

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 1 of 55

- [1- MJ's Help Wanted Ad](#)
- [2- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Coming up on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [3- School Board Agenda](#)
- [4- Weekly Vikings Roundup](#)
- [5- Prairie Doc: The Healing Power of Art](#)
- [6- Weather Pages](#)
- [9- Daily Devotional](#)
- [10- 2021 Community Events](#)
- [11- News from the Associated Press](#)

"Anything you do to stretch yourself out of your comfort zone will ultimately enable you to take larger risks and grow."

-Leslie Evans



## NOW HIRING

MJ's Sinclair of Groton is looking for someone to work weekends and nights. Stop out and see Jeff for an application.



**OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 2 of 55

## Upcoming Events

### Monday, May 10

4 p.m.: Track: 7th/8th at Aberdeen Roncalli (Swisher Field)

7 p.m.: School Board Meeting

### Thursday, May 13

11 a.m.: Track: Northeast Conference Meet in Groton

12:30 p.m.: Scholarship Meet and Greet, GHS Library

### Friday, May 14

3:30 p.m.: Track: 7th/8th @ Groton

### Sunday, May 16

2 p.m.: GHS Graduation, GHS Arena

Monday, May 17

10 a.m.: Track: 7th/8th Northeast Conference Track Meet at Swisher Field

### Thursday, May 20

Noon: Region 1A Track Meet at Sisseton



SCHOOL  
BOARD  
MEETING

On [GDILIVE.COM](http://GDILIVE.COM)

Monday, May 10, 2021, 7 p.m.

Groton Area High School Conference Room

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 3 of 55

## GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

### School Board Meeting

May 10, 2021 – 7:00 PM – Groton Area High School Conference Room

#### AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

#### POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

#### CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of minutes of April 12, 2021 and April 26, 2021 school board meetings as drafted or amended.
2. Approval of April District bills for payment.
3. Approval of April 2021 Financial Report, Custodial Accounts, and Investments.
4. Approval of April 2021 Transportation Report
5. Approval of April 2021 School Lunch Report

#### OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

#### NEW BUSINESS:

1. Preliminary FY2022 District Budget.
2. Approve signed teacher contracts.
3. Approve summer agreements.
  - a. Connect 4 ED Summer School: Julie Milbrandt, Alexa Schuring, Missi Smith
  - b. Special Education Extended School Year: Dustin Vogel, Anne Zoellner, Ann Gibbs
  - c. Summer Library: Joni Groeblichhoff
4. Cast ballot for West River At Large Representative to SDHSAA Board of Directors.
5. Cast ballot for Division III Representative to SDHSAA Board of Directors [Recommend Derek Barrios].
6. Cast ballot for Division IV Representative to SDHSAA Board of Directors [Recommend Jeff Kusters].
7. Cast ballot for SDHSAA Constitutional Amendment 1 [Recommend "YES"].
8. Approve new Agent of Record for EMC Property/Liability Insurance [Recommend CorInsurance].
9. Executive session pursuant SDCL 1-25-2(4) for negotiations and SDCL 1-25-2(2) for student issue.
10. Approve 2021-2022 GASA Negotiated Agreement.
11. Issue 2021-2022 Auxiliary Staff Work Agreements.
12. Act on open enrollment #22-01.
13. Act on open enrollment #22-02.
14. Act on open enrollment #22-03.

#### ADJOURN

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 4 of 55

Last week we covered the Minnesota Vikings' draft picks from days one and two, so this week we turn our attention to the third day. The Vikings added Fourth round (pick 119) – Kene Nwangwu, running back, Iowa State. Although he was a backup RB during college, Kene's testing numbers were off the charts. He will battle Ameer Abdullah for the team's third RB spot and kick returner.



By Jordan Wright

Fourth round (pick 125) – Camryn Bynum, safety, California. Bynum was a four-year starter and two-time captain at Cal, but his lack of high-end speed is forcing him to switch from corner to safety.

Fourth round (pick 134) – Janarius Robinson, defensive end, Florida State. A top-10 DE prospect coming out of high school, Robinson has the size and athletic ability to develop into a starting-caliber player. The only thing that will hold him back is his lack of effort that showed up on tape through college.

Fifth round (pick 157) – Ihmir Smith-Marsette, wide receiver, Iowa. The Vikings wanted to upgrade their kick return game, so they doubled down on the position by drafting Ihmir. He has the potential to develop into a rotational receiver, but his kick return ability will be what keeps him on the roster.

Fifth round (pick 168) – Zach Davidson, tight end, Central Missouri. Davidson had a fantastic 2019 season but will face a big test in the jump from Central Missouri to the NFL. The most interesting thing about Davison is that he is a dual-threat – not only can he play tight end, he is also a punter!

Sixth-round (pick 199) – Jaylen Twyman, defensive tackle, Pittsburgh. With their final pick in the 2021 NFL draft, the Vikings grabbed Twyman. He will be a rotational DT whose biggest strength is his ability to push the pocket and rush the passer from the interior of the defensive line.

## Undrafted Rookie Free Agents

Turner Bernard, long snapper, San Diego State. A solid long snapper, Bernard has limited athleticism which could limit his potential to make an NFL roster.

Tuf Borland, linebacker, Ohio State. Only the second player to be named a three-time team captain at Ohio State, by all accounts Borland has a fantastic work ethic and was the leader of the buckeye's defense. The thing that will hold him back is his limited athleticism.

Christian Elliss, linebacker, Idaho. His father was a Pro Bowl defensive lineman for Detroit, so Elliss has been around football his entire life. He has a chance to make the roster as a backup LB and special team's ace.

Zeandae Johnson, defensive tackle, California. Johnson played mostly defensive tackle in college, but he is only 270 pounds so will need to switch to defensive end if he wants to stick in the league.

Myron Mitchell, wide receiver, Alabama-Birmingham. Another player who could potentially be a kick return specialist, Mitchell was a solid yet unspectacular receiver at UAB. He has high-end athleticism, but he will need to refine his route running.

Riley Patterson, kicker, Memphis. Patterson will battle for the Vikings' kicker spot that was opened up when the team released Dan Bailey this offseason.

Whop Philyor, wide receiver, Indiana. Earning the nickname because of his love for Burger King Whoppers, Philyor is impressive with the ball in his hands. His biggest weakness is his size, but his speed can compensate for that somewhat.

Blake Proehl, wide receiver, East Carolina. Another player who had family in the NFL (his father, Ricky, is a two-time Super Bowl champion), Blake is very good at route running and has a wide catch radius. His lack of speed will be a tough hurdle to overcome.

A.J. Rose, running back, Kentucky. Rose is a high-character person (he achieved the rank of Eagle Scout as a youth) who is a bruising running back but doesn't have the speed to break away from NFL defenders.

Jordon Scott, defensive tackle, Oregon. A massive human being, Scott is a nose tackle who is difficult to move but doesn't offer much as far as rushing the passer.

Zach Von Rosenberg, punter, LSU. Rosenberg is a truly unique prospect. A former pitching prospect for the Pittsburg Pirates, Rosenberg ditched baseball to become a punter at LSU.

## The Healing Power of Art

Artists and medical personnel both know the importance of art. The famous nurse Florence Nightingale once said, "Variety of form and brilliancy of color in the object presented to patients are an actual means to recovery." Elaine Poggi, Founder of the Foundation for Photo/Art in Hospitals agrees and stated "The mood changes when our beautiful nature photos are placed on the walls, providing color, comfort, and hope to patients, caregivers, and loved ones."

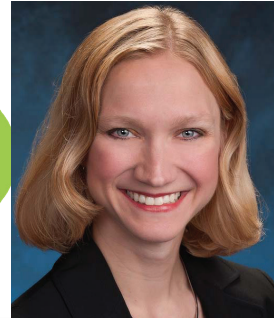
Before COVID, the walls of my exam rooms featured some of my favorite art. Each room had a different, deliberately chosen theme. One theme was photographs of the Grand Tetons and Canyon De Chelle taken by Ansel Adams. Canyon De Chelle is on the Navajo reservation where I did a rotation as a resident. Another room was filled with an Asian mural and photographs of my time in South Korea when I was a student ambassador for SDSU at their sister school in Taejon, South Korea. My third exam room had circus posters and pictures of Baraboo, Wisconsin, hometown of the Ringling Brothers, and the location where I did my residency training.

The art helped break the ice with patients and allowed me to share a special part of myself and my life with them. It also provided my patients with something to look at while waiting for me to come into the room. It gave us something to talk about other than their illness or why they came to the doctor that day. As part of the discussion, I learned about my patients' travels, their love of photography, or memories of going to the circus as a child. Each picture was an opportunity to share a common bond.

COVID forced those pictures off the walls and into storage. The rooms were stripped of anything extraneous that could potentially become contaminated. My exam room walls are now blank and sterile; the rooms seem a little colder and less inviting. There is less color and joy in the rooms. Without art, we tend to jump into the clinic visit topic without first connecting as people. I didn't realize what a big difference the loss of art on the walls could make until it was gone.

Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen said "At the deepest level, the creative process and the healing process arise from a single source. When you are an artist, you are a healer: a wordless trust of the same mystery is the foundation of your work and its integrity." Photographer Prakash Ghai explained it much more succinctly when he stated, "Art heals both the creator and the viewer." I miss my art and cannot wait until I can once again hang some healing on my exam room walls.

Jill Kruse, D.O. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices family medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. For free and easy access to the entire Prairie Doc® library, visit [www.prairiedoc.org](http://www.prairiedoc.org) and follow Prairie Doc® on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show streaming on Facebook and broadcast on SDPB most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



By Jill Kruse, DO ~ Prairie Doc® Perspectives

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 6 of 55

Today



Sunny

High: 59 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 32 °F

Tuesday



Sunny

High: 64 °F

Tuesday  
Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 38 °F

Wednesday

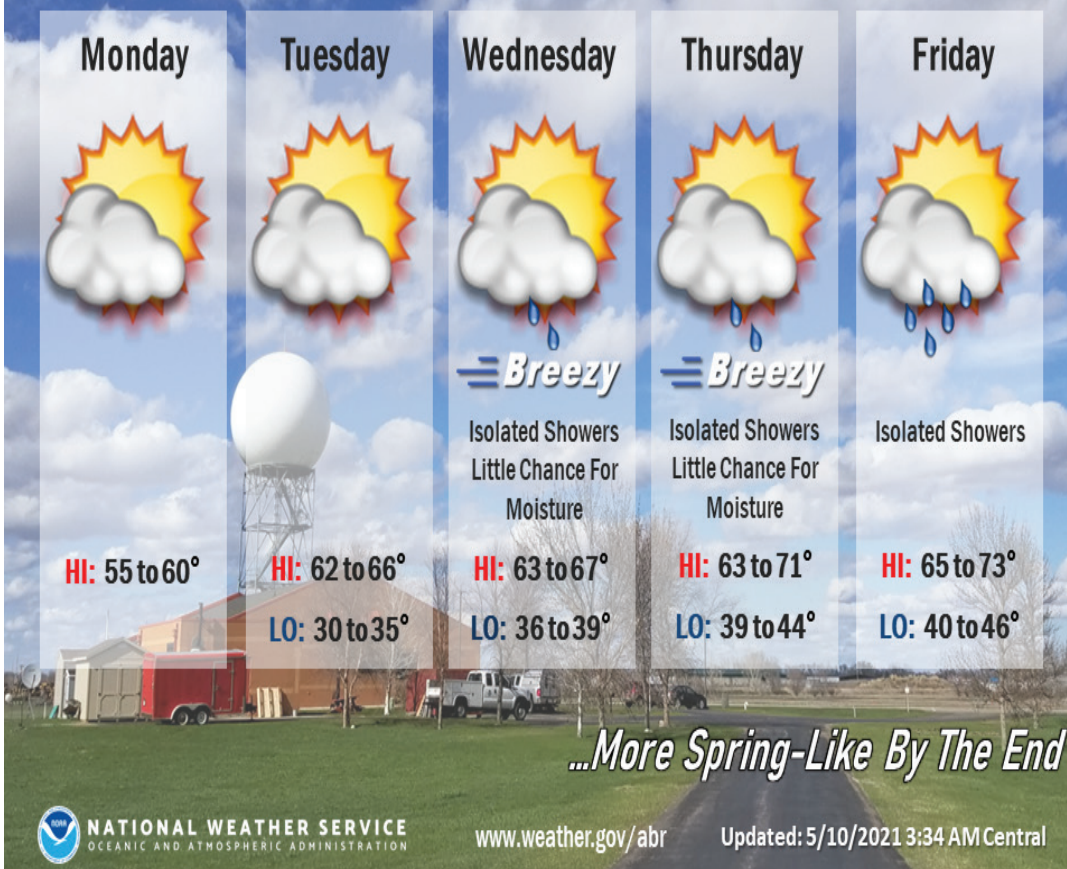


Mostly Sunny

High: 66 °F

## This Week

*Below Average Temperatures To Start...*



We will start things off cool with a slow warming trend through the week. We could see some shower activity, but for most areas dry weather is the better bet.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 7 of 55

## Today in Weather History

May 10, 1982: An F3 tornado was first sighted six miles west of Tintah, Minnesota. The storm moved into the town of Tintah and then northeastward, dissipating north of Wendell. Two farms, sites were damaged west of Tintah. Nearly one dozen farm buildings were destroyed, and 50 cows were killed. Hail as large as softballs preceded the tornado into Tintah where there was extensive damage. A school and church received heavy damage, two railroad cars were overturned, homes and grain buildings were damaged, and utility poles and trees were uprooted.

1880: A tornado estimated to be F4 intensity moved across 20 miles of Scott and Morgan Counties in central Illinois. The tornado touched down near Alsey and moved northeast, passing 8 miles south of Jacksonville. The tornado was strongest in the Pisgah area, where 30 buildings were destroyed. Seven people were killed.

1905: On Wednesday, May 10th, 1905, the Oklahoma Territory was struck by one of the worst natural disasters in early American history. Tornadoes pounded the southwest part of the Territory, one of which flattened the town of Snyder. The "official" death toll is listed today as 97, but the actual number of victims may never be known. One hundred years later, this single tornado remains the second most deadly in Oklahoma history.

1953: Four, F4 tornadoes touched down in parts of eastern Minnesota and western Wisconsin. One F4 tornado moved northeast from northeast of Fountain City, Wisconsin to Colburn, Wisconsin. Total damage from this storm was \$1 million, and it caused ten injuries.

The second F4 tornado moved from 5 miles southwest of Chester, Iowa to 4 miles northeast of Chatfield, Minnesota. One man was killed as his barn was destroyed one mile southeast of Wykoff. A rural school was leveled 3 miles south of Chatfield as well.

The third F4 tornado moved northeast and passed about 2 miles northwest of St. Charles, Minnesota. Farms were torn up all along the track. An infant was killed, and four other people were injured in a car that was thrown 100 feet. Overall this tornado killed one person and injured 11 people.

The final F4 tornado moved across Rusk, Price, and Taylor counties in Wisconsin. Over \$150,000 worth of damage resulted. An F3 tornado moved northeast across Clayton County, Iowa. At least 60 head of cattle were killed. A farmer was carried 700 feet but suffered only minor injuries.

2010: On this day, Oklahoma experienced its largest tornado outbreak since May 3, 1999. Fifty-five twisters tore through the state, including two rated EF4. The EF4 storms took three lives and injured 81 people. Ironically, both EF4 tornadoes struck Norman, Oklahoma, home of the Storm Prediction Center and the National Severe Storms Laboratory. Fourteen additional tornadoes hit Oklahoma during May 11-13. The May 10 disaster racked up insured property losses of \$2 billion.

# Groton Daily Independent

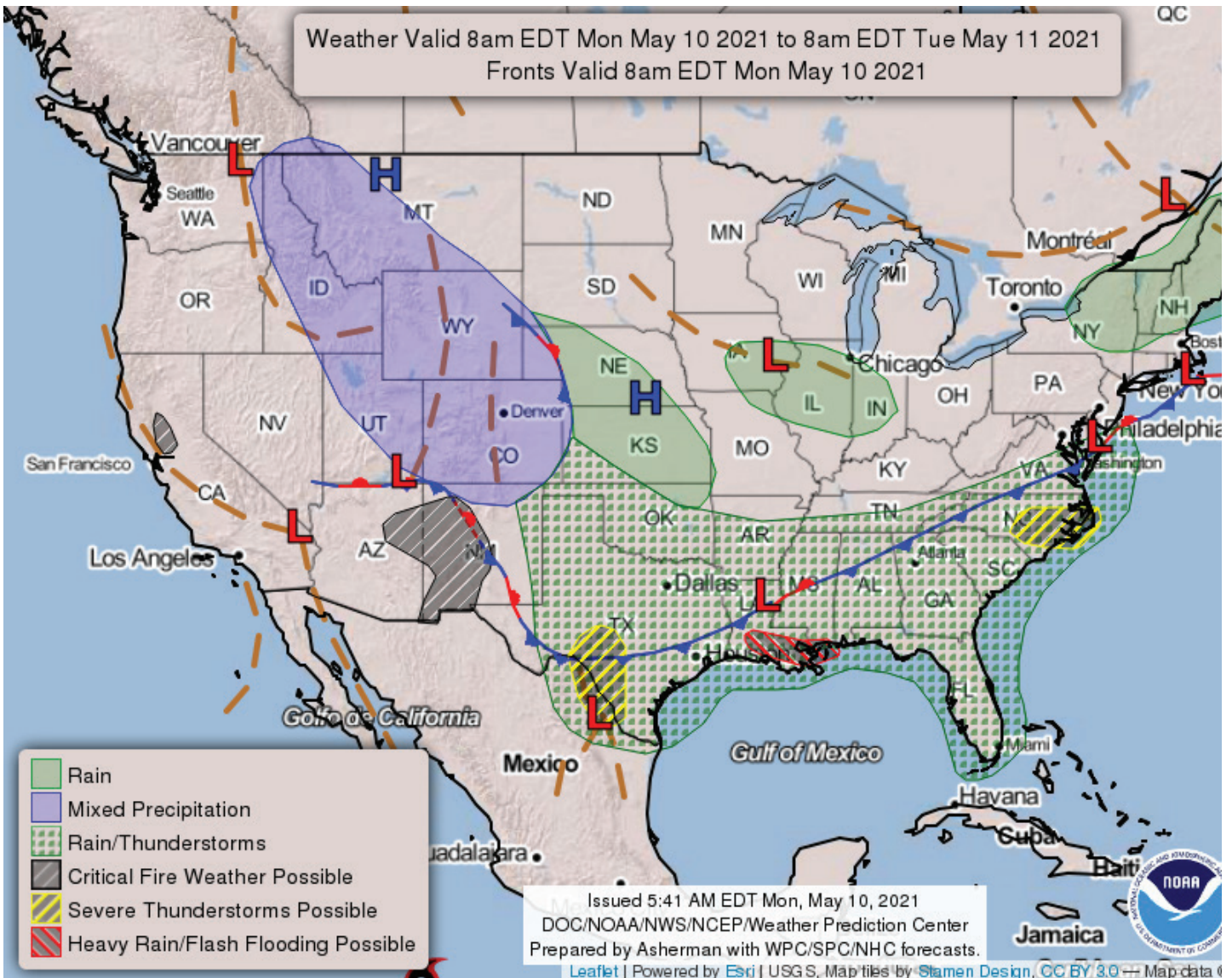
Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 8 of 55

## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 60 °F at 2:52 PM**  
**Low Temp: 35 °F at 2:30 AM**  
**Wind: 15 mph at 3:18 PM**  
**Precip: .00**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 95° in 1911**  
**Record Low: 20° in 1981**  
**Average High: 68°F**  
**Average Low: 42°F**  
**Average Precip in May.: 0.98**  
**Precip to date in May.: 0.25**  
**Average Precip to date: 5.95**  
**Precip Year to Date: 3.02**  
**Sunset Tonight: 8:52 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:08 a.m.**





# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 9 of 55



## **NEED HELP? WANT HOPE? HERE'S YOUR SOURCE!**

On one special occasion, Queen Elizabeth decided to honor a nobleman for his service by giving him a ring. As she presented him the ring she said, "If you are ever in trouble, send the ring to me, and I will help you." What power that ring represented.

But there is one who is much more powerful than a king or a queen, a president or a premier who is available to us: "The Mighty One, God, the Lord," declared the Psalmist. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you and you will honor Me," is His enduring promise.

The language of The Mighty One is incredibly significant. He did not say, "Don't call me – I'll call you when I have time." Nor did He say, "That problem's insignificant" or "Your concern does not matter to me," or "I'll refer that to someone else later." Our God, who is richer than the richest and stronger than the strongest and the greatest friend we can have, says to each of us, "Call me when you are facing troubles and need help. I'm always available." Is that not exciting? If you are facing a difficult problem as you are reading this Seed, you can stop – right now – and know that He is waiting for You to call on Him.

