the Bernie Sanders' wing against the more mainstream.

The liberal group Democracy for America had abandoned Virginia's gubernatorial candidate, Ralph Northam, over immigration policy, then celebrated his win days later. "The plus of a tidal wave like this is it washes away the stains of all the campaigns," Charles Chamberlain, DFA's executive director, said in an interview.

Republican Party leaders also expect their political outlook to improve dramatically once the GOP-led Congress takes action on taxes or health care.

Based on Tuesday's results, they need to act quickly.

Governors' races in Virginia and New Jersey — where Phil Murphy will replace Republican Chris Christie — were perhaps the most consequential, but Democrats also celebrated victories in Maine, where voters slapped the state's Republican governor, a Trump ally, by backing a measure to expand Medicaid coverage under Obama's health care law. Manchester, New Hampshire, elected its first Democratic mayor in more than a decade. And Virginia voters sent a large and diverse group of new Democrats to the statehouse, including a transgender heavy metal singer, a member of Democratic Socialists of America and a former news anchor whose journalist girlfriend was fatally shot while on-air in 2015.

The results were particularly troubling for Republicans serving in suburban districts in states Trump lost last fall.

Schumer singled out by name one of the most vulnerable House Republicans in the nation: Rep. Barbara Comstock, whose northern Virginia district lies just west of Washington.

Roughly two of three voters in the counties that primarily make up Comstock's district backed the Democrat in this week's governor's race. Sensing opportunity, more than a half dozen Democrats have already lined up to challenge her.

A spokesman for Comstock said that Democrats have regularly underestimated the two-term congresswoman. "Barbara has always over-performed and that won't change in 2018," said political director Ken Nunnenkamp.

Trump's team concedes the Republican Party's suburban challenges but predicts voters will bounce back once Congress begins to enact his agenda. Embedded in that diagnosis, however, is a warning for Republican lawmakers that continued inaction could be disastrous.

Republican Sen. Thom Tillis of North Carolina acknowledged the urgency for his party to produce results.

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"We've got to be RINOs," he said, "Republicans in Need of Outcomes."

AP writers Zeke Miller, Erica Werner and Juliet Linderman in Washington and Nicholas Riccardi in Denver contributed to this report.

New looks come to Snapchat and Twitter in bid for more users

By RICHARD JACOBSEN and BARBARA ORTUTAY, Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Struggling social-media darlings Twitter and Snapchat are taking on new looks as the services seek wider audiences in the shadow of Facebook.

Twitter is rolling out a 280-character limit for nearly all its users, abandoning its iconic 140-character limit for tweets. And Snapchat, long popular with young people, will undergo a revamp in hopes of becoming easier to use for everyone else.

Both services announced the moves Tuesday as they look for ways to expand beyond their passionate but slow-growing fan bases.

Twitter has said that 9 percent of tweets written in English hit the 140-character limit. People ended up spending more time editing tweets or didn't send them out at all. By removing that hurdle, Twitter is hoping people will tweet more, drawing more users in.

German bureaucrats — notorious for their ability to create lengthy tongue twisters consisting of one single word — celebrated Wednesday.

Germany's justice ministry wrote that it can now tweet about legislation concerning the transfer of oversight responsibilities for beef labeling.

The law is known in German as the Rindfleischetikettierungsueberwachungsaufgabenuebertragungsgesetz.

Munich police, meanwhile, said that "at last" they won't need abbreviations to tweet about accidents involving forklift drivers, or Niederflurfoerderfahrzeugfuehrer.

In Rome, student Marina Verdicchio said the change "will give us the possibility to express ourselves in a totally different way and to avoid canceling important words when we use Twitter."

Others were not impressed, including at least one who quoted Shakespeare: "Brevity is the soul of wit." And, as Snap Inc. CEO Evan Spiegel noted, change does not come without risk.

"We don't yet know how the behavior of our community will change when they begin to use our updated application," he said. "We're willing to take that risk for what we believe are substantial long-term benefits to our business."

Snap, Snapchat's parent company, did not provide details on the upcoming changes.

During the third quarter, Twitter averaged 330 million monthly users, up just 1 percent from the previous quarter. Snapchat added 4.5 million daily users in the quarter to 178 million, which amounts to a 3 percent growth. The company does not report monthly user figures.

Those numbers pale next to social media behemoth Facebook, which reported that its monthly users rose 16 percent to 2.07 billion.

"The one thing that we have heard over the years is that Snapchat is difficult to understand or hard to use, and our team has been working on responding to this feedback," Spiegel said. "As a result, we are currently redesigning our application to make it easier to use."

