

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 1 of 38

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Dacotah Bank tree at City Hall](#)
- [3- Next Level Nutrition tree at City Hall](#)
- [4- Weekly Vikings Roundup](#)
- [5- Prairie Doc: SMART Resolutions](#)
- [6- Weather Pages](#)
- [10- Daily Devotional](#)
- [11- 2021 Community Events](#)
- [12- Subscription Form](#)
- [13- News from the Associated Press](#)

*"If you dare nothing, then  
when the day is over,  
nothing is all you will  
have gained."*

-Neil Gaiman



## UpComing Events

### Monday, Dec. 27

**Cancelled:** Boys Basketball at Jamestown College Classic (Harold Newman Arena), Groton Area vs. Kindred, N.D. **Make up game: Jan. 15 at Redfield Classic - Groton Area vs. Deubrook at 7:30 p.m.**

### Thursday, Dec. 30

9:30 a.m.: Wrestling at Webster

### Friday, Dec. 31

Girls Basketball at Webster. C game at 11 a.m. followed by JV and then varsity

### Monday, Jan. 4

School resumes

Basketball Double Header at Warner. Girls JV at 4 p.m. followed by Boys JV, Girls Varsity and Boys Varsity.

5 p.m.: Junior High Wrestling Tournament at Groton.

### Thursday, Jan. 6

6 p.m.: Wrestling Tri-angular at Groton with Redfield and Webster

### Friday, Jan. 7

Penguin Classic Debate on-line

5 p.m.: Junior High Wrestling at Milbank

Girls Basketball hosts Sisseton with JV at 6 p.m. and varsity to follow

### Saturday, Jan. 8

Groton Robotics Tournament, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Penguin Classic Debate on-line

Girls Basketball Classic at Redfield

**Groton Daily Independent**  
**PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445**  
**Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460**

## **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.  
© 2021 Groton Daily Independent

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 2 of 38



**The new city hall has been adorned with many Christmas Trees decorated by area businesses. This one was decorated by Dacotah Bank.**



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 3 of 38



**The new city hall has been adorned with many Christmas Trees decorated by area businesses. This one was decorated by Next Level Nutrition.**

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 4 of 38

## Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

The Week 16 matchup between the Minnesota Vikings and the Los Angeles Rams brought back memories of the old rivalry between the Purple People Eaters and the Fearsome Foursome. However, unlike the cold, hardnosed games of the '60s and '70s, the Vikings and Rams played today's game indoors with no elements playing a factor whatsoever.

The Vikings fell to the Rams 30-23 in a sloppy game that saw a total of 4 interceptions thrown by the starting quarterbacks; Matthew Stafford with three and Kirk Cousins with one. Even with winning the turnover battle, the Vikings' defense could not stop the Rams' rushing attack as they ran for 159 yards. And when the Vikings' defense crowded the box, Matthew Stafford was able to find his reliable wide receiver, Cooper Kupp, in numerous third-down situations. Kupp caught a total of 109 of Stafford's 197 passing yards for the game. In all, the Vikings' defense forced the Rams to only punt twice for the entire game. When the Vikings' defense wasn't picking off Matthew Stafford passes, they were getting run up and down the field.

The Vikings' offense played an above-average game against the star-studded Ram's defense. Von Miller did nothing disruptive during the game, finishing with only one tackle. Aaron Donald, however, was a menace from start to finish, ending the game with five total tackles, one sack, and a forced fumble. Donald's combination of strength and quickness is something the NFL hasn't seen since John Randle.

With that said, the matchup everyone was looking forward to before the game was between Justin Jefferson and Jalen Ramsey. If you just looked at the stat sheet, you would think Jefferson dominated Ramsey, finishing with 116 yards on eight catches. However, Ramsey did break up a few passes intended for Jefferson and held him from reaching the endzone at any point during the game.

The one highlight for the Vikings came in the first half when Jefferson broke Odell Beckham Jr.'s record for most receiving yards in a player's first two seasons in the NFL. Jefferson currently sits at 2,851 receiving yards for his career and has a chance to do something no other wide receiver has ever done before: eclipse 3,000 yards in their first two seasons in the NFL. If there is a bright spot from this Vikings' season, it is Justin Jefferson, who is on his way to becoming the best wide receiver in the NFL.

Looking to next week:

The Vikings head to Lambeau Field for a Week 17 matchup against the Green Bay Packers, who currently hold the best record in the NFL. With already having a win under their belt from earlier this season, the Vikings may go into Lambeau with confidence that a 7-8 team wouldn't usually have. Right now, the Vikings are on the outside looking in for the playoffs. Thus, next week's game will be a must-win for the Vikings. A loss to the Packers will likely knock the Vikings out of the playoffs.

Playoff picture:

As mentioned, the Vikings are currently not in the playoffs. The Vikings, with a 7-8 record, see themselves a game behind the 7th seeded Philadelphia Eagles, who are currently 8-7 after their blowout over the New York Giants. With two weeks remaining in the 2021 season, the Vikings no longer have control of their destiny. If they want to make the playoffs, the Vikings need to not only win their remaining two games against the Packers and Bears, but they are also going to need the Saints, Eagles, and Falcons to lose games as well.

With how the season has gone for the Vikings, anything is possible. I predict a Vikings win in Green Bay, followed by a loss to the Bears in Week 17. Just enough to twist the knife in the backs of Vikings fans one more time.



## SMART Resolutions

With 2022 nearly upon us, so too is the tradition of the New Year's resolution. Merriam-Webster defines the New Year's resolution as "a promise to do something differently in the new year." I would argue that in practice, the resolution is less of a promise and more of a hope or intention.

My resolution for 2021 was to read 20 books by year's end. I failed. I could blame my kids, work, other hobbies, but honestly I blame my phone! In my defense, I was in

good company as a flopped resolver; less than half of New Year's Resolutions are estimated to be successful.

An estimated 74 percent of adult Americans set a personal goal each year, the most common category being to improve health and wellness. If you are a regular at a gym or fitness center, you have witnessed the phenomenon of the January influx of attendees that typically trickles back down to baseline by March.

Whatever your resolution, there are some ways to increase your odds of being successful in following through in 2022. One tip is to make your goals follow the SMART mnemonic: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-sensitive. Let me elaborate, using my failed 2021 goal as an example.

**Specific:** "Read at least 20 books this year" is specific, but I could have done better. Had I explicitly listed each book title up front I would have avoided time wasted searching for books throughout the year.

**Measurable:** My goal was easily measurable; just count the books. If your goal is not measurable there is no way to know whether you are on track to reach it.

**Attainable:** I did not set a goal to read 50 or 100 books in a year. I know people who read that much, and I admire them, but that was not realistic for me. Setting an unattainable goal may set you up to quit in the early stages.

**Relevant:** I set this goal because I enjoy reading, and I know I am a happier person when I spend my downtime with my nose in a book. Choose a goal that you care about, and maintain enthusiasm.

**Time-sensitive:** Most New Year's resolutions will have a time frame of one year. But setting smaller time-sensitive goals can be helpful. I ought to have made a sub-goal to read two books per month to keep on pace.

The New Year might be a great time to commit to a positive change in your life. I hope the SMART approach will help you (and me) succeed this year!

Kelly Evans-Hullinger, M.D. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices internal medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® at [www.prairiedoc.org](http://www.prairiedoc.org) and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show celebrating its twentieth season of truthful, tested, and timely medical information, broadcast on SDPB and streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.

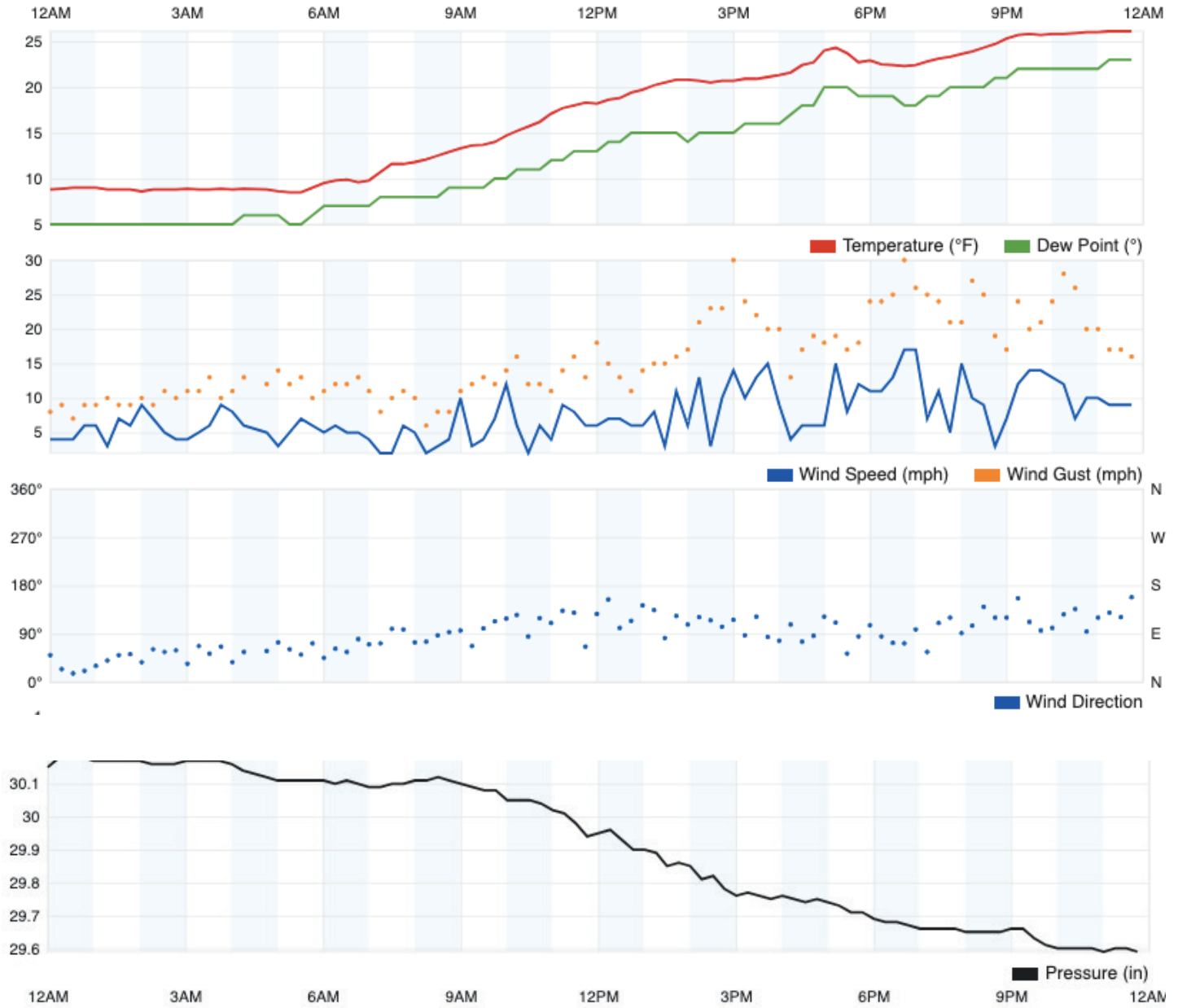


**Kelly Evans-Hullinger, MD**

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 6 of 38

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Broton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 7 of 38

Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
High: 18 °F ↓	Low: -5 °F	High: 2 °F ↓	Low: -20 °F	High: -1 °F

## Blowing Snow This Morning Turning Much Colder - Highs In The Single Digits & Teens

### Maximum Wind Gust Forecast

	12/27 Mon															
	5am	6am	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm
<b>Aberdeen</b>	37	38	38	38	37	37	35	31	28	23	20	14	10	10	13	14
<b>Britton</b>	35	38	38	38	38	40	39	38	33	28	24	22	16	13	12	13
<b>Eagle Butte</b>	43	39	37	35	33	31	28	21	17	13	12	14	15	18	21	22
<b>Eureka</b>	38	38	38	38	38	38	36	32	28	23	20	14	9	9	12	14
<b>Gettysburg</b>	43	41	40	39	38	38	35	29	24	18	14	13	12	14	17	20
<b>Kennebec</b>	40	37	33	30	29	28	23	20	18	16	15	15	15	18	20	21
<b>McIntosh</b>	43	43	40	38	38	36	31	28	24	20	15	14	12	13	15	17
<b>Milbank</b>	30	35	38	37	36	36	36	33	30	26	23	21	15	12	10	9
<b>Miller</b>	43	41	38	38	38	36	31	26	22	17	15	13	10	12	14	15
<b>Mobridge</b>	37	36	33	32	31	30	28	24	21	16	14	13	10	13	14	16
<b>Murdo</b>	38	35	30	28	26	25	21	16	17	18	20	20	20	21	22	22
<b>Pierre</b>	36	32	30	26	26	25	23	18	16	13	13	14	15	17	18	18
<b>Redfield</b>	38	38	37	36	36	36	32	28	23	18	16	14	10	12	13	14
<b>Sisseton</b>	30	39	40	40	43	43	43	39	36	32	30	26	20	13	13	10
<b>Watertown</b>	36	37	38	37	37	37	37	36	32	28	25	21	14	10	10	9
<b>Wheaton</b>	21	24	32	35	38	38	38	36	33	30	26	22	18	14	13	12

\*Table values in mph  
 \*\*Created: 3 am CST Mon 12/27/2021  
 \*\*\*Values are maximums over the period beginning at the time shown.