Not only is He available, but He gives us the assurance that He will deliver us. What good is His availability if He is too powerless to protect us, too weak to fight for us, or too poor to meet our needs? Whatever trouble we are facing – large or small, ours or someone we love – He guarantees a timely, effective, and positive solution. He will deliver us when we call!

But He does make one simple request of us: "You will honor me." The goal of our prayer must not be to bring attention to ourselves for what He has done or will do for us, it must always be to bring honor to His name in all we do!

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for the hope we have in You and Your willingness to hear our prayer and Your ability and willingness to answer them and show Your care for us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Call on Me in the day of trouble. I will take you out of trouble, and you will honor Me. Psalm 50:15

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 10 of 55

## 2021 Community Events

- Cancelled** Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)  
03/27/2021 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)  
04/10/2021 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm  
04/24/2021 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)  
04/25/2021 Princess Prom (Sunday after GHS Prom)  
05/01/2021 Lions Club Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)  
05/31/2021 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)  
6/7-9/2021 St. John's Lutheran Church VBS  
06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
06/19/2021 Lions Crazy Golf Fest at Olive Grove Golf Course, Noon  
07/04/2021 Firecracker Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
07/11/2021 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 10am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)  
07/22/2021 Pro-Am Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course  
07/30/2021-08/03/2021 State "B" American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton  
08/06/2021 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course  
09/11/2021 Lions Club Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)  
09/12/2021 Sunflower Classic Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
**Cancelled** Groton Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport  
10/08/2021 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)  
10/09/2021 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm (Saturday before Columbus Day)  
10/29/2021 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm  
10/31/2021 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)  
11/13/2021 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)  
11/25/2021 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)  
12/11/2021 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-Noon

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 11 of 55

## News from the Associated Press

South Dakota residents from India carry worldwide worry

By ALFONZO GALVAN Sioux Falls Argus Leader

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The country of India is going through its worst surge of COVID-19 since the pandemic started more than a year ago, but its effects are reverberating across the world, even in the city of Sioux Falls, where residents have been forced to remain oceans apart because of the deadly virus.

According to data from Johns Hopkins University, India has become the first country to report more than 400,000 daily cases, with the overall case count most likely underestimated. With the rise in cases, the U.S. has implemented travel restrictions from the U.S. to India.

The COVID-19 death toll there has also surpassed 220,000, making India the fourth country to reach the milestone, Johns Hopkins data shows.

"The surge in cases happened quite rapidly," stated Amita Gupta, a professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and Bloomberg School of Public Health, in an article from Johns Hopkins University last week. "The stresses that have been placed on every sector of society are catastrophic."

People from India who live in Sioux Falls talked about how they're navigating the surge of COVID-19 back home and what they're doing to help, the Sioux Falls Argus Leader reported.

Kirtana Krishna Kumar was born in India and grew up there before moving to Sioux Falls to attend Augustana University in 2016. When she graduated last year, her parents couldn't come visit to see her because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, she's found a job in the city and is still waiting for her parents the place she's called home for the last couple of years.

"I talk to them every day, and fortunately, they are safe," Kumar said.

Kumar's parents are vaccinated, which brings her relief, but she said it's still difficult to hear about other people she knows struggling – and at times dying – from COVID-19 in India.

The majority of her immediate family are back in India. Earlier this year, her 87-year-old grandmother back in India got the virus and recovered from it. When her uncle, who lives with her grandmother got it, the family became worried she'd get it again.

Kirtana Kumar moved to Sioux Falls to attend Augustana University, now she works at Sanford.

"We are fortunate to even have her," Kumar said. "We quarantined her and the whole house. It was really scary. After that, she was really weak."

The day of March 24, 2020 India went into a nationwide lockdown for 21 days. Kumar said after the initial lockdown ended and restrictions were lessened people began attending religious and political gathering again. This led to the country's first major surge of COVID-19.

The first major surge in cases in India peaked in mid-September with a seven-day average of new cases of more than 90,000. The current surge has a seven-day average of more than 350,000 cases a day, according to data from John Hopkins University.

"My family's health is very important to me," Kumar said. "We've all collectively decided we won't be seeing each other this year."

Because of the risk of spreading the disease more, Kumar said she'll be waiting until sometime in 2022 to be reunited with her family, be it in India or Sioux Falls. Meanwhile, Kumar and her family make due with phone calls.

Ramesh Singh has been in the U.S. since 2005 and moved to Sioux Falls in 2009. He, like many other Indians in Sioux Falls, maintains a connection to family and friends in his home country.

Singh visits India once a year at least, and in 2019, he said he visited four different times. For 2020, he didn't visit, but planned a trip in 2021. As of Tuesday, because of the new travel restrictions, he'll have to miss out again on going home.

"First wave, they managed very well," Singh said. "Everything was in control only because there was a shutdown."

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 12 of 55

Singh, who has three brothers and two sisters in India, said the importance of family and friends in his culture has attributed to the risings cases of COVID-19. In India, events like wedding festivities can last four to five days, he said. The close interactions associated with these events and number of people who attend help spread the disease.

"That's one of the reasons COVID is devastating," he said. "Social distancing is difficult when one house has 20-30 people. You can't leave someone isolated."

The Sioux Falls Indian community is stressed with what's going on in their home country, Singh said. Being kept away from family is not something they're used to in their culture.

"I talk to my brothers and sisters often," he said. "Family is important in India. We keep in touch."

During the current surge, Singh said he's lost some distant relatives and one of his college friends to the virus: a professor in Delhi with two young kids.

"Most people here know somebody who's lost family members there," Singh said.

Now a year into COVID-19, Singh said the virus alone isn't killing people in India, but rather having to live with the restrictions.

"You can't just sit home and do nothing," Singh said. "You have to take care of family. People relaxed, and the result is an increase in number of cases."

Singh said the Indian community in Sioux Falls has been sending money and resources back home to help their families deal with the virus.

Happy Singh has been a part of the Sioux Falls Indian community for more than 10 years, since opening Shahi Palace, the city's oldest Indian restaurant. Although the majority of his family lives outside of India, he said he still sympathizes with the struggles faced by his countrymen.

"My wife and my parents, they usually call on a daily basis to check up on their families," Happy Singh said.

Part of issue he's seeing from India could be that hospitals are privately owned, and therefore, only cater to those with money who can afford the services, he said.

"A lot of people live below poverty, and people are dying, because they can't afford medical services," Happy Singh said.

Alongside his other relatives, Happy Singh said he's been trying to send help as often as he can to those affected by the pandemic in India. The main way they've assisted has been by donating money to organizations that give out oxygen tanks to those in need, because oxygen is running low in India because of the high demand.

"When somebody sends help, you really want to make sure it goes to the right people," Happy Singh said.

He expects the supply will run out before the demand for things like oxygen tanks are met, he said. Government hospitals near where his family in India lived are overcrowded, he said. The best chance at receiving medical attention if someone gets the virus is to try to go to a privately owned medical facility, he said.

Meanwhile, Happy Singh said people in Sioux Falls have been reaching out to him and asking about his family.

"I've had people texting me, calling me and even emailing me, asking about the situation in India," he said.

As the situation in India worsens, Happy Singh said it's a time for those with connections to the community to unite. Whether it be in prayer or donations, he said anything can help.

## Not keen on green: Organic farm criticized for harming land

By DAN CHARLES Minnesota Public Radio News

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Hardly a week goes by, it seems, without a big food company making promises to deliver products from green, sustainable farms. Turning those promises into reality, though, can be complicated.

Take Gunsmoke Farms, a vast property that covers 53 square miles just northwest of Pierre, South Dakota. The food company General Mills, the Minnesota-based maker of Cheerios, announced in 2018 that it would convert the farm to organic production. The company planned to turn it into an educational hub

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 13 of 55

to teach other farmers “how to implement organic and regenerative agriculture practices.”

Now, some of Gunsmoke Farms’ neighbors say that the farm is doing more environmental harm than good, Minnesota Public Radio News reported.

Among the critics is Dwayne Beck, a soil scientist who manages South Dakota State University’s Dakota Lakes Research Station, located forty miles east of Gunsmoke Farms. Beck was skeptical about the project from the beginning. “It scared me, because normally organic (farming) entails lots of tillage, and those soils are very fragile,” he says.

Farmers often till the soil — breaking it up with tools like chisel plows or disks — to uproot weeds and get land ready for planting. But tillage also tears soil loose from the plant roots that help hold it together, and also breaks down parts of the soil that are most rich in carbon and nutrients.

This is especially true of soils where Gunsmoke Farms is located, Beck says. The area developed from an ancient ocean floor, and the soil is full of clay. “Once you disturb it, nothing holds that soil together. It just turns into powder,” he says, vulnerable to rain or wind that can carry it away.

This used to happen regularly in western South Dakota. Beck recalls dust storms so thick, cars crashed because drivers couldn’t see vehicles just in front of them.

South Dakota was one of the places that saw severe soil erosion from wind during the Dust Bowl of the 1930s.

Those dust storms happen less often now because over the past two decades, many farmers in the region abandoned regular tillage. They now use planting equipment that slices into undisturbed soil and places seed in the ground.

To control weeds, these farmers use herbicides. But chemical weed control isn’t an option for an organic business like Gunsmoke Farms.

During the farm’s three-year transition to organic status, its managers grew primarily alfalfa, which doesn’t require annual planting. In 2020, though, they planted their first crops of wheat and peas, which involved tilling the enormous fields.

Months later, Dwayne Beck says his fears were realized. He collected photographs of the damage: small drifts of wind-blown soil in a roadside ditch, and a country road that disappears into a brown cloud of blowing dust. “The soil that blew out of there, it will never be the same as it was before it blew,” he says. It won’t have the stability and structure of healthy soil, held in place by the roots of plants.

Beck and others who live near Gunsmoke Farms say that non-organic farmers also struggled to control soil erosion in 2020 because of drought and high winds. But the problems at Gunsmoke, they say, were worse. A planting of winter wheat, which was supposed to protect the soil on those fields, failed to grow well.

When the Gunsmoke project was just getting off the ground, in 2018, an expert from the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service drew up a soil conservation plan for the farm. That plan called for wide strips of native grasses across the farm to help prevent soil from blowing, and for the steepest slopes to stay covered, most years, with crops like alfalfa that don’t require annual planting.

Gary Zimmer, an expert on organic farming who collaborated with General Mills in launching the Gunsmoke project, says that he drew up a plan that incorporated many of these measures. But he says much of his plan was never implemented.

“It’s in a deep hole,” Zimmer says, referring to the farm. “I don’t know how you get it back out organically. It’s hard to farm organically if you do it really well, and have your intensive management. But 30,000 acres, poorly managed, is a really good sign for failure.”

General Mills doesn’t own Gunsmoke Farms, or control it directly. It signed a “strategic sourcing agreement” with an investment firm called TPG, an early investor in Uber, which acquired the land in order to supply General Mills with organic wheat, peas, and other crops. TPG then spun off another firm, Sixth Street, which currently owns Gunsmoke. The investors have hired a series of managers to run the farm.

General Mills said in a statement to NPR that turning Gunsmoke Farms into a thriving ecosystem “is a journey,” and promised continued efforts to minimize erosion and improve soil health there.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 14 of 55

Sixth Street Partners said in its statement that the farm is "early in the process of regenerating land" and that its mission — organic farming — also provides additional environmental benefits, such as lower use of pesticides and synthetic fertilizer.

Ruth Beck, who's married to Dwayne Beck, spent many years as an extension agronomist with South Dakota State University, advising farmers in the area around Gunsmoke Farms. She says it's simply difficult to grow crops organically, on a large scale, in this semi-arid part of the country. "You know, we've got to figure out ways to do that, if that's what people want," she says. "But we aren't there yet."

At Gunsmoke, she says, environmental marketing got ahead of what farmers can actually do.

## Waubay woman sentenced to prison for program theft

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Federal authorities say a Waubay woman accused of stealing money from an American Indian agency has been sentenced to more than two years in prison.

Dawn Block, 53, pleaded guilty earlier to program theft. Authorities say the embezzlement occurred while she was acting director for the United Sioux Tribes of South Dakota Development Corp. from October 2018 to May 2019.

A judge ordered Block to serve 27 months in prison and three years of supervised release. She must also pay back more than \$222,000.

Block allegedly took payroll advances, cash withdrawals, awards and bonuses, duplicate pay and unsupported payments.

The case was brought as part of The Guardians Project, a federal law enforcement initiative meant to hold accountable those who are responsible for adversely affecting those living in South Dakota's Native American communities.

## More than 300 Palestinians hurt in Jerusalem holy site clash

By ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli police firing tear gas, stun grenades and rubber bullets clashed with stone-throwing Palestinians at a flashpoint Jerusalem holy site on Monday, the latest in a series of confrontations that threatened to push the contested city toward wider conflict.

More than a dozen tear gas canisters and stun grenades landed in the Al-Aqsa mosque, located in a compound sacred to both Jews and Muslims, said an Associated Press photographer at the scene. Smoke rose in front of the mosque and the iconic golden-domed shrine on the site, and rocks littered the surrounding plaza. Inside one area of the compound, shoes and debris lay scattered over ornate carpets.

More than 305 Palestinians were hurt, including 228 who went to hospitals and clinics for treatment, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent. Seven of the injured were in serious condition. Police said 21 officers were hurt, including three who were hospitalized.

Monday's confrontation was the latest after weeks of mounting tensions between Palestinians and Israeli troops in the Old City of Jerusalem, the emotional center of their conflict. The clashes have come during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, already a time of heightened religious sensitivities.

Most recently, the tensions have been fueled by an eviction plan in an Arab neighborhood of east Jerusalem where Israeli settlers have waged a lengthy legal battle to take over properties.

Hundreds of Palestinians and about two dozen police officers have been hurt over the past few days in clashes at the sacred compound, which is known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary. The compound, which, has been the trigger for rounds of Israel-Palestinian violence in the past, is Islam's third-holiest site and considered Judaism's holiest.

An AP photographer at the scene said that early Monday morning, protesters had barricaded gates to the walled compound with wooden boards and scrap metal. Sometime after 7 a.m., clashes erupted, with those inside throwing stones at police deployed outside. Police entered the compound, firing tear gas, rubber-coated steel pellets and stun grenades.

At some point, about 400 people, both young protesters and older worshippers, were inside the carpeted

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 15 of 55

Al-Aqsa Mosque. Police fired tear gas and stun grenades into the mosque.

Police said protesters hurled stones at officers and onto an adjoining roadway near the Western Wall, where thousands of Israeli Jews had gathered to pray.

After several days of Jerusalem confrontations, Israel has come under growing international criticism for its heavy-handed actions at the site, particularly during Ramadan.

The U.N. Security Council scheduled closed consultations on the situation Monday.

Late Sunday, the U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan spoke to his Israeli counterpart, Meir Ben-Shabbat. A White House statement said that Sullivan called on Israel to "pursue appropriate measures to ensure calm" and expressed the U.S.'s "serious concerns" about the ongoing violence and planned evictions.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pushed back against the criticism Monday, describing Israel's actions in Jerusalem as a law-and-order issue. Netanyahu said Israel is determined to ensure the rights of worship for all and that this "requires from time to time stand up and stand strong as Israeli police and our security forces are doing now."

Ofir Gendelman, a spokesman for Netanyahu, claimed in a tweet that "extremist Palestinians planned well in advance to carry out riots" at the holy site, sharing photos of mounds of stones and wooden barricades inside the compound.

Ayman Odeh, a leading Arab politician in Israel, blamed the violence on Israel's discriminatory policies toward the Palestinians and said it had provoked the violence. "Wherever you find occupation, you will find resistance," he said at a news conference in Sheikh Jarrah, near the homes whose residents are under threat of eviction.

In other violence, Palestinian protesters hurled rocks at an Israeli vehicle driving just outside the Old City walls. The driver later told public broadcaster Kan that his windows were smashed by stones and pepper spray shot into the car as he drove past the Old City. CCTV footage of the incident released by the police showed a crowd surrounding the car and pelting it with rocks, its rear window shattered, when it swerved off the road and into a stone barrier and a bystander.

Police said two passengers were injured.

The day began with police announcing that Jews would be barred from visiting the holy site on what Israelis mark as Jerusalem Day, with a flag-waving parade through the Old City that is widely perceived by Palestinians as a provocative display in the contested city. The marchers celebrate Israel's capture of east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war.

In that conflict, Israel also captured the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It later annexed east Jerusalem and considers the entire city its capital. The Palestinians seek all three areas for a future state, with east Jerusalem as their capital.

Police have allowed the Jerusalem Day parade to take place despite growing concerns that it could further inflame tensions after violence has occurred almost nightly throughout Ramadan.

It began when Israel blocked off a popular spot where Muslims traditionally gather each night at the end of their daylong fast. Israel later removed the restrictions, but clashes quickly resumed amid tensions over the planned eviction of Palestinians from the Arab neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah.

Israel's Supreme Court postponed a key ruling Monday that could have forced dozens of Palestinians from their homes, citing the "circumstances."

The Israeli crackdown and planned evictions have drawn harsh condemnations from Israel's Arab allies and expressions of concern from the U.S., European Union and United Nations.

The tensions in Jerusalem have threatened to reverberate throughout the region.

Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip have fired several barrages of rockets into Israel, and protesters allied with the ruling Hamas militant group have launched dozens of incendiary balloons into Israel, setting off fires across the southern part of the country.

"The occupier plays with fire, and tampering with Jerusalem is very dangerous," Saleh Arouri, a top Hamas official, told the militant group's Al-Aqsa TV station.

In response, COGAT, the Israeli Defense Ministry organ responsible for crossings with the Gaza Strip,

announced Monday that it was closing the Erez crossing to all but humanitarian and exceptional cases until further notice.

## **New White House panel aims to separate science, politics**

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Eager to turn the page on the Trump years, the Biden White House is launching an effort to unearth past problems with the politicization of science within government and to tighten scientific integrity rules for the future.

A new 46-person federal scientific integrity task force with members from more than two dozen government agencies will meet for the first time on Friday. Its mission is to look back through 2009 for areas where partisanship interfered with what were supposed to be decisions based on evidence and research and to come up with ways to keep politics out of government science in the future.

The effort was spurred by concerns that the Trump administration had politicized science in ways that put lives at risk, eroded public trust and worsened climate change.

"We want people to be able to trust what the federal government is telling you, whether it's a weather forecast or information about vaccine safety or whatever," said Jane Lubchenco, the deputy director for climate and environment at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

People need to know "it's not by fiat, somebody's sort of knee-jerk opinion about something," added Alondra Nelson, the science office's deputy director for science and society. Nelson and Lubchenco spoke to The Associated Press ahead of a Monday announcement about the task force's first meeting and part of its composition. It stems from a Jan. 27 presidential memo requiring "evidence-based policy-making."

Scientists and others have accused the Trump administration of setting aside scientific evidence and injecting politics into issues including the coronavirus, climate change and even whether Hurricane Dorian threatened Alabama in 2019.

Naomi Oreskes, a Harvard University historian who has written about attacks on science in the book "Merchants of Doubt," said politicization of science undermines the nation's ability to address serious problems that affect Americans' health, their well-being and the economy.

"There's little doubt that the American death toll from covid-19 was far higher than it needed to be and that the administration's early unwillingness to take the issue seriously to listen to and act on the advice of experts and to communicate clearly contributed substantively to that death toll," Oreskes said in an email.

Lubchenco, who led the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in the Obama administration, pointed to an incident during the Trump years that became known as "Sharpiegate" as a clear example of "political interference with scientific information that was potentially extraordinarily dangerous."

During Sharpiegate, the NOAA reprimanded some meteorologists for tweeting that Alabama was not threatened by the hurricane, contradicting President Donald Trump, who said Alabama was in danger. The matter became known as Sharpiegate after someone in the White House used a black Sharpie — a favorite pen of Trump's — to alter the official National Hurricane Center warning map to indicate Alabama could be in the path of the storm. A 2020 inspector general report found the administration had violated scientific integrity rules.

The Sharpiegate case revealed flaws in the scientific integrity system set up in 2009 by President Barack Obama, Lubchenco said. There were no consequences when the agency violated the rules, Lubchenco said. Nor were there consequences for NOAA's parent Cabinet agency, the Commerce Department. That's why President Joe Biden's administration is calling for scientific integrity rules throughout government and not just in science-oriented agencies, she said.

Lubchenco said a reluctance to fight climate change in the last four years has delayed progress in cutting emissions of heat-trapping gases. "That will inevitably result in the problem being worse than it needed to be," she said.

"What we have seen in the last administration is that the suppression of science, the reassignment of scientists, the distortion of scientific information around climate change was not only destructive but



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 17 of 55

counterproductive and really problematic," Lubchenco said.

