

Groton Daily Independent

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Groton Community Calendar

Sunday, Dec. 4

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:45 a.m.

St. John's worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Sunday school, 9:45 a.m.; Zion's worship with communion, 11 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday school, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

United Methodist Worship with Communion (Conde, 8:30 a.m.; Groton, 10:30 a.m.; Sunday school, 9:30 a.m.; Coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.)

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

Open Gym: Grade JK-8, 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.; Grades 6-12, 3:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Monday, Dec. 5

Senior Menu: Baked pork chop, au gratin potatoes, carrots, apple sauce, whole wheat bread.

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



School Breakfast: Mini pancakes.
School Lunch: Chicken legs, mashed potatoes.
Emmanuel Lutheran Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.
GBB at Sisseton, 6 p.m.
The Pantry, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Groton UMC Advent Bible Study, 6 p.m.

Tuesday, Dec. 6

Senior Menu: Baked codfish, parsley buttered potatoes, seasoned cabbage, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast sandwich

School Lunch: Lasagna hot dish, corn.

St. John's Ladies Aid Christmas Party, noon.

JHGBB hosts Northwestern. 7th grade at 6:15 p.m. followed by 8th grade

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

The Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

Groton UMC Bible Study Christmas Party, 10 a.m.;
Conde Advent Bible Study, 6 p.m.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Minot State Cruises Past (RV) Northern State Men

Aberdeen, S.D. – The (RV) Northern State University men's basketball team suffered their first NSIC loss of the season Saturday, falling to Minot State on the road. Northern struggled with efficiency in the game, shooting a season low 34.4% from the floor and 21.9% from the 3-point line.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 62, MiSU 82

Records: NSU 6-3 (2-1 NSIC), MiSU 4-3 (1-2 NSIC)

Attendance: 2346

HOW IT HAPPENED

· The Wolves trailed 26-33 at the half and Minot State ran away with the game in the second, out-scoring Northern 49-36

· Northern tallied 36 rebounds, eight assists, seven made 3-pointers, four steals, and three blocks in the game

· They scored 26 points in the paint, ten second chance points, nine points off turnovers, and 18 points off the bench led by Michael Nhial with seven

· Minot State recorded more rebounds, assists, and 3-pointers in the win, shooting 50.0% from the floor and 46.2% from beyond the arc

· Jordan Belka and Sam Masten were the lone Wolves in double figures, with Masten notching a career high 11 rebounds in his first double-double of the season

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

· Jordan Belka: 17 points, 7 rebounds, 2 assists, 2 steals

· Sam Masten: 14 points, 11 rebounds (career high), 3 assists

UP NEXT

Northern State returns to the confines of Wachs Arena next Friday and Saturday versus Minnesota Crookston and Bemidji State. Tip-off times are set for 7:30 p.m. on Friday and 6 p.m. on Saturday.

**'TIS THE
SEASON TO
SHOP LOCAL**

GROTON
Chamber Of Commerce



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Five Wolves Finish in Top-4 at Jim Koch Wrestling Open

Kenosha, Wis. – After a Friday night dual versus the No. 11 Rangers, the No. 20 Northern State University wrestling team took on the Jim Koch Open with 15 student-athletes in competition. Ten Wolves made the podium at the meet led by Landen Fischer, Wyatt Turnquist, and Chase Bloomquist with runner-up finishes.

HOW IT HAPPENED

- Brenden Salfrank took fourth at 125 pounds with a 4-2 record on the day; he tallied wins over Kyree Noble of Harper College (Fall 2:20), Joshua Cruz of Joliet JC (Maj. 18-8), Kade Willis of Maryville (MFF), and Aidan Haggard of Maryville (Fall 2:19)

- Landen Fischer went 2-1 on the day en route to his second place finish with wins over Nicholas Korhorn of Findlay (Dec 6-2) and Aidan Haggard of Maryville (TF 20-4), before falling to Shane Corrigan in a 16-3 major decision

- Robert Coyle III tallied a fifth place finish at 141 pounds with a 3-2 record on the day; he recorded wins over Alex Epstein of Findlay (Dec 4-2), Lucas Nagel of Davenport (Maj. 14-4), and Rasheek Bongs of McKendree (Maj. 13-5) in the fifth place match

- No. 7 Turnquist went 3-1 and fell to Jalen Spuhler of UWP in the championship match in a 4-3 decision; he tallied three straight victories over Christian Pfeiffer-Laguerre of McKendree (Fall 1:27), Mason Kleinberg of Findlay (TF 16-0), and Aiden Medora of Wisconsin (Dec 3-0)

- Tyson Stoebner added a sixth place finish at 157 pounds with a bye in the opening round and win over Tony Pacetti of Joliet JC (Maj. 16-7) in the quarterfinals

- Spencer Roth went 4-2 from the meet with a fifth place finish at 165 pounds; he notched wins over Jamason Jodway of Davenport (Fall 3:35), Jordan Alcalá of McKendree (Fall 1:17), Gary Nilson of Findlay (Dec 6-1), and Andrew Knick of Findlay (Dec 6-4)