**Drop In Wind Intensity = Less Blowing Snow**



Visit [www.weather.gov/abr](http://www.weather.gov/abr) for a detailed local forecast

Updated: 12/27/2021 3:52 AM CT



NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
 OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

40 to 50 mph winds will cause some blowing and drifting of snow this morning. The winds and reduced visibility, along with icy and snow covered roads, will make for difficult travel conditions. Give yourself extra time this morning.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 8 of 38

## Today in Weather History

December 27, 1959: Precipitation began as freezing rain on the morning of the 27th throughout the eastern half of South Dakota, changing to snow mixed with occasional sleet late on the 27th, then continued as mostly snow through the late afternoon of the 28th. Glaze caused extensive breakage of tree limbs and power and telephone lines in southeast sections of the state and in scattered communities in the northeast counties. More than 40 communities were without telephone service for more than 24 hours. Highway travel was very dangerous; one man was killed when a tractor skidded on an icy highway and overturned on him in Kingsbury County. Strong winds averaging 20 to 25 mph both dates increased breakage of ice-laded utility wires and caused drifting and blocking of highways by the 3 to 6 inch snowfall. Damage and repair costs to utility lines were estimated at \$400,000.

December 27, 1987: A winter storm gave some freezing rain and snow to southern and eastern South Dakota and southwest and west central Minnesota on the 27th and 28th. In Minnesota, freezing rain began Sunday morning the 27th before changing to heavy snow, which extended into the 28th. The heaviest snowfall was across the high terrain of southwest Minnesota. In southern and eastern South Dakota, six to twelve inches of snow fell. Strong northwest winds of 20-40 mph hampered travel and snow removal. Snow drifts up to 6 feet deep were common. Across many areas of southern Minnesota, visibilities were reduced to zero due to blowing snow. Snowfall amounts in South Dakota included 12 inches in DeSmet; 10 inches in Wessington Springs and Madison; 9 inches in Huron; 8 inches in Pierre, Brookings, Mission and McCook County; 7 inches in Sioux Falls, Kadoka, Pine Ridge, and Martin. 8 inches also fell in Watertown and Highmore, with 7 inches at Bryant and 6 inches in Clear Lake.

December 27, 1987: Today marks the end of the infamous 2-day ice storm which began as freezing rain and sleet before sunrise on Christmas Day in Oklahoma. This ice storm left parts of Oklahoma without power for over a week. Sleet prevailed across the western and northern parts of Oklahoma City, while freezing rain devastated southern and eastern parts of the metro area. Despite heavy sleet and ice accumulations of up to 2 inches, total snowfall was only a trace.

December 27, 2001: Typhoon Vamei forms in the South China Sea, about 100 miles north of the Equator. Vamei is the first recorded tropical cyclone to develop within 1.5 degrees of latitude about 104 miles of the equator.

1869 - A post Christmas storm in New York and Vermont produced record storm totals of 30 inches at Burlington, VT, and 39 inches at Montpelier VT. A public emergency was declared in Vermont. (David Ludlum)

1892 - An Atlantic coast storm produced a record 18.6 inches of snow at Norfolk, VA, including 17.7 inches in 24 hours. The storm also produced 9.5 inches of snow at Raleigh NC, and brought snow to northern Florida for the first time in 35 years. (26th- 28th) (The Weather Channel)

1982 - The worst Louisiana rainstorm in more than 100 years came to an end. More than 18 inches fell at Vinton, LA, during the three day storm. Flooding was widespread, and property damage was estimated at 100 to 200 million dollars. President Reagan visited the state and declared ten parishes in northeastern Louisiana disaster areas. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A winter storm produced snow and high winds in Wyoming, Colorado and Nebraska. Denver CO experienced its worst snowstorm since December 1983 as high winds gusting to 46 mph created near blizzard conditions, whipping the fifteen inch snow into drifts five feet high, and closing Stapleton Airport. Snowfall totals in the foothills southwest of Denver ranged up to 42 inches, at Intercanyon. Blizzard conditions raged across southeastern Wyoming through the day, stranding 300 holiday travelers in the tiny town of Chugwater. Heavier snowfall totals included 19 inches at La Grange WY, and 22 inches at Elsmere NE. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Severe thunderstorms developing along a cold front in the south central U.S. spawned a dozen tornadoes in Mississippi between early afternoon and sunrise the following day. A tornado at Harperville destroyed five chicken homes killing thousands of chickens. Strong thunderstorm winds gusted to 80 mph at Rolling Fork MS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



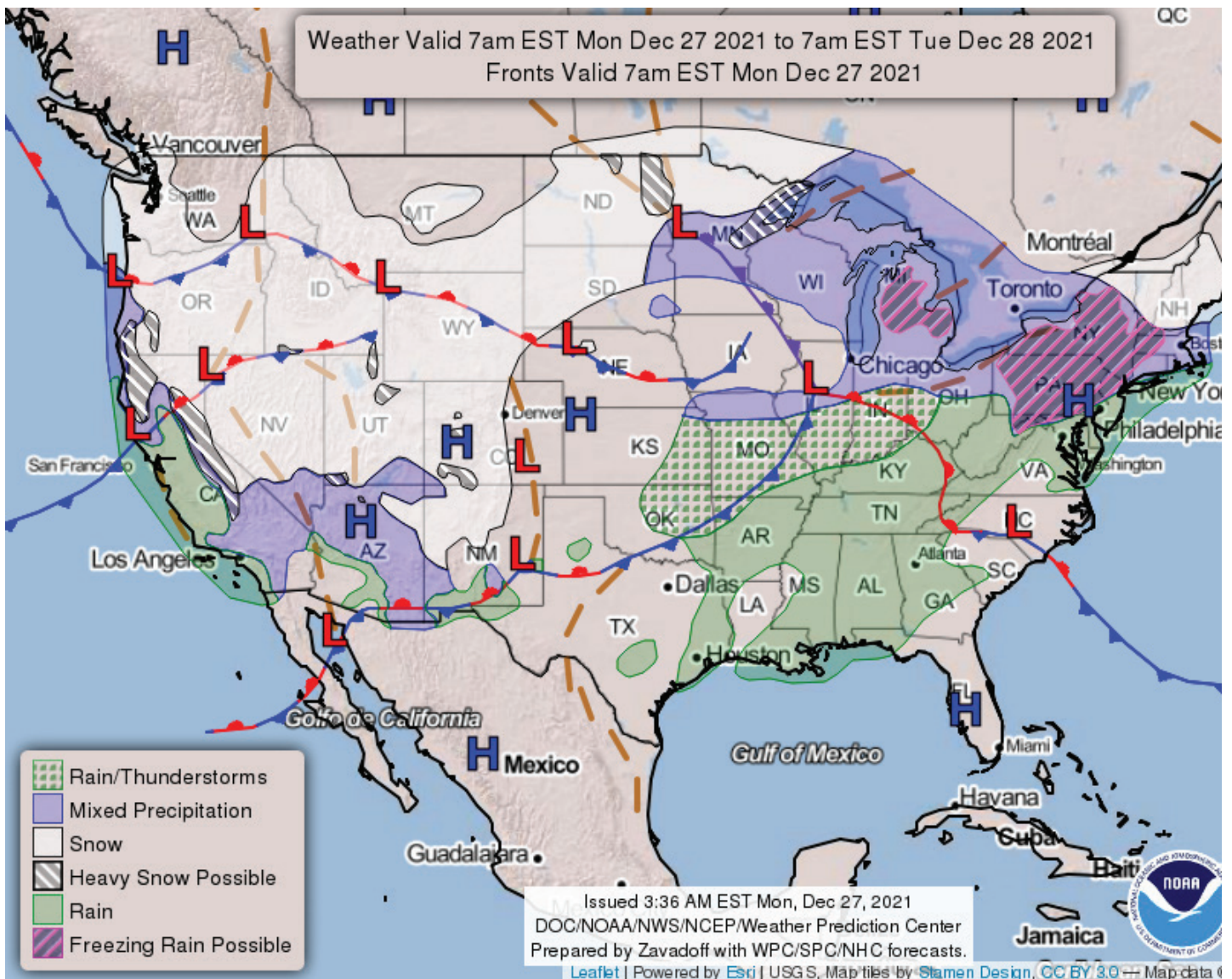
# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 9 of 38

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

**High Temp: 26 °F at 11:53 PM**  
**Low Temp: 8 °F at 5:17 AM**  
**Wind: 30 mph at 2:55 PM**  
**Precip: 0.00**

**Record High: 54° in 1928**  
**Record Low: -29° in 1914**  
**Average High: 25°F**  
**Average Low: 5°F**  
**Average Precip in Dec.: 0.52**  
**Precip to date in Dec.: 0.47**  
**Average Precip to date: 21.73**  
**Precip Year to Date: 20.03**  
**Sunset Tonight: 4:57:32 PM**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:10:02 AM**





## WHY FATHERS MATTER

We rarely think of Joseph when we speak of Mary and her son, Jesus. But Joseph was a very special individual as well.

In describing him, Matthew says that he was a "just" or "righteous" man. And, because of that, he was a "decent," "fair" and "righteous" man. When he was faced with an incredibly difficult decision, an angel appeared and advised him to "go ahead with your marriage to Mary."

Initially, Scripture informs us, "that not wanting to disgrace her, he planned to send her away." He was well aware of the fact that stoning was the legal prescription for what people would think of Mary's being pregnant without being married. If he took Mary to be his wife, he could be humiliated or ridiculed by those around him. But he chose to obey the command of the angel to marry her. As a "righteous" man he was also a "merciful" man, a man willing to listen to, hear from, and obey God. Joseph was a man of great character.

But there is more. Not only was he righteous, merciful, and obedient to the voice of God, but he was a man who was sensitive and discrete. Joseph was open to the voice of God and responded immediately when God spoke to him and protected the reputation and honor of Mary – thereby revealing he was a man of integrity.

Prayer: Lord, we pray for fathers everywhere who will strive to be like the earthly father of Your Son. We ask that You raise up men of integrity to honor You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Matthew 1:18-25 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 11 of 38

## 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  
06/17/2021 Groton Transit Fundraiser, 4-7 p.m.  
06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
06/19/2021 U8 Baseball Tournament  
06/19/2021 **Postponed to Aug. 28th:** Lions Crazy Golf Fest at Olive Grove Golf Course, Noon  
06/26/2021 U10 Baseball Tournament  
06/27/2021 U12 Baseball Tournament  
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  
08/13/2021 Groton Basketball Golf Tournament  
**Cancelled** Lions Club Crazy Golf Fest 9am Olive Grove Golf Course  
08/29/2021 Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day at GHS Parking Lot (4-5 p.m.)  
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  
09/18-19 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  
10/29/2021 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)  
11/13/2021 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)  
11/11/2021 Veteran's Day Program at the GHS Arena  
11/21/2021 Groton Area Snow Queen Contest  
11/25/2021 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)  
11/30/2021 James Valley Telecommunications Holiday Open House 10am-4pm  
12/04/2021 Olive Grove Tour of Homes  
12/11/2021 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-Noon

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 12 of 38

## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

### Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White ..... \$41.54/year
- Colored ..... \$74.55/year
- Colored ..... \$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly\* ..... \$21.30/year

\* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to [paperpaul@grotonsd.net](mailto:paperpaul@grotonsd.net)

## Groton Daily Independent

[www.397news.com](http://www.397news.com)

### Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month ..... \$15.98
- 3 Months ..... \$21.30
- 6 Months ..... \$26.63
- 9 Months ..... \$31.95
- 12 Months ..... \$42.60

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Password \_\_\_\_\_

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

[paypal.me/paperpaul](https://paypal.me/paperpaul)





## News from the Associated Press

### Good seats still available from Met Stadium looting in 1981

By CHRIS TOMASSON St. Paul Pioneer Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Sunday, Dec. 20, 1981, marked the end of an era for the Minnesota Vikings. After 21 seasons at Metropolitan Stadium in Bloomington, the team played its final game there on that cold, blustery day before moving into the spanking new Metrodome in downtown Minneapolis.

As the final seconds ticked off in a 10-6 loss to the Kansas City Chiefs on the 10-degree day, fans rushed onto the field and tore down the goalposts. Many also pilfered what they could find that wasn't nailed down as well as plenty that was nailed down.

"Everybody was going crazy at the time," said Tommy Kramer, then the Vikings starting quarterback. "They were carrying out the seats. I was thinking at that time, why would anybody want an old chair?"

Well, 40 years later, some people think it's pretty cool to have a seat from the Met. And Kramer has figured that out.

"A lot people will bring me a seat and say they want me to sign it, and they'll bring me other stuff (from the stadium)," he said. "It's funny."

For those who missed out on looting Met Stadium, there are still places to go. Just do a search on Craigslist or eBay, the St. Paul Pioneer Press reported.

Want a piece of one of the goalposts? Some fans had brought hacksaws to the final game and cut off sections. A one-foot section that features the signatures of Purple People Eaters Alan Page, Carl Eller, Jim Marshall and Gary Larsen (who all were retired by 1981) can be found on eBay for \$3,500.

For a much cheaper item, there is a floodlight said to have come from Metropolitan Stadium available for \$100 on Craigslist.

"I think it was taken on that day (of the final game), but I don't know," seller Tom Jacobs of St. Anthony said. "My dad got it from somebody. He passed away, and we're trying to sell the house and all this stuff that has been stored in the garage forever."

T.J. Mutch, 56, is a collector who lives in Lakeville and has spent years accumulating items from Metropolitan Stadium, which opened in 1956 and was home to the Vikings and Twins from 1961-81. His collection includes ticket stubs from the final Vikings game, an exit sign, a banner CBS put up when it televised Vikings games, and a box-office sign with admission prices for the Twins.