Kelvin Droegemeier, who served as Trump's science adviser, in an email repeated what he told Congress in his confirmation hearing: "Integrity in science is everything," and science should be allowed to be done "in an honest way, full of integrity without being incumbered by political influence."

Droegemeier said the White House science office, where Nelson and Lubchenco now work and where he used to be, is more about policy and does not have the authority to investigate or enforce rules.

Last week, Republican legislators accused the Biden White House of playing politics with science when it removed climate scientist Betsy Wetherhead, who had been praised by atmospheric scientists, from heading the national climate assessment. Lubchenco said it was normal for a new administration to bring in new people.

Rice University historian Douglas Brinkley said the Biden administration is trying hard but isn't approaching the task of restoring science quite right.

"It's impossible to keep politics out of science," Brinkley said. "But you can do your best to mitigate it."

He said that only looking as far back as the Obama and Trump administrations will doom the task force's efforts not to be politicized itself and looked at in a partisan way.

What's really needed, Brinkley said, is to "get to the root of things" and look back as far as 1945. Both Presidents Dwight Eisenhower, a Republican, and John F. Kennedy, a Democrat, elevated science efforts and tried to keep out the politics. But Brinkley said that with the onset of the environmental movement, the distraction of the Vietnam War and corporations seeing science as leading to too much regulation during the Reagan era, a unified public admiration for science fell apart.

Harvard's Oreskes said her research indicated Ronald Reagan was "the first president in the modern era to exhibit disregard and at times even contempt for scientific evidence."

The new task force will focus more on the future than the past, Nelson said.

"Every agency is being asked to really demonstrate that they are making decisions that are informed by the best available research evidence," Nelson said.

One of the four task force co-chairs is Francesca Grifo, scientific integrity officer for the Environmental Protection Agency since 2013. She clashed with the Trump EPA, which would not allow her to testify at a 2019 congressional hearing about scientific integrity.

The others are Anne Ricciuti, deputy director for science at the Education Department's Institute of Education Sciences; Craig Robinson, director of the Office of Science Quality and Integrity at the U.S. Geological Survey; and Jerry Sheehan, deputy director of the National Library of Medicine.

## The Latest: Employee sickness rates below average in Germany

By The Associated Press undefined

BERLIN — A large German health insurance provider says the number of days working-age people called in sick during the first three months of 2021 hit a 13-year low as hygiene and distancing rules prevented the spread of other illnesses.

The Techniker Krankenkasse said Monday that the rate of absence among its clients during the first quarter was 3.8%, compared with 5.1% in the same period of 2020 and 4.8% the previous year.

Jens Baas, the company's chairman, said the biggest drop in reported illnesses was for colds, but the wave of flu cases seen every February also didn't happen.

"It shows that distancing and hygiene rules as well as limited possibilities for contact also prevented the spread of other causes of infection," Baas said.

### THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:

- In coastal Senegal, beginning of the fishing season renews hope for industry ravaged by COVID-19
- While wealthier nations stockpile vaccines, some of the poorest countries have yet to receive any, even for medical staff
- Joyful reunions among vaccinated parents and children marked this year's Mother's Day

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 18 of 55

— Concert advocating vaccine equity pulls in \$302 million, exceeding its goal  
Follow more of AP's pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic> and <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-vaccine>

## HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

**KARACHI, Pakistan** — Pakistani authorities say the country's largest vaccination center has been opened in the southern port city of Karachi to speed up the inoculation campaign against COVID-19.

The vaccination center, which was inaugurated Sunday, has the capacity to inoculate between 25,000 and 30,000 people daily.

Pakistan has vaccinated about 4 million people against coronavirus since March when China donated vaccines to this impoverished nation.

Pakistan is currently in the middle of a third wave of the pandemic.

Over the weekend it imposed a lockdown to force people to stay home during the Eid al-Fitr festival, which is celebrated at the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

Pakistan on Monday reported 78 deaths from coronavirus in the past 24 hours, a decrease.

Since last year, Pakistan has reported 18,993 deaths from COVID-19 among 861,473 cases.

**SYDNEY** — An Australian judge has rejected a challenge to a temporary COVID-19 ban on citizens returning from India.

The government imposed the Indian travel ban on April 30 to relieve pressure on quarantine facilities for returned international travelers. The ban will be lifted on Friday.

Federal Court Justice Tom Thawley on Monday dismissed the first two parts of a four-pronged challenge to the ban initiated by 73-year-old Australian Gary Newman, who has been stranded since March last year in the Indian city of Bangalore.

The second two parts are based on constitutional grounds so require more notice for a court hearing than Newman's application last week for an urgent hearing allowed.

**BERLIN** — Germany is making the one-shot Johnson & Johnson coronavirus vaccine available to all adults as it did with the AstraZeneca vaccine, though the bulk of the expected deliveries is still some way off.

Germany has recommended the AstraZeneca shot mainly for over-60s because of a rare type of blood clot seen in an extremely small number of recipients. But amid a push to get as many people inoculated as possible, the government decided to allow doctors' offices to vaccinate any adults with it -- putting aside a priority system under which the oldest and most vulnerable have been vaccinated first.

Health Minister Jens Spahn said authorities decided Monday to take the same approach with the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, about which there are similar concerns. He estimated that 5 to 6 million over-60s in Germany still need to be vaccinated and that should be concluded by early June.

Spahn said the largest deliveries from Johnson & Johnson, more than 10 million doses, are expected in June or July.

Germany has now given nearly one-third of the population at least one vaccine shot.

**TOKYO** — Japan's leader insisted Monday that the country can host the Summer Olympics safely despite repeated questions from opposition lawmakers asking him to explain how that's possible and consider canceling the event.

Concerns are rising about the ability of Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's government to infections under control ahead of the Olympics, which start in just over two months. Suga decided Friday to extend a state of emergency in Tokyo until May 31 and expand the measure to six prefectures from the current four.

Japan logged about 7,000 new cases Saturday, a highest since mid-January.

Opposition lawmakers on Monday asked if Suga is determined to hold the Olympics even if coronavirus infections soar. The prime minister repeated that his role is to do his utmost to ensure the health and safety of all during the July 23-Aug. 8 games.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 19 of 55

"I have never put the Olympics first," Suga said. "We will do everything we can to provide safety for athletes and other participants, while protecting the lives and health of the Japanese people."

Suga added he arranged for Pfizer to donate its vaccine for athletes via the IOC, which would contribute to holding the games safely.

Public calls for a cancellation have been on the rise. An online petition calling for the Olympics to be canceled has gained more than 300,000 signatures in a week. A weekend survey by Japan's largest newspaper showed about 60% of the respondents calling for a cancellation.

**DUBAI, United Arab Emirates** — The United Arab Emirates has announced it will bar airline passengers arriving from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka starting May 12 until further notice, as concern mounts over a virus variant spreading in India.

The statement on the UAE's state-run WAM news agency said anyone who has been in those Southeast Asian nations over the past two weeks are also forbidden from entering the country. They must first spend 14 days in another country before being allowed to enter the UAE.

Emirati citizens, diplomats and a few others are exempt from the restrictions as long as they get tested on arrival and quarantine for 10 days in the UAE.

Already, the UAE has halted all flights to and from India over the dramatic virus outbreak there. The decisions have a major impact on residents of seven sheikhdoms, home to millions of foreign workers from India, Pakistan and the other nations.

**BERLIN** — German pharmaceutical company BioNTech says it plans to create a state-of-the-art manufacturing site for its mRNA-based vaccines and other drugs in Singapore.

The company, which developed the first widely used coronavirus vaccine together with U.S. partner Pfizer, said Monday that it is also establishing a regional headquarters for Southeast Asia in the city-state.

BioNTech said the new manufacturing facility will boost the regional and global supply capacity of its products and ensure a rapid response to potential pandemic threats in the region.

The site, which could be operational by 2023, will have the capacity to produce "several hundred of million doses of mRNA-based vaccines depending on the specific vaccine," the company said.

**BRUSSELS** — There were 16,000 excess deaths recorded in Belgium last year amid the coronavirus pandemic, according to the country's Federal Planning Bureau.

In a statement Monday, the office said the 2020 excess mortality — a term which refers to the number of deaths from all causes during a crisis — was largely a result of the COVID-19 health crisis.

"These 16,000 people lost a combined 124,000 years of life, given their life expectancy, or an average of 7.7 years per person," the bureau said.

More than 24,500 people have died from coronavirus-related causes in Belgium, a country with 11.5-million inhabitants that has been among the most battered by the deadly virus in Europe.

**COPENHAGEN, Denmark** — The Norwegian Institute of Public Health — whose advice is normally followed by the government in Oslo — recommended Monday that the single-dose Johnson & Johnson jab be taken out of the country's vaccine program to investigate reports of extremely rare but potentially dangerous blood clots.

Norway, which like neighboring Denmark has been very cautious with all vaccines, suspended the roll-out of the AstraZeneca vaccine on March 11. Both the J&J and AstraZeneca shots are made with similar technology.

"We believe that this is the right decision," infection control director at the agency Geir Bukholm said, adding that the virus is under control in Norway.

The agency noted that the Johnson & Johnson jab has "several benefits," namely offering "good protection against COVID-19 disease, is a single-dose vaccine and can be stored at refrigerator temperature."

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 20 of 55

Bukholm said should the government decide to pull the J&J vaccine out of the vaccination program, it will cause a delay of up to two weeks in the vaccination program.

**BEIJING** — A Chinese pharmaceutical company and BioNTech SE, the co-developer of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, are setting up a joint venture in China with the capacity to manufacture up to 1 billion doses of the shot to protect against COVID-19.

Shanghai Fosun Pharmaceutical Group Co. said in a stock filing on Sunday night that the companies will invest up to \$100 million each to set up the venture.

The vaccine has yet to be approved in mainland China, where regulations require an in-country clinical trial. BioNTech's CEO has said the company expects the shot to be approved in July.

The joint venture aims to supply shots for the Chinese population, but no timing was given on when the shots would be distributed.

China has based its vaccination campaign on domestically produced vaccines with a goal of vaccinating 560 million of the country's 1.4 billion people by mid-June. Most of its vaccines require two doses, but China hasn't broken down its vaccination figures by how many have received one or both doses.

**ISTANBUL**— Turkey's daily COVID-19 infections have dropped to levels last seen in mid-March as the country nears two weeks in its strictest restrictions.

Heath Ministry statistics showed 15,191 new infections Sunday and 283 deaths. Confirmed cases averaged around 60,000 per day during the peak week mid-April. More than 43,000 people have died in the pandemic.

The Turkish government introduced a full lockdown from April 29 until May 17, ordering people to stay home and closing down businesses and schools. Millions of people who work in jobs deemed essential — like factories, hospitals and the tourism sector — are exempt. Foreign tourists are also exempt.

Turkey's president said the lockdown aims to bring daily infections below 5,000 and for tourists to come.

France and the United Kingdom recently introduced mandatory quarantines for travelers returning from Turkey. The British government told fans not to travel to Istanbul for the Chelsea- Manchester United Champions League final on May 29 and has offered to have Wembley Stadium in London host the game.

**COLOMBO, Sri Lanka** — Sri Lanka authorities are converting garment factories and other buildings for facilities to treat COVID-19 patients amid fears existing hospitals may run out of capacity.

Military troops are completing the transformation of a garment factory in Seeduwa, on the outskirts of the capital Colombo, to create the island's biggest COVID-19 hospital, with a capacity of 1,200 beds.

Another garment factory in Yakkala, about 40 kilometers from Colombo, is being converted to a treatment center with a 2,000-bed capacity.

Armed forces are acquiring buildings in all parts of the country and converting them to hospitals to increase capacity, said army commander Gen. Shavendra Silva, head of the country's COVID-19 operations center.

Sri Lanka is experiencing a sharp surge in infections, reporting 2,000 new cases for the first time on Monday. It has seen over 800 deaths in the pandemic.

**PARIS** — French President Emmanuel Macron welcomed the decision from the European Union not to renew its order for the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

Macron said the EU policy is aiming at "responding in particular to the variants... We see that some other vaccines are more efficient."

EU Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton said Sunday the EU Commission has not ordered AstraZeneca shots for after June. Two weeks ago, the EU launched legal proceedings against the pharmaceutical group for allegedly failing to respect the terms of its contract.

In France, the variant first identified in Britain has become largely dominant and the South African variant represents only a small percentage of cases.

Across the Channel, the British government has made the AstraZeneca vaccine the centerpiece of its

successful vaccination campaign.

## In India's northeast there's fear of a virus surge to come

By WASBIR HUSSAIN and ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL Associated Press

GAUHATI, India (AP) — With experts saying the coronavirus is likely spreading in India's northeastern state of Assam faster than anywhere else in the country, authorities were preparing Monday for a surge in infections by converting a massive stadium and a university into hospitals.

Cases in Assam started ticking upward a month ago and the official seven-day weekly average in the state on May 9 stood at more than 4,700 cases. But a model run by the University of Michigan — which predicts the current spread of cases before they are actually detected — says infections in Assam are likely occurring as fast as any other place in the country.

Add to that recent elections in the state — and the huge political rallies that accompanied them — and experts fear a uncontrolled surge is on the horizon.

Worryingly, along with cities in India's northeastern frontier — which is closer to Myanmar, Bangladesh and Bhutan than it is New Delhi — cases have also started to spike in some remote Himalayan villages in the region.

Nationwide, India's Health Ministry reported 360,000 new cases in the past 24 hours Monday, with more than 3,700 deaths. Since the pandemic began, India has seen more than 22.6 million infections and more than 246,000 deaths — both, experts say, almost certainly undercounts.

Officials in Assam were racing to prepare for a virus surge because similar onslaughts in infections have overwhelmed hospitals in much richer Indian states.

"We are adding 1,000 beds a week to prepare ourselves in the event of cases spiraling," said Dr Lakshmanan S, the director of the National Health Mission in Assam.

The state's largest government-run hospital, the Guwahati Medical College Hospital has more than doubled its number of intensive care beds to 220 and health officials are building another 200 in the hospital's parking lot.

A football and cricket stadium is being converted into a hospital for COVID-19 patients with 430 beds. The private Royal Global University in the state capital, Gauhati, has been converted into a hospital with 1,000 beds.

The state is sending doctors, paramedics and medicine to these facilities and the university said it would provide books and newspapers for patients to read.

"This is the least we thought we could do in this time of huge crisis for our country," said Dr AK Pansari, the university chairman.

There are 2,100 beds reserved in government centers for COVID-19 patients in Gauhati, with hundreds more planned. That's in addition to the existing 750 beds for patients at private hospitals in the state.

Even as infections have increased, the rates of vaccination have fallen in Assam and the other states in the region since India expanded its coverage to include all adults on May 1.

Adding to concerns is confirmation the virus has started spreading into more remote Himalayan villages with poor health infrastructure. These areas are home to indigenous tribes, whose are already face some of the lowest access to health care in the nation.

The region had largely been untouched by the virus earlier and many people behaved like COVID-19 didn't exist. But it now appears the virus was spreading in even remote villages without people knowing until it was too late.

The lack of awareness about the virus, lack of resources and the remoteness is complicating contact tracing in such areas, said Dr. Mite Linggi, the medical superintendent at the district hospital at Roing in Arunachal Pradesh state.

Despite the limited medical infrastructure and even more limited medical supplies, Linggi said what they really feared were power cuts.

"Power is crucial for running oxygen supply. We have patients gasping for air when the power comes

and goes out," he said.

## **Palestinians fear loss of family homes as evictions loom**

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — When Samira Dajani's family moved into their first real home in 1956 after years as refugees, her father planted trees in the garden, naming them for each of his six children.

Today, two towering pines named for Mousa and Daoud stand watch over the entrance to the garden where they all played as children. Pink bougainvillea climbs an iron archway on a path leading past almond, orange and lemon trees to their modest stone house.

"The Samira tree has no leaves," she says, pointing to the cypress that bears her name. "But the roots are strong."

She and her husband, empty nesters with grown children of their own, may have to leave it all behind on Aug. 1. That's when Israel is set to forcibly evict them following a decades-long legal battle waged by ideological Jewish settlers against them and their neighbors.

The Dajanis are one of several Palestinian families facing imminent eviction in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of east Jerusalem. The families' plight has ignited weeks of demonstrations and clashes in recent days between protesters and Israeli police.

It also highlights an array of discriminatory policies that rights groups say are aimed at pushing Palestinians out of Jerusalem to preserve its Jewish majority. The Israeli rights group B'Tselem and the New York-based Human Rights Watch both pointed to such policies as an example of what they say has become an apartheid regime.

Israel rejects those accusations and says the situation in Sheikh Jarrah is a private real-estate dispute that the Palestinians have seized upon to incite violence. The Foreign Ministry did not respond to questions submitted by The Associated Press. A top municipal official and a settler group marketing "residential plots" in Sheikh Jarrah did not respond to requests for comment.

Settler groups say the land was owned by Jews prior to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation. Israeli law allows Jews to reclaim such lands but bars Palestinians from recovering property they lost in the same war, even if they still reside in areas controlled by Israel.

Samira Dajani's parents fled in 1948 from their home in Baka — now an upscale neighborhood in mostly Jewish west Jerusalem. After several years spent as refugees in Jordan, Syria and east Jerusalem, which was then controlled by Jordan, Jordanian authorities offered them one of several newly built homes in Sheikh Jarrah in exchange for giving up their refugee status.

"I have beautiful memories from this house," says Dajani, now 70, recalling how she played with the other children in the close-knit neighborhood, where several other Palestinian refugee families had also been resettled. "It was like heaven after our exodus."

Things changed after Israel captured east Jerusalem, along with the West Bank and Gaza, in the 1967 Mideast war, and annexed it in a move not recognized internationally. The Palestinians want all three territories for their future state and view east Jerusalem as their capital.

In 1972, settler groups told the families that they were trespassing on Jewish-owned land. That was the start of a long legal battle that in recent months has culminated with eviction orders against 36 families in Sheikh Jarrah and two other east Jerusalem neighborhoods. Israeli rights groups say other families are also vulnerable, estimating that more than 1,000 Palestinians are at risk of being evicted.

The Dajanis and other families have been ordered to leave by Aug. 1. A Supreme Court hearing in the case of another four families that was to be held on Monday was postponed for at least a month. If they lose the appeal, they could be forcibly evicted within days or weeks.

A woman from another family in Sheikh Jarrah said it was "an inhumane act" to take away someone's home. She invited her parents to move in with her and her husband if they are evicted from the home where she was born and raised, but her father refused.

"He said there is no way I'm leaving this neighborhood unless I'm dead," she said, requesting anonym-

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 23 of 55

ity for fear of retribution by Israeli authorities. "It's been 65 years that he's lived in this neighborhood."

Israel views all of Jerusalem as its unified capital and says residents are treated equally. But east Jerusalem residents have different rights depending on whether they are Jewish or Palestinian.

Jews born in east Jerusalem are automatically granted Israeli citizenship, and Jews from anywhere else in the world are eligible to become Israeli citizens.

Palestinians born in east Jerusalem are granted a form of permanent residency that can be revoked if they spend too much time living outside the city. They can apply for Israeli citizenship but must go through a difficult and uncertain bureaucratic process that can take months or years. Most refuse, because they do not recognize Israel's annexation.

Palestinians are also treated differently when it comes to housing, which will make it difficult for the Sheikh Jarrah families to remain in Jerusalem if they are evicted.

After 1967, Israel expanded the city's municipal boundaries to take in large areas of open land where it has since built Jewish settlements that are home to tens of thousands of people. At the same time, it set the boundaries of Palestinian neighborhoods, restricting their growth.

Today, more than 220,000 Jews live in east Jerusalem, mostly in built-up areas that Israel considers to be neighborhoods of its capital. Most of east Jerusalem's 350,000 Palestinian residents are crammed into overcrowded neighborhoods where there is little room to build.

Palestinians say the expense and difficulty of obtaining permits forces them to build illegally or move to the occupied West Bank, where they risk losing their Jerusalem residency. Israeli rights groups estimate that of the 40,000 homes in Palestinian neighborhoods, half have been built without permits and are at risk of demolition.

In part due to the protests, Israel has come under international pressure over Sheikh Jarrah, with both the United States and the European Union expressing concern. Rights groups say the government can halt or postpone the evictions if it wants to.

In the meantime, Samira Dajani has planted her spring flowers in small pots that she'll be able to take with her if she is forced from her home in August. The trees named for her and her siblings will have to stay. She says she tries not to think about it.

## Inside Arizona's election audit, GOP fraud fantasies live on

By JONATHAN J. COOPER and BOB CHRISTIE Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — On the floor of Veterans Memorial Coliseum, where Sir Charles Barkley once dunked basketballs and Hulk Hogan wrestled King Kong Bundy, 46 tables are arrayed in neat rows, each with a Lazy Susan in the middle.