- Chase Bloomquist was the final runner-up of the day for the Wolves, going 3-1 at 165 pounds; he recorded wins over Jackson Pettigrew of Findlay (Dec 7-3), Ty Miller of Whitewater (Maj. 8-0), and Kevin Meicher of Wisconsin (SV-1 7-5)

- Kelby Hawkins opened his day with back-to-back wins over Luke Hooker of UWP (Maj. 12-4) and Brody Hemauer of UWP (Dec 3-1) en route to a sixth place finish

- Marshall VanTassel took fourth in the 197 class with a 3-2 record; he tallied wins over Jacob Kowalski of Findlay (Dec 7-4), Jacob Juska of Harper College (Dec 4-2), and Alexander Drmac of McKendree (Fall 3:37)

- George Bolling closed out the podium finishes for the Wolves, taking fifth at 285-pounds; he went 4-2 with wins over Jose Medina of Davenport (Fall 6:04), Dustin Olmstead of McKendree (Dec 3-0), Garner Simmons of Whitewater (TB-1 2-1), and Jonah Schmidtke of Wisconsin (Dec 3-1)

UP NEXT

Northern State travels to Southwest Minnesota State next Friday, December 9, for their second NSIC dual of the season. The Wolves and Mustangs will face off at 7 p.m. from Marshall.

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Northern Women Rally Falls Short in Closing Seconds in Minot

Minot, N.D. – Rianna Fillipi gave Northern State their first lead of the game with 1.5 seconds left in the game, however a turnaround jump shot at the buzzer by Natasha Elliott gave Minot State a 67-66 victory. Northern's comeback attempt ended with a 13-5 scoring run to end the game, as well as holding a 20-13 scoring advantage in the fourth quarter.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 66, MINOT 67

Records: NSU 6-3 (1-2 NSIC), MINOT 5-3 (1-1 NSIC)

Attendance: 312

HOW IT HAPPENED

Minot State grabbed an early 8-3 advantage in the first five minutes of the first quarter, the lone basket for the Wolves in the opening minutes was an Alayna Benike 3-pointer

With five early points from Laurie Rogers, the Wolves were able to cut the Beaver lead back down to one with 1:36 remaining in the opening period

The Beavers led by as many as ten points in the second period, however the Wolves were able to claw back within five points by out-scoring Minot State 11-7 in the final 4:16 of the first half

Trailing by nine points with 4:30 remaining in the game, Northern State ended the game on a 13-5 scoring run; the Wolves shot 4-6 from the field, 1-1 from 3-point range, and 4-4 from the free throw line during the scoring run

Rianna Fillipi knocked down her first 3-pointer of the game with 1.5 seconds remaining, giving Northern their first lead of the game; Minot State advanced the ball with a time-out and an in-bounds pass to Natasha Elliott set up a game-winning turnaround jump shot at the buzzer

NSU won the rebounding battle 33-30, and secured 11 offensive rebounds for eight second chance points

The Wolves out-scored the Beavers 32-12 in points in the point, and 22-18 in bench points

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Laurie Rogers: 14 points, 5 rebounds, 1 block

Kailee Oliverson: 12 points, 1 rebound, 1 steal

Brynn Alfson: 10 points, 6 rebounds, 1 assist, 1 steal

UP NEXT

Northern State will return to Aberdeen and Wachs Arena next weekend for the final two home games of the 2022 calendar year. The Wolves will host the Golden Eagles of Minnesota Crookston on Friday evening with a 5:30 p.m. tip-off scheduled. Northern will then close out the weekend with a home match-up against the Beavers of Bemidji State on Saturday afternoon, with a 4 p.m. tip-off scheduled.

GDILIVE.COM

Girls' Basketball
Monday, Dec. 5, 2022
Groton Area at Sisseton

JV match starts at 6 p.m.

Livestream sponsored by Adam and Nicole Wright

Varsity game to follow

Sponsored by
Bary Keith at Harr Motors
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Groton Chamber of Commerce
Groton Ford
John Sieh Agency
Locke Electric
Spanier Harvesting & Trucking

Anyone wanting to sponsor a JV or C game, Call/Text Paul at 605-397-7460

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- ▶ 21" intake height
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- ▶ Heavy-duty cast aluminum gear box backed by 5-year limited warranty**

MSRP
\$1,599*

3X 30" HD

Gear up for the worst of winter weather with the 3X 30" HD powered by a 420cc Cub Cadet OHV engine.

- ★ Heavy-duty 14-gauge steel auger housing and side plates
- ★ LED light bar on auger housing plus dual LED in-dash headlights
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- ▶ OVH crank chute control w/ high-arc steel chute
- ▶ Heavy-duty cast aluminum gear box backed by 5-year limited warranty**

MSRP
\$1,999*

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- ▶ 23" intake height
- ▶ Heated hand grips
- ▶ OVH crank chute control w/ high-arc steel chute
- ▶ LED light bar on auger housing plus dual LED in-dash headlights
- ▶ Heavy-duty cast aluminum auger gear box w/ 5-year limited warranty**

MSRP
\$2,099* ★ Indicates step-up feature

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* When compared to the same engine without IntelliPower™ technology. Improvements vary depending on engine models and specific operating conditions.
 ** Actual retail prices are set by dealer and may vary. Taxes are additional and vary by location. Freight and PDI charges may be additional and vary by dealer. Models subject to limited availability. Images may not reflect dealer inventory and/or unit specifications.