Mutch said he once bought five stadium signs for \$1,000 from a fan who yanked them off walls at the final Vikings game. He said he's had an offer of \$2,000 for just the box-office sign but he's not selling it.

Most of the items from the Met that can be found for sale are seats, and one guy to contact is Mark Satterstrom, 63, of Harris, Minnesota. Satterstrom didn't attend the final game but said he went to the stadium before it was torn down in January 1985 and was allowed to pick up about a dozen seats for free. He then found a guy to help him refurbish them.

In 2006, Satterstrom got wind of a cache of wooden seats from Metropolitan Stadium that had been sitting for about six years in a field in Mandan, North Dakota. As Satterstrom tells it, a high school in the area had bought about 2,500 seats before the stadium was demolished and had them carted up in seven semi trucks to use at a baseball field under construction.

When the seats arrived, it was determined they were made for concrete risers and too heavy for the wooden stands being built. So, the city sold the seats to Darrell Itrich, a local businessman.

Itrich broke what he had down to about 1,250 seats because armrests between each seat made it impossible to have 2,500 individual seats. He then started refurbishing and selling some.

After a while, Itrich was paying more money in storage fees than he was making, so he dumped the remaining seats in a field at a friend's farm. Satterstrom then drove up to see them.

"I was expecting to see a big pile of green and blue," said Satterstrom, referring to the seat colors at the Met. "I get there and it was all brown and gray. I was so disappointed. The stuff had been badly weathered."

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 14 of 38

Satterstrom left without buying any but about a month later changed his mind because, he said, he was "the guy to save the seats before they turned to dust." So he bought about 580 or so that were left for \$4,000.

With the help of a company, he started refinishing those seats and putting them up for sale. Five years later, he came across another bunch of Metropolitan Stadium seats for sale.

A friend of Satterstrom's, John Jensen, learned in 2011 of about 400 plastic seats from the stadium lying around at Mark Evenson Memorial Fields in Bemidji. While the Met initially had all wooden seats, in its later years broken or weathered seats were replaced with plastic ones.

According to Moe Webb, a former treasurer for youth baseball in Bemidji, the city in about 1997 purchased about 450 plastic seats from a seller in the Bismarck, North Dakota, area, who got them when the Met was being torn down. They were for a ballfield there but didn't fit right and were put up for sale.

When the seats got to Minnesota for possible use at Bemidji State's BSU Baseball Field, they were deemed too heavy for the metal risers. About 50 then were passed on to locals who donated \$250 or more for construction of a youth baseball field, and the other 400 or so were dumped outside, where they sat for about 14 years.

Satterstrom and Jensen bought the lot for \$500.

After all the trouble buyers had fitting the seats to new venues, a match was found at Joe Schleper Stadium in Shakopee. That stadium was outfitted with plastic seats from the Met in the 1980s and they remained in place until 2014, when they were replaced with seats from the Metrodome, torn down after the Vikings' last season there in 2013.

In December 2014, about 200 of the Met Stadium seats were sold — one for \$25, two for \$40 and three for \$55.

Jon Bradley, a collector who then lived in Bloomington and now lives in Bothell, Wash., bought about a dozen along with an associate and said they were in "pretty rough shape" and "pretty rusted," But that's not the case with Satterstrom's seats, which start at \$150 for plastic and \$235 for wood. They can be ordered at [www.Vendiamo.com](http://www.Vendiamo.com). He refurbishes them to look new, and places a mounting stand under each one.

"I can match the original color pretty easily, and I'll even put a seat number on there that you want," Satterstrom said. "A lot of people want number 3 (for Harmon Killebrew) on them and they're thinking that they're Twins seats. I had somebody call me up and say, 'I want number 10.' I said, 'Earl Battey, that's an eclectic choice.' He said, 'Earl Battey? Fran Tarkenton.'"

When he first started selling his refurbished seats, Satterstrom catered more to those interested in the Twins, who played their last game at the Met on Sept. 30, 1981, before also moving to the Metrodome. He has sold two seats to Twins' TV play-by-play announcer Dick Bremer, who sat in one when he broadcast the first game at Target Field on April 12, 2010.

Bremer this year hooked Satterstrom up with former Twins star Rod Carew, who agreed to sign 10 Met seats if he could have a refurbished one. Carew got one with his uniform No. 29, and that number will be on the others when they go up for sale.

Satterstrom also has gotten a pair of legendary Vikings to sign his seats. head coach Bud Grant and running back Chuck Foreman. Prices are \$295 for wooden ones. There also are Grant-signed plastic seatbacks and seat bottoms for \$75 and \$55, respectively.

Satterstrom said he first encountered Grant when he showed up announced at his Bloomington home in 2018 and the Hall of Fame coach agreed to a signing endeavor.

Grant, 94, led the Vikings to four Super Bowl appearances during their years at Metropolitan Stadium, and they haven't been to one since they left. Grant said he doesn't have anything himself from the Met since he's not a collector.

"What would I do with an old wooden seat?" he said.

For those who do want one, Grant said, "That's fine for them," he said before adding, "There's a lot of crazy people out there."

Plenty of souvenir seekers showed up for the final game at the Met in which the announced attendance was 41,110 on a bitterly cold day in which the wind-chill factor was minus-8 and there was a 17 mph



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 15 of 38

wind. Both teams were out of playoff contention with the Vikings entering the season finale at 7-8 and the Chiefs at 8-7.

"I remember the Chiefs players begging us to not pass because they were so cold and they wanted us to run the ball so that the time would run out," said then Vikings running back Ted Brown. "They were telling Tommy, 'Quit passing the ball.'"

Kramer didn't comply, completing 17 of 38 passes for 177 yards. But the Chiefs hung on for the win when Kramer threw an incomplete pass to tight Joe Senser with 15 seconds left in the game on fourth-and-goal from the 3-yard line.

"It was bittersweet," then Vikings wide receiver Ahmad Rashad said of the final game. "There were so many memories of all the great players who had played there. The stadium was alive but for me it was like a funeral. It was the end of an era."

As soon as the game ended, fans spilled onto the field and tore down the goalposts while security officers mostly watched. Some fans climbed onto the scoreboard to rip off lights and other items. In the stands, seats were being taken out.

"They brought screwdrivers and hammers because I saw them taking the seats out," Rashad said. "I sort of thought then that it would be cool if I had a couple of seats that I could put in my house, but that was a fleeting thought that came and went."

Bob Lurtsema, a Vikings defensive lineman from 1971-76 who has remained close to the team and was on the sideline for the final game, got a seat and didn't need any tools. He said he convinced a fan who was carrying out a bunch of seats to give him one. It ended up sitting in his garage for five years before he passed it on to an avid Twins fan.

Lurtsema, nicknamed "Benchwarmer Bob," appropriately also went home with a bench from Metropolitan Stadium. But he seems to be most proud of something else he got after the final game.

"I was the first one on the field when the gun went off," Lurtsema said. "I went out on the field and touched the grass because we were going from grass to artificial turf (at the Metrodome). Then I remember I actually dug it up and I put some in a jar. Then I put it on top of the fireplace for a couple of weeks. And then I put it in the far back corner of my lawn (in Lakeville)."

A fan on hand was Bob Bukovich, who has been making Vikings statues out of plaster of Paris and fiberglass resin for about 50 years. He sold about 10 that day at the stadium. Bukovich, now 75, remembers well the aftermath.

"It was chaotic," Bukovich said. "There were a bunch of people tearing down a goalpost and I got the heck out of the way because I wasn't going to let it fall on me. It could have killed somebody. I saw people walking out with chairs, but they didn't stop anybody."

Bukovich said he didn't take anything from the stadium that day. But in his "Man Cave" at his Inver Grove Heights home, he has on display numerous items from Vikings history, and one is a pennant he acquired that season. It reads, "Farewell to the Met" and "150 Great Games."

That's how many regular-season games the Vikings played at Metropolitan Stadium, where they compiled a 90-56-4 record. They also went 7-3 in playoff games there.

"When I hear about the old stadium, it just triggers up so many memories," Lurtsema said. "There are so many good memories from it."

## Woman keeps plant alive through 50 years and several moves

By CRYSTAL PUGSLEY Huron Daily Plainsman

HURON, S.D. (AP) — For the past 50 years, Shirley Apley has been the keeper of what she calls the Carr family's heritage plant — an amaryllis she received in 1971 from Jessie Carr Whittington, an aunt of Dr. E.W. Carr who founded the Carr Chiropractic Clinics in eastern South Dakota.

"I grew up in Miller and Jessie just fascinated me," Apley said. "She was about 80 then, and she kept journals all her life. She would tell stories of when she first got married and she and her husband homesteaded in Canada. She taught for two years in a school where all the children spoke French and she only spoke

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 16 of 38

English. When they came back, they ended up in Miller because of the Carr family being around there.

"She had amaryllis all over the place and she gave me one," she said. "I kept that bugger alive and carried it all over the U.S. with me wherever I moved."

Apley returned to South Dakota in 2012, when she became director of the Huron Public Library. She plans to retire after a lifelong career as a librarian at the end of this year, the Huron Daily Plainsman reported.

"I have the original plant here at the library," Apley said. "It's been propagating, creating all these babies."

When Bridget Carr, whose husband is Dr. Josh Carr at Carr Chiropractic Clinic in Huron, joined the library board, Apley offered to give her some of the offspring from that original plant.

"I said I bet you don't know I have been caretaker for your family's heritage plant for over 50 years," she said. "We were at a point where we needed to repot the plants, they were so overcrowded. I ended up with five new pots of plants."

Apley gave Bridget Carr two potted plants and many bulbs to pass out to family members.

"We're hoping to keep them alive," Bridget Carr said. "I thought it was amazing that she had kept them for so long and handed them back over. I'm hoping we will keep the life going in them."

One of the potted plants will be heading back to the original Carr homestead north of Vayland, where the youngest daughter of Dr. E.W. Carr still lives.

"I would say that plant has produced hundreds and hundreds of little bulbs," Apley said. "I've given them to family, friends, strangers. The main mother bulb no longer produces bulbs, and that's okay. We let her babies propagate. The main bulb is still here at the library."

Although she has been able to keep her amaryllis bulb alive for 50 years, that is the extent of her green thumb, Apley said.

"This is the only plant I've ever been able to keep alive," she said. "I had a cactus I killed. For some reason, this one lived. Jessie taught me how to take care of it. I followed her instructions and that little bugger just kept producing babies."

"I don't have any plants in my house right now because of my animals, I have two dogs," she added. "One dog thinks that's lunch."

After retiring, Apley said her original plan was to pack up and move to Texas, where she could continue her research on two nonfiction books she is writing — one on the history of African American doctors in Fort Worth, and the other about a woman, Bessie, from the 1900s known for her pick-pocket skills and countless jail breaks.

But that plan changed when she received notification to report for jury duty in Sioux Falls for the month of January. "Probably more toward the spring I'll put my house on the market," she said. "All my research I need to do is down in Texas."

Apley has been a librarian since 1974, when she began working at the Vermillion Public Library while still in college. Her work has taken her across the country from Minnesota to Oklahoma to Texas. She had been in Texas 17 years before moving back to South Dakota and settling in Huron to be closer to her mother in her later years.

"It's been a fun job, I've enjoyed trying out new things to see how the community liked them," Apley said. "Some things worked, some didn't."

"A lot of people think public libraries are just for reading and it's not," she added. "The status of public libraries has changed — we're community centers. We have crafts, games, puzzles, you can listen to live performances. We have a variety of stuff for everybody."

Apley said she will miss the library patrons that she has come to know over the years. "There's a camaraderie if you're talking about books. The other day a little girl came in shouting at the top of her lungs, 'It's time to collect books day.' I said, 'You're our kind of people.'"

"They have been so much fun," she said. "Huron has a love of reading I have not found in other communities. I hope they continue to support it with Angela (Bailey) taking over as the new director."

When she does move to Texas next spring, Apley said she plans to leave all of the amaryllis plants right where they are in the library office area, adding: "I'm ready to retire and start on my next adventures."

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 17 of 38

## Guests, workers at transitional facility receive \$100 bills

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Staff members and guests at a homeless and transitional facility in South Dakota each received \$100 bills for Christmas, thanks to an anonymous donor.

The St. Francis House in Sioux Falls has 90 residents, one of whom is recovering from cancer and suffering from Parkinson's disease. Darrin Stringfellow said he was "overwhelmed" by the donation.

"I have saved a year's worth of rent in four and a half months, working the two jobs, and they've given so much more, a sense of worth, though, not just the monetary things and a warm bed," Stringfellow said. "I feel like a complete human again."

Nichole Barry, one of 30 employees at the house, said she "teared up a little bit" when she received the present.

St. Francis House Executive Director Julie Becker said it was humbling to be selected by the donor and delivered a message when handing out the bills, KELO-TV reported.

"Please know that this donor wanted to let all of you know that you guys are all special people, okay?" Becker said. "Your circumstances do not define you. You are all here for a reason, and it's all different, and everybody is working their plan to get on to a better way of life."

She also asked them to continue paying it forward, such as putting a couple of bucks in the Salvation Army kettle or buying someone a cup of coffee.

## Fast-moving storm to affect travel in Upper Midwest states

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A winter storm system was building steam in South Dakota Sunday and has prompted weather alerts in eastern North Dakota, northern Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin, the National Weather Service said.

The storm was expected to move quickly from southwest to northeast and could dump up to a foot of snow in some areas of eastern North Dakota and northern Minnesota. The heaviest snow was expected to begin in the late afternoon in North Dakota and overnight in Minnesota, the weather service said.