Seated at the tables are several dozen people, mostly Republicans, who spend hours watching ballots spin by, photographing them or inspecting them closely. They are counting them and checking to see if there is any sign they were flown in surreptitiously from South Korea. A few weeks ago they were holding them up to ultraviolet lights, looking for a watermark rumored to be a sign of fraud.

This is Arizona's extraordinary, partisan audit of the 2020 election results in the state's most populous county — ground zero for former President Donald Trump and a legion of his supporters who have refused to accept his loss in Arizona or in other battleground states. These ballots have been counted before and certified by the Republican governor. Much of the country has moved on.

And yet, in this aging arena, Republicans are searching for evidence to support claims they already believe.

The effort has alarmed voting rights advocates, election administrators and civil rights lawyers at the U.S. Department of Justice, who this past week demanded confirmation that federal security and anti-intimidation laws are being followed. Senate President Karen Fann responded Friday by telling the department it had nothing to worry about.

"They lost, and they can't get over it," said Grant Woods, a former Republican Arizona attorney general who became a Democrat during Trump's presidency. "And they don't want to get over it because they want to continue to sow doubt about the election."

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 24 of 55

The 2.1 million ballots were already counted by Maricopa County election officials in November, validated in a partial hand recount and certified by Gov. Doug Ducey. Two extra audits confirmed no issues. No evidence of fraud sufficient to invalidate Joe Biden's narrow victory in Arizona and Maricopa County has been found.

Still, counters are being paid \$15 an hour to scrutinize each ballot, examining folds and taking close-up photos looking for machine-marked ballots and bamboo fibers in the paper. The reason appears to be to test a conspiracy theory that a plane from South Korea delivered counterfeit ballots to the Phoenix airport shortly after the election.

When the recount started, the ballots were viewed under ultraviolet light to check for watermarks. A theory popular with QAnon followers has it that Trump secretly watermarked mail ballots to catch cheating.

There are no watermarks on ballots in Maricopa County. The effort has since been abandoned.

Despite their obvious partisan biases, the auditors insist they can be trusted because they're running an independent and transparent operation. Yet they're recruiting from right-wing groups. They tried to block media access. They fought in court to not disclose written procedures they're using to count votes and keep ballots secure. They lost.

And it's entirely unclear who is paying for it and how much it's costing. Taxpayers, through the Senate's operating budget, chipped in \$150,000, but the CEO of the small company leading the audit has acknowledged that won't cover costs.

Fundraisers, one from the conservative One America News Network and another tied to Patrick Byrne, a former CEO who promoted election conspiracies, are raising hundreds of thousands more.

Critics call the undisclosed private funding a huge red flag — the audit could be funded by foreign governments or people with a stake in the outcome like ardent Trump supporters.

Ken Bennett, a former Republican secretary of state who is serving as the Senate's liaison to the auditors, dismissed mounting criticism.

"I think Republicans can count votes on ballots as well as Democrats or Libertarians or independents," Bennett said.

The audit has its own Twitter account and it has taken on a Trumpian air, deploying hyperbole and sharp attacks on Democrats and journalists.

"THE GREATEST AUDIT IN THE GALAXY CONTINUES!!" the account tweeted on May 4.

All of it is made possible by the GOP-controlled state Senate, which issued an unprecedented subpoena demanding access to all ballots and the machines that counted them in Maricopa County, home to the Phoenix area and 60% of Arizona voters.

After months of court battles with the GOP-controlled county Board of Supervisors, which maintains the election was well-run, the Senate got hold of the ballots. That came despite repeated audits and a hand-count of a sample of ballots that showed the results were accurate.

Fann, the Republican Senate president, insisted again Saturday that the audit has nothing to do with Trump and everything to do with the large segment of GOP voters who he convinced that he actually won, despite the lack of evidence.

"Everybody keeps saying, oh, there's no evidence and it's like, yeah, well let's do the audit and if there's nothing there, then we say look, there was nothing there," Fann said. "If we find something, and it's a big if, but if we find something, then we can say, OK, we do have evidence and now how do we fix this."

The ballots were handed over to Cyber Ninjas, a tiny cybersecurity firm whose president, Doug Logan, is a Trump supporter who has shared outlandish conspiracy theories about the election.

That concern continues to the counters themselves. Anthony Kern, a former Republican state lawmaker who was photographed in restricted areas outside the U.S. Capitol during the Jan. 6 insurrection, has been spotted several times tallying the votes.

The audit is recounting only the presidential race and the U.S. Senate contest, two contests won by Democrats. Down-ballot races, where Republicans fared better, are not being reviewed.

The operation has been slowed by mistakes and operational problems. On the first day, a reporter noticed counters using blue pens, which are banned in ballot counting rooms because they can be read by



machines. That prompted a court order requiring only red or green pens.

Staffing has been an issue as well. Despite promises that an army of counters is imminent, only about a third of the 46 counting tables are being used.

On Thursday afternoon, just 16 counting tables and 12 photography tables were in use, split into red, blue, green and yellow color-coded teams.

The fastest tables spent about 6 seconds per ballot. One particularly slow green table spent 20 seconds or more on each one. So much time passes between batches of ballots that, at any given time, half or more of the counters were not doing anything.

The Senate leased the Coliseum for four weeks as part of an audit that was supposed to take "about 60 days." But with one week left before the auditors have to vacate the arena for a series of high school graduations, only about 10% of the ballots have been counted.

Bennett said the count may continue into July.

## Hit by COVID, Senegal's women find renewed hope in fishing

By CARLEY PETESCH Associated Press

BARGNY, Senegal (AP) — Since her birth on Senegal's coast, the ocean has always given Ndeye Yacine Dieng life. Her grandfather was a fisherman, and her grandmother and mother processed fish. Like generations of women, she now helps support her family in the small community of Bargny by drying, smoking, salting and fermenting the catch brought home by male villagers. They were baptized by fish, these women say.

But when the pandemic struck, boats that once took as many as 50 men out to sea carried only a few. Many residents were too terrified to leave their houses, let alone fish, for fear of catching the virus. When the local women did manage to get their hands on fish to process, they lacked the usual buyers, as markets shut down and neighboring landlocked countries closed their borders. Without savings, many families went from three meals a day to one or two.

Dieng is among more than a thousand women in Bargny, and many more in the other villages dotting Senegal's sandy coast, who process fish — the crucial link in a chain that constitutes one of the country's largest exports and employs hundreds of thousands of its residents.

"It was catastrophic — all of our lives changed," Dieng said. But, she noted, "Our community is a community of solidarity."

That spirit sounds throughout Senegal with the motto "Teranga," a word in the Wolof language for hospitality, community and solidarity. Across the country, people tell each other: "on es ensemble," a French phrase meaning "we are in this together."

---

This story is part of a yearlong series on how the pandemic is impacting women in Africa, most acutely in the least developed countries. AP's series is funded by the European Journalism Centre's European Development Journalism Grants program, which is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. AP is responsible for all content.

---

Last month, the first true fishing season since the pandemic devastated the industry kicked off, bringing renewed hope to the processors, their families and the village. The brightly painted vast wooden fishing boats called pirogues once again are each carrying dozens of men to sea, and people swarm the beach to help the fishermen carry in their loads for purchase.

But the challenges from the coronavirus — and so much more — remain. Rising seas and climate change threaten the livelihoods and homes of those along the coast, and many can't afford to build new homes or move inland. A steel processing plant rising near Bargny's beach raises fears about pollution and will join a cement factory that also is nearby, though advocates argue they are needed to replace resources depleted by overfishing.

"Since there is COVID, we live in fear," said Dieng, 64, who has seven adult children. "Most of the people

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 26 of 55

here and women processors have lived a difficult life. ... We are exhausted. But now, little by little, it's getting better."

Dieng and her fellow processors weathered the pandemic by relying on each other. They're accustomed to being breadwinners — one expert estimated that each working woman in Senegal feeds seven or eight family members. Before the pandemic, a good season could bring Dieng 500,000 FCFA (\$1,000). Last year, she said, she made little to nothing.

Dieng's husband teaches the Quran at the mosque next door to their home, and the couple pooled their money with their children, with one son finding work repairing TVs. Other women got help from family abroad or rented out parts of their refrigerators for storage.

They survived, but they missed their work, which isn't just a job — it is their heritage. "Processing is a pride," Dieng said.

Most fishing in Senegal is small-scale, and carried out in traditional, generations-old methods, as old as the ways Dieng and other villagers process the fish. They refer to it as artisanal fishing. Once processed, the fish is sold to local and international buyers, and preserving it means it lasts longer than fresh and is cheaper for all who purchase it. In Senegal alone, the fish accounts for more than half of protein eaten by its 16 million residents — key for food security in this West African country.

Industrial fishing is carried out in Senegal's waters as well, via motorized vessels and trawlers instead of the traditional pirogues, and more than two dozen companies also specialize in industrial processing in the country alongside fishmeal factories and canning plants. The fishmeal factories price women like Dieng out by paying more for the fish and depleting resources — 5 kilos of fish are needed for 1 kilo of fishmeal, a lower-grade powder-like product used for farm animals and pets.

Senegal's government also has agreements with other countries allowing them to fish off the country's coast and imposing limits on what they can haul in, but monitoring what these large boats from Europe, China and Russia harvest has proven difficult. The villagers say the outsiders are devastating the local supply.

Dieng has become a local leader and mentor whose neighbors increasingly come to her for advice on everything from money woes to their marriages, and she and others are now part of a rising collective voice of women in Senegal working for change along the coast and beyond.

Senegal has designated land near Bargny as an economic zone in its efforts to invest in redevelopment. Dieng's neighbor Fatou Samba is a town councilor and president of the Association of Women Processors of Fish Products, and she's testified about the challenges in artisanal fishing. She hopes to stop much of the expansion of big industry as fishmeal companies scoop up fish and send the product to Europe and Asia.

"If we let ourselves be outdone, within two or three years, women will not have work anymore," Samba said. "We are not against the creation of a project that will develop Senegal. But we are against projects that must make women lose the right to work."

Samba also warns of the effects of climate change, with rising tides eroding Senegal's coast and forcing fisherman to seek their catch further out to sea. Samba and Dieng have each lost at least half of their seaside homes as water gutted rooms during the rainy seasons of the past decade.

In addition to their laborious work processing fish, Samba and other women handle the bulk of the work at home.

"Especially in Africa, women are fighters. Women are workers. Women are family leaders," Samba said. "Therefore, women must be empowered."

Dieng, Samba and other women want to be heard — by the government, and by the companies building projects near them. They want better financing, protection of their fish and processing sites, and improved health regulations.

These women open their doors to family, friends, neighbors and even strangers who are eager to hear about the work they take such pride in, and which they want preserved — to help put food on the table for their families and to pay school fees for their children so they can have a future that might not involve fish. But while they're happy to talk about the work, they hesitate to focus on themselves. Community is what they are most comfortable with.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 27 of 55

Late last month, when word spread that fishermen were finally coming back to Bargny with catches, Dieng and others hurried to meet the pirogues, tethered by ropes to the beach. It was the longest Dieng had been away from the catch. She bought enough to have her haul carried by horse-drawn cart to the plot of land she and friends claimed along acres of black sand. Then she started the work she's known for decades.

Once the fish were piled onto the ground, the women smoothed them out with a small, flat piece of wood. They covered them in light brown peanut shells, bought by the sack, and then lit embers in a bowl and placed those on the shells, which started to burn. Smoke billowed everywhere, a sign of progress. But it also made trying to breathe as brutal as toiling under the hot sun — even tougher during Ramadan, when the women are fasting.

The women stoked the fire, and after feeling confident it would smoke for hours, stepped away. After a day or so, they returned to turn the fish and let it dry in the sun. Another day passed, and the women returned to clean it. Finally, the fish was packaged in vast nets, sold and taken away in trucks.

The pandemic has taught villagers a crucial lesson: Money from fish may not always be there, so it's important to try to save some of their earnings.

The pandemic also is not over, so Dieng and other women go door to door to raise awareness and urge people to get vaccinated. Like many other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Senegal imposed strict measures at the start of the pandemic. The government was widely commended for its overall handling of the pandemic, and curfews have been lifted and restrictions largely eased. But the country has had more than 40,000 cases, and both volunteer and government campaigns aim to keep another wave at bay.

At the end of a long day of work, and before she goes home to break fast of Ramadan with her family, Dieng stands in front of her smoking fish and records a video she hopes will motivate the women working in the industry.

"It's our gold. This site is all, this site is everything for us," Dieng said of the coast and its vital importance to Bargny. "All the women must rise up. ... We must work, to always work and work again for our tomorrows, for our future."

## German Catholics to bless gay unions despite Vatican ban

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Germany's powerful Catholic progressives are openly defying a recent Holy See pronouncement that priests cannot bless same-sex unions by offering such blessings at services in about 100 different churches all over the country this week.

The blessings at open worship services are the latest pushback from German Catholics against a document released in March by the Vatican's orthodoxy office, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which said Catholic clergy cannot bless same-sex unions because God "cannot bless sin."

The document pleased conservatives and disheartened advocates for LGBTQ Catholics around the globe. But the response has been particularly acute in Germany, where the German church has been at the forefront of opening discussion on hot-button issues such as the church's teaching on homosexuality as part of a formal process of debate and reform.

The dozens of church services celebrating blessings of gay unions are the latest escalation in tensions between conservatives and progressives that have already sparked alarm, primarily from the right, that part of the German church might be heading into schism.

Germany is no stranger to schism: 500 years ago, Martin Luther launched the Reformation here.

Pope Francis, who has championed a more decentralized church structure, has already reminded the German hierarchy that it must remain in communion with Rome during its reform process, known as a "synodal path."

In Berlin, the Rev. Jan Korditschke, a Jesuit who works for the diocese preparing adults for baptism and helps out at the St. Canisius congregation, will lead blessings for queer couples at a worship service May 16.

"I am convinced that homosexual orientation is not bad, nor is homosexual love a sin," Korditschke

told The Associated Press in an interview Friday. "I want to celebrate the love of homosexuals with these blessings because the love of homosexuals is something good."

The 44-year-old said it is important that homosexuals can show themselves within the Catholic Church and gain more visibility long-term. He said he was not afraid of possible repercussions by high-ranking church officials or the Vatican.

"I stand behind what I am doing, though it is painful for me that I cannot do it in tune with the church leadership," Korditschke said, adding that "the homophobia of my church makes me angry and I am ashamed of it."

The head of the German Bishops Conference last month criticized the grassroots initiative for gay blessings which is called "Liebe Gewinnt" or "Love Wins."

Limburg Bishop Georg Baetzing said the blessings "are not suitable as an instrument of church political manifestations or political actions."

However, Germany's powerful lay organization, the Central Committee of German Catholics, or ZdK, which has been advocating for gay blessings since 2015, positioned itself once more in favor of them. It called the contentious document from Rome "not very helpful" and explicitly expressed its support for "Love Wins."

"These are celebrations of worship in which people express to God what moves them," Birgit Mock, the ZdK's spokeswoman for family affairs, told the AP.

"The fact that they ask for God's blessing and thank him for all the good in their lives — also for relationships lived with mutual respect and full of love — that is deeply based on the Gospel," Mock said, adding that she herself was planning to attend a church service with gay blessings in the western city of Hamm on Monday in which she would pray for "the success of the synodal path in which we, as a church, recognize sexuality as a positive strength."

The ZdK has been taking part in the "synodal path" meetings for more than a year with the German Bishops Conference. They are due to conclude in the fall. The meetings include talks about allowing priests to get married, the ordination of women and a different understanding of sexuality, among other reforms. The process was launched as part of the response to revelations of clergy sexual abuse.

"We're struggling in Germany with a lot of seriousness and intensive theological discourses for the right path," Mock added. "Things cannot continue the way they did — this is what the crimes and cover-ups of sexual abuse showed us."

"We need systemic changes, also regarding a reassessment of the ecclesiastical morality of sexuality," Mock said.

## **Afghanistan Taliban plan 3-day cease-fire for Eid holiday**

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Afghanistan's Taliban Monday announced a three-day cease-fire for the Eid-al-Fitr holiday this week marking the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

The cease-fire would begin on either Wednesday or Thursday. The Muslim calendar follows lunar cycles and the Eid holiday depends on the sighting of the new moon.

Just hours after the pending cease-fire was announced, a bus in southern Zabul province struck a road-side mine killing 11 people, said Interior Ministry spokesman Tariq Arian. At least 24 more people on the bus were injured. Improvised explosive devices litter the countryside and have been used extensively by the Taliban.

Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen said Taliban fighters have been ordered to stop all offensives, "to provide a peaceful and secure atmosphere to our compatriots . . . so that they may celebrate this joyous occasion with a greater peace of mind."

The cease-fire announcement comes amid heightened violence in the country and follows a brutal attack on a girls' school on Saturday that killed as many 60 people, most of them students between 11-15 years old. The death toll from the three explosions continues to climb.

The Taliban denied any responsibility and condemned the attack, which occurred in the mostly Shiite neighborhood of Dasht-e-Barchi in the west of the capital.

Attacks in the area are most often claimed by the Afghan Islamic State affiliate, but no group yet has claimed the attack on the school.

The cease-fire announcement also comes as the U.S. and NATO are withdrawing the last of their military forces. The final 2,500-3,500 American soldiers and roughly 7,000 allied NATO forces will leave by Sept. 11 at the latest.

The Afghan government has not yet responded to the cease-fire announcement.

## US trashes unwanted gear in Afghanistan, sells as scrap

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

BAGRAM, Afghanistan (AP) — The twisted remains of several all-terrain vehicles leaned precariously inside Baba Mir's sprawling scrapyards, alongside smashed shards that were once generators, tank tracks that have been dismantled into chunks of metal, and mountains of tents reduced to sliced up fabric.

It's all U.S. military equipment. The Americans are dismantling their portion of nearby Bagram Air Base, their largest remaining outpost in Afghanistan, and anything that they are not taking home or giving to the Afghan military, they destroy as completely as possible.

They do so as a security measure, to ensure equipment doesn't fall into militant hands. But to Mir and the dozens of other scrap sellers around Bagram, it's an infuriating waste.

"What they are doing is a betrayal of Afghans. They should leave," said Mir. "Like they have destroyed this vehicle, they have destroyed us."

As the last few thousand U.S. and NATO troops head out the door, ending their own 20-year war in Afghanistan, they are deep into a massive logistical undertaking, packing up bases around the country. They leave behind an Afghan population where many are deeply frustrated and angry. They feel abandoned to a legacy they blame at least in part on the Americans — a deeply corrupt U.S.-backed government and growing instability that could burst into brutal new phase of civil war.

The bitterness of the scrapyards owners is only a small part of that, and it's somewhat self-interested: they're angry in part because they could have profited more selling intact equipment. But it's been a common theme for the past two traumatic and destructive decades where actions the U.S. touted as necessary or beneficial only disillusioned Afghans who felt the repercussions.

At Bagram, northwest of the capital Kabul, and other bases, U.S. forces are inventorying equipment that will be returned to America. Tens of thousands of metal containers, about 20 feet long, are being shipped out on C-17 cargo planes or by road through Pakistan and Central Asia. As of last week, 60 C-17s packed with equipment had already left Afghanistan.

Officials are being secretive about what stays and what goes. Most of what is being shipped home is sensitive equipment never intended to stay behind, say U.S. Defense and Western officials who spoke on condition of anonymity in order to speak freely about departing troops.

Other equipment including helicopters, military vehicles, weapons and ammunition will be handed over to Afghanistan's National Defense and Security Forces. Some bases will be given to them as well. One of those most recently handed over was the New Antonik base in Helmand province, where Taliban are said to control roughly 80% of the rural area.

Destined for the scrap heap are equipment and vehicles that can neither be repaired nor transferred to Afghanistan's security forces because of poor condition.

So far about 1,300 pieces of equipment have been destroyed, said a U.S. military statement. There will be more before the final deadline for departure on Sept. 11, said one U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media.

The practice is not new. The same was done in 2014, when thousands of troops withdrew as the U.S. and NATO handed Afghanistan's security over to Afghans. More than 387 million pounds (176 million kilograms) of scrap from destroyed equipment and vehicles was sold to Afghans for \$46.5 million, a spokeswoman for the military's Defense Logistics Agency in Virginia said at the time.

Last month, around the time President Joe Biden announced that America was ending its 'forever war,'

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 30 of 55

Mir paid nearly \$40,000 for a container packed with 70 tons of trashed equipment.

He'll make money, he told The Associated Press, but it will be a fraction of what he could have made selling the vehicles if they'd been left intact, even if they weren't in running condition.

The parts would have been sold to the legions of auto repair shops across Afghanistan, he said. That can't happen now. They've been reduced to mangled pieces of metal that Mir sells for a few thousand Afghanis.

Sadat, another junk dealer in Bagram, who gave only one name, says similar scrap yards around the country are crammed with ruined U.S. equipment.

"They left us nothing," he said. "They don't trust us. They have destroyed our country. They are giving us only destruction."