† See owner's manual for warranty details and information. Certain restrictions apply.

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A New Year, A New Beginning

By Bryan Golden

The New Year is a time of resolutions. It's a time when people commit to making a change in their life. Losing weight, changing jobs, saving money, making money, a new relationship, getting in shape, going back to school, or giving up smoking, are just some of the goals people set for themselves on January 1st.

Although it's possible for anyone to make a change or a new start, it takes determination, commitment, and persistence. A new goal must be your own. You have to really want it. Without a burning desire, your motivation will fade quickly. It's virtually impossible to make a change due to external pressure.

You may agree to what someone else wants you to do, but it's very difficult to succeed without an internal drive. So, in order to successfully make a change or reach a goal, you have to make sure it's what you really want.

Don't start off on the wrong foot by making excuses as to why you will probably fail. If you don't truly believe you can do it, you won't. People who do this will say something like, "I'll try to do it, but ..." Or you may hear, "I tried before and it didn't work but I'll give it another go." Before you begin, make sure the only things you are telling yourself are, "I can," "I will," and "I will do whatever it takes."

A new beginning is a three-step process. You have to first know what you want, formulate a plan to achieve it, and then take the necessary action to get it. Setting a specific goal is essential. The more detailed the better. If you want to lose weight, how much and by when? If you want a new job, what will it be and how much will it pay? If you want to save money, how much and how often?

Next, you need a plan. Just like your goal, your plan must be as detailed as possible. If you are going to lose weight, what will be your menu each week? Are you going to go on a specific diet, cut out certain foods, or just eat less? For finding a new job, what will be your strategy? Do you need a new resume? Will you look on line, in the classifieds, use an employment agency, network, cold call, or all of these? If you want to save more money, in what areas will you cut back? Do you know where your money is going? Have you created a budget?

You want your plan to be doable. The smaller the steps are, the more likely you will be to succeed. Any time you feel a step is too big, break it down further. It doesn't matter how small each step is so long as you keep going and never give up.

Losing 20 pounds may feel overwhelming, but dropping two pounds a month doesn't seem too bad. If you keep at it for 10 months, you will reach your goal. Saving \$3000 might appear beyond reach, but cutting back \$9 a day on family spending is manageable.

Finally, you must take action. The best goals and greatest plans will go nowhere without action. The reason you divided your plan into small sections is so it would be easy to take action, one day at a time. All you have to do is keep going, until you achieve your goal.

Bryan is the author of "Dare to Live Without Limits." Contact Bryan at Bryan@columnist.com or visit www.DareToLiveWithoutLimits.com Copyright 2022 Bryan Golden

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Groton Area has five that place at Clark Tourney

Groton Area kicked off the wrestling season on Saturday, participating at the Clark/Willow Lake Tournament. Groton Area grapplers had five that placed. John Bisbee placed fourth at 113 pounds, Walker Zoellner placed fourth at 120 pounds, and Gavin Englund placed fourth at 220 pounds. In the girl's division, Jaycie Leir placed second and Hollie Frost placed third at 142 pounds.

Kingsbury County won the team title with 186.0 points followed by Faulkton Area with 162.0, Pierre JV 118.0, Clark/Willow Lake 105.0, Britton/Hecla 83.0, Canton JV 69.0, Webster Area 50.0, Ortonville, MN 49.0, Groton Area 25.0, Tiospa Zina 4.0, Doland 0.0

90-98: Noah Scepaniak (0-2)

Quarterfinal - Kaden Wookey (Clark/Willow Lake) 3-0 won by fall over Noah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 0-2 (Fall 1:56)

Cons. Round 1 - Noah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 0-2 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Semi - Isaac Johnson (Clark/Willow Lake) 3-1 won by fall over Noah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 0-2 (Fall 0:57)

106-G: Liza Krueger (0-0)

113: John Bisbee (0-2) placed 4th and scored 4.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - John Bisbee (Groton Area) 0-2 received a bye () (Bye)

Semifinal - Tacey Miller (Webster Area) 2-0 won by fall over John Bisbee (Groton Area) 0-2 (Fall 1:25)

Cons. Semi - John Bisbee (Groton Area) 0-2 received a bye () (Bye)

3rd Place Match - Caden Singrey (Kingsbury County) 1-1 won by fall over John Bisbee (Groton Area) 0-2 (Fall 1:29)

120: Kellen Antonson (2-2)

Champ. Round 1 - Kellen Antonson (Groton Area) 2-2 won by fall over Bryce Heitkamp (Britton/Hecla) 0-2 (Fall 1:14)

Quarterfinal - Kellen Antonson (Groton Area) 2-2 won by fall over Noah Vig (Kingsbury County) 2-2 (Fall 3:28)

Semifinal - Chase Adam (Canton JV) 5-2 won by fall over Kellen Antonson (Groton Area) 2-2 (Fall 3:27)

Cons. Semi - Cody Zell (Kingsbury County) 5-1 won by fall over Kellen Antonson (Groton Area) 2-2 (Fall 4:13)