"Generally, we should see accumulations ranging from 5 to 8 inches on the low end, and upwards of 12 inches where stronger bands develop," the weather service said in a release.

Potential drifting could make travel nearly impossible with blowing snow becoming more of a factor on Monday, forecasters said. There's a possibility of rain and freezing rain and drizzle in southern Wisconsin.

In addition, lake-effect snow along Lake Superior in northeastern Minnesota coupled with winds up to 40 mph "will have to be monitored closely" for a potential blizzard warning, meteorologists said. Some lakeside communities could see up to 18 inches of snow.

Another system on a similar track will follow for Tuesday into Wednesday with dangerous wind chills possible the remainder of the week.

## Cape Town bells toll to honor Archbishop Desmond Tutu's life

By ANDREW MELDRUM Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Bells rang at midday Monday from St. George's Anglican Cathedral in Cape Town to honor Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, a day after his death at age 90.

The bells at the cathedral, where Tutu urged South Africans of all races to work together against apartheid, will toll for 10 minutes at noon for five days to mark Tutu's life.

"We ask all who hear the bells to pause their busy schedules for a moment in tribute to Archbishop Tutu," said the current Archbishop of Cape Town, Thabo Makgoba.

The activist prelate worked against South Africa's apartheid regime that oppressed the country's Black majority. Following the end of apartheid in 1994, when South Africa became a democracy, Tutu chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that documented atrocities and sought to promote national reconciliation. Tutu also became one of the world's most prominent religious leaders to champion LGBTQ rights.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 18 of 38

Several events in South Africa are being planned to honor Tutu's life.

Tutu's body will lie in state at the cathedral in Cape Town on Friday before a requiem mass is held Saturday, Makgoba said. In addition, an ecumenical service will be held for Tutu on Wednesday in South Africa's capital, Pretoria.

South Africans are laying flowers at the cathedral, in front of Tutu's home in Cape Town's Milnerton area, and in front of his former home in Soweto.

"He knew in his soul that good would triumph over evil, that justice would prevail over iniquity, and that reconciliation would prevail over revenge and recrimination. He knew that apartheid would end, that democracy would come," South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said of Tutu, in a nationally broadcast address Sunday night.

"He knew that our people would be free. By the same measure, he was convinced, even to the end of his life, that poverty, hunger and misery can be defeated; that all people can live together in peace, security and comfort," said Ramaphosa who added that South Africa's flags will be flown at half-staff this week.

Ramaphosa urged all South Africans to "pay respects to the departed and to celebrate life with the exuberance and the purpose of our beloved Archbishop. May we follow in his footsteps. May we, too, be worthy inheritors of the mantle of service, of selflessness, of courage, and of principled solidarity with the poor and marginalized."

## Delta: Flight to Shanghai turned back because of COVID rules

BEIJING (AP) — Delta Air Lines said Monday that new pandemic-related cleaning requirements at a Shanghai airport were behind the turning back of a recent flight from Seattle in midair, a move that had prompted a protest from the Chinese Consulate in San Francisco.

An emailed statement said the new mandates at Shanghai Pudong International Airport "require significantly extended ground time and are not operationally viable for Delta."

It wasn't clear what the rules are and what prompted the change, but it comes as China tightens its already strict COVID-19 travel restrictions in the face of a growing outbreak in the city of Xi'an and ahead of the Winter Olympics in Beijing in six weeks.

Xi'an, which is about 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) southwest of Beijing, reported more than 300 new cases over the weekend, a sharp rise from previous days. The city of 13 million people has been locked down, with only one person per household allowed out every two days to shop for necessities.

The Delta flight that turned back to Seattle last week left passengers with expired COVID-19 test results and U.S. visas, according to Chinese media reports.

Two Taiwan-based airlines, China Airlines and EVA Air, have both cut down on the number of flights heading to Shanghai Pudong International Airport in recent days, citing new disinfection procedures that will take longer to complete, according to Taiwan's semi-official Central News Agency.

EVA is suspending flights from two cities to Shanghai until Feb. 3. China Airlines is suspending flights from one city to Shanghai until the end of January, and reducing the number of flights on another route.

The consulate in San Francisco did not name Delta but said in a short statement Sunday that many flights from the U.S. to China had been delayed or canceled in recent days including a flight that turned back more than halfway to its destination.

The consulate "had made a stern representation to the airline," the statement said.

## Bulgarian shoppers find bargains in Turkey as lira struggles

By MEHMET GUZEL Associated Press

EDIRNE, Turkey (AP) — Bulgarian shoppers are crossing Turkey's western border in packed cars and buses, taking advantage of a declining Turkish lira to fuel their own shopping sprees.

Their first stop is the currency exchange and then it's off to the markets and grocery stores in the northwestern Turkish city of Edirne.

On Christmas Eve, the city's Turkish marketplace was packed with shoppers from Bulgaria. Hatice Ahm-

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 19 of 38

edova said she left at 3 a.m. to get on a bus that would take her over the border to Edirne, exchanged 200 Bulgarian Levs to get 1,150 Turkish liras and began shopping.

Gulfiye Osinova, 60, was also there to find gifts for her children and grandchildren, saying that Bulgaria was much more expensive.

Turkey is in the throes of an economic crisis with official inflation figures above 21%, affecting the prices of food, fuel and household items. But for the Bulgarian shoppers, the grocery stores are a bargain and they leave the country with their trunks packed.

The lira has experienced its most volatile month in December, declining almost every day and finally hitting an all-time low of 18.36 against the U.S. dollar on Dec. 20, when Turkey's currency lost more than 60% of its value against the dollar this year. Tourists have benefited from this currency decline.

The lira has since rebounded after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced new financial tools to protect lira deposits against currency fluctuations, and closed the week at 10.83 against the dollar.

Bulent Reisoglu, the president of the Ulus bazaar cooperative in Edirne, said the number of foreigners has quadrupled over the past few weeks.

"Parking lots are filled with Bulgarian cars, it has become almost impossible to see Edirne or Istanbul license plates," he said. "(They) are shopping as if they are crazed, not knowing what they are buying and buying five or ten of the same with the logic of selling it or thinking they won't find these again."

Shoppers were also coming from neighboring Greece, converting euros into lira. One shopper, Esra Molla, said she was happy to be buying gifts for her family and herself.

Despite the lira's rally in the past week, the Turkish national currency has still lost nearly 40% of its value this year, triggered by Erdogan's insistence on lowering interest rates, which currently stand at 14%. Established economic theory says high inflation can be lowered by raising interest rates but Erdogan argues otherwise. Under his new economic program, Erdogan wants cheap credit, high exports and big growth.

With Turks waiting for bread in long lines in the cold this month, the decline of their buying power amid price hikes has been painfully visible. Erdogan has urged Turkish businesses to lower their prices as the lira stabilizes but there's no signs yet they will be replacing the hordes of Bulgarian shoppers in Edirne anytime soon.

Zeynep Bilginsoy and Robert Badendieck contributed from Istanbul.

## Myanmar court postpones verdicts in 2nd case against Suu Kyi

By TASSANEE VEJPONGSA Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — A court in military-ruled Myanmar postponed its verdicts Monday on two charges against ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi in which she is accused of importing and possessing walkie-talkies without following official procedures, a legal official familiar with the case said.

The case in the court in the capital, Naypyitaw, is among many brought against the 76-year-old Nobel Peace Prize laureate since the army seized power on Feb. 1, ousting her elected government and arresting top members of her National League for Democracy party.

The court gave no reason for delaying the verdicts until Jan. 10, according to the legal official, who insisted on anonymity for fear of being punished by the authorities, who have restricted the release of information about Suu Kyi's trials.

Suu Kyi's party won a landslide victory in last year's general election, but the military said there was widespread electoral fraud, an assertion that independent poll watchers doubt.

Suu Kyi's supporters and independent analysts say all the charges against her are politically motivated and an attempt to discredit her and legitimize the military's seizure of power while keeping her from returning to politics. If found guilty of all the charges she faces, she could be sentenced to more than 100 years in prison.

Suu Kyi was convicted on Dec. 6 on two other charges — incitement and breaching COVID-19 restrictions — and sentenced to four years' imprisonment. Hours after the sentence was issued, the head of the

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 20 of 38

military-installed government, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, reduced it by half. She is being held by the military at an unknown location and state television reported that she would serve her sentence there.

Suu Kyi has been attending court hearings in prison clothes — a white top and a brown longyi skirt provided by the authorities. The hearings are closed to the media and spectators and the prosecutors do not comment. Her lawyers, who had been a source of information on the proceedings, were served with gag orders in October.

A charge under the Export-Import Law of having improperly imported the walkies-talkies was the first filed against Suu Kyi and served as the initial justification for her continued detention. A second charge of illegally possessing the radios was filed the following month.

The radios were seized from the gate of her residence and the barracks of her bodyguards during a search on Feb. 1, the day she was arrested.

Suu Kyi's lawyers argued that the radios were not in her personal possession and were legitimately used to help provide for her security, but the court declined to dismiss the charges.

The court on Monday also heard video testimony from the vice chairman of Suu Kyi's party, Zaw Myint Maung, in another case against her involving alleged violation of COVID-19 restrictions during last year's election campaign, the legal official said.

Zaw Myint Maung, who had been unable to appear in court earlier for health reasons, testified that people had gathered to see her when she visited Shwe Kyar Pin Ward during the campaign because they respect her, and it wasn't a violation of virus restrictions, the official said.

The offense falls under the Natural Disaster Management Law and the maximum penalty is three years in prison and a fine.

She is also being tried in the same court on five counts of corruption. The maximum penalty for each count is 15 years in prison and a fine. A sixth corruption charge, in which Suu Kyi and ousted President Win Myint are accused of granting permits to rent and buy a helicopter, has not yet gone to trial.

In separate proceedings, she is accused of violating the Official Secrets Act, which carries a maximum term of 14 years.

Additional charges were also added by Myanmar's election commission against Suu Kyi and 15 other politicians in November for alleged fraud in last year's election. The charges by the military-controlled Union Election Commission could result in Suu Kyi's party being dissolved and unable to participate in a new election the military has promised will take place within two years of its takeover.

The military's seizure of power was met by nonviolent nationwide demonstrations, which security forces quashed with deadly force, killing nearly 1,400 civilians, according to a detailed list compiled by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

Peaceful protests have continued, but amid the severe crackdown, an armed resistance has also grown, to the point that U.N. experts have warned the country could be sliding into civil war.

## Prescott, Cowboys celebrate with 56-14 rout of Washington

By SCHUYLER DIXON AP Pro Football Writer

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — Dak Prescott and the Dallas Cowboys didn't have to worry about the NFC East title anymore once they kicked off against Washington.

So they took care of the star quarterback's slump instead.

Prescott threw four touchdown passes, DeMarcus Lawrence returned an interception for a score and the Cowboys celebrated their clinching of the division crown with a 56-14 rout of Washington on Sunday night.

The Cowboys (11-4) tied the franchise record for points in a first half while taking a 42-7 lead and frustrating Washington to the point that defensive tackles Jonathan Allen and Daron Payne scuffled on the sideline.

Dallas didn't need to win to add the division title to the playoff berth that was sealed with San Francisco's loss to Tennessee three nights earlier. Las Vegas' 17-13 victory over Denver took care of that about an hour before kickoff, giving the Cowboys a tiebreaker over Philadelphia.

Prescott and company didn't seem to care, and now the Eagles can't tie them for the division title after



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 21 of 38

Dallas scored its most points, playoffs included, since a 59-14 victory over San Francisco in 1980.

"I don't know if many people knew that we'd clinched before the game. I didn't," Prescott said. "I don't know if we're in the world or in the business of trying to send messages more than we're just trying to get better."

Washington (6-9) allowed its most points since 2010 in the most-lopsided loss for either team in a storied rivalry played 124 times. Washington's playoff hopes are faint, but not gone.

"I told them you play this game long enough, you're going to get beat like this," coach Ron Rivera said. "How you respond to it, how you bounce back, how you play, that tells more about you than anything else."

Prescott tied the club record for passing TDs in a half with four before halftime — one each to a running back (Ezekiel Elliott), a tight end (Dalton Schultz), a receiver (Amari Cooper) and a backup tackle (Terence Steele, who was lined up as a tight end when Prescott faked the handoff for an easy 1-yard score ).

Taylor Heinicke, making a second consecutive start against Dallas after missing the game in between because of COVID-19, gave up Trevon Diggs' NFL-leading 11th interception on the first offensive play for Washington, which was playing five days after a coronavirus-delayed loss to Philadelphia.

The Dallas offense took it from there, recording 389 yards before halftime as Prescott ended a run of mediocre showings by completing 22 of his first 25 passes and finishing with the most yards in a first half in his career with 321. He was 28 of 39 for 330 yards when he left for good in the third quarter.

"I thought he was in total control," coach Mike McCarthy said. "His numbers in the first half reflect that. Had some shot opportunities, was patient with the checkdowns. I really like the way he played tonight."

The Cowboys were already up 14-0 late in the first quarter when Lawrence, a defensive end, deflected Heinicke's pass with his right hand, corralled the ball and rumbled down the left sideline 40 yards for a TD.

"Nothing was more impressive than D'Law's pick-6," said Elliott, who scored once each on a run and a catch. "I was impressed with the stiff arm, the high knees, making the last guy miss on the sideline. I think he said he was an all-state tight end on the sideline. You saw that today."

Lawrence was mobbed by other members of his defensive line, just as Steele was by fellow Dallas blockers on his score. It was a different scene for the guys in the trenches for Washington.