The Western official familiar with the packing up process said U.S. forces face a dilemma: Hand off largely defunct but intact equipment and risk having them fall into hands of enemy forces, or trash them and anger Afghans.

To make his point, he recounted a story: Not so long ago, U.S. forces discovered two Hummers that had found their way into enemy hands. They had been refitted and packed with explosives. U.S. troops destroyed the vehicles, and the incident reinforced a policy of trashing equipment.

But Afghan scrapyards owners and dozens of others who sifted through the junk in the yard wondered what danger a treadmill could have posed to require it to be torn apart, or the long lengths of fire hose that had been cut to pieces, or the Hesco bags, once used to create large sand-barrier walls, now their powerful mesh fabric sliced and useless.

Dozens of tents cut and sliced sat in piles on the scrapyard floors. Nearby were fuel bags and gutted generators, tank tracks and gnarled pieces of metal that looked like the undercarriage of a vehicle.

"They destroyed our country and now they are giving us their garbage," said gray-bearded Hajji Gul, another junk dealer. "What are we to do with this?"

## Capitol rioters make questionable claims about police

By JACQUES BILLEAUD Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Joshua Matthew Black said in a YouTube video that he was protecting the officer at the U.S. Capitol who had been pepper sprayed and fallen to the ground as the crowd rushed the building entrance on Jan. 6.

"Let him out, he's done," Black claimed to have told rioters.

But federal prosecutors say surveillance footage doesn't back up Black's account. They said he acknowledged that he wanted to get the officer out of the way — because the cop was blocking his path inside.

At least a dozen of the 400 people charged so far in the Jan. 6 insurrection have made dubious claims about their encounters with officers at the Capitol. The most frequent argument is that they can't be guilty of anything, because police stood by and welcomed them inside, even though the mob pushed past police barriers, sprayed chemical irritants and smashed windows as chaos enveloped the government complex.

The January melee to stop the certification of Joe Biden's victory was instigated by a mob of supporters of then-President Donald Trump who have professed their love of law enforcement and derided the mass police overhaul protests that shook the nation last year following the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

But they quickly turned on police in one violent encounter after another.

"We backed you guys in the summer," one protester screamed at three officers cornered against a door by dozens of men screaming for them to get out of their way. "When the whole country hated you, we had your back!"

The Capitol Police didn't plan for a riot. They were badly outnumbered and it took hours for reinforcements to arrive — a massive failure that is now under investigation. Throughout the insurrection, police officers were injured, mocked, ridiculed and threatened. One Capitol Police officer, Brian Sicknick, died after the riot.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 31 of 55

Officers who spoke to The Associated Press said police had to decide on their own how to fight them off. There was no direction or plan and they were told not to fire on the crowd, they said. One cop ran from one side of the building to another, fighting hand-to-hand against rioters. Another decided to respond to any calls of officers in distress and spent three hours helping cops who had been immobilized by bear spray or other chemicals.

Three officers were able to handcuff one rioter. But a crowd swarmed the group and took the arrested man away with the handcuffs still on.

Still, some rioters claim police just gave up and told them that the building was now theirs. And a few — including one accused of trying to pull off an officer's gas mask in a bid to expose the officer to bear spray — have claimed to be protecting police.

Matthew Martin, an employee for a defense contractor from Santa Fe, New Mexico, who has acknowledged being inside the building, claimed police were opening doors for people as they walked into the Capitol.

Dan Cron, Martin's attorney, said a photo filed in court by authorities shows an officer using his back to hold a door open for people. No police barriers were in place when Martin walked into the Capitol area, nor was there anyone telling people they weren't allowed in the building, Cron said.

"He thought that was OK," Cron said, adding that his client was inside the Capitol for less than 10 minutes and didn't commit any violence. "He doesn't know what the policies and procedures at the Capitol are," Cron said. "He had never been there."

On the surface, images taken of officers who appear to step aside as the mob stormed the building could be beneficial to the rioters' claims. In the days after Jan. 6, those images fueled rumors that police had stood by on purpose, but they have not been substantiated.

Experts caution against drawing conclusions.

"The context will be very important in claiming officers welcomed in a crowd," said Loyola Law School professor Laurie Levenson. "They were trying to control a fast-developing, difficult, potentially explosive situation. So I don't think it's enough to say, 'The officer didn't tackle me.'"

Authorities say Michael Quick of Springfield, Missouri, claimed that he didn't know at the time that he wasn't allowed in the Capitol when he and his brother climbed in through an open window. He believed police were letting people in, despite seeing officers in riot gear.

Attorney Dee Wampler, who represents Michael and Stephen Quick, said he doesn't currently have proof for the claim the officers were letting people into the building, but he pointed out that he has thousands of documents from prosecutors still left to review.

"If this case was tried, the evidence would be that there was a fairly large number of officers that were standing around when my clients entered, and they didn't try to stop the Quicks," Wampler said, adding that his clients didn't commit any violence inside the Capitol.

But the argument did not work for Jacob Chansley, the Arizona man who sported face paint, a furry hat with horns and carried a spear during the riot.

Chansley's lawyer said an officer told his client that "the building is yours" and that he was among the third wave of rioters entering the Capitol.

In rejecting a request two months ago to free Chansley from jail, Judge Royce Lamberth said it wasn't clear who made the comment and concluded Chansley was unable to prove that officers waved him into the building, citing a video that the judge said proves that the Phoenix man was among the first wave of rioters in the building. The judge noted that rioters were crawling in through broken windows when Chansley entered the Capitol through a door.

Chansley's attorney, Albert Watkins, still insists that his client was in the third wave of rioters in the building and said it shouldn't shock the public that rioters who were hanging on to Trump's every word and believed the election was stolen legitimately believed they were allowed in the building. "It's what's in their hearts and minds," Watkins said.

In all, Joshua Black made two claims that he helped officers at the Capitol.

Before encountering the officer he claimed to have protected at a Capitol doorway, Black said, police shot

him in the cheek with a plastic projectile as he tried to keep another officer from being "bootstomped" by other rioters while outside the Capitol. But prosecutors say surveillance video doesn't depict an officer on the ground, nor is Black shown trying to help an officer.

Black's attorney, Clark Fleckinger II, didn't return a phone call and email seeking comment.

## House GOP leader says he backs ousting Cheney from No. 3 job

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Top House Republican Kevin McCarthy publicly endorsed Rep. Elise Stefanik for the post of No. 3 leader, cementing party support of the Donald Trump loyalist over Rep. Liz Cheney, an outspoken critic of the former president for promoting discredited claims that the 2020 election was stolen.

House Republicans could vote as early as Wednesday to remove Cheney, the highest-ranking woman in the Republican leadership and daughter of former Vice President Dick Cheney, and replace her with Stefanik, whose ascension has received Trump's backing.

Asked in an interview on Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures" whether he supported Stefanik, R-N.Y., for the job of Republican Conference chair, McCarthy responded: "Yes, I do."

"We want to be united in moving forward, and I think that is what will take place," he said in response to a question about whether he had the votes to oust Cheney, R-Wyo.

McCarthy said the leadership post must focus on a message "day in and day out" on what he said were the problems of the Biden administration.

Cheney has taken on Republicans, including McCarthy, R-Calif., saying those who indulge Trump's false claims of a stolen presidential election are "spreading THE BIG LIE, turning their back on the rule of law, and poisoning our democratic system." In an opinion essay Wednesday in The Washington Post, she denounced the "dangerous and anti-democratic Trump cult of personality," and warned her fellow Republicans against embracing or ignoring his statements "for fundraising and political purposes."

She also said McCarthy had "changed his story" after initially saying Trump "bears responsibility" for the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol. McCarthy initially criticized Trump's actions, and in a private call during the insurrection, had urged the then-president to call off the rioters. The GOP leader now says he does not believe Trump provoked the riot.

McCarthy on Sunday denied that Republicans' effort to remove Cheney was based on her views of Trump or being one of 10 House Republicans to vote to impeach Trump over the Jan. 6 riot. He said she was distracting from Republicans' bid to win back the House in 2022 and successfully oppose President Joe Biden's agenda, goals that McCarthy believes will need Trump's support.

McCarthy complained last week that he had "lost confidence" in Cheney and "had it with her" over her continuing remarks about Trump, according to a leaked recording of his exchange on "Fox and Friends."

Cheney actually has a more conservative voting record in the House than Stefanik, a onetime Trump critic who evolved into an ardent ally. She previously opposed Trump's tax cuts.

"You have this real battle right now in the party, this idea of let's just put our differences aside and be unified," said Rep. Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill., who also voted to impeach Trump. "They're going to get rid of Liz Cheney because they'd much rather pretend that the conspiracy is either real or not confront it than to actually confront it and maybe have to take the temporary licks to save this party and, in the long term, this country," he said on CBS' "Face the Nation."

The second-ranking House Republican leader, Rep. Steve Scalise of Louisiana, already has announced his support for Stefanik.

## Cyberattack on US pipeline is linked to criminal gang

By MAE ANDERSON and FRANK BAJAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The cyberextortion attempt that has forced the shutdown of a vital U.S. pipeline was carried out by a criminal gang known as DarkSide that cultivates a Robin Hood image of stealing from corporations and giving a cut to charity, two people close to the investigation said Sunday.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 33 of 55

The shutdown, meanwhile, stretched into its third day, with the Biden administration loosening regulations for the transport of petroleum products on highways as part of an "all-hands-on-deck" effort to avoid disruptions in the fuel supply.

Experts said that gasoline prices are unlikely to be affected if the pipeline is back to normal in the next few days but that the incident — the worst cyberattack to date on critical U.S. infrastructure — should serve as a wake-up call to companies about the vulnerabilities they face.

The pipeline, operated by Georgia-based Colonial Pipeline, carries gasoline and other fuel from Texas to the Northeast. It delivers roughly 45% of fuel consumed on the East Coast, according to the company.

It was hit by what Colonial called a ransomware attack, in which hackers typically lock up computer systems by encrypting data, paralyzing networks, and then demand a large ransom to unscramble it.

On Sunday, Colonial Pipeline said it was actively in the process of restoring some of its IT systems. It says it remains in contact with law enforcement and other federal agencies, including the Department of Energy, which is leading the federal government response. The company has not said what was demanded or who made the demand.

However, two people close to the investigation, speaking on condition of anonymity, identified the culprit as DarkSide. It is among ransomware gangs that have "professionalized" a criminal industry that has cost Western nations tens of billions of dollars in losses in the past three years.

DarkSide claims that it does not attack hospitals and nursing homes, educational or government targets and that it donates a portion of its take to charity. It has been active since August and, typical of the most potent ransomware gangs, is known to avoid targeting organizations in former Soviet bloc nations.

Colonial did not say whether it has paid or was negotiating a ransom, and DarkSide neither announced the attack on its dark web site nor responded to an Associated Press reporter's queries. The lack of acknowledgment usually indicates a victim is either negotiating or has paid.

On Sunday, Colonial Pipeline said it is developing a "system restart" plan. It said its main pipeline remains offline but some smaller lines are now operational.

"We are in the process of restoring service to other laterals and will bring our full system back online only when we believe it is safe to do so, and in full compliance with the approval of all federal regulations," the company said in a statement.

Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said Sunday that ransomware attacks are "what businesses now have to worry about," and that she will work "very vigorously" with the Department of Homeland Security to address the problem, calling it a top priority for the administration.

"Unfortunately, these sorts of attacks are becoming more frequent," she said on CBS' "Face the Nation." "We have to work in partnership with business to secure networks to defend ourselves against these attacks."

She said President Joe Biden was briefed on the attack.

"It's an all-hands-on-deck effort right now," Raimondo said. "And we are working closely with the company, state and local officials to make sure that they get back up to normal operations as quickly as possible and there aren't disruptions in supply."

The Department of Transportation issued a regional emergency declaration Sunday, relaxing hours-of-service regulations for drivers carrying gasoline, diesel, jet fuel and other refined petroleum products in 17 states and the District of Columbia. It lets them work extra or more flexible hours to make up for any fuel shortage related to the pipeline outage.

One of the people close to the Colonial investigation said that the attackers also stole data from the company, presumably for extortion purposes. Sometimes stolen data is more valuable to ransomware criminals than the leverage they gain by crippling a network, because some victims are loath to see sensitive information of theirs dumped online.

Security experts said the attack should be a warning for operators of critical infrastructure — including electrical and water utilities and energy and transportation companies — that not investing in updating their security puts them at risk of catastrophe.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 34 of 55

Ed Amoroso, CEO of TAG Cyber, said Colonial was lucky its attacker was at least ostensibly motivated only by profit, not geopolitics. State-backed hackers bent on more serious destruction use the same intrusion methods as ransomware gangs.

"For companies vulnerable to ransomware, it's a bad sign because they are probably more vulnerable to more serious attacks," he said. Russian cyberwarriors, for example, crippled the electrical grid in Ukraine during the winters of 2015 and 2016.

Cyberextortion attempts in the U.S. have become a death-by-a-thousand-cuts phenomenon in the past year, with attacks forcing delays in cancer treatment at hospitals, interrupting schooling and paralyzing police and city governments.

Tulsa, Oklahoma, this week became the 32nd state or local government in the U.S. to come under ransomware attack, said Brett Callow, a threat analyst with the cybersecurity firm Emsisoft.

Average ransoms paid in the U.S. jumped nearly threefold to more than \$310,000 last year. The average downtime for victims of ransomware attacks is 21 days, according to the firm Coveware, which helps victims respond.

David Kennedy, founder and senior principal security consultant at TrustedSec, said that once a ransomware attack is discovered, companies have little recourse but to completely rebuild their infrastructure, or pay the ransom.

"Ransomware is absolutely out of control and one of the biggest threats we face as a nation," Kennedy said. "The problem we face is most companies are grossly underprepared to face these threats."

Colonial transports gasoline, diesel, jet fuel and home heating oil from refineries on the Gulf Coast through pipelines running from Texas to New Jersey. Its pipeline system spans more than 5,500 miles (8,850 kilometers), transporting more than 100 million gallons (380 million liters) a day.

Debnil Chowdhury at the research firm IHSMarkit said that if the outage stretches to one to three weeks, gas prices could begin to rise.

"I wouldn't be surprised, if this ends up being an outage of that magnitude, if we see 15- to 20-cent rise in gas prices over next week or two," he said.

The Justice Department has a new task force dedicated to countering ransomware attacks.

While the U.S. has not suffered any serious cyberattacks on its critical infrastructure, officials say Russian hackers in particular are known to have infiltrated some crucial sectors, positioning themselves to do damage if armed conflict were to break out. While there is no evidence the Kremlin benefits financially from ransomware, U.S. officials believe President Vladimir Putin savors the mayhem it wreaks in adversaries' economies.

Iranian hackers have also been aggressive in trying to gain access to utilities, factories and oil and gas facilities. In one case in 2013, they broke into the control system of a U.S. dam.

## More Jerusalem clashes on eve of contentious Israeli parade

By ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli police faced off with Palestinian protesters Sunday in another night of clashes in east Jerusalem, a day before Israeli nationalists planned to parade through the Old City in an annual flag-waving display meant to cement Israeli claims to the contested area.

The late-night skirmishes raised the likelihood of further clashes Monday during the annual Jerusalem Day celebrations. Israeli police gave the go-ahead to the parade Sunday, despite days of unrest and soaring Israeli-Palestinian tensions at a flashpoint holy site and in a nearby Arab neighborhood where Jewish settlers are trying to evict dozens of Palestinians from their homes.

Addressing a special Cabinet meeting ahead of Jerusalem Day, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday that Israel "will not allow any extremists to destabilize the calm in Jerusalem. We will enforce law and order decisively and responsibly."

"We will continue to maintain freedom of worship for all faiths, but we will not allow violent disturbances," he said. At the same time, he said, "We emphatically reject the pressures not to build in Jerusalem."

The United States again expressed its "serious concerns" about the situation in Jerusalem, including

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 35 of 55

clashes between Palestinian worshippers in Jerusalem's Old City, home to sites sacred by Muslims and Jews, and Israeli police, as well as the expected expulsion of Palestinian families.

Washington made its concerns during a phone call between National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and his Israeli counterpart. Sullivan urged Israel "to pursue appropriate measures to ensure calm during Jerusalem Day commemorations," according to a statement by National Security Council spokeswoman Emily Horne.

Jerusalem Day is meant to celebrate Israel's capture of east Jerusalem, home to the Old City and its sensitive holy sites, in the 1967 Mideast war. But the annual event is widely perceived as provocative, as hardline nationalist Israelis, guarded by police, march through the Damascus Gate of the Old City and through the Muslim Quarter to the Western Wall, the holiest site where Jews can pray.

This year the march coincides with the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, a time of heightened religious sensitivities, and follows weeks of clashes. That, combined with Palestinian anger over the eviction plan in the nearby Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, could set the stage for an especially volatile day.

Amos Gilad, a former senior defense official, told Army Radio that the parade should be canceled or at least kept away from Damascus Gate, saying "the powder keg is burning and can explode at any time." Israel's public broadcaster Kan said the final route of the parade had not yet been decided.

In recent days, dozens of Palestinians have been wounded in clashes near the Al-Aqsa mosque compound in the Old City. The site, known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary, is considered the holiest site in Judaism and the third holiest in Islam. It has been a tinderbox for serious violence in the past.

"The occupier plays with fire, and tampering with Jerusalem is very dangerous," Saleh Arouri, a top Hamas official, told the militant group's Al-Aqsa TV station.

Israel captured east Jerusalem, along with the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in the 1967 war. The Palestinians seek all three areas for a future state, with east Jerusalem as their capital.

The violence, along with the planned evictions in east Jerusalem, have drawn condemnations from Israel's Arab allies and expressions of concern from the United States, Europe and the United Nations.

In Sunday night's clashes, Palestinian protesters shouted at police and pelted them with rocks and bottles, while police fired stun grenades and a water cannon to disperse the crowds. Palestinian medics said at least 14 protesters were injured.

The clashes were less intense than the previous two nights. Police said over 20 police officers had been injured in recent days.

But there were signs the violence was beginning to spread.

Late Sunday, Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired four rockets toward Israel, setting off air raid sirens in southern city of Ashkelon and nearby areas, the Israeli military said. It said one rocket was intercepted, while two others exploded inside Gaza. Early Monday, Israeli tanks and artillery struck several Hamas posts near the border in retaliation for the rocket fire. There were no reports of injuries.

Earlier in the day, Israel carried out an airstrike on a Hamas post in response to another rocket attack. Gazan protesters affiliated with Hamas militant group also launched incendiary balloons into southern Israel during the day, causing dozens of fires.

In Jerusalem, meanwhile, Israeli police also clashed with hundreds of Arab students at Israel's Hebrew University, using stun grenades to disperse the crowd. Police said 15 people were arrested at another protest in the northern city of Haifa.

Jordan and Egypt, the first two countries to strike peace deals with Israel, both summoned senior Israeli diplomats to condemn the Israeli actions.

Jordan's King Abdullah II, who acts as custodian of Jerusalem's Muslim holy sites, condemned what he called "Israeli violations and escalating practices" and urged Israel to halt its "provocations against Jerusalemites."

At the Vatican, Pope Francis said he was following the events in Jerusalem with worry and called for an end to the clashes.

"Violence only generates violence," he told the public gathered at St. Peter's Square.

With tensions high, the Israeli Supreme Court postponed a decision on the possible evictions in Sheikh

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 36 of 55

Jarrah. The decision had been expected for Monday, but was pushed back by up to 30 days in light of "circumstances," the court said

Palestinians and international rights groups portray the planned evictions as a part of a campaign by Israel to drive Palestinians from traditionally Arab neighborhoods, especially in the heart of Jerusalem. Israel has cast the evictions case as a real estate dispute.

The flare-up in hostilities comes at a crucial point in Israel's political crisis after longtime leader Netanyahu failed to form a governing coalition. His opponents are now working to build an alternate government. If they succeed, Netanyahu would be pushed to the opposition for the first time in 12 years.

## 2 Catholic bishops at odds over Biden receiving Communion

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

They share Roman Catholicism as a faith and California as their home base. Yet there's a deep gulf between Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco and Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego in the high-stakes debate over whether politicians who support abortion rights should be denied Communion.

Cordileone, who has long established himself as a forceful anti-abortion campaigner, recently has made clear his view that such political figures — whose ranks include President Joe Biden and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi — should not receive Communion because of their stance on the issue. The archbishop issued a pastoral letter on the topic May 1 and reinforced the message in an hourlong interview Friday with the Catholic television network EWTN.

"To those who are advocating for abortion, I would say, 'This is killing. Please stop the killing. You're in position to do something about it,'" he told the interviewer.

In neither the letter nor the interview did Cordileone mention Pelosi, who represents San Francisco, by name. But he has criticized her in the past for stances on abortion that directly contradict Catholic teaching.