120: Walker Zoellner (2-2) placed 4th and scored 13.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 2-2 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 2-2 won by fall over Slayton Swenson (Canton JV) 0-2 (Fall 1:38)

Semifinal - Cody Klepel (Ortonville, MN) 3-0 won by decision over Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 2-2 (Dec 4-0)

Cons. Semi - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 2-2 won by fall over Noah Vig (Kingsbury County) 2-2 (Fall 0:26)

3rd Place Match - Cody Zell (Kingsbury County) 5-1 won by decision over Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 2-2 (Dec 8-2)

120: Quinton Bedford (0-2)

Champ. Round 1 - Quinton Bedford (Groton Area) 0-2 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Chase Adam (Canton JV) 5-2 won by fall over Quinton Bedford (Groton Area) 0-2 (Fall 2:00)

Cons. Round 2 - Quinton Bedford (Groton Area) 0-2 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 3 - Noah Vig (Kingsbury County) 2-2 won by injury default over Quinton Bedford (Groton Area) 0-2 (Inj. 1:38)

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142-G: Hollie Frost (0-2) placed 3rd.

Round 1 - Jaycie Leir (Groton Area) 1-1 won by fall over Hollie Frost (Groton Area) 0-2 (Fall 3:01)

Round 3 - Brooke Grajczyk (Webster Area) 2-0 won by fall over Hollie Frost (Groton Area) 0-2 (Fall 0:55)

142-G: Jaycie Leir (1-1) placed 2nd.

Round 1 - Jaycie Leir (Groton Area) 1-1 won by fall over Hollie Frost (Groton Area) 0-2 (Fall 3:01)

Round 2 - Brooke Grajczyk (Webster Area) 2-0 won by fall over Jaycie Leir (Groton Area) 1-1 (Fall 0:47)

145: Isiah Scepaniak (0-2).

Champ. Round 1 - Isiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 0-2 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Haeden Jorgenson (Webster Area) 3-1 won by fall over Isiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 0-2 (Fall 4:00)

Cons. Round 2 - Isiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 0-2 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 3 - Ethan Johnson (Kingsbury County) 3-1 won by fall over Isiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 0-2 (Fall 0:13)

145: Nick Morris (0-2)

Champ. Round 1 - Haeden Jorgenson (Webster Area) 3-1 won by fall over Nick Morris (Groton Area) 0-2 (Fall 0:58)

Cons. Round 1 - Nick Morris (Groton Area) 0-2 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 - Trent Eastman (Ortonville, MN) 3-2 won by decision over Nick Morris (Groton Area) 0-2 (Dec 6-3)

160: Easten Ekern (0-2)

Quarterfinal - Elliot Bratland (Clark/Willow Lake) 3-1 won by fall over Easten Ekern (Groton Area) 0-2 (Fall 1:47)

Cons. Round 1 - Dashed Davidson (Britton/Hecla) 1-2 won by fall over Easten Ekern (Groton Area) 0-2 (Fall 0:30)

220: Gavin Englund (1-2) placed 4th and scored 8.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Carson Leonhardt (Faulkton Area) 2-1 won by fall over Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 1-2 (Fall 0:45)

Cons. Round 1 - Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 1-2 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Semi - Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 1-2 won by forfeit over forfeit forfeit (Tiospa Zina) 0-2 (For.)

3rd Place Match - Carson Leonhardt (Faulkton Area) 2-1 won by fall over Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 1-2 (Fall 2:12)

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Canton Robotics Tournament Summary

Groton Robotics traveled down to Canton to participate in the Sioux Metro Qualifier on Saturday, December 3rd competing against 21 other teams from 8 towns: Mitchell (5), Harrisburg (4), Groton (3), Sioux Falls (2), Brandon (1), Menno(2), Vermillion (1), Canton (2), Jefferson (1) Groton Teams included: Galaxy 9050E-Logan Clocksene, Axel Warrington, not present-Corbin Weismantel Kianna Sanders, Brayden Barrera. Gear Heads 9050B-Ethan Clark, not present Jack Dinger. Gladiators 9050F-Garrett Schultz, De Eh Tha Say, Bradyn Wienk.

Three teams braved the sub-zero temps Saturday morning and were loading their robots by 5:00 am traveling down to Canton, SD. Our 6th grade team G-Force had prior obligations and opted out of attending this tournament. The competition started off with 32 qualifying matches, each team competing 6 times. At the end of the 32 qualifying matches against 21 teams Gladiators 9050F ranked 5th, Galaxy 9050E-9th and Gear Heads 9050B-11th.

Galaxy had some tough luck and got disqualified in their first match. A part of their robot extended too tall and measured outside the size regulations. Unfortunately this was missed during inspection and not discovered until their third match (see VEX rule below). This was fixed by cutting down the metal to meet requirements. Galaxy improved their robot over the last week by adding expansion features for the End Game to cover tiles (see picture).