The defensive linemen were on the Washington bench when Allen and Payne appeared to exchange words before both got up and Allen, a team captain, threw a punch at his former Alabama teammate.

## COPYCAT LEAGUE

The Washington scuffle happened on benches the club brought in, adorned with its "W" logo, after the Cowboys did the same thing when visiting its NFC East rival two weeks ago.

The difference is, the rematch was in climate-controlled AT&T Stadium. The retractable roof was closed. Regardless, temperatures were in the 70s.

The Cowboys pulled the stunt because temperatures were in the 40s and they had been told the warmers on the benches were unreliable.

## SACK TIME

While Dallas' three-game streak of forcing four turnovers ended with just the two first-quarter takeaways, but the Cowboys recorded five sacks. Micah Parsons had his 13th, and is 1 1/2 from Jevon Kearse's NFL rookie record for Tennessee in 1999.

## INJURIES/COVID-19

Washington rookie linebacker Jamin Davis was after reporting to team doctors with possible COVID-19 symptoms before the game. The club said there wasn't enough time to process a COVID-19 test before reporting the inactive players so Davis was held out as a precaution. ... Dallas LT Tyron Smith (ankle) missed his second consecutive game and fifth overall. ... Dallas DBs Malik Hooker and Jourdan Lewis went on the COVID-19 reserve list during the week.

## UP NEXT

Washington: The home finale is against Philadelphia next Sunday. It's the fourth of five consecutive division games to finish the regular season. A loss will eliminate Washington from the playoffs.

Cowboys: The No. 1 seed in the NFC is still in play for Arizona's visit next Sunday. Dallas and the other

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 22 of 38

teams trailing Green Bay (12-3) need the Packers to lose.

More AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/hub/nfl> and <https://apnews.com/hub/pro-32> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_NFL](https://twitter.com/AP_NFL)

## Major storm dumps snow, closes mountain routes in California

COLFAX, Calif. (AP) — A major Christmas weekend storm caused whiteout conditions and closed key highways amid blowing snow in mountains of Northern California and Nevada, with forecasters warning that travel in the Sierra Nevada could be difficult for several days.

Authorities near Reno said three people were injured in a 20-car pileup on Interstate 395, where drivers described limited visibility on Sunday. Further west, a 70-mile (112-kilometer) stretch of Interstate 80 was shut until at least Monday from Colfax, California, through the Lake Tahoe region to the Nevada state line.

The California Department of Transportation also closed many other roads while warning of slippery conditions for motorists.

"Expect major travel delays on all roads," the National Weather Service office in Reno, Nevada, said Sunday on Twitter. "Today is the type of day to just stay home if you can. More snow is on the way too!"

The weather service issued a winter storm warning for greater Lake Tahoe until 1 a.m. Tuesday because of possible "widespread whiteout conditions" and wind gusts that could top 45 mph (72 kph).

Turbulent weather stretched from San Diego to Seattle. More than a foot (0.3 meters) of snow was reported near Port Angeles on Washington state's Puget Sound. Portland, Oregon received a dusting, but the city was expected to get another 2.5 inches (6 centimeters) by Monday morning, according to the weather service.

In California, rockslides caused by heavy rain closed more than 40 miles (64 kilometers) of coastal Highway 1 in the Big Sur region south of the San Francisco Bay Area. There was no estimate for the reopening of the scenic stretch that is frequently shut after wet weather.

The latest in a series of blustery storms hit Southern California with heavy rain and wind that flooded streets and knocked down power lines late Saturday. Powerful gusts toppled trees, damaged carports and blew a track-and-field shed from a Goleta high school into a front yard two blocks away, according to the Santa Barbara County Fire Department. No injuries were reported.

More than 1.8 inches (4.5 centimeters) of rain fell over 24 hours in Santa Barbara County's San Marcos pass, while Rocky Butte in San Luis Obispo County recorded 1.61 inches (4 centimeters), the weather service said.

Los Angeles International Airport said a "storm-related electrical issue" forced a partial closure of Terminal 5, causing post-Christmas passengers to divert to other terminals for certain services.

"Cancellations and delays are possible, so it will be important to check your flight status today if flying through Terminal 5," LAX tweeted.

In the San Bernardino Mountains east of Los Angeles, crews were repairing a section of State Route 18 that washed down a hillside after heavy rain late Thursday. The closure of the major route into the Big Bear ski resort area could last for weeks, officials said.

The continuing storms were welcomed in parched California, where the Sierra snowpack had been at dangerously low levels after weeks for dry weather. But the state Department of Water Resources reported on Christmas Eve that the snowpack was between 114% and 137% of normal across the range with more snow expected.

Up to 8 feet (2.4 meters) of snow was predicted at the highest elevations of the Sierra.

Before Sunday, 20 inches (50 centimeters) of snow already had fallen at Homewood on Lake Tahoe's west shore. About a foot (30 centimeters) was reported at Northstar near Truckee, California, and 10 inches (25 centimeters) at the Mount Rose ski resort on the southwest edge of Reno.

**Sarah Weddington, lawyer who argued Roe v. Wade, dies at 76**

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 23 of 38

By JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — Sarah Weddington, a Texas lawyer who as a 26-year-old successfully argued the landmark abortion rights case *Roe v. Wade* before the U.S. Supreme Court, died Sunday. She was 76.

Susan Hays, Weddington's former student and colleague, said she died in her sleep early Sunday morning at her Austin home. Weddington had been in poor health for some time and it was not immediately clear what caused her death, Hays told The Associated Press.

Raised as a minister's daughter in the West Texas city of Abilene, Weddington attended law school at the University of Texas. A couple years after graduating, she and a former classmate, Linda Coffee, brought a class-action lawsuit on behalf of a pregnant woman challenging a state law that largely banned abortions.

The case of "Jane Roe," whose real name was Norma McCorvey, was brought against Dallas County District Attorney Henry Wade and eventually advanced to the Supreme Court.

Weddington argued the case before the high court twice, in December 1971 and again in October 1972, resulting the next year in the 7-2 ruling that legalized abortion nationwide.

Weddington's death comes as the Supreme Court is considering a case over Mississippi's ban on abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy that's widely considered to be most serious challenge in years to the *Roe* decision.

While that case was before the court, Weddington also ran to represent Austin in the Texas House of Representatives. She was elected in 1972 and served three terms as a state lawmaker, before becoming general counsel of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and later working as advisor on women's issues to President Jimmy Carter.

Weddington later wrote a book on *Roe v. Wade*, gave lectures and taught courses at the University of Texas at Austin and Texas Women's University on leadership, law and gender discrimination. She remained active in the political and legal worlds well into her later years, attending the 2019 signing ceremony for a New York state law meant to safeguard abortion rights should *Roe v. Wade* be overturned.

## 1st U.S. gay bishop remembers Tutu's generosity, kindness

By HOLLY RAMER Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — In 2008, when the Right Rev. Gene Robinson of New Hampshire was excluded from a global Anglican gathering because of his sexuality, Desmond Tutu, who died Sunday, came to his defense.

"Gene Robinson is a wonderful human being, and I am proud to belong to the same church as he," Tutu wrote in the foreword to a book Robinson published that year.

Robinson, who in 2003 became the U.S. Episcopal Church's first openly gay bishop, said Sunday he has been trying to live up to those words ever since.

"It was quite surreal because I was taking grief from literally around the world," he said in a phone interview. "There was probably at that time, and maybe still, no one better known around the world than Desmond Tutu. It was an astounding gesture of generosity and kindness."

Tutu, South Africa's Nobel Peace Prize-winning activist for racial justice, died at age 90. He was an uncompromising foe of apartheid, South Africa's brutal regime of oppression against its Black majority, as well as a leading advocate for LGBTQ rights and same-sex marriage.

"Now, with gay marriage, it's hard to remember how controversial this was, and for him to stand with me at the very time I was being excluded ... it completely floored me," said Robinson.

In the foreword to Robinson's book, Tutu also apologized for the "cruelty and injustice" the LGBTQ community had suffered at the hands of fellow Anglicans.

Tutu, Robinson said, used his own experience of oppression to understand and empathize with others.

"He used that as a window into what it was like to be a woman, what it was like to be someone in a wheelchair or for someone to LGBTQ or whatever it was," he said. "It was the thing that taught him to be compassionate."

Robinson recalled the way Tutu's laugh rippled across crowds of thousands as well as a private moment



when they prayed together in the seminary Robinson graduated from in New York.

"There was nobody in pain that he wasn't concerned about, whether that pain was a physical ailment of some kind or a mental illness or something to do with cruelty or degradation. It pained him," Robinson said. "To sit in the room and hear him praying about those people was about as close to knowing the heart of God as I ever expect to know. I mean, I don't even need to know more than that."

Robinson served as the ninth bishop of New Hampshire until his retirement in early 2013 and later as a fellow at the Center for American Progress. Now 74, he recently retired as the vice president of religion and senior pastor at the Chautauqua Institution.

## COVID-19 variant disrupts holiday travel but not shopping

By BRYAN GALLION and PAUL WISEMAN Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — The latest COVID-19 variant is upending holiday plans for tens of thousands of travelers — but it didn't do much damage to holiday shopping.

Airlines canceled hundreds more flights Sunday, citing staffing problems tied to COVID-19, as the nation's travel woes extended beyond Christmas, with no clear indication when normal schedules would resume.

But shoppers shrugged off the omicron variant, and holiday sales rose at the fastest pace in 17 years, according to one spending measure.

Omicron is likely to slow the economy's unexpectedly strong rebound from last year's coronavirus recession by disrupting travel and discouraging some consumers from venturing out. The variant could also add more heat to already simmering inflation by forcing shutdowns at factories and ports, delaying shipments and driving up prices.

"A full reopening of the U.S. economy will be delayed yet again," said Robin Brooks, chief economist at the Institute of International Finance, a trade group of financial firms.

But it's not yet clear how deep the hurt will go or how long it will last.

For now, the variant is playing havoc with travel. More than 1,100 flights entering, leaving or flying within the U.S. were called off, according to the flight-tracking website FlightAware. That figure was up from nearly 1,000 on Saturday. About 130 flights were already canceled for Monday.

Delta, United, JetBlue and American have blamed omicron for staffing shortages that forced cancellations.

"This was unexpected," United spokesperson Maddie King said of the variant's effect on staffing.

Globally, airlines scrapped more than 2,700 flights as of Sunday evening, nearing the more than 2,800 cancellations the day before, FlightAware's data showed. The site does not say why flights were canceled.

JetBlue scrapped 11% of its flights Sunday. Delta and United both canceled 5%, according to FlightAware. The three airlines canceled more than 10% of their scheduled flights on Saturday.

Mason Herlocker waited Sunday at Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey to pick up his girlfriend, who was coming in from Paris. Her flight was delayed for four hours.

It took her five hours to get a COVID-19 test the day before to enter the U.S. She's visiting for three weeks, and Herlocker said he fears that she will get stuck here if she doesn't have a negative test result before trying to return home to France.

Worried about his parents getting sick, Herlocker recently got a booster shot and encouraged others to get theirs, too. He said he doesn't believe an end to the pandemic is in sight.

"I'm of the opinion that this is the new normal," Herlocker said. "I don't foresee (the virus) going away any time soon."

Aneesh Abhyankar flew in from Atlanta on Sunday and was waiting for a flight to India.

Neither of his flights was delayed or canceled, but he said news of the omicron variant encouraged him to push up his travels to ensure he could get to his destination. He said face masks and vaccines are likely to become ingrained in everyday life for the foreseeable future.

"I don't think we have much to worry about if we take all the precautions, and I think we will be entering a situation where we just live with" the virus, he said.

Despite omicron, American consumers appeared undaunted. Mastercard SpendingPulse, which tracks

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 25 of 38

all kinds of payments, including cash and debit cards, reported Sunday that holiday sales had risen 8.5% from a year earlier, the biggest annual gain in 17 years. Mastercard SpendingPulse had expected an 8.8% increase.

The results, which covered Nov. 1 through Dec. 24, were fueled by purchases of clothing and jewelry. Holiday sales were up 10.7% compared with the pre-pandemic 2019 holiday period.

After omicron hit, some consumers shifted their spending to e-commerce, but sales stayed strong.

"I feel really good about how the season played out," said Steve Sadove, senior adviser to Mastercard and former CEO of Saks Inc. "When people feel a little bit uncomfortable, you'll see a little bit of a pickup in online and a little bit of a slowdown in store performance."

Sadove said consumers are "learning to live" with what COVID-19 throws at them.

"You're coming out of 2021 with quite a bit of consumer momentum," he said.

Also Sunday, the nation's top infectious disease doctor acknowledged that he was frustrated with the limited supply of COVID-19 tests.

Demand for tests has risen amid the omicron surge. "We've obviously got to do better," Dr. Anthony Fauci said in an interview that aired Sunday on ABC's "This Week."

"I think things will improve greatly as we get into January, but that doesn't help us today and tomorrow," Fauci said.

Fauci said he was pleased with evidence that omicron causes less severe illness for most people. But he warned against complacency because the rapid spread of the disease could "override a real diminution in severity," because so many more people could get infected.

There are still many questions about how bad the omicron surge will be in the U.S., Johns Hopkins infectious disease specialist Dr. Amesh Adalja said Sunday.

"There are multiple signals showing decreased severity. But the problem is, we have many high-risk individuals that are not vaccinated in some parts of the country. And there are hospitals in those regions that already are dealing with a lot of delta patients," Adalja said.

Meanwhile in Europe, France recorded more than 100,000 virus infections in a single day for the first time in the pandemic. COVID-19 hospitalizations have doubled over the past month as omicron complicates the French government's efforts to stave off a new lockdown. The country's overall death toll stands at more than 122,000.