McElroy, in a statement published Wednesday by the Jesuit magazine *America*, assailed the campaign to exclude Biden and other like-minded Catholic officials from Communion.

"It will bring tremendously destructive consequences," McElroy wrote. "The Eucharist is being weaponized and deployed as a tool in political warfare. This must not happen."

The polarized viewpoints of the two prelates illustrate how divisive this issue could be if, as expected, it comes before the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops at its national assembly starting June 16. There are plans for the bishops to vote on whether the USCCB's Committee on Doctrine should draft a document saying Biden and other Catholic public figures with similar views on abortion should refrain from Communion.

In accordance with existing USCCB policy, any such document is likely to leave decisions on withholding Communion up to individual bishops.

Biden, the second Catholic U.S. president, attends Mass regularly, worshipping at his home in Wilmington, Delaware, and in Washington.

The archbishop of Washington, Cardinal Wilton Gregory, has made it clear that Biden is welcome to receive Communion at churches he oversees. Bishop William Koenig, appointed April 30 to head the Wilmington diocese, said he would gladly speak with Biden about his views on abortion but did not say whether he would allow him to continue receiving Communion, as Koenig's predecessor had done.

It's considered unlikely that Biden would heed any call to forgo Communion, but a USCCB document urging him to do so would be a remarkable rebuke nonetheless.

Cordileone, in his pastoral letter, wrote that it's the responsibility of Catholic clergy "to correct Catholics who erroneously, and sometimes stubbornly, promote abortion."

Initially, this rebuke should come in private conversations between "the erring Catholic" and his or her priest or bishop, wrote Cordileone, who then noted that such conversations are often fruitless.

"Because we are dealing with public figures and public examples of cooperation in moral evil, this correction can also take the public form of exclusion from the reception of Holy Communion," he wrote. "This is a bitter medicine, but the gravity of the evil of abortion can sometimes warrant it."

In the 2020 presidential election, Catholic voters split their votes almost evenly between Biden and Re-

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 37 of 55

publican Donald Trump. National polls have consistently shown that a majority of U.S. Catholics believe abortion should be legal in at least some cases.

Were Biden to be excluded from Communion, McElroy wrote, "fully half the Catholics in the United States will see this action as partisan in nature, and it will bring the terrible partisan divisions that have plagued our nation into the very act of worship that is intended by God to cause and signify our oneness."

McElroy also questioned why abortion was the overarching focus of some bishops, while the sin of racism has not been prominent in their comments.

"It will be impossible to convince large numbers of Catholics in our nation that this omission does not spring from a desire to limit the impact of exclusion to Democratic public leaders," McElroy wrote.

Toward the close of his statement, McElroy quoted Pope Francis as saying Communion is "not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak."

Cordileone, in an addendum to his pastoral letter, sought to explain its timing.

"I have been working on this Pastoral Letter for a long time, but did not want to publish it during the election year, precisely to avoid further confusion among those who would misperceive this as 'politicizing' the issue," he wrote. "Regardless of which political party is in power at a given moment, we all need to review some basic truths and moral principles."

## Long suspected of murder, she confessed but avoided prison

By FELICIA FONSECA Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — There was no shortage of tips about who killed Pamela Pitts, a rowdy but compassionate 19-year-old whose body was found burned beyond recognition in a pile of trash in 1988.

A Satanic cult. A drug dealer. A cowboy. An ex-lover. A guy nicknamed "Halftrack." Or maybe it was an overdose at a spot in central Arizona where people went to party.

It would take more than 30 years, some prison calls and an eyebrow-raising plea deal before a convicted murderer would confess and the mystery would partly be solved. But in a shocking twist, a court recently agreed Pitts' killer wouldn't spend any more time behind bars.

Over the years, investigators couldn't pin down the evidence they needed to arrest anyone. The tips that poured in didn't add up. The slaying had stoked widespread fear about a killer on the loose around Prescott, a tourist town about 100 miles (160 kilometers) north of Phoenix.

And then the case went cold.

Yet, suspicion followed Pitts' roommate, Shelly Harmon, for the 20 years she spent in prison for fatally shooting her ex-boyfriend, Raymond F. Clerx. As her sentence was ending, police reopened the Pitts case and started monitoring Harmon's phone calls, eventually collecting 20 hours' worth of recordings, according to court documents obtained by The Associated Press.

One call gave prosecutors what they said they needed to connect Harmon to Pitts' killing. In it, Harmon's father said she never told him what actually happened.

"I had a moment. I had a huge moment," Harmon replied.

Dennis McGrane of the Yavapai County Attorney's Office saw it as an admission of guilt.

"Like a sudden quarrel with the roommate," he said. "She wasn't planning it, but she did do it."

Harmon's attorney, Dwane Cates, said statement could have referred to Clerx's death.

Clerx had wanted to end the relationship and was going to take their dogs. In a burst of anger, Harmon shot him as he lay on the roof of a car watching planes overhead. She stored his body in the trunk of her car for two weeks before the smell became overpowering and she dropped it in a mineshaft.

Before confessing, Harmon said, "I loved him. I was planning to spend the rest of my life with this man."

With Pitts' death, Harmon's story changed over the years: She said Clerx was her alibi. She said she was never at the party spot outside town where Pitts went missing on Sept. 16, 1988. She claimed another roommate strangled Pitts. At one point, Harmon declared, "I never killed my roommate. I never wanted to kill anyone. I loved her dearly."

Prosecutors tried to draw similarities between the two cases to back up a theory that when Harmon felt

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 38 of 55

threatened or abandoned, she killed.

Cates called that a stretch and argued prosecutors may have well said, "They were both human, they both breathed air."

What prosecutors did have is that Harmon was furious with Pitts over money, for wanting to move out and for sharing news of Harmon's pregnancy that she wanted to keep from her father, according to court documents.

The same day Pitts went missing, Harmon drove around Prescott looking for her and saying she'd kill her if she found her, the documents say. Harmon also said she knew how to conceal a killing: by burning a body or dumping it down a mineshaft — a statement a judge said could be included at a trial that was supposed to start last week.

But prosecutors were dealt a huge blow when the court ruled no evidence of Clerx's death could be introduced. The risk of unfair prejudice was too great, the court said.

Plus, the autopsy was inconclusive because of the extent of Pitts' burns. The court ruled that no one could suggest it was a homicide or probable homicide, though that was listed on the report. Pitts was identified through dental records.

Prosecutors acknowledged that they faced a trial without the evidence they had hoped to present. Some witnesses also had died or their memories faded, and the records were incomplete. That's when they considered a plea deal.

"It weighed heavily on us, guaranteeing an outcome versus taking a chance at trial," McGrane said.

Harmon maintained the evidence was stronger against someone else. A former lead detective on the case recommended charges against another woman in 1990 and would have been the defense's star witness, Cates wrote in court documents.

He accused prosecutors of intentionally delaying the case, not taking it to a grand jury until a month after the former detective died in 2017. Harmon was charged with a first-degree murder.

Yavapai County sheriff's Lt. Victor Dartt, who got the case as a new detective in 2011, said he followed leads until they no longer checked out.

"Shelly was the only one that I could keep corroborating," he said.

Harmon was living outside Carson City, Nevada, after being released from prison for Clerx's death. She got married, managed rental properties, and did bookkeeping and tax work. Neighbors and friends called her a brilliant and generous Christian woman, entrusting her to care for them, their pets and their homes.

Harmon had not registered as a felon as required in Nevada, so she was picked up on that allegation and told of the murder charge once she got to a sheriff's office, Dartt said.

In March, she agreed to plead guilty to second-degree murder and detail how she killed Pitts. Until then, authorities thought someone else may have witnessed the killing and had not come forward.

Harmon said she was alone. In court, Harmon recounted that she was upset Pitts was late on rent and had overdrawn a joint bank account. So, she went looking for her, the two fought and Harmon said, "I just lost it."

She said she hit Pitts repeatedly against the ground until she was no longer moving, no longer breathing. As voices drew near, Harmon said, she "freaked out."

"I was thinking, 'Oh, my God, she's dead, she's dead, and I killed her,'" said Harmon, whose maiden name was Norgard.

The Pitts' family found the account unbelievable, ridiculous and weak, like half a story. Harmon did not talk about how Pitts' body was burned.

"It was just to get out of jail," said Pitts' brother, Paul Pitts Jr. "She got a golden ticket, and she got away with murder."

Harmon was sentenced to 20 years but received credit for the time she served for Clerx's death and the years she spent in jail awaiting trial in Pitts' slaying.

Still, the Pitts family celebrated — it wasn't justice, but it was an ending to the decadeslong case. They remembered Pitts, who exuded 1980s rock style and whose room always smelled like Aqua Net hair spray.

She loved animals, took care of the elderly, was kind and bubbly but also had a tough, know-it-all side, her family said.

Her remains were cremated, and her family spread the ashes by Thumb Butte, a geographical landmark in Prescott, where she liked to hike and visit a creek.

Her father bought dinner and drinks at a restaurant after the March 1 court hearing. The family crowded around a framed picture of Pitts and smiled, thankful for the work law enforcement put into the case.

Pitts' mother, Carol, said Harmon will have to live with killing her daughter for the rest of her "miserable life."

None of Harmon's family or friends were at her final court hearing, according to court documents.

She's barred by the plea agreement from talking about the case. And her usually chatty attorney, Cates, would only say, "This is a very sad case all the way around, and it just needed to end."

Harmon, now 50, is back in Nevada, friends say. Mary Burgoon said she's had a few meals with Harmon and her husband. She said Harmon was unjustly jailed and believes Harmon pleaded guilty only to avoid prison time.

"Wouldn't you if that was the only way you could get out of there?" said Burgoon, a past president of the Carson City Republican Women's Club. "I do not believe that she did it."

## Man kills 6, then self, at Colorado birthday party shooting

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (AP) — A gunman opened fire at a birthday party in Colorado, slaying six adults before killing himself Sunday, police said.

The shooting happened just after midnight in a mobile home park on the east side of Colorado Springs, police said.

Officers arrived at a trailer to find six dead adults and a man with serious injuries who died later at a hospital, the Colorado Springs Gazette reported.

The suspected shooter was the boyfriend of a female victim at the party attended by friends, family and children. He walked inside and opened fire before shooting himself, police said.

The birthday party was for one of the people killed, police said.

Neighbor Yenifer Reyes told The Denver Post she woke to the sound of many gunshots.

"I thought it was a thunderstorm," Reyes said. "Then I started hearing sirens."

Police brought children out of the trailer and put them into at least one patrol car, she said, adding that the children were "crying hysterically."

Authorities say the children, who weren't hurt in the attack, have been placed with relatives.

Police on Sunday hadn't released the identities of the shooter or victims. Authorities say a motive wasn't immediately known.

"My heart breaks for the families who have lost someone they love and for the children who have lost their parents," Colorado Springs Police Chief Vince Niski said in a statement.

It was Colorado's worst mass shooting since a gunman killed 10 people at a Boulder supermarket March 22.

"The tragic shooting in Colorado Springs is devastating," Gov. Jared Polis said Sunday, "especially as many of us are spending the day celebrating the women in our lives who have made us the people we are today."

Colorado Springs, population 465,000, is Colorado's second-biggest city after Denver.

In 2015, a man shot three people to death at random before dying in a shootout with police in Colorado Springs on Halloween. Less than a month later, a man killed three people, including a police officer, and injured eight others in a shooting at a Planned Parenthood clinic in the city.

## Micronesians feel hatred in Hawaii, decry police shooting

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Comments on social media about a 16-year-old boy shot and killed by Honolulu police have been so hateful that a Catholic priest, who hails from the same small Pacific island as the teen's

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 40 of 55

family, hesitates to repeat them.

"It is really bad and I don't want to say it as a priest," said the Rev. Romple Emwalu, parochial vicar at a parish outside Honolulu who was born in Chuuk in the Federated States of Micronesia. "But, like, 'Micronesians are dirt.'"

Some in the Micronesian community say the April 5 shooting of Iremamber Sykap highlights the racism they face in Hawaii, a place they expected to be more welcoming to fellow islanders.

Police say Sykap was driving a stolen car when he led officers on a chase through oncoming traffic after a series of crimes including an armed robbery and purse-snatching.

Sykap's family is from Chuuk, but he was born in Guam, a U.S. territory, said his mother, Yovita Sykap. "He's American," she said.

Of Hawaii's 1.5 million residents, 38% are Asian — mostly Japanese and Filipino — 26% are white, 2% are Black, and many people are multiple ethnicities, according to U.S. census figures. Native Hawaiians account for about 20% of the population.

There are an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 Micronesians in Hawaii, who began migrating here in bigger numbers in the 1990s in search of economic and educational opportunities, said Josie Howard of We are Oceania, which advocates for the Micronesian community.

The Compact of Free Association allows citizens from the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau to live and work freely in the United States in exchange for allowing the U.S. military to control strategic land and water areas in the region.

Located about 2,500 miles (4,000 kilometers) southwest of Hawaii, the Federated States of Micronesia consists of 607 islands with a population of about 107,000.

The relationship with the U.S. seems to make people in Hawaii incorrectly believe that Micronesians are a drain on social benefits, said Sha Merirei Ongelungel, a Honolulu resident.

A Palauan born and raised in Oregon, Ongelungel came to Hawaii "because all I wanted to do was to fit in and be around Pacific Islanders and know what it was like to not stand out like a sore thumb."

When she first got here, a cousin advised her to tell potential employers she was from Oregon. "If you tell them you're Micronesian, you won't get a job," she said her cousin told her.

She wasn't prepared for the racism in Hawaii, and so she left after a year.

Ongelungel said she felt equipped to deal with the racism on the U.S. mainland against those who are not white. "I didn't have training to fight people who looked like my actual blood relatives," she said.

She returned to Hawaii nearly 15 years later.

What might be difficult for a priest to repeat, Ongelungel doesn't hesitate to describe: "People talking about killing cockroaches, calling for a purge on Micronesians, calling to have us — even those of us who are U.S. citizens who are born in the United States — calling for us to be deported, calling for the parents of minors to be incarcerated, you name it."

She said that whenever there's a crime in the news involving someone who is Micronesian, there's an uptick in hateful comments, but "they never fully go away."

After the shooting, some local media outlets reported about Sykap's criminal history as a juvenile.

"I want to press people on why his past matters when he's a child," Ongelungel said.

The police department has offered little information on the shooting. The department won't release body camera footage because there were other minors in the car with Sykap.

A little more than a week after the shooting, Honolulu police shot and killed a Black man who had entered a home that wasn't his, sat down and took off his shoes, prompting a frightened occupant to call 911. Chief Susan Ballard said race wasn't a factor in that incident.

In response to protests in other parts of the country decrying police brutality against minorities, Ballard, who is white, has said that in general, that degree of racism doesn't exist here.

"Officers are extensively trained to respond to the individual's behavior and actions, not race," said police spokeswoman Michelle Yu.

Eric Seitz, an attorney not involved in the Sykap case who represents families of others who have been



killed by police, says Honolulu police have similar issues with race as other U.S. cities.

"More and more people are coming to realize that Hawaii is not different and that just as they release video footage in all of these other cities for all of these other incidents, it should be obligatory as a matter of public responsibility to release the similar information here," Seitz said.

Nothing in the law prevents police from blurring out faces of the other juveniles in the car with Sykap, he said.

Jacque Esser, a state deputy public defender, said police will often stop Micronesians for no reason or call them cockroaches. "It's so blatant," she said.

Esser believes the department leaked Sykap's sealed records to the media to demonize him and now are relying on juvenile confidentiality to keep the footage from becoming public.

The department denies doing so. "Juvenile arrest records are generally confidential, and department policy prohibits the release of a suspect's prior arrest history," Yu said.

Ann Hansen befriended Sykap's family in 2008 and became godmother to him and four of his siblings after noticing they walked 3 miles (5 kilometers) each way to get to the Cathedral of St. Andrew, an Episcopal church in downtown Honolulu.

People called him "Baby" because he was the youngest of eight, she said. Hansen said she used to drive him to ukulele lessons.

There has also been an outpouring of support for the slain teen, including a memorial for Sykap at a street corner near where the shooting took place. Some people have kept round-the-clock vigil at the site, decorated with floral bouquets, balloons, candles and a stuffed bear.

## Medina Spirit could lose Ky. Derby win; track bans Baffert

By GARY B. GRAVES AP Sports Writer

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Medina Spirit's victory in the Kentucky Derby is in serious jeopardy because of a failed postrace drug test, one that led Churchill Downs to suspend Hall of Fame trainer Bob Baffert on Sunday in the latest scandal to plague the sport.

Baffert denied all wrongdoing and promised to be fully transparent with the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission during its investigation. Baffert's barn received word Saturday that Medina Spirit had tested positive for an excessive amount of the steroid betamethasone, which is sometimes used to treat pain and inflammation in horses.

Medina Spirit's win over Mandaloun in the Derby stands — for now.

"To be clear, if the findings are upheld, Medina Spirit's results in the Kentucky Derby will be invalidated and Mandaloun will be declared the winner," Churchill Downs officials said in a statement shortly after Baffert held a hastily planned morning news conference outside his barn to announce and respond to the allegations.

The track said failure to comply with the rules and medication protocols jeopardizes the safety of horses and jockeys, the sport's integrity and the Derby's reputation.

"Churchill Downs will not tolerate it," the statement read. "Given the seriousness of the alleged offense, Churchill Downs will immediately suspend Bob Baffert, the trainer of Medina Spirit, from entering any horses at Churchill Downs Racetrack."

Medina Spirit is expected to run in the Preakness on Saturday, barring some abrupt change in plans or a decision from officials at Pimlico or Maryland's racing commission that would prevent him from entering the second jewel of the Triple Crown.

Officials from 1/ST Racing, a branding arm of the Stronach Group that owns and operates Pimlico, and the Maryland Jockey Club said Sunday they would consult with state authorities and that "any decision regarding the entry of Medina Spirit in the 146th Preakness Stakes will be made after review of the facts." Officials rescheduled the post position draw for Tuesday afternoon, moving it back a day in light of the uncertainty.

"I got the biggest gut-punch in racing for something that I didn't do," Baffert said of the failed drug test.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 42 of 55

"And it's disturbing. It's an injustice to the horse. ... I don't know what's going on in racing right now, but there's something not right. I don't feel embarrassed. I feel like I was wronged. We're going to do our own investigation. We're going to be transparent with the racing commission, like we've always been.

"He's a great horse. He doesn't deserve this. He ran a gallant race," Baffert added.

The only horse to be disqualified for medication after winning the Derby is Dancer's Image in 1968.

Medina Spirit is Baffert's fifth horse known to have failed a drug test in just over a year. Flanked by his attorney Craig Robertson, Baffert said his barn was told that Medina Spirit was found to have 21 picograms of betamethasone — slightly more than double what the trainer said was the allowable amount — in a postrace sample.

Betamethasone is the same drug that was found in the system of Gamine, another Baffert-trained horse who finished third in the Kentucky Oaks last September. Gamine was eventually disqualified from that finish because of that test and Baffert was fined \$1,500. Betamethasone is legal under Kentucky racing rules, though it must be cleared 14 days before a horse races.

"I'm not a conspiracy theorist," Baffert said. "I know everybody is not out to get me, but there's definitely something wrong. Why is it happening to me? You know, there's problems in racing, but it's not Bob Baffert."

Mandaloun, which lost the Derby by a half-length, is not going to the Preakness. If Mandaloun is declared the Kentucky Derby winner, that would mean the Triple Crown pursuit for 2021 would end right there. It is unknown how long Kentucky officials will take to determine whether the results of the Derby should stand or will change.

If Medina Spirit is disqualified, his connections will not receive the \$1.86 million winner's share of the Derby purse money. But for bettors, anything that happens next won't matter — those who cashed in on Medina Spirit still win, those who didn't still lose and those who backed Mandaloun missed out on a winning ticket that would have returned more than \$50 on a \$2 wager.

Baffert was planning to saddle Medina Spirit and Concert Tour in the Preakness, going for a record eighth victory in that race. Except for 2020 when the races were run out of order due to the coronavirus pandemic, Baffert is undefeated with a Derby winner in the Preakness.

Last month, Baffert won an appeals case before the Arkansas Racing Commission after he had been suspended by Oaklawn Park stewards for 15 days for a pair of positive drug tests involving two of his horses that won at the track on May 2, 2020. The horses tested positive for the painkiller lidocaine, which Baffert said they were exposed to inadvertently.

But as Baffert insisted that horse racing can do better preventing doping, he also acknowledged the spotlight.

"I know I'm the most scrutinized trainer and have millions of eyes on me. But you know what? I don't have a problem with that," Baffert said. "The last thing I want to do is do something that would jeopardize the greatest 2 minutes in sports."

Animal Wellness Action executive director Marty Irby said in a statement that racing authorities "should throw the book" at those found guilty of violations.