His comments came on a conference call with industry analysts after the company posted the lackluster user-growth numbers and revenue that fell well short of Wall Street expectations. Snap's stock was bludgeoned Wednesday, falling almost 15 percent to close at \$12.91. The Venice, California, company went public in March at \$17 a share.

Snapchat needs to grow its user base beyond 13 to 34 year olds in the U.S., France the U.K. and Australia, Spiegel said. This, he said, includes Android users, people older than 34 and what he called "rest of world" markets.

Meanwhile, Snap said Wednesday that Chinese internet company Tencent has acquired a 10 percent

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stake in the company. Tencent runs the WeChat messaging app, as well as online payment platforms and games. Earlier this year, Tencent bought a 5 percent stake in Tesla Inc.

As for Twitter, the move to 280 characters was first started as a test in September.

"People in the experiment told us that a higher character limit made them feel more satisfied with how they expressed themselves on Twitter, their ability to find good content, and Twitter overall," said project manager Aliza Rosen in a blog post .

The expansion to 280-character tweets will be extended to all users except those tweeting in Chinese, Japanese and Korean, who will still have the original limit. That's because writing in those languages uses fewer characters.

The company has been slowly easing restrictions to let people cram more characters into a tweet. It stopped counting polls, photos, videos and other things toward the limit. Even before it did so, users found creative ways to get around the limit. This includes multi-part tweets and screenshots of blocks of text.

Twitter's character limit was created so that tweets could fit into a single text message, back when many people were using texts to receive tweets. But now, most people use Twitter through its mobile app; the 140-character limit is no longer a technical constraint but nostalgia.

Barbara Ortutay reported from New York. Associated Press writer Frank Jordans in Berlin and AP Videojournalist Paolo Santalucia in Rome contributed to this story.

Sheep can recognize Baaaa-rack Obama's face, new study shows

LONDON (AP) — A new study shows that sheep have the ability to recognize human faces from photographs on computer screens.

The Cambridge University study published Wednesday also shows that sheep can recognize the faces of their human handlers without any prior training.

It had been known that sheep can recognize familiar faces of other sheep and of humans.

The researchers say this study of the ability of sheep to recognize faces may be useful in research into Huntington's disease and other human brain disorders that affect mental processing.

Lead scientist Professor Jenny Morton says sheep have advanced face-recognition abilities comparable to those of humans and monkeys.

Among the faces they were trained to recognize were Barack Obama and Harry Potter actress Emma Watson.

The research was published in Royal Society: Open Science.

World shares mixed as investors watch Trump's China visit

By KELVIN CHAN, AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — World shares were mixed Thursday after Japan's stock benchmark failed to sustain a strong rally and as investors monitored U.S. President Donald Trump's visit to Beijing.

KEEPING SCORE: European shares were uneven in early trading. France's CAC 40 edged up 0.1 percent to 5,479.13 but Britain's FTSE 100 lost 0.3 percent to 7,511.21. Germany's DAX was nearly flat at 13,386.26. Wall Street was poised to open lower. Dow futures dipped 0.1 percent to 23,474.00 and broader S&P 500 futures slipped 0.1 percent to 2,588.20.

ASIA'S DAY: Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 index surged as much as 2 percent to its highest level in more than a quarter century before giving up gains and falling 0.2 percent to close at 22,868.71. South Korea's Kospi lost 0.1 percent to 2,560.57. Hong Kong's Hang Seng added 0.8 percent to 29,136.57, and the Shanghai Composite in mainland China rose 0.4 percent to 3,427.79. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 climbed 0.6 percent to 6,049.40. Taiwan's benchmark fell and Southeast Asian indexes were mostly lower.

TOKYO RALLY: The Nikkei's surge in initial trading to its highest level since January 1992 came after a poor monthly machinery orders report added to expectations that central bank policymakers will maintain

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stimulus measures to prop up the economy. Early weakness in the yen and upbeat corporate earnings also helped lift investor sentiment. But the gains couldn't be sustained and the Nikkei turned negative in the afternoon session.

TRUMP TRIP: On Trump's second day in Beijing, U.S. and Chinese business leaders signed additional business agreements worth more than \$250 billion in a ceremony attended by Trump and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping. The deals included sales of U.S.-made chipsets, jet engines and auto parts, though they did not excite market watchers because some were non-binding contracts and many would have been made anyway but were saved for the trip. After the signing, Trump criticized the "very one-sided and unfair" trade relationship between the two countries but added he doesn't blame Beijing for taking advantage of the U.S.