President Emmanuel Macron's government planned emergency meetings for Monday to discuss the next steps. Some scientists and educators have urged delaying the post-holiday return to school or suggested re-imposing a curfew.

Wiseman reported from Washington. Associated Press writer Mead Gruver in Fort Collins, Colorado, contributed to this story.

## Missouri woman charged with killing boyfriend with a sword

CAPE GIRARDEAU, Mo. (AP) — A Missouri woman has been charged with killing her boyfriend with a sword on Christmas Eve.

Cape Girardeau Police said 32-year-old Brittany Wilson was found outside the home she shared with her boyfriend Friday night with blood on her clothing, and a sword was lying in the front yard. Cape Girardeau is in southeast Missouri about 115 miles (185.07 kilometers) south of St. Louis.

KFVS television reported that a woman had called police shortly after 11 p.m. Friday to report that she had killed her boyfriend with a sword.

After officers arrested Wilson, they went inside the home and found her boyfriend, 34-year-old Harrison Stephen Foster, dead with several fresh stab wounds.

Wilson told police that she and Foster had taken methamphetamine earlier in the day. She also told investigators that she believed Foster had several other entities living in his body, and she was setting him free by stabbing him.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 26 of 38

Wilson was being held Sunday in lieu of \$2 million bond. She has been charged with first-degree murder and armed criminal action. It was not immediately known if Wilson had an attorney to speak on her behalf.

## Despite supply issues and omicron, holiday sales rise 8.5%

By PAUL WISEMAN and ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Business Writers

Holiday sales rose at the fastest pace in 17 years, even as shoppers grappled with higher prices, product shortages and a raging new COVID-19 variant in the last few weeks of the season, according to one spending measure.

Mastercard SpendingPulse, which tracks all kinds of payments including cash and debit cards, reported Sunday that holiday sales had risen 8.5% from a year earlier. Mastercard SpendingPulse had expected an 8.8% increase.

The results, which covered Nov. 1 through Dec. 24, were fueled by purchases of clothing and jewelry. Holiday sales were up 10.7% compared with the pre-pandemic 2019 holiday period.

By category, clothing rose 47%, jewelry 32%, electronics 16%. Online sales were up 11% from a year ago and 61% from 2019. Department stores registered a 21% increase over 2020.

After omicron hit, some consumers stayed home and shifted their spending to e-commerce -- but sales stayed strong. "I feel really good about how the season played out," said Steve Sadove, senior adviser to Mastercard and former CEO of Saks Inc. "When people feel a little bit uncomfortable, you'll see a little bit of a pickup in online and a little bit of a slowdown in store performance."

A broader picture will be revealed next month when the National Retail Federation, the nation's largest retail trade group, comes out with its combined two-month results in mid-January. The results will be based on an analysis of the November and December sales figures from the Commerce Department. Analysts will also be dissecting the fourth-quarter financial results from different retailers that are slated to be released in February.

Overall, analysts had expected a strong holiday season, fueled by early shopping that started back in October in anticipation of a product shortage. Consumers were also determined to celebrate the holidays after a muted one a year ago. Still, November saw a slowdown in retail sales, in part because of the early shopping. And omicron, which has fast become the dominant version of the virus in the United States, has now spoiled holiday plans for many Americans who have had to cancel gatherings last minute.

The National Retail Federation said early in December that holiday sales were on track to beat its already record-breaking forecasts for an increase of 8.5% to 10.5% compared to the year-ago period. Holiday sales increased 8.2% in 2020 when shoppers, locked down during the early part of the pandemic, splurged on pajamas and home goods, mostly online.

The group expects that online and other non-store sales, which are included in the total, will increase between 11% and 15%. The numbers exclude automobile dealers, gasoline stations and restaurants. Holiday sales have averaged gains of 4.4% over the past five years, according to the group.

The update from the NRF was delivered in early December, right before omicron became a bigger threat in the U.S. and started to disrupt businesses from Broadway theaters to restaurants. But overall store traffic hasn't taken a plunge, though some stores are reporting dips in big city locations. For the week that ended Dec. 18, store traffic was up nearly 20% from a year earlier, though down 23% from the same week in the pre-pandemic year of 2019, according to Sensormatic Solutions. Peter McCall, Sensormatic's senior manager of retail consulting, noted shoppers are still going to retail stores but are now favoring open-air shopping centers and outlet malls more than enclosed shopping centers.

Retail sales have continued to rise in an economic environment that has hamstrung some retailers. Many have had to sharply increase pay to find and keep workers, increasing their cost of doing business. They also scrambled to fill shelves with major U.S. ports still backed up.

At the same time, Americans proved their resilience in different ways. They paid more across the board for necessities like food and gas, putting pressure on holiday shoppers' budgets. In fact, consumer prices rose 5.7% over the past year, the fastest pace in 39 years, as a surge in inflation confronts Americans with



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 27 of 38

the holiday shopping season under way. The November increase, announced Thursday by the Commerce Department, followed a 5.1% rise for the 12 months ending in October, continuing a string of annual price increases that have been above the 2% inflation target set by the Federal Reserve.

Americans also learned to adjust to product shortages, turning to alternatives if their top choices were not available, or looking at other venues like eBay to find their top brands.

Though big box retailers like Target and Walmart promised stocked shelves for the holiday, supply constraints appear to be stubborn elsewhere. Target CEO Brian Cornell recently told The Associated Press he believes that it will take several years for supply chain clogs to be cleared.

---

This story corrects Mastercard SpendingPulse forecast to 8.8% from 7.4%.

---

AP Economics Writer Marty Crutsinger contributed to this report in Washington.

## Photos of aftermath of massacre in Myanmar fuel outrage

By TASSANEE VEJPONGSA Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Photos of the aftermath of a Christmas Eve massacre in eastern Myanmar that reportedly left more than 30 people, including women and children, dead and burned in their vehicles, have spread on social media in the country, fueling outrage against the military that took power in February.

The photos showed the charred bodies of over 30 people in three burned-out vehicles who were reportedly shot by government troops as they were fleeing combat. The accounts could not be independently verified.

The international aid group Save the Children said that two of its staffers were missing in the massacre, which sparked outrage against the military that took power after ousting the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. Save the Children said it was suspending operations in the region.

On Sunday, the U.S. Embassy in Myanmar said it was appalled by the "barbaric attack in Kayah state that killed at least 35 civilians, including women and children."

"We will continue to press for accountability for the perpetrators of the ongoing campaign of violence against the people of Burma," it said in a statement.

A villager who said he went to the scene told The Associated Press that the victims had fled the fighting between armed resistance groups and Myanmar's army near Koi Ngan village, which is just beside Mo So, on Friday. He said they were killed after they were arrested by troops while heading to refugee camps in the western part of the township.

Save the Children said that two of its staff who were traveling home for the holidays after conducting humanitarian response work in a nearby community were "caught up in the incident and remain missing."

"We have confirmation that their private vehicle was attacked and burned out," the group added in a statement. "The military reportedly forced people from their cars, arrested some, killed others and burned their bodies."

The government has not commented on the allegations, but a report in the state-run Myanmar Alinn daily newspaper on Saturday said that the fighting near Mo So broke out on Friday when members of ethnic guerrilla forces, known as the Karenni National Progressive Party, and those opposed to the military drove in "suspicious" vehicles and attacked security forces after refusing to stop.

The newspaper report said they included new members who were going to attend training to fight the army, and that the seven vehicles they were traveling in were destroyed in a fire. It gave no further details about the killings.

The witness told the AP the remains were burned beyond recognition, and children's and women's clothes were found together with medical supplies and food.

"The bodies were tied with ropes before being set on fire," said the witness, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he feared for his safety.

He did not see the moment they were killed, but said he believed some of them were Mo So villagers

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 28 of 38

who reportedly got arrested by troops on Friday. He denied that those captured were members of locally organized militia groups.

Myanmar's independent media reported on Friday that 10 Mo So villagers including children were arrested by the army. The media said that four members of the local paramilitary Border Guard Forces who went to negotiate for their release were reportedly tied up and shot in the head by the military.

The witness said the villagers and anti-government militia groups left the bodies as military troops arrived near Mo So while the bodies were being prepared for cremation.

"It's a heinous crime and the worst incident during Christmas. We strongly condemn that massacre as a crime against humanity," said Banyar Khun Aung, director of the Karenni Human Rights Group.

Earlier this month, government troops were also accused of rounding up villagers, some believed to be children, tying them up and slaughtering them. An opposition leader, Dr. Sasa, who uses only one name, said the civilians were burned alive.

A video of the aftermath of the Dec. 7 assault — apparently retaliation for an attack on a military convoy — showed the charred bodies of 11 people lying in a circle amid what appeared to be the remains of a hut.

Fighting resumed over the weekend on the border with Thailand, where thousands of people have fled to seek shelter. Local officials said Myanmar's military had unleashed airstrikes and heavy artillery on Lay Kay Kaw, a small town controlled by ethnic Karen guerrillas in neighboring Kayin state, since Friday.

The governor of Thailand's Tak province, Somchai Charoenkitroongroj, told reporters that around 4,700 evacuees from Myanmar were in three shelters across the border. Sounds of gunfire and explosions could be heard across the river dividing the countries.

He ordered five border districts to prepare supplies and secure places to receive more refugees from Myanmar.

Myanmar's military's action prompted multiple Western governments including the United States to issue a joint statement condemning "serious human rights violations committed by the military regime across the country."

"We call on the regime to immediately cease its indiscriminate attacks in Karen state and throughout the country, and to ensure the safety of all civilians in line with international law," the joint statement said.

## After suicide bombing, Congo officials fear more attacks

By AL-HADJI KUDRA MALIRO Associated Press

BENI, Congo (AP) — Authorities in eastern Congo announced an evening curfew and new security checkpoints Sunday, fearing more violence after a suicide bomber killed five people in the first attack of its kind in the region.

Beni Mayor Narcisse Muteba, a police colonel, warned hotels, churches and bars in the town of Beni that they needed to add security guards with metal detectors because "terrorists" could strike again.

"We are asking people to be vigilant and to avoid public places during this festive period," Muteba told The Associated Press on Sunday.

Brig. Gen. Constant Ndima, the military governor of North Kivu province, said there will be a 7 p.m. curfew, as well as more road checkpoints.

Officials initially said the death toll was six plus the suicide bomber, but they revised that figure a day later to five victims. Thirteen others remained hospitalized after the blast at the entrance to the Inbox restaurant on Christmas Day.

Saturday's bloodshed dramatically deepened fears that Islamic extremism has taken hold in Beni. The town already has suffered years of attacks by rebels from the Allied Democratic Forces, or ADF, who trace their origins to neighboring Uganda.

Officials have blamed the latest attack on those rebels, whose exact links to international extremist groups have been murky. The Islamic State's Central Africa Province has claimed responsibility for attacks blamed on ADF, but it is unknown what role exactly the larger organization may have played in organizing and financing the attacks.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 29 of 38

There have been worrying signs that religious extremism was escalating around Beni: Two local imams were killed earlier this year within weeks of each other, one of whom had spoken out against the ADF.

Then in June, the Islamic State group's Central Africa Province claimed responsibility for a suicide bomber who blew himself up near a bar in Beni without harming others. Another explosion that same day at a Catholic church wounded two people.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for Saturday's attack, in which authorities say the bomber ultimately was stopped from entering the crowded restaurant. After the blast near the entrance, blood stained the pavement and mangled chairs lay strewn near the entrance.

Rachel Magali, who had been at the restaurant with her sister-in-law and several others, described hearing a loud noise and then people starting to cry.

"We rushed to the exit where I saw people lying down," she told the AP. "There were green plastic chairs scattered everywhere and I also saw heads and arms no longer attached. It was really horrible."

Associated Press writer Krista Larson in Dakar, Senegal contributed.

## UN chief calls Desmond Tutu 'an inspiration to generations'

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Reactions to the death Sunday of Nobel Peace Prize laureate and former Archbishop of Cape Town Desmond Tutu:

"Archbishop Tutu was a towering global figure for peace and an inspiration to generations across the world. During the darkest days of apartheid, he was a shining beacon for social justice, freedom and non-violent resistance. ... Although Archbishop Tutu's passing leaves a huge void on the global stage, and in our hearts, we will be forever inspired by his example to continue the fight for a better world for all." — U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres.

"Archbishop Desmond Tutu was a mentor, a friend, and a moral compass for me and so many others. A universal spirit, Archbishop Tutu was grounded in the struggle for liberation and justice in his own country, but also concerned with injustice everywhere. He never lost his impish sense of humor and willingness to find humanity in his adversaries, and Michelle and I will miss him dearly." — Former U.S. President Barack Obama.

"I remember with fondness my meetings with him and his great warmth and humour," the tweet from Britain's Queen Elizabeth II on The Royal Family site said. "Archbishop Tutu's loss will be felt by the people of South Africa, and by so many people in Great Britain, Northern Ireland and across the Commonwealth, where he was held in such high affection and esteem."

"The death of Archbishop Desmond Tutu (always known as Arch) is news that we receive with profound sadness — but also with profound gratitude as we reflect upon his life. ... Arch's love transformed the lives of politicians and priests, township dwellers and world leaders. The world is different because of this man." — Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby.

"Indeed the big baobab tree has fallen. South Africa and the mass democratic movement has lost a tower of moral conscience and an epitome of wisdom." — The African National Congress, South Africa's ruling party.