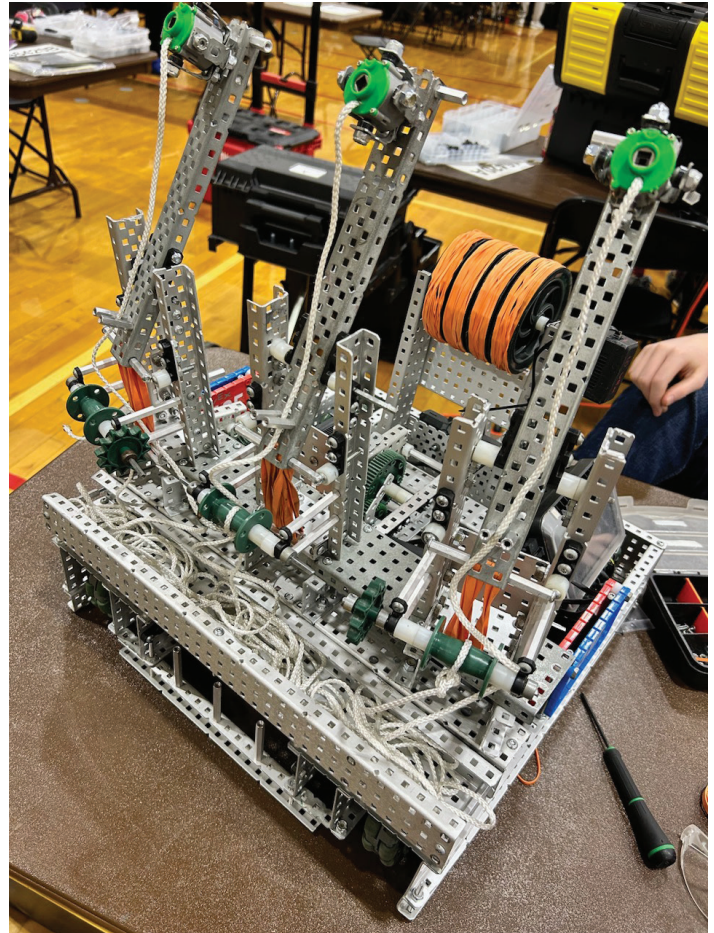
Source: VEX ROBOTIC SPIN-UP 2022-2023 Manual: Robots must begin each Match in a volume smaller than 18" (457.2 mm) long by 18" (457.2 mm) wide by 18" (457.2 mm) tall.

If a Robot has passed inspection, but is later confirmed to be in Violation of a Robot rule during a Match by a Head Referee, they will be Disqualified from that Match. This is the only Match that will be affected; any prior Matches that have already been completed will not be revisited. <R3d> will apply until the Violation is remedied and the Team is re-inspected.

Gear Heads did not make any changes to their robot and continued to work on defense, turning rollers and shooting disks. Gladiators made a major change to their robot 9050F by adding a 3 way catapult to shoot three strings to cover tiles in the end game. (see picture) They also worked on turning rollers and defense.

Galaxy 9050E ended their day in the Round of 16. Gear Heads 9050B and Gladiators 9050F paired up together to be alliance partners and worked their way up to the semi-finals, but was up against some tough competition and ended their day here. Great job teams!

Tournament champions were from Harrisburg and Jefferson. Congratulations to all the robotist who participated! Groton Robotics will be headed to Windom, MN on Saturday, December 17th.



Gladiators robot 9050F resting between matches. Note the three green wheels on top, these are attached to string and shot out across the field, trying to cover as many tiles as possible during the last 10 seconds called the END GAME. (Courtesy Photo)

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS! Groton will be hosting their annual robotic tournament on Saturday, January 7th. Everyone is welcome to stop on in and see what we are all about located at Groton Area High School! PANCAKE FEED! Groton Robotics will be teaming up with Groton Lions Club for the Annual Pancake feed on Carnival of Silver Skates Sunday, January 29th at the Groton Community center, typically starting at 10:00am. For more information check out the vex VRC robotics website, download the VEX via app and follow Groton Tiger Robotics on Facebook. Thanks to all who support Groton Robotics!

Submitted by Groton Robotics



(l-r) De Eh Thay Say, Garrett Schultz and Ethan Clark teaming up and preparing for a match. (Courtesy Photo)



Axel Warrington and Logan Clocksene working on their robot between matches. (Courtesy

Photo)

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Gear Heads robot 9050B taking a break between matches. (Courtesy Photo)



(l-r) Garrett Schultz, Bradyn Wienk and De Eh Tha Say waiting for a match to begin. (Courtesy Photo)