QUOTEWORTHY: Such deals are important for maintaining good U.S.-China trading relations battered by Trump's dislike of swollen U.S. trade deficits, said Prakash Sakpal, an economist at ING. "The improved economic relations with China will be key for the U.S. in keeping its own economic strength going and keeping the North Korea threat at bay, which is what matters for a sustained global growth and positive investor sentiments toward risky assets."

CURRENCIES: The dollar retreated to 113.49 yen from 113.88 yen in late trading Wednesday. The euro eased to \$1.1594 from \$1.1595.

ENERGY: Oil futures were mixed. Benchmark U.S. crude rose 6 cents to \$56.87 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract fell 39 cents to settle at \$56.81 a barrel Wednesday. Brent crude, used to price international oils, dipped 2 cents to \$63.47 a barrel in London.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Nov. 9, the 313th day of 2017. There are 52 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 9, 1967, a Saturn V rocket carrying an unmanned Apollo spacecraft blasted off from Cape Kennedy on a successful test flight.

On this date:

In 1620, the passengers and crew of the Mayflower sighted Cape Cod.

In 1872, fire destroyed nearly 800 buildings in Boston.

In 1918, it was announced that Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II would abdicate; he then fled to the Netherlands.

In 1935, United Mine Workers president John L. Lewis and other labor leaders formed the Committee for Industrial Organization (later renamed the Congress of Industrial Organizations).

In 1938, Nazis looted and burned synagogues as well as Jewish-owned stores and houses in Germany and Austria in a pogrom that became known as "Kristallnacht."

In 1952, Chaim Weizmann, the first president of Israel, died.

In 1965, the great Northeast blackout began as a series of power failures lasting up to 13 1/2 hours left 30 million people in seven states and part of Canada without electricity.

In 1970, former French President Charles de Gaulle died at age 79.

In 1976, the U.N. General Assembly approved resolutions condemning apartheid in South Africa, including one characterizing the white-ruled government as "illegitimate."

In 1986, Israel revealed it was holding Mordechai Vanunu, a former nuclear technician who'd vanished after providing information to a British newspaper about Israel's nuclear weapons program. (Vanunu was convicted of treason and served 18 years in prison.)

In 1989, communist East Germany threw open its borders, allowing citizens to travel freely to the West; joyous Germans danced atop the Berlin Wall.

In 1999, with fireworks, concerts and a huge party at the landmark Brandenburg Gate, Germany cel-

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celebrated the 10th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Ten years ago: Six U.S. troops died in an insurgent ambush in the high mountains of eastern Afghanistan, making 2007 the deadliest year for American forces in Afghanistan since 2001. President Gen. Pervez Musharraf (pur-VEHZ' moo-SHAH'-ruhv) of Pakistan placed opposition leader Benazir Bhutto (BEN'-uh-zeer BOO'-toh) under house arrest for a day, and rounded up thousands of her supporters to block a mass rally against his emergency rule.

Five years ago: Retired four-star Army Gen. David Petraeus abruptly resigned as CIA director after an affair with his biographer, Paula Broadwell, was revealed by an FBI investigation. Thousands of union bakers went on strike against Hostess Brands, Inc., to protest cuts to wages and benefits under a new contract offer. (Hostess responded by shutting down its operations and selling its assets to new owners who revived the Hostess brand.)

One year ago: Democrat Hillary Clinton conceded the presidential election to Republican Donald Trump, telling supporters in New York that her defeat was "painful, and it will be for a long time." But Clinton told her faithful to accept Trump and the election results, urging them to give him "an open mind and a chance to lead."

Today's Birthdays: Baseball Hall of Famer Whitey Herzog is 86. Baseball Hall of Famer Bob Gibson is 82. Actor Charlie Robinson is 72. Movie director Bille August is 69. Actor Robert David Hall is 69. Actor Lou Ferrigno is 66. Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, is 65. Gospel singer Donnie McClurkin is 58. Rock musician Dee Plakas (L7) is 57. Actress Ion Overman is 48. Rapper Pepa (Salt-N-Pepa) is 48. Rapper Scarface (Geto Boys) is 47. Blues singer Susan Tedeschi (teh-DEHS'-kee) is 47. Actor Jason Antoon is 46. Actor Eric Dane is 45. Singer Nick Lachey (98 Degrees) is 44. Country musician Barry Knox (Parmalee) is 40. Rhythm-and-blues singer Sisqo (Dru Hill) is 39. Country singer Corey Smith is 38. Country singer Chris Lane is 33. Actress Nikki Blonsky is 29. Actress-model Analeigh (AH'-nuh-lee) Tipton is 29.

Thought for Today: "I think charm is the ability to be truly interested in other people." — Richard Avedon, American fashion photographer (1923-2004).