"The friendship and the spiritual bond between us was something we cherished. Archbishop Desmond Tutu was entirely dedicated to serving his brothers and sisters for the greater common good. He was a true humanitarian and a committed advocate of human rights." — the Dalai Lama, Tibet's exiled spiritual leader.

"I am deeply saddened to hear of the death of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. He was a critical figure in the fight against apartheid and in the struggle to create a new South Africa — and will be remembered for his



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 30 of 38

spiritual leadership and irrepressible good humor.” — British Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

“No words better exemplify his ministry than the three he contributed to a work of art at The Carter Center: love, freedom, and compassion. He lived his values in the long struggle to end apartheid in South Africa, in his leadership of the national campaign for truth and reconciliation, and in his role as a global citizen. His warmth and compassion offered us a spiritual message that is eternal.” — former U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

“He was never afraid to call out human rights violators no matter who they were and his legacy must be honored by continuing his work to ensure equality for all.” — Amnesty International South Africa Executive Director Shenilla Mohamed.

“The loss of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Mpilo Tutu is immeasurable. He was larger than life, and for so many in South Africa and around the world his life has been a blessing. His contributions to struggles against injustice, locally and globally, are matched only by the depth of his thinking about the making of liberatory futures for human societies.” — The Nelson Mandela Foundation.

“I’m saddened to learn of the death of global sage, human rights leader, and powerful pilgrim on earth. ... A great, influential elder is now an eternal, witnessing ancestor. And we are better because he was here.” — Dr. Bernice King, youngest daughter of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

“We are all devastated at the loss of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The Elders would not be who they are today without his passion, commitment and keen moral compass. He inspired me to be a ‘prisoner of hope’, in his inimitable phrase. Arch was respected around the world for his dedication to justice, equality and freedom. Today we mourn his death but affirm our determination to keep his beliefs alive.” — Mary Robinson, former president of Ireland and chair of The Elders, an independent group of world leaders and human rights activists.

Tutu’s passing “closes an important chapter in Africa’s long and painful struggle for justice, liberty and democracy and the continent’s current efforts to create prosperity and stand find its competitive edge in the rest of the world. For South Africans, it is a major reckoning with the reality that one-by-one, its heroic liberators are leaving.” — Raila Odinga, Kenya’s former prime minister and opposition leader.

“His legacy is moral strength, moral courage and clarity. He felt with the people. In public and alone, he cried because he felt people’s pain. And he laughed — no, not just laughed, he cackled with delight — when he shared their joy.” — Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town Thabo Makgoba.

“His Holiness Pope Francis was saddened to learn of the death of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and he offers heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones. Mindful of his service to the Gospel through the promotion of racial equality and reconciliation in his native South Africa, His Holiness commends his soul to the loving mercy of Almighty God.” — Telegram sent by the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin.

“A powerful and courageous voice for nonviolence, reconciliation and peace. He will be very much missed in our troubled world. May he Rest In Peace.” — Egypt’s former vice president and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mohamed ElBaradei.

“Through his distinguished work over the years as a cleric, freedom fighter and peacemaker, Archbishop Tutu inspired a generation of African leaders who embraced his non-violent approaches in the liberation struggle.” — Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 31 of 38

Tutu's death was "a loss for justice, truth and peace in the world. ... He loved Palestine and Palestine loved him." — Mohammed Shtayyeh, prime minister of the Western-backed Palestinian Authority.

## 'Spider-Man' surpasses \$1B globally in second weekend

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Peter Parker's good fortune continued over the holiday weekend as Hollywood prepares to close the books on a turbulent 2021. Even with some mighty competition from new Matrix and Sing movies, and rising concerns over the omicron variant, "Spider-Man: No Way Home" stayed in the No. 1 spot and netted a few more milestones too including crossing the \$1 billion mark globally.

According to studio estimates Sunday "Spider-Man" added \$81.5 million over the three-day weekend, down 69% from its first weekend. The Sony and Marvel film has now grossed \$467 million from North American theaters, more than doubling the domestic grosses of 2021's previous No. 1 film, "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings."

With \$587.1 million from 61 overseas markets, in just 12 days of release, "Spider-Man" has grossed \$1.05 billion globally. It's the first film of the pandemic to cross \$1 billion and is tied with "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" for being the third-fastest film ever to do so — and this without the benefit of its release in China.

Universal's "Sing 2" came in second place with an estimated \$23.8 million, while Warner Bros.' "The Matrix Resurrections" grossed \$12 million to take third place.

The animated musical "Sing 2" features high-profile celebrity talent including Matthew McConaughey, Scarlett Johansson, Reese Witherspoon and Bono, as well as a jukebox soundtrack full of well-known hits. Since its release Wednesday, it's made \$41 million (\$1.6 million of that came from Thanksgiving weekend showings) from North America and \$65 million worldwide.

"We're extraordinarily pleased," said Jim Orr, Universal's president of domestic distribution.

Orr said the stellar CinemaScore (A+) and audience scores suggest that the film will continue to perform well in the next few weeks, when many kids are still out of school for the holidays.

The fourth Matrix also opened on Wednesday and has earned an estimated \$22.5 million in its first five days in North America. The film, directed by Lana Wachowski and starring Keanu Reeves and Carrie-Anne Moss, is currently streaming on HBO Max as well. Globally, it's grossed \$69.8 million to date.

While the studio was hoping for a stronger box office, Jeff Goldstein, Warner Bros.' head of domestic distribution, said the movie achieved what they were looking for as an overall strategy including HBO Max.

"The Matrix Resurrections" is the last of the 18 Warner Bros. films released in 2021 to debut both in theaters and on HBO Max simultaneously. Starting in 2022, the studio will have a 45-day exclusive theatrical window on their films.

In fourth place was Disney and 20th Century's "The King's Man," a prequel to the action-comedy Kingsman series starring Ralph Fiennes. It came in slightly under expectations with \$6.4 million from the weekend and \$10 million from its first five days. The audience skewed heavily male (65%).

The Kurt Warner biopic "American Underdog" opened on Christmas Day and has made an estimated \$6.2 million in its two days in release to round out the top five. Zachary Levi stars as Warner, the quarterback who went from undrafted free agent to Hall of Famer.

Paul Thomas Anderson's "Licorice Pizza" expanded nationwide on Christmas, after playing in limited release for a month, and added \$2.3 million bringing its total to \$3.7 million. And right behind it was the Denzel Washington-directed drama "A Journal For Jordan," which to \$2.2 million.

With just a few days left in 2021, the North American box office is currently sitting at \$4.3 billion and is likely to net out around \$4.4 billion. Pre-pandemic, it was normal for a year's box office to surpass \$11 billion.

"To say was a roller-coaster year is an understatement," said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore, Inc. "The marketplace is still facing challenges from the pandemic, but what an amazing capper to one of the most incredible years ever at the box office."

He added: "The future of the movie theater a year ago was a big question mark, and a year later it's here to stay."

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. "Spider-Man: No Way Home," \$81.5 million.
2. "Sing 2," \$23.8 million.
3. "The Matrix Resurrections," \$12 million.
4. "The King's Man," \$6.4 million.
5. "American Underdog," \$6.2 million.
6. "West Side Story," \$2.8 million.
7. "Licorice Pizza," \$2.3 million.
8. "A Journal For Jordan," \$2.2 million.
9. "Encanto," \$2 million.
10. "83," \$1.8 million.

Follow AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/ldbahr>

## Whitmer kidnapping plot defense seeks to dismiss indictment

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (AP) — Defense attorneys want to dismiss the indictment against five men accused of plotting to kidnap Gov. Gretchen Whitmer because of what they described as "egregious overreaching" by federal agents and informants, according to a court filing.

In the 20-page motion, which was filed Saturday night, defense attorneys allege FBI agents and federal prosecutors invented a conspiracy and entrapped people who could face up to life in prison. They're asking U.S. District Judge Robert Jonker to dismiss the conspiracy charge, which would effectively knock down the federal government's case and other connected charges, according to The Detroit News.

The request comes after developments and claims about the government's team, including the conviction of Richard Trask, an FBI special agent who was arrested on a domestic violence charge and later fired and convicted of a misdemeanor.

"Essentially, the evidence here demonstrates egregious overreaching by the government's agents, and by the informants those agents handled," defense attorneys wrote. "When the government was faced with evidence showing that the defendants had no interest in a kidnapping plot, it refused to accept failure and continued to push its plan."

Five people are charged with kidnapping conspiracy and face a trial March 8 in Grand Rapids. They have pleaded not guilty and claim to be victims of entrapment.

Federal prosecutors have argued the men were not entrapped. The government alleged the men were upset over coronavirus restrictions when they conspired to kidnap Whitmer, a Democrat, even scouting her second home in northern Michigan. Messages left Sunday with the U.S. attorney for the Western District of Michigan and the U.S. Department of Justice weren't immediately returned.

In January, a sixth man, 26-year-old Ty Garbin, pleaded guilty and is serving a six-year federal prison sentence.

## France sees over 100,000 daily virus infections for 1st time

By ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — France has recorded more than 100,000 virus infections in a single day for the first time in the pandemic and COVID-19 hospitalizations have doubled over the past month, as the fast-spreading omicron variant complicates the French government's efforts to stave off a new lockdown.

More than 1 in 100 people in the Paris region have tested positive in the past week, according to the regional health service. Most new infections are linked to the omicron variant, which government experts



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 33 of 38

predict will be dominant in France in the coming days. Omicron is already dominant in Britain, right across the Channel.

Meanwhile a surge in delta variant infections in recent months is pushing up hospital admissions in France, and put ICUs under strain again over the Christmas holidays. More than 1,000 people in France with the virus died over the past week, bringing the country's overall death toll to more than 122,000.

President Emmanuel Macron's government is holding emergency meetings Monday to discuss the next steps in tackling the virus. Some scientists and educators have urged delaying the post-holiday return to school, or suggested re-imposing a curfew.

But France's education minister says schools should open as usual on Jan. 3, and other government officials are working to avoid measures that would hammer the country's economic recovery.

Instead the French government is hoping that stepped-up vaccinations will be enough. The government is pushing a draft law that would require vaccination to enter all restaurants and many public venues, instead of the current health pass system which allows people to produce a negative test or proof of recovery if they're not vaccinated.

In neighboring Belgium, the government imposed new measures starting Sunday that ordered cultural venues like movie theaters and concert halls to close.

Some venues defied the ban, and thousands of performers, event organizers and others demonstrated Sunday in Brussels against the decision, carrying signs reading "The Show Must Go On" or "No Culture No Future." They accuse the Belgian government of double standards because it allowed Christmas markets, with their boisterous crowds and mulled wine drinking, to stay open, along with restaurants and bars.

Even the scientific committee advising the Belgian government had not asked for the culture industry closures, leaving virologist Marc Van Ranst to ponder that, in Belgium, "gluhwein beat culture."

Meanwhile, in the Netherlands, the Dutch government has gone farther than most European countries and shut down all nonessential stores, restaurants and bars and extended the school holidays in a partial new lockdown.

In Britain, where the omicron variant has been dominant for days, government requirements have been largely voluntary and milder than those on the continent, but the Conservative government said it could impose new restrictions after Christmas. The U.K. hit a new high of 122,186 daily infections on Friday, but did not report figures for Christmas.

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland imposed new restrictions Sunday on socializing, mainly limiting the size of gatherings, moves that the restaurant, pub and nightclub industries have described as economically devastating.

Follow all AP stories on the pandemic at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>.

## Federal program offers cash to cover COVID-19 funeral costs

By STEVE LeBLANC Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — When Wanda Olson's son-in-law died in March after contracting COVID-19, she and her daughter had to grapple with more than just their sudden grief. They had to come up with money for a cremation.

Even without a funeral, the bill came to nearly \$2,000, a hefty sum that Olson initially covered. She and her daughter then learned of a federal program that reimburses families up to \$9,000 for funeral costs for loved ones who died of COVID-19.

Olson's daughter submitted an application to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, received a deposit by June and was able to reimburse her mother the \$1,974.

"Had this not been available, we would have been paying the money ourselves," said Olson, 80, of Villa Rica, Georgia. "There wasn't any red tape. This was a very easy, well-handled process."

As of Dec. 6, about 226,000 people had shared in the nearly \$1.5 billion that FEMA has spent on funeral costs that occurred after Jan. 20, 2020, the date of the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in the U.S. With

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 34 of 38

the nation's coronavirus death toll topping 800,000, it's clear that many families who are eligible for reimbursement have yet to take advantage of the funeral benefit.

Her son-in-law was traveling a lot, working on air conditioning systems in theaters, restaurants and businesses, when he began feeling ill, Olson said. After a few days at home, he went to the hospital and was put on a ventilator. He died several weeks later.

"He could never overcome it," she said.

To be eligible for reimbursement, death certificates for those who died after May 16, 2020, must indicate that the death was attributed to COVID-19.

For deaths that occurred in the early months of the pandemic — from Jan. 20 to May 16, 2020 — death certificates must be accompanied with a signed statement from a medical examiner, coroner or the certifying official listed on the certificate indicating that COVID-19 was the cause or a contributing cause of death.

The percentage of individuals who have been reimbursed varies dramatically from state to state — from nearly 40% in North Carolina and Maryland to fewer than 15% in Idaho and Oregon, according to state-by-state data compiled by FEMA.

While the reimbursement must go directly to individuals, some funeral directors have taken on the task of informing grieving families of the benefit.

After the benefit was first announced, David Shipper, owner of the Sunset Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery in Evansville, Indiana, took out ads to let people know that help was available if they qualified.