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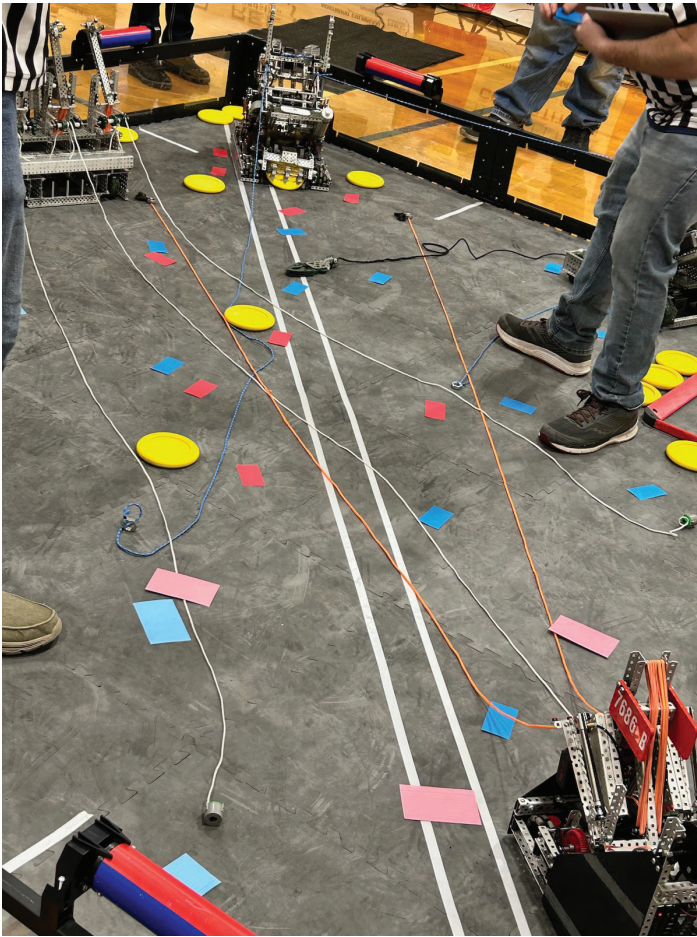
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(l-r) Ethan Clark, Garrett Schultz, Bradyn Wienk and De Eh Tha Say standing over the stars of the match 9050B and 9050F. (Courtesy Photo)

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An impressive END GAME. Note the white strings, these belong to Gladiators robot. VERY impressive, the more tiles they touch the more points they get! All four robots shot out expansion strings during this match.

(Courtesy Photo)



(l-r) Logan Clocksene and Axel Warrington competing in a match. (Courtesy Photo)

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Axel Warrington and Ethan Clark fixing their robot. (Courtesy Photo)




Garrett Schultz, Bradyn Wienk and De Eh Tha Say working their robot in the pits. (Courtesy Photo)

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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

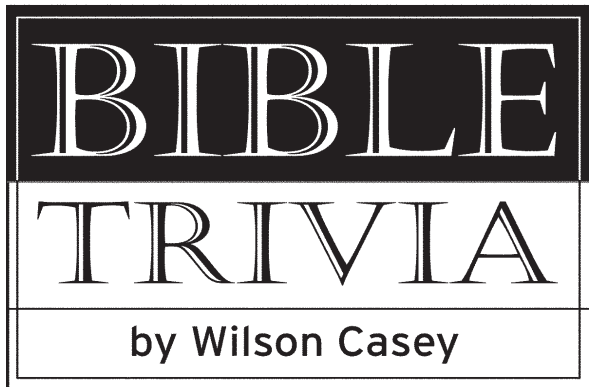
...God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." LUKE 1:26-28 



Detail of "The angel Gabriel announces the birth of Jesus to Mary; the light of the Holy Spirit alights on her brow" by V. Lefebvre (1670)

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1. Is the book of Bethlehem in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. Where did the angel Gabriel appear to Mary saying, "Blessed art thou among women"? *Nazareth, Tyre, Ninevah, Gazi*

3. With perhaps two different biblical answers, who was the father of Joseph? *Jacob/Heli, Gideon/Ishmael, Solomon/Nahum, Samuel/Pilate*

4. Which Old Testament prophet predicted Jesus would be born in Bethlehem? *Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum*

5. For the journey to Bethlehem, how did Mary and Joseph travel? *Bible not specific, Cart, Rode donkey, Small raft*

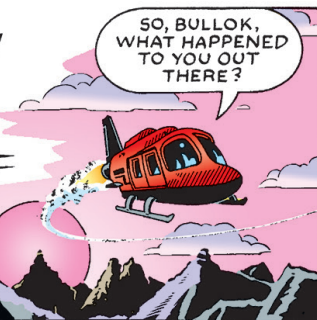
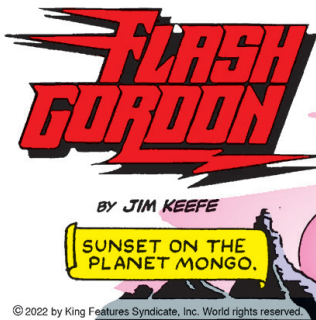
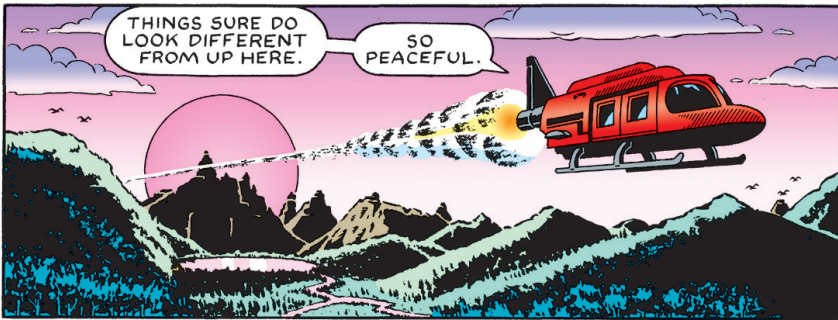
6. Which of these wasn't a gift from the wise men (Magi)? *Silver, Myrrh, Gold, Frankincense*