The failed drug test is just another in a long series of events shadowing the sport — and the Derby, its best known and most prestigious race — in recent years.

Maximum Security crossed the line first in the 2019 Kentucky Derby before being disqualified by Churchill Downs stewards for interference in what was an unprecedented move. Country House, which crossed the line second in that race, is now considered the winner.

In March 2020, Jason Servis — who was Maximum Security's trainer — was part of a sweeping indictment that involved trainers, veterinarians and pharmacists in a horse doping ring. Baffert faced the doping allegations in Arkansas and Kentucky last year with Gamine, and now this.

"I'm worried about our sport," Baffert said. "Our sport, we've taken a lot of hits as a sport. These are pretty serious accusations here, but we're going to get to the bottom of it and find out. We know we didn't do it."

## Tearful reunions mark second Mother's Day under pandemic

By CLAUDIA LAUER, MICHELLE LIU and ED WHITE Associated Press

Last Mother's Day, they celebrated with bacon and eggs over FaceTime. This time, Jean Codianni of Los Angeles flew to New Jersey to surprise her 74-year-old mother, now that both have been vaccinated against the disease that has stolen uncountable hugs and kisses around the world.

"You forget how your mom smells, how she looks. It's like, she never looks as beautiful as the last time you saw her," Codianni said. "We understand how privileged we are, how lucky we are. Hundreds of thousands of people don't get to celebrate Mother's Day, or are celebrating it under a veil of grief."

Joyous reunions among vaccinated parents and children across the country marked this year's Mother's Day, the second one celebrated during the coronavirus pandemic. Some families separated by worries of transmitting the virus saw each other for the first time in more than a year, emboldened by their vaccinations, as many others grieved for mothers lost to the virus.

For Pam Grimes, Mother's Day last year remains a fuzzy yet "scary and depressing" memory, blurred together with the rest of the pandemic's early months. In contrast, when her vaccinated adult grandchildren gathered at her Panama City, Florida, home to celebrate this year, they hugged and laughed and teased each other.

"The whole world felt better," Grimes said.

Historian Andy Verhoff didn't see his mother for Thanksgiving, Christmas or New Year's. But for Mother's Day, he drove from his home in Columbus, Ohio, to spend a day in rural Putnam County, Ohio with her, stopping at the first historical marker they'd worked on together. Both mother and son were vaccinated, giving them the confidence to take their masks off — which made it feel like a normal, pre-pandemic day, Verhoff said.

"We never let the mask get in the way of things," Verhoff said. "It was just nice to not have my glasses fog up."

Some long-term care facilities across the country prepared for the special day by facilitating in-person visits, especially as some states have relaxed visitation rules in recent months given rising vaccination rates and dropping case numbers.

In suburban Detroit, residents with dementia at Addington Place lately have been allowed to see visitors in person. But the big change Sunday was their ability to leave for a special meal with family members and return without being quarantined. Moms were also receiving roses from staff.

"Residents can feel the energy now that families are coming in," said Kelley Fulkerson, business office manager at Addington in Northville. "There is excitement among staff — and tears and excitement among families waiting to see loved ones."

St. Joseph of Harahan — an assisted living facility in Harahan, Louisiana — held a parking lot parade Friday with dozens of cars honking and family members yelling well wishes for Mother's Day.

Residents in masks sat behind caution tape and waved to loved ones whom they had waited to see for more than a year in some cases. Workers passed out balloons and flowers.

Cathedral Village, a nursing home and rehabilitation center in Philadelphia, was spacing out weekend visits for Mother's Day, said supervisor Hannah Han. Social workers were helping some families that wanted to take people home to celebrate. Visits in private rooms required masks and gowns.

Mary Daniel, who last year took a job as a dishwasher so she could see her husband at a long-term care facility in Jacksonville, Florida, said holidays are important to maintain traditions with family. She said spouses and others should be recognized as essential caregivers who offer emotional support and be allowed inside.

"We are seeing progress with people being allowed to see loved ones and visit or take them home for holidays, but we are still seeing individual facilities who refuse to follow the federal guidance on allowing visits," said Daniel, who started a group called Caregivers for Compromise-Because Isolation Kills Too.

Still, the virus limited the holiday this year for Winslow Swan, who served as his 83-year-old mother's primary caretaker in Ellijay, Georgia, until last year, when health troubles forced him to move her into a

nursing home in town during the middle of the pandemic.

New COVID-19 cases in the past month has led to the facility to tighten its visitation restrictions, and Swan likely won't see his mother for this year's holiday, though he has considered an impromptu window visit.

"It's sad," he said. "I know the room that's she's in and there is a possibility that I can find her and see her through the window."

## House GOP leader says he backs ousting Cheney from No. 3 job

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Top House Republican Kevin McCarthy on Sunday publicly endorsed Rep. Elise Stefanik for the post of No. 3 leader, cementing party support of the Donald Trump loyalist over Rep. Liz Cheney, an outspoken critic of the former president for promoting discredited claims that the 2020 election was stolen.

House Republicans could vote as early as Wednesday to remove Cheney, the highest-ranking woman in the Republican leadership and daughter of former Vice President Dick Cheney, and replace her with Stefanik, whose ascension has received Trump's backing.

Asked in an interview on Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures" whether he supported Stefanik, R-N.Y., for the job of Republican Conference chair, McCarthy responded: "Yes, I do."

"We want to be united in moving forward, and I think that is what will take place," he said in response to a question about whether he had the votes to oust Cheney, R-Wyo.

McCarthy said the leadership post must focus on a message "day in and day out" on what he said were the problems of the Biden administration.

Cheney has taken on Republicans, including McCarthy, R-Calif., saying those who indulge Trump's false claims of a stolen presidential election are "spreading THE BIG LIE, turning their back on the rule of law, and poisoning our democratic system." In an opinion essay Wednesday in The Washington Post, she denounced the "dangerous and anti-democratic Trump cult of personality," and warned her fellow Republicans against embracing or ignoring his statements "for fundraising and political purposes."

She also said McCarthy had "changed his story" after initially saying Trump "bears responsibility" for the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol. McCarthy initially criticized Trump's actions, and in a private call during the insurrection, had urged the then-president to call off the rioters. The GOP leader now says he does not believe Trump provoked the riot.

McCarthy on Sunday denied that Republicans' effort to remove Cheney was based on her views of Trump or being one of 10 House Republicans to vote to impeach Trump over the Jan. 6 riot. He said she was distracting from Republicans' bid to win back the House in 2022 and successfully oppose President Joe Biden's agenda, goals that McCarthy believes will need Trump's support.

McCarthy complained last week that he had "lost confidence" in Cheney and "had it with her" over her continuing remarks about Trump, according to a leaked recording of his exchange on "Fox and Friends."

Cheney actually has a more conservative voting record in the House than Stefanik, a onetime Trump critic who evolved into an ardent ally. She previously opposed Trump's tax cuts.

"You have this real battle right now in the party, this idea of let's just put our differences aside and be unified," said Rep. Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill., who also voted to impeach Trump. "They're going to get rid of Liz Cheney because they'd much rather pretend that the conspiracy is either real or not confront it than to actually confront it and maybe have to take the temporary licks to save this party and in the long term this country," he said on CBS' "Face the Nation."

The second-ranking House Republican leader, Rep. Steve Scalise of Louisiana, already has announced his support for Stefanik.

## Sturgeon: Scotland independence vote matter of when, not if

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Scotland's leader told British Prime Minister Boris Johnson Sunday that a second

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 45 of 55

Scottish independence referendum is “a matter of when, not if,” after her party won its fourth straight parliamentary election.

Johnson has invited the leaders of the U.K.’s devolved nations for crisis talks on the union after the regional election results rolled in, saying the U.K. was “best served when we work together” and that the devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should cooperate on plans to recover from the coronavirus pandemic.

But Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland’s first minister and leader of the Scottish National Party, told Johnson in a call that while her immediate focus was on steering Scotland to recovery, a new referendum on Scotland’s breakup from the rest of the U.K. is inevitable.

Sturgeon reiterated “her intention to ensure that the people of Scotland can choose our own future when the crisis is over, and made clear that the question of a referendum is now a matter of when — not if,” her office said.

Earlier, she said she wouldn’t rule out legislation paving the way for a vote at the start of next year.

Final results of Thursday’s local elections showed that the SNP won 64 of the 129 seats in the Edinburgh-based Scottish Parliament. Although it fell one seat short of securing an overall majority, the parliament still had a pro-independence majority with the help of eight members of the Scottish Greens.

Sturgeon said the election results proved that a second independence vote for Scotland was “the will of the country” and that any London politician who stood in the way would be “picking a fight with the democratic wishes of the Scottish people.”

Johnson has the ultimate authority whether or not to permit another referendum on Scotland gaining independence. He wrote in Saturday’s Daily Telegraph that another referendum on Scotland would be “irresponsible and reckless” as Britain emerges from the pandemic. He has consistently argued that the issue was settled in a 2014 referendum where 55% of Scottish voters favored remaining part of the U.K.

But proponents of another vote say the situation has changed fundamentally because of the U.K.’s Brexit divorce from the European Union. They charge that Scotland was taken out of the EU against its will. In the 2016 Brexit referendum, 52% of U.K. voters backed leaving the EU, but 62% of Scots voted to remain.

When asked about the prospect of Johnson agreeing to a second Scottish referendum, Cabinet Office minister Michael Gove said Sunday “it’s not an issue for the moment” and stressed that the national priority is on recovering from the coronavirus pandemic.

Gove argued that the SNP’s failure to secure a majority in the Scottish Parliament was in marked contrast to the party’s heights of power in 2011, when it won a 69-seat majority.

“It is not the case now — as we see — that the people of Scotland are agitating for a referendum,” he told the BBC.

The Scotland results have been the main focus of Thursday’s local elections across Britain. In Wales, the opposition Labour Party did better than expected, extending its 22 years at the helm of the Welsh government despite falling one seat short of a majority.

Labour’s support also held up in some big cities. In London, Mayor Sadiq Khan handily won a second term. Other winning Labour mayoral candidates included Steve Rotherham in the Liverpool City Region, Andy Burnham in Greater Manchester and Dan Norris in the West of England region, which includes Bristol.

## **Pierre ‘Pete’ du Pont IV dies; ran for president in 1988**

By The Associated Press undefined

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — Among the moneyed du Ponts, who preferred the privacy of their elegant homes and the offices and plants of the chemical company that bore their name, Pierre S. “Pete” du Pont IV was a bit of a rebel.

Du Pont, who died Saturday at age 86 after a long illness, according to his former chief of staff, broke with family tradition by leaving the family business for a career in law and politics.

That led du Pont to multiple elected offices and an unsuccessful bid in the 1987-88 Republican presidential primary race.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 46 of 55

The du Ponts, big-money establishment industrialists, were among the nation's wealthiest families. That wasn't a problem for du Pont when he ran for statewide office in Delaware.

After one term in the Delaware state House and three terms in Congress, du Pont was elected governor in 1976 and set about working to restore the state's financial stability.

However, his elite background turned out to be a problem for him in his race for national office.

"I was born with a well-known name and genuine opportunity. I hope I have lived up to both," du Pont said in announcing his longshot presidential bid in September 1986. As a little-known governor of a small state, du Pont had to distinguish himself from the rest of the Republican field - including Vice President George Bush and Sen. Bob Dole.

He did that by questioning sacrosanct social programs that his better-known rivals feared to address, such as doing away with farm subsidiaries.

Some of his positions were more conservative than those taken by then-President Ronald Reagan, including mandatory drug testing of high school students.

Du Pont insisted his was a candidacy of ideas, and he offered no apologies, even after Bush dismissed as "nutty" du Pont's idea to create another form of Social Security modeled on private IRA accounts. The idea later became a mainstream Republican proposal. So did another one, school choice.

"Before you run for president, you ought to decide why you want to be president and what you do if you get there," du Pont once said. "The only thing that would be worth being in that job is to try to change the things that need to be changed."

But du Pont's February 1988 withdrawal became inevitable after his poor showings in the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary.

During an appearance at the Hotel du Pont in downtown Wilmington, where du Pont announced he was abandoning his campaign for president, he praised an electoral process that gave a shot at the White House to a former small-state governor with unorthodox ideas.

"You've given me the opportunity of a lifetime. You listened, you considered and you chose. I could not have asked for any more," du Pont said. "For in America, we do not promise that everyone wins, only that everyone gets a chance to try."

Pierre du Pont IV was born Jan. 22, 1935, in Delaware. After attending Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, he graduated from Princeton University in 1956 with an engineering degree. Following a four-year stint in the Navy, he obtained a law degree from Harvard University in 1963.

He joined the Du Pont Company, where he held several positions, resigning as a quality control supervisor in 1968 to begin his political career.

He left a firm imprint on the government of his native state.

After running unopposed for a state House seat in 1968, du Pont immediately set his sights on Congress, running as a fiscal conservative and winning the first of three terms in 1970.

As governor, du Pont fought successfully to restore financial integrity to a state he had declared "bankrupt" shortly after his 1977 inauguration. He presided over two income tax cuts; constitutional amendments restricting state spending and requiring three-fifths votes in the legislature to raise taxes; and establishment of an independent revenue forecasting panel.

After a rocky start with Democratic legislators, including an embarrassing override of a 1977 budget veto, du Pont forged successful relationships with lawmakers from both parties to tackle thorny issues including prison overcrowding and corruption and school desegregation. He was re-elected in a landslide in 1980, winning a record 71 percent of the vote and becoming the first two-term governor in Delaware in 20 years.

In his second term, du Pont signed landmark legislation that loosened Delaware's banking laws, including removing the cap on interest rates that banks could charge customers. The Financial Center Development Act made Delaware a haven for some of the country's largest credit card issuers.

Under du Pont's leadership, Delaware also established a nonprofit employment counseling and job placement program for Delaware high school seniors not bound for college. It served as the model for a national program adopted by several other states.

Du Pont is survived by his wife of over 60 years, the former Elise R. Wood; a daughter and three sons;

and 10 grandchildren.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, a memorial service will be held at a later date, according to Bob Perkins, his former chief of staff.

## **Palestinians fear loss of family homes as evictions loom**

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — When Samira Dajani's family moved into their first real home in 1956 after years as refugees, her father planted trees in the garden, naming them for each of his six children.

Today, two towering pines named for Mousa and Daoud stand watch over the entrance to the garden where they all played as children. Pink bougainvillea climbs an iron archway on a path leading past almond, orange and lemon trees to their modest stone house.

"The Samira tree has no leaves," she says, pointing to the cypress that bears her name. "But the roots are strong."

She and her husband, empty nesters with grown children of their own, may have to leave it all behind on Aug. 1. That's when Israel is set to forcibly evict them following a decades-long legal battle waged by ideological Jewish settlers against them and their neighbors.

The Dajanis are one of several Palestinian families facing imminent eviction in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of east Jerusalem. The families' plight has ignited weeks of demonstrations and clashes in recent days between protesters and Israeli police.

It also highlights an array of discriminatory policies that rights groups say are aimed at pushing Palestinians out of Jerusalem to preserve its Jewish majority. The Israeli rights group B'Tselem and the New York-based Human Rights Watch both pointed to such policies as an example of what they say has become an apartheid regime.

Israel rejects those accusations and says the situation in Sheikh Jarrah is a private real-estate dispute that the Palestinians have seized upon to incite violence. The Foreign Ministry did not respond to questions submitted by The Associated Press. A top municipal official and a settler group marketing "residential plots" in Sheikh Jarrah did not respond to requests for comment.

Settler groups say the land was owned by Jews prior to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation. Israeli law allows Jews to reclaim such lands but bars Palestinians from recovering property they lost in the same war, even if they still reside in areas controlled by Israel.

Samira Dajani's parents fled in 1948 from their home in Baka — now an upscale neighborhood in mostly Jewish west Jerusalem. After several years spent as refugees in Jordan, Syria and east Jerusalem, which was then controlled by Jordan, Jordanian authorities offered them one of several newly built homes in Sheikh Jarrah in exchange for giving up their refugee status.

"I have beautiful memories from this house," says Dajani, now 70, recalling how she played with the other children in the close-knit neighborhood, where several other Palestinian refugee families had also been resettled. "It was like heaven after our exodus."

Things changed after Israel captured east Jerusalem, along with the West Bank and Gaza, in the 1967 Mideast war, and annexed it in a move not recognized internationally. The Palestinians want all three territories for their future state and view east Jerusalem as their capital.

In 1972, settler groups told the families that they were trespassing on Jewish-owned land. That was the start of a long legal battle that in recent months has culminated with eviction orders against 36 families in Sheikh Jarrah and two other east Jerusalem neighborhoods. Israeli rights groups say other families are also vulnerable, estimating that more than 1,000 Palestinians are at risk of being evicted.

The Dajanis and other families have been ordered to leave by Aug. 1. A Supreme Court hearing in the case of another four families that was to be held on Monday was postponed for at least a month. If they lose the appeal, they could be forcibly evicted within days or weeks.

A woman from another family in Sheikh Jarrah said it was "an inhumane act" to take away someone's home. She invited her parents to move in with her and her husband if they are evicted from the home where she was born and raised, but her father refused.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 48 of 55

"He said there is no way I'm leaving this neighborhood unless I'm dead," she said, requesting anonymity for fear of retribution by Israeli authorities. "It's been 65 years that he's lived in this neighborhood."

Israel views all of Jerusalem as its unified capital and says residents are treated equally. But east Jerusalem residents have different rights depending on whether they are Jewish or Palestinian.

Jews born in east Jerusalem are automatically granted Israeli citizenship, and Jews from anywhere else in the world are eligible to become Israeli citizens.

Palestinians born in east Jerusalem are granted a form of permanent residency that can be revoked if they spend too much time living outside the city. They can apply for Israeli citizenship but must go through a difficult and uncertain bureaucratic process that can take months or years. Most refuse, because they do not recognize Israel's annexation.

Palestinians are also treated differently when it comes to housing, which will make it difficult for the Sheikh Jarrah families to remain in Jerusalem if they are evicted.

After 1967, Israel expanded the city's municipal boundaries to take in large areas of open land where it has since built Jewish settlements that are home to tens of thousands of people. At the same time, it set the boundaries of Palestinian neighborhoods, restricting their growth.

Today, more than 220,000 Jews live in east Jerusalem, mostly in built-up areas that Israel considers to be neighborhoods of its capital. Most of east Jerusalem's 350,000 Palestinian residents are crammed into overcrowded neighborhoods where there is little room to build.

Palestinians say the expense and difficulty of obtaining permits forces them to build illegally or move to the occupied West Bank, where they risk losing their Jerusalem residency. Israeli rights groups estimate that of the 40,000 homes in Palestinian neighborhoods, half have been built without permits and are at risk of demolition.

In part due to the protests, Israel has come under international pressure over Sheikh Jarrah, with both the United States and the European Union expressing concern. Rights groups say the government can halt or postpone the evictions if it wants to.

In the meantime, Samira Dajani has planted her spring flowers in small pots that she'll be able to take with her if she is forced from her home in August. The trees named for her and her siblings will have to stay. She says she tries not to think about it.

"I don't feel sad or scared, I feel angry," she said. "God willing, these will not be our last days here."

## Elon Musk shows humility and hubris as 'SNL' host

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

Elon Musk showed a combination of humility and hubris as he opened his highly anticipated hosting gig on "Saturday Night Live."

The 49-year-old Tesla CEO, SpaceX founder and one of the world's richest men opened his monologue by mocking his monotonal speaking style, saying no one can tell when he's joking.

"It's great to be hosting 'Saturday Night Live,' and I really mean it," said Musk standing on the stage in a black suit with a black T-shirt. "Sometimes after I say something, I have to say that I mean it."

He added, in explanation, that he is the first person with Asperger's syndrome to host the show. "Or at least the first person to admit it," he said.

It may have been the first time Musk has publicly said he has the mild form of autism. But at least one former "SNL" host, Dan Aykroyd, also has talked about having Asperger's.

Musk also joked about his Twitter account, which has more than 50 million followers, and the tweets that led some critics to object to his being invited to host the show.

"Look, I know I sometimes say or post strange things, but that's just how my brain works," he said.

Then Musk added a boast that got his biggest laugh of the night, and an applause break from the studio audience.

"To anyone who's been offended, I just want to say I reinvented electric cars, and I'm sending people to Mars in a rocket ship," Musk said. "Did you think I was also going to be a chill, normal dude?"



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 49 of 55

Musk didn't appear in the show's unconventional and heart-warming cold open, in which cast members and their moms did brief bits for Mother's Day as musical guest Miley Cyrus sang her godmother Dolly Parton's inspirational "Light of a Clear Blue Morning."

But Musk brought his own mother, model Maye Musk, on stage to talk about what he was like when he was 12.

The casting choice brought criticism from those who felt the show was celebrating a man for his exorbitant wealth in a time of great inequality and a man who spread misinformation to his huge Twitter following as he downplayed the severity of the coronavirus pandemic.