"Nine thousand dollars — that's a lot of money. We wanted to find a way to tell people about it," he said. "We stopped advertising some time ago, but when we have a new family with a death from COVID, we tell them about the program."

Workers at the home will sit down with families, gather the needed paperwork, contact FEMA on the phone and help walk them through the process if they ask, he said.

Many families may simply be unaware of the benefit, but others may opt against seeking the cash out of reluctance to revisit the pain of the death, Shipper said. He said the better time to seek the help is when planning the funeral.

"They're much more likely to take advantage right then than if they've already spent the money and don't want to open it up again," Shipper said.

The largest states account for some of the biggest shares of the FEMA reimbursement money.

The program has paid out more than 21,000 reimbursements in California and Texas, which have both reported more than 74,000 COVID-19 deaths. Residents applied for more than \$141 million in each state.

The fewest number of reimbursements have occurred in Vermont, where 123 people were awarded a total of about \$704,000.

Expenses covered under the FEMA program include funeral services, cremation and interment, as well as the costs for caskets or urns, burial plots or cremation niches, markers or headstones, transportation or transfer of remains, clergy or officiant services, and the use of funeral home equipment or staff.

The program has been funded using federal stimulus funds, and money remains available. No online applications are allowed.

After all required documents are received and verified, it typically takes fewer than 30 days to determine if an individual is eligible, according to FEMA. Once eligibility is confirmed, applicants who request direct deposit may receive the money in a matter of days. It may take longer for applicants who request a check.

The reimbursement is one way of helping ease the emotional and financial burden that the pandemic has wreaked on communities across the country according to Ellen Wynn McBrayer, president of Jones-Wynn Funeral Homes & Crematory in Villa Rica, Georgia.

She recalled one woman who lost her mother, husband and one of her children to the disease in the span of six months. One of the workers at the funeral home also succumbed to the virus.

"To have to help a grieving family is hard on a normal day, but to see so many deaths," she said. "COVID has just broken a lot of hearts and taken a lot of lives."

## Twins a mixed blessing for some West African parents

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

OUAGADOUGOU, Burkina Faso (AP) — In her dreams, Eveline Zagre believes her two sets of twins share premonitions and make demands of her -- buy a chicken, beg for money.

"Their spirits will enter your dreams and let you know what they want and then you have to get it for them," she said.

Despite the burden of following their dream directives, Zagre considers herself doubly blessed. The 30-year-old mother of five is raising 3-year-old twin girls and 13-year-old twin boys in Burkina Faso — one of the West African countries where twins are revered for having special powers, like healing the sick, warding off danger, bringing financial prosperity and predicting the future.

The majority-Muslim country, with its strong cultural embrace of the supernatural, regards twins as the children of spirits, and the mothers of twins as specially picked to bear them. This deeply rooted perception stems from the days people could not scientifically explain how twins were conceived. In other parts of West Africa, twins are seen as a curse.

"People were afraid of twins because they couldn't explain ... why these children were born two instead of one," said Honorine Sawadogo, a sociologist at the government-run National Center for Scientific and Technological Research in Burkina Faso.

Parents of twins would turn to witch doctors who came up with rules they believed they must follow in order to keep their children and themselves safe, said Sawadogo, who did her doctoral research on the mothers of twins. These beliefs and practices persist today despite the established scientific explanation for how twins come into the world.

Zagre and her husband, Ousmane Nikiema, visited a witch doctor after giving birth to both sets of twins. For their boys, the parents were given no directives. But a witch doctor told them their girls, Victorine and Victoria Nikiema, needed to beg for money on the side of the road or risk being killed by a family member's spirit.

"If (the witch doctor) sees a spirit in the compound, you'll have to take the children to beg in order to prevent the curse," said Nikiema, who lives with his family in Burkina Faso's capital city, Ouagadougou. "(The spirit) might not kill them, but he'll do something to them. He can make them insane or something similar, or he can paralyze them."

Throughout Ouagadougou, mothers and their identically dressed twins can be seen sitting on mats alongside roads and begging. They are driven by dream requests and witch doctor instructions, mothers told The Associated Press.

As they beg, visitors offer gifts, like chickens, honey cake and seashells, in exchange for blessings.

"I bless people when they come and give us things, I say may God heal you if someone comes and is sick," said Marcelline Tapsoba, the mother of 2-year-old twins.

As they sat on the ground in their usual spot in the city's outskirts, Tapsoba and her children were surrounded by other mothers and their twins who also were begging and offering blessings.

Tapsoba said those who receive her blessings often return weeks later to thank her for their newfound romantic or financial success.

Similar scenes play out in Ghana. "If you give birth to the twins in Ghana, you have to follow the twins' rules," said Kasim Amadu, a businessman. It is thought that wronged and unhappy twins can lead to personal harm for the parents and others, he said.

Most cultures in West Africa cherish twins, and soothsayers believe they can enhance their communication with the spirit world through them, said Philip Peek, a professor emeritus at Drew University in New Jersey whose research includes folklore and African religion.

Peek, who is the editor of the book, "Twins in African and Diaspora Cultures: Double Trouble, Twice Blessed," said there is a longstanding global belief that twins have a heightened ability to communicate because of the bond they form in the womb, which allows them to connect to higher powers.

"They communicate intuitively and the ability is certainly recognized in secular terms, not just spiritual,"



Peek said.

Not every West African community embraces them.

Twins are considered evil in some neighborhoods surrounding Nigeria's capital of Abuja, said Stevens Olusola Ajayi, a Christian missionary who has rescued 19 sets of twins out of fear they would be killed. Ajayi, who has been doing this work since 1996, brings the children to live with his family and community. This year he returned six children to their parents; it is the first time he has been able to arrange such family reunions.

Even in countries where they are viewed favorably, twins can be at risk of being exploited for financial gain. Some mothers borrow children from neighbors and pass them off as twins to make more money from begging, said Sawadogo, the sociologist.

It is not easy being the parent of twins. In Ouagadougou, Fati Yougma, 27, said her twin girls beat her in her dreams if she doesn't obey their demands.

Despite that, Yougma is honored to be their mother.

---

AP journalist Chinedu Asadu in Lagos, Nigeria, contributed to this report.

---

Associated Press religion coverage receives support from the Lilly Endowment through The Conversation U.S. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

## **EXPLAINER: New easy-to-use COVID-19 pills come with a catch**

By TOM MURPHY AP Health Writer

Newly infected COVID-19 patients have two new treatment options that can be taken at home.

But that convenience comes with a catch: The pills have to be taken as soon as possible once symptoms appear.

The challenge is getting tested, getting a prescription and starting the pills in a short window.

U.S. regulators authorized Pfizer's pill, Paxlovid, and Merck's molnupiravir last week. In high-risk patients, both were shown to reduce the chances of hospitalization or death from COVID-19, although Pfizer's was much more effective.

A closer look:

### **WHO SHOULD TAKE THESE PILLS?**

The antiviral pills aren't for everyone who gets a positive test. The pills are intended for those with mild or moderate COVID-19 who are more likely to become seriously ill. That includes older people and those with other health conditions like heart disease, cancer or diabetes that make them more vulnerable. Both pills were OK'd for adults while Paxlovid is authorized for children ages 12 and older.

### **WHO SHOULDN'T TAKE THESE PILLS?**

Merck's molnupiravir is not authorized for children because it might interfere with bone growth. It also isn't recommended for pregnant women because of the potential for birth defects. Pfizer's pill isn't recommended for patients with severe kidney or liver problems. It also may not be the best option for some because it may interact with other prescriptions a patient is taking. The antiviral pills aren't authorized for people hospitalized with COVID-19.

### **WHAT'S THE TREATMENT WINDOW?**

The pills have to be started as soon as possible, within five days of the start of symptoms. Cough, headache, fever, the loss of taste or smell and muscle and body aches are among the more common signs. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers a website to check your symptoms.

Dr. Cameron Wolfe, an infectious disease specialist at Duke University Hospital, advises getting a test as soon as you have symptoms of COVID-19.

"If you wait until you have started to get breathless, you have already to a large extent missed the window where these drugs will be helpful," Wolfe said.

### **WHERE CAN I GET THE PILLS?**

You'll need a prescription first from a doctor or other authorized health worker. The U.S. government

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 37 of 38

is buying the pills from Merck and Pfizer and providing them for free, but supplies will be limited initially. They'll be shipped to states where they will be available at drugstores, community health centers and other places. Treatment lasts five days.

Some pharmacists may be able to administer a quick COVID-19 test and prescribe the pills all in one visit. They already do this in many states for flu or strep throat.

**WILL THE PILLS WORK FOR THE OMICRON VARIANT?**

The pills are expected to be effective against omicron because they don't target the spike protein where most of the variant's worrisome mutations reside. The two pills work in different ways to prevent the virus from reproducing.

**ARE THERE OTHER OPTIONS FOR NEW COVID-19 PATIENTS?**

Yes, but they aren't as easy to use as a pill: They are given by IV or injection, typically at a hospital or clinic. Three drugs provide virus-fighting antibodies, although laboratory testing suggests the two aren't effective against omicron. British drugmaker GlaxoSmithKline's antibody drug appears to work, and officials say they are working to increase the U.S. supply. The only antiviral drug approved in the U.S., remdesivir, is for people hospitalized with COVID-19.

AP Health Writer Matthew Perrone contributed to this report. Follow Tom Murphy on Twitter at @thp-murphy.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Dec. 27, the 361st day of 2021. There are four days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 27, 2001, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld announced that Taliban and al-Qaida prisoners would be held at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

On this date:

In 1831, naturalist Charles Darwin set out on a round-the-world voyage aboard the HMS Beagle.

In 1932, New York City's Radio City Music Hall first opened.

In 1949, Queen Juliana of the Netherlands signed an act recognizing Indonesia's sovereignty after more than three centuries of Dutch rule.

In 1958, American physicist James Van Allen reported the discovery of a second radiation belt around Earth, in addition to one found earlier in the year.

In 1964, the Cleveland Browns defeated the Baltimore Colts 27-0 to win the NFL Championship Game played at Cleveland Municipal Stadium.

In 1968, Apollo 8 and its three astronauts made a safe, nighttime splashdown in the Pacific.

In 1979, Soviet forces seized control of Afghanistan. President Hafizullah Amin (hah-FEE'-zoo-lah ah-MEEN'), who was overthrown and executed, was replaced by Babrak Karmal.

In 1985, Palestinian guerrillas opened fire inside the Rome and Vienna airports; 19 victims were killed, plus four attackers who were slain by police and security personnel. American naturalist Dian Fossey, 53, who had studied gorillas in the wild in Rwanda, was found hacked to death.

In 1995, Israeli jeeps sped out of the West Bank town of Ramallah, capping a seven-week pullout giving Yasser Arafat control over 90 percent of the West Bank's 1 million Palestinian residents and one-third of its land.

In 1999, space shuttle Discovery and its seven-member crew returned to Earth after fixing the Hubble Space Telescope.

In 2000, President Bill Clinton put the first Black judge on the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals serving

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 173 ~ 38 of 38

several Southern states. (The nomination of Roger Gregory had been stalled in the Senate, but Clinton used a recess appointment to put him on the bench.)

In 2002, a defiant North Korea ordered U.N. nuclear inspectors to leave the country and said it would restart a laboratory capable of producing plutonium for nuclear weapons; the U.N. nuclear watchdog said its inspectors were "staying put" for the time being.

Ten years ago: Tens of thousands of defiant Syrian protesters thronged the streets of Homs, calling for the execution of President Bashar Assad shortly after his army pulled its tanks back and allowed Arab League monitors in for the first time to the city at the heart of the anti-government uprising.

Five years ago: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (shin-zoh AH'-bay), accompanied by President Barack Obama, visited Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, where he offered his "sincere and everlasting condolences to the souls of those who lost their lives" in Japan's 1941 attack; Abe did not apologize, but conceded his country "must never repeat the horrors of war again." Actor Carrie Fisher died in a hospital four days after suffering a medical emergency aboard a flight to Los Angeles; she was 60.

One year ago: Nearly 1.3 million people went through U.S. airports, the highest level of air travel in more than nine months, despite fears that trips would lead to more cases of COVID-19. President Donald Trump signed a \$900 billion pandemic relief package, ending days of drama over his refusal to accept the bipartisan deal that would deliver cash to businesses and individuals and avert a federal government shutdown. Federal authorities identified the man they said was responsible for a Christmas Day bombing that tore through downtown Nashville; they said Anthony Quinn Warner had died in the blast.

Today's Birthdays: Actor John Amos is 82. Rock musician Mick Jones (Foreigner) is 77. Singer Tracy Nelson is 77. Actor Gerard Depardieu is 73. Jazz singer-musician T.S. Monk is 72. Singer-songwriter Karla Bonoff is 70. Rock musician David Knopfler (Dire Straits) is 69. Actor Tovah Feldshuh is 68. Journalist-turned-politician Arthur Kent is 68. Actor Maryam D'Abo is 61. Actor Ian Gomez is 57. Actor Theresa Randle is 57. Actor Eva LaRue is 55. Wrestler and actor Bill Goldberg is 55. Bluegrass singer-musician Darrin Vincent (Dailey & Vincent) is 52. Rock musician Guthrie Govan is 50. Musician Matt Slocum is 49. Actor Wilson Cruz is 48. Actor Masi Oka is 47. Actor Aaron Stanford is 45. Actor Emilie de Ravin is 40. Actor Jay Ellis is 40. Christian rock musician James Mead (Kutless) is 39. Rock singer Hayley Williams (Paramore) is 33. Country singer Shay Mooney (Dan & Shay) is 30. Actor Timothee Chalamet is 26.