ANSWERS: 1)Neither, 2) Nazareth, 3) Jacob/Heli (Matthew 1:16, Luke 3:23), 4) Micah, 5) Bible not specific, 6) Silver

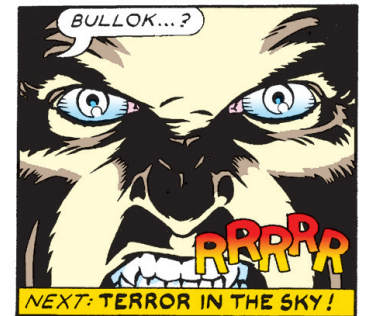
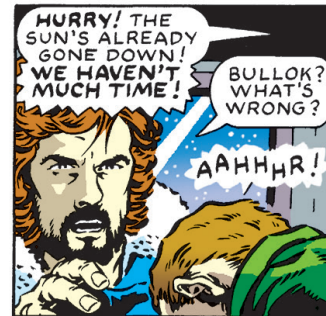
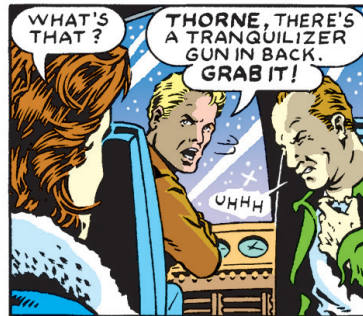
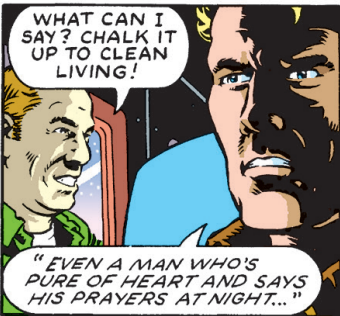
Sharpen your understanding of scripture with Wilson's Casey's latest book, "Test Your Bible Knowledge," now available in bookstores and online.

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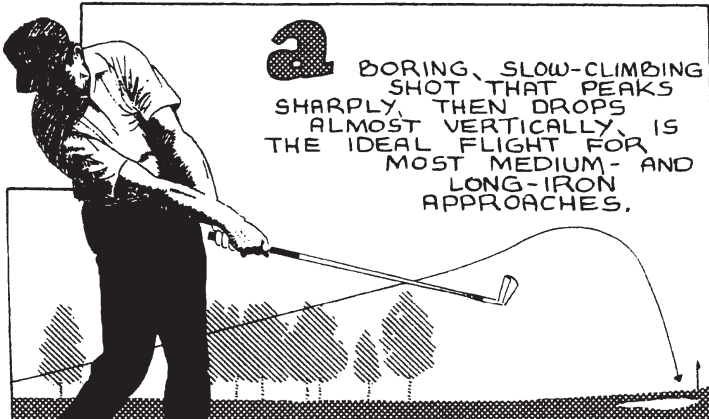
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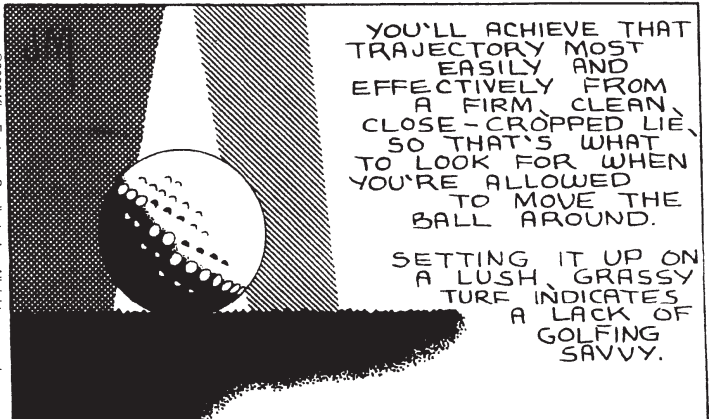


Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



a BORING, SLOW-CLIMBING SHOT THAT PEAKS SHARPLY, THEN DROPS ALMOST VERTICALLY, IS THE IDEAL FLIGHT FOR MOST MEDIUM- AND LONG-IRON APPROACHES.

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YOU'LL ACHIEVE THAT TRAJECTORY MOST EASILY AND EFFECTIVELY FROM A FIRM, CLEAN, CLOSE-CROPPED LIE, SO THAT'S WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN YOU'RE ALLOWED TO MOVE THE BALL AROUND.

SETTING IT UP ON A LUSH, GRASSY TURE INDICATES A LACK OF GOLFING SAVVY.



Swallowing Pills All at Once is OK, Unless Meds Shouldn't Interact

DEAR DR. ROACH: I have always wondered if it matters if you swallow a bunch of pills in one swallow or if it would be better to space them out. I take a bunch, like Eliquis, dicyclomine, gabapentin, etc. — *B.A.*

ANSWER: With most pills, it's OK to take them as a bunch together if you can tolerate doing so (I've known people who have a tough time taking multiple pills at the same time due to gagging). There are a few combinations of pills that shouldn't be taken together, such as tetracyclines and calcium, but these should be labelled clearly on your bottle.