Playing on Musk's reputation as an innovator, NBC live-streamed the episode globally on YouTube, the first time "Saturday Night Live" has ever been viewable simultaneously around the world.

Musk took his first stiff stab at acting in the show's first sketch, a mock soap called "Gen Z Hospital," playing a doctor in a fake beard who delivered bad news to a group of youths in their own lingo.

"You all might want to sit down, what I'm going to say might be a little cringe," Musk said. "Your bestie took a major L."

He had small roles in subsequent sketches. He played one of a party full of people out for the first time after quarantine, and he did a German-ish accent in a bleached, spiked wig as the director of an Icelandic talk show.

And on "Weekend Update" he played a character close to himself, donning a bow tie and glasses as a financial analyst named Lloyd Ostertag, throwing an extended plug for Musk's favored cryptocurrency dogecoin.

After "Update" anchor Michael Che struggled to understand, Musk as Ostertag admitted, "Yeah, it's a hustle."

Dogecoin's price, which has been volatile all year, tumbled 23% in the hour after the show began, and fell further on Sunday.

While Musk is likely the wealthiest host of the show ever -- Forbes Magazine puts his fortune at \$177 billion -- several other business leaders, politicians and other non-entertainers have hosted the sketch comedy institution in its more than four decades on the air.

Steve Forbes, a publishing executive from a wealthy family and a longshot presidential candidate, hosted in 1996.

Donald Trump hosted twice, in 2004 as businessman and host of "The Apprentice" and in 2015 as a presidential candidate. The show's sketches began making him their primary target the following year, but the choice to team with him has brought harsh criticism in the years since.

## Job market for new grads: Much hiring but much competition

By TRAVIS LOLLER and CHRISTOPHER RUGABER Associated Press Writers

After a painful year of joblessness, the future has finally brightened for Alycia St. Germain, a 22-year-old college senior at the University of Minnesota.

Having lost a part-time gig at Barnes and Noble last March as the viral pandemic tore through the U.S. economy, she was left unemployed like tens of millions of other Americans. But now, St. Germain has a job lined up — with benefits — even before graduation and in her chosen field of developmental psychology. A family friend established a new child-care center in St. Paul, and St. Germain landed a job as an assistant in the infant room.

"This," she said, "is probably the most positive thing that could happen."

Not all new college grads will find a job so quickly. But collectively, this year's graduating class is poised for better prospects than were the 2020 seniors, who had the misfortune to graduate into the depths of the brutal coronavirus recession. Though the competition will be stiff — this year's graduates will have to compete, in many cases, with 2020 graduates who are still seeking their first full-time job — employers are ramping up hiring. And many are desperate for workers.

On Friday, the government reported that employers added just 266,000 jobs in April, a surprisingly sharp

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 50 of 55

slowdown from the 770,000 that were added in March. Yet much of that lapse reflected a shortage of available workers, economists say. The economic rebound is strengthening so fast that many businesses are struggling to quickly attract enough applicants to fill jobs.

The pace of job openings, in fact, has fully recovered from the pandemic and is now far above pre-recession levels, including in professional occupations that college students are more likely to seek and that can typically be done from home.

"I don't think this recession will be as bad for college graduates as previous recessions have been," said Brad Hershbein, an economist at the Upjohn Institute in Kalamazoo, Michigan. "That segment of the labor market is going to recover faster than other segments where jobs can't be done remotely."

Hershbein said he worries, though, that the pandemic will dim the economic prospects of young adults who were unable to complete, or even start, their educations during the pandemic. Data has shown sharp drops in enrollment at community and four-year colleges.

Even so, college seniors will be competing against a larger-than-usual universe of job seekers when you include last year's crop of graduates.

"Because there is a large pool of unemployed workers, companies can pick exactly who they want and skip over people with less experience," said Elise Gould, a senior economist at the Economic Policy Institute.

Graduating into a recession has historically led to poor outcomes for many young people, with research showing that they sometimes bear long-running scars. Starting a career in a recession can lead to lower incomes for as long as a decade afterward for those graduates, compared with their peers who completed college just before or after a recession.

The sectors of the economy that face the most difficulty in regaining all their lost jobs are the service sectors that were hit hardest by the pandemic recession: Restaurants, bars, hotels, gyms, and entertainment venues. Though college graduates often take such jobs temporarily, they typically seek out careers in professional or technical fields, where job losses were far less severe last year and are now recovering.

Sheila Jordan, chief digital technology office at Honeywell, said she's recruiting more students and recent graduates for paid internships than she did last year — internships that often lead to permanent jobs. She is especially interested in students with a range of technical backgrounds, including software, data analytics and cybersecurity.

"We like to recruit once, hire twice," Jordan said of the internships. "That's a feeder group for us."

Lucius Giannini, who graduated last summer from the University of California San Diego with a degree in political science and public policy, had hoped to find work with the Peace Corps or teaching English overseas. But when COVID-19 struck, the Peace Corps brought home all its volunteers. And no one was hiring for overseas teaching.

Giannini moved back in with his parents and broadened his job search for eight months. In March, he secured a paid marketing internship with a small pharmaceutical company.

It's not his field of expertise, but, Giannini said, "They figure, 'You're young, you understand social media.' So that's what I do."

The internship will be over by the end of summer, so he may be back on the job hunt. He is also applying to law school.

For college grads who do find jobs, the "onboarding" process, through which they meet co-workers and become acclimated to their employer's culture, has had to occur in an entirely new remote setting.

Still, that hasn't always worked out so badly. Some companies have ramped up their efforts to make new employees feel welcome, even if they are working remotely.

Dominique Davis, a senior at Tennessee State University, interned with Toyota last summer from her family home in Danville, Illinois. Yet she said she met just as many people then as she did in the summer of 2019, when she interned at the company's headquarters in Plano, Texas.

"I think I networked even more this term than being in the building," she said. "It forces you to reach out. It's less awkward, less intimidating. I would have conversations on a daily basis with the VP of my department. Normally, you can't just go into his office and sit down and have a conversation."

Davis plans to go straight into graduate school for her MBA. But as president of the student body, she

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 51 of 55

is well-aware that some other seniors are struggling with their next steps.

"I have heard of multiple students who are having trouble getting interviews or internships," Davis said. "Especially in the medical fields, some students are hesitant, afraid because of the virus."

Natalie Naranjo-Morett, who will graduate in June with a history degree from UCSD, is looking for work in museums.

"But," she said, "that's become very difficult because of the pandemic."

Museums have been clobbered over the past year. In a recent survey by the American Alliance of Museums, nearly one-third of museum directors said they either faced a significant risk of closing permanently by next fall or didn't know if their institutions would survive.

Naranjo-Morett, who has applied unsuccessfully for some internships, says there appear to be few job openings. She'd like to find work related to her history degree.

But "it's so difficult at this point, I kind of would go for anything," she said.

## Some states plan big spending with Biden's aid, others wait

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

Though still awaiting money from the latest federal coronavirus relief act, some governors and state lawmakers already are making plans to add the multibillion-dollar boon to their budgets.

Among their priorities: bailing out depleted unemployment accounts, expanding high-speed internet and providing additional aid to schools and businesses.

The \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief law signed by President Joe Biden earlier this year contains \$350 billion of flexible aid for state and local governments, plus billions of dollars more for specific programs such as housing assistance. Unlike earlier coronavirus aid, states have broad leeway to use the money to plug budget holes, invest in certain infrastructure or address the "negative economic impacts" of the pandemic.

States are expected to receive an initial installment soon, with a second round coming a year later.

"A billion dollars has just fallen from the sky, in some respects," said Vermont Gov. Phil Scott, a Republican. "It's here, right in front of us. We have to invest it wisely."

Like many governors, Scott hadn't accounted for a new influx of federal money when he presented a budget plan earlier this year. Now he's working with lawmakers to add it to the state's spending plan while still awaiting guidance from the U.S. Treasury Department on specific ways the money can — or can't — be used.

Scott wants to put the money toward economic development, climate change initiatives, water and sewer infrastructure, housing and high-speed internet. Democratic Senate President Pro Tem Becca Balint also wants some to go toward workforce training.

In other states, the spending plans include bonuses for teachers and first-responders; aid to movie theaters and entertainment venues; construction at parks and public facilities; and grants to farmers, commercial fishing operations and food processors.

"Of course it's classical politics: They announce it, no details and everybody's filling in the void with what they want to spend it on," Virginia Secretary of Finance Aubrey Layne said.

Officials in Virginia and about a dozen other states told The Associated Press they are waiting for Treasury Department guidance before developing specific spending plans. Federal law prohibits states from using the aid to make pension payments or fund tax cuts. Some state officials are concerned that other uses also could be ruled out, triggering a provision requiring them to repay the federal government.

"If we don't know what the guidelines are, it makes it hard to spend the money, because we don't want to spend it in the wrong way and have it clawed back," said Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, a Republican.

The federal law, known as the American Rescue Plan, comes on top of \$150 billion the federal government sent directly to states and local governments last year.

This year's law cites infrastructure for water, sewer and broadband internet as allowable uses. It's less clear whether money can be used for other infrastructure, such as roads and bridges. But some states are planning to do so, anyway.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 52 of 55

A budget plan passed by the Indiana Legislature allots \$192 million in federal aid to pay off bonds for an Interstate 69 project and \$900 million for other "future state infrastructure projects." Maine Gov. Janet Mills, a Democrat, rolled out a plan this week that allots \$50 million for road and bridge work this summer.

A potentially wide-ranging provision allows states to use the federal aid for "government services" affected by a pandemic-induced reduction in revenue. States also can use the aid to provide extra pay for essential workers, such as the \$1,000 bonuses included in a Florida budget for first-responders, teachers and early learning instructors.

Federal law allows states to address the pandemic's economic effects by providing aid to households, small businesses, nonprofits and industries such as tourism, travel and hospitality. But that doesn't necessarily prevent money from going to other purposes.

Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont, a Democrat, wants to use more than half the state's flexible funds to plug budget holes over the next two years. But his plan also would spend millions on social programs.

Lamont wants to use \$15 million to provide free admission for children at museums, aquariums, zoos and other venues from July through Labor Day; \$3.5 million to help send low-income children to sports and specialty camps; and \$1.9 million for programs that provide "safe, fun and healing spaces" for teenagers. He said the programs would provide a dual benefit — aiding children who were socially isolated during the pandemic and organizations that lost money because of a lack of customers.

Mills' wide-ranging plan would provide aid to Maine's agriculture and seafood industries, increase public support for private-sector research and subsidize health insurers to temporarily reduce premiums for small businesses and their employees, among other things.

Officials in Connecticut, Hawaii, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine and Maryland are among those wanting to use part of their federal aid to replenish depleted unemployment trust funds. Doing so could spare businesses from temporary tax hikes that could otherwise be imposed to repay federal loans that funded benefits when jobless rates spiked during coronavirus shutdowns.

A plan passed by Kansas' Republican-led Senate would dedicate nearly \$700 million to compensate small businesses that were forced to close or had their operations restricted because of the pandemic — a "pot of gold" that some Democrats said should be partly passed on to workers in higher wages.

Republican state. Sen. Mike Thompson said compensation should have been paid months ago, as pandemic restrictions were imposed.

"A lot of these businesses should not have been shut down," Thompson said.

In Kansas and some other states, the federal funding surge has generated spats over who can control how it's spent.

Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers, a Democrat, vetoed bills passed by the Republican-led Legislature that sought to use \$1 billion for property tax cuts, \$308 million for local roads and \$250 million to pay off transportation bonds. Nonpartisan legislative staff had warned that those uses might not be allowed under federal law. Evers said he will instead spend the money according to his own plans, not all of which have been detailed.

New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham vetoed the Democratic-led Legislature's plan to devote \$600 million to the state's unemployment fund, \$200 million to roads and \$100 million to a college scholarship program. The Democratic governor said in her veto message that "the Legislature lacks the authority" to tell her how to use the money and that the state should wait for federal guidance.

## Death toll soars to 50 in school bombing in Afghan capital

By RAHIM FAIEZ Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Grieving families buried their dead Sunday following a horrific bombing at a girls' school in the Afghan capital that killed 50 people, many of them pupils between 11 and 15 years old.

The number of wounded in Saturday's attack climbed to more than 100, said Interior Ministry spokesman Tariq Arian. In the western neighborhood of Dasht-e-Barchi, families buried their dead amid angry recriminations at a government they said has failed to protect them from repeated attacks in the mostly Shiite Muslim neighborhood.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 53 of 55

"The government reacts after the incident, it doesn't do anything before the incident," said Mohammad Baqir, Alizada, 41, who had gathered to bury his niece, Latifa, a Grade 11 student the Syed Al-Shahda school.

Three explosions outside the school entrance struck as students were leaving for the day, said Arian. The blasts targeted Afghanistan's ethnic Hazaras who dominate the Dasht-e-Barchi neighborhood, where the bombings occurred. Most Hazaras are Shiite Muslims. The Taliban denied responsibility, condemning the attack and the many deaths.

The first explosion came from a vehicle packed with explosives, followed by two others, said Arian, adding that the casualty figures could still rise.

In the capital rattled by relentless bombings, Saturday's attack was among the worst. Criticism has mounted over lack of security and growing fears of even more violence as the U.S. and NATO complete their final military withdrawal from Afghanistan.

At Vatican City, in his traditional Sunday remarks to faithful in St. Peter's Square, Pope Francis cited the bombing. "Let us pray for the victims of the terrorist attack in Kabul, an inhumane action that struck so many girls as they were coming out of school." He said. The pontiff then added: "May God give Afghanistan peace."

The Dasht-e-Barchi area has been hit by several incidents of violence targeting minority Shiites and most often claimed by the Islamic State affiliate operating in the country. No one has yet claimed Saturday's bombings.

In this same neighborhood in 2018, a school bombing killed 34 people, mostly students. In September 2018 a wrestling club was attacked killing 24 people and in May 2020 a maternity hospital was brutally attacked killing 24 people, including pregnant women and infants. And in October 2020, the Kawsar-e-Danish tutoring center was attacked, killing 30 people.

Most of the attacks were claimed by the Islamic State affiliate operating in Afghanistan.

The radical Sunni Muslim group has declared war on Afghanistan's Shiites. Washington blamed IS for a vicious attack last year in a maternity hospital in the same area that killed pregnant women and newborn babies.

Soon after the bombing, angry crowds attacked ambulances and even beat health workers as they tried to evacuate the wounded, Health Ministry spokesman Ghulam Dastigar Nazari said. He had implored residents to cooperate and allow ambulances free access to the site.

Arian, the Interior Ministry spokesman, blamed the attack on the Taliban despite their denials.

Bloodied backpacks and school books lay strewn outside the Syed Al-Shahda school. In the morning, boys attend classes in the sprawling school compound and in the afternoon, it's girls' turn.

On Sunday, Hazara leaders from Dasht-e-Barchi met to express their frustration with the government failure to protect ethnic Hazaras, deciding to cobble together a protection force of their own from among the Hazara community.

The force would be deployed outside schools, mosques and public facilities and would cooperate with government security forces. The intention is to supplement the local forces, said Parliamentarian Ghulam Hussein Naseri.

The meeting participants decided that "there is not any other way, except for people themselves to provide their own security alongside of the security forces," said Naseri, who added that the government should provide local Hazaras with weapons.

Naseri said Hazaras have been attacked in their schools, in their mosques and "it is their right to be upset. How many more families lose their loved ones? How many more attacks against this minority has to occur in this part of the city before something is done?"

One of the students fleeing the school recalled the attack, the girls' screams of the girls, the blood.

"I was with my classmate, we were leaving the school, when suddenly an explosion happened," said 15-year-old Zahra, whose arm had been broken by a piece of shrapnel.

"Ten minutes later there was another explosion and just a couple of minutes later another explosion," she said. "Everyone was yelling and there was blood everywhere, and I couldn't see anything clearly."

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 54 of 55

Her friend died.

Most of the dozens of injured brought to the EMERGENCY Hospital for war wounded in the Afghan capital, "almost all girls and young women between 12 and 20 years old," said Marco Puntin, the hospital's program coordinator in Afghanistan.

In a statement following the attack, the hospital, which has operated in Kabul since 2000, said the first three months of this year have seen a 21 per cent increase in war-wounded.

Even as IS has been degraded in Afghanistan, according to government and US officials, it has stepped-up its attacks particularly against Shiite Muslims and women workers.

The attack comes days after the remaining 2,500 to 3,500 American troops officially began leaving the country. They will be out by Sept. 11 at the latest. The pullout comes amid a resurgent Taliban, who control or hold sway over half of Afghanistan.

The top U.S. military officer said Sunday that Afghan government forces face an uncertain future and possibly some "bad possible outcomes" against Taliban insurgents as the withdrawal accelerates in the coming weeks.

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, May 10, the 130th day of 2021. There are 235 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 10, 1869, a golden spike was driven in Promontory, Utah, marking the completion of the first transcontinental railroad in the United States.

On this date:

In 1774, Louis XVI acceded to the throne of France.

In 1775, Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys, along with Col. Benedict Arnold, captured the British-held fortress at Ticonderoga, New York.

In 1865, Confederate President Jefferson Davis was captured by Union forces in Irwinville, Georgia.

In 1924, J. Edgar Hoover was named acting director of the Bureau of Investigation (later known as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or FBI).

In 1933, the Nazis staged massive public book burnings in Germany.

In 1940, during World War II, German forces began invading the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Belgium and France. The same day, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain resigned, and Winston Churchill formed a new government.

In 1941, Adolf Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess, parachuted into Scotland on what he claimed was a peace mission. (Hess ended up serving a life sentence at Spandau Prison until 1987, when he apparently committed suicide at age 93.)

In 1977, Academy Award-winning film star Joan Crawford died in New York.

In 1994, Nelson Mandela took the oath of office in Pretoria to become South Africa's first Black president. The state of Illinois executed serial killer John Wayne Gacy, 52, for the murders of 33 young men and boys.

In 1995, former President George H.W. Bush's office released his letter of resignation from the National Rifle Association in which Bush expressed outrage over an NRA fund-raising letter's reference to federal agents as "jack-booted thugs." (NRA Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre apologized a week later.)

In 2002, A tense 39-day-old standoff between Israeli troops and Palestinian gunmen at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem ended with 13 suspected militants flown into European exile and 26 released into the Gaza Strip.

In 2010, President Barack Obama introduced Supreme Court nominee Elena Kagan, billing her as a unifying force for a fractured court.

Ten years ago: The bulging Mississippi River rolled into the Mississippi Delta after cresting before daybreak at Memphis, Tennessee, causing widespread damage. In a one-two punch against Moammar Gadhafi's

# Groton Daily Independent

**Monday, May 10, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 307 ~ 55 of 55**

forces, NATO warplanes struck a command center in Tripoli and pounded targets around the besieged port of Misrata.

Five years ago: With his White House dreams fading, Bernie Sanders added another state to his tally against Hillary Clinton with a win in West Virginia; Republican Donald Trump also won there and in Nebraska, a week after he cleared the field of his remaining rivals. Stephen Curry became the first unanimous NBA MVP, earning the award for the second straight season after leading the defending champion Warriors to a record-setting season.

One year ago: Vice President Mike Pence was said to be self-isolating at home, two days after his press secretary, Katie Miller, tested positive for the coronavirus. American families celebrated Mother's Day amid the social distancing restrictions caused by the coronavirus.

Today's Birthdays: Author Barbara Taylor Bradford is 88. R&B singer Henry Fambrough (The Spinners) is 83. Actor David Clennon is 78. Writer-producer-director Jim Abrahams is 77. Singer Donovan is 75. Singer-songwriter Graham Gouldman (10cc) is 75. Singer Dave Mason is 75. Actor Mike Hagerty is 67. Sports anchor Chris Berman is 66. Actor Bruce Penhall is 64. Former Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa., is 63. Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith, R-Miss., is 62. Actor Victoria Rowell is 62. Rock singer Bono (BAH'-noh) (U2) is 61. Former Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., is 61. Rock musician Danny Carey (Tool) is 60. Actor Darryl M. Bell is 58. Playwright Suzan-Lori Parks is 58. Model Linda Evangelista is 56. Rapper Young MC is 54. Actor Erik Palladino is 53. Rock singer Richard Patrick (Filter) is 53. Actor Lenny Venito is 52. Actor Dallas Roberts is 51. Actor Leslie Stefanson is 50. Actor-singer Todd Lowe is 49. Actor Andrea Anders is 46. Race car driver Helio Castroneves is 46. Rock musician Jesse Vest is 44. Actor Kenan Thompson is 43. Rhythm-and-blues singer Jason Dalyrimple (Soul For Real) is 41. Actor Odette Annable is 36. Actor Lindsey Shaw is 32. Actor Lauren Potter is 31. Olympic gold medal swimmer Missy Franklin is 26.