A few medicines, like alendronate (Fosamax), can't be taken with any other medicines. Some medicines, including all the ones you mentioned, can cause sedation, which can be worsened if taken together.

As always, your pharmacist is your best friend for questions about medication interactions.

DEAR DR. ROACH: Despite having family history of high cholesterol (including early death due to heart failure), I was told at 53 that my 10-year risk is not alarming. I do not smoke, nor do I drink.

I recently had some tests done and was told that my Lipoprotein(a) level is above normal. I am wondering if that may explain my concern of why, despite keeping a very careful diet over two decades (and a fairly

well) and an ideal BMI, my figures are not getting better. (I still have a high LDL, low HDL and high triglyceride count.)

After I recovered from COVID, I seemed to have a high pulse and was advised that my stress ECG is positive. I find aerobic exercise very challenging, but I keep active when I can. I tend to be anemic and feel tired very often due to heavy periods, but I take iron supplements.

What should I do concerning my cholesterol in my blood? I am concerned that my high figures may indicate a serious silent illness. — *M.H.*

ANSWER: The 10-year risk is a good place to start in deciding whether elevated cholesterol needs to be treated; however, the 10-year risk does not consider some risk factors, including the high Lp(a), which is an independent risk factor on top of your high LDL and low HDL. The Lp(a) doesn't affect the other cholesterol numbers.

Diet and exercise do tend to help cholesterol numbers and definitely help reduce heart disease risk, but it is possible to have cholesterol results that are not ideal despite a very good lifestyle.

A positive stress test is a concerning finding and is usually followed up by a definitive test for blockages in the artery, such as an angiogram. The results of that will absolutely guide your cardiologist as far as further treatment, including whether you need treatment for your cholesterol numbers.

Although statin drugs do not reduce Lp(a), they do reduce the risk of heart disease in people with elevated levels of Lp(a). I follow the advice of experts who recommend a lower threshold for medication treatment in people with high Lp(a) levels, especially in people with a family history of heart blockages or heart attacks.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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"Amsterdam" (R) -- Talk about a star-studded cast in writer-director David O. Russell's latest release! Christian Bale, Margot Robbie, Chris Rock, Robert De Niro and Taylor Swift are only a few of the A-list names you'll see in this comedy thriller. Although it's considered a box office bomb after its quick stint in theaters, "Amsterdam" will release Dec. 6 for at-home viewers to decide for themselves. The film follows three friends who get accused of killing a retired U.S. general after fleeing the scene where the murder was committed. To clear their names, the trio attempts to uncover the truth, finding that the truth is much larger than anyone ever thought. (HBO Max)



Bryan Tyree Henry and Brad Pitt star in "Bullet Train." Courtesy of Sony Pictures

"Bullet Train" (R) -- Here's another film with a mountain of star power. Starring Brad Pitt, Joey King, Michael Shannon, Sandra Bullock and Latin superstar Bad Bunny, "Bullet Train" takes place in a singular night as a bullet train travels throughout Japan. Pitt portrays a havoc-wreaking, yet effective assassin tasked with the simple mission of retrieving a suitcase. The owners of the suitcase, a pair of assassin brothers named Lemon and Tangerine, plan to deliver the suitcase to a Russian mafia boss, as well as deliver the boss' son. About a thousand different variables no one could've ever predicted ensue from the train's first stop to its last stop at Kyoto. This not-for-the-faint-hearted action comedy will keep you hanging on through every minute. Out now. (Netflix)

"Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules" (PG) -- Jeff Kinney's children's book series "Diary of a Wimpy Kid" had quite a moment when the first book was released back in 2007. Since then, Kinney has released 16 subsequent books. Film adaptations, like this one, have been made including two live-action films. Disney+ has found success with their animated adaptations, and the second animated film just released on the streaming platform. While the animation style for these films is a bit basic, the fundamental story of how to navigate middle school awkwardness remains entertaining and a great family-friendly watch. (Disney+)

"Emancipation" (R) -- Based on a true story of a former slave named Gordon, whose scoured back showcased in photos made history in 1863, this AppleTV+ original film starring Will Smith releases Dec. 9. Smith portrays a slave named Peter (based on Gordon), who attempts to make his way north after escaping from a Louisiana plantation. Smith gives a very honest and raw performance as Peter, but with a film style more suited for a documentary or reenactment series, "Emancipation" lacked the visual design that made films like "12 Years a Slave" so believable. While the style fits into AppleTV+'s cool aesthetic for its TV shows and movies, the tones of the film didn't pair well enough with the story. (AppleTV+)

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1. What does the song title "Livin' la Vida Loca" mean? Who sang it?
2. Who is Robert Thomas Velline and how did he get his start?
3. Which group wrote and released "Dance With Me"?
4. Who was the first to release "Some Guys Have All the Luck"?
5. Name the song that contains these lyrics: "Everybody sing, everybody dance. Lose yourself in wild romance. We're going to party."

Answers

1. The title of Ricky Martin's 1999 song means "Livin' the Crazy Life." The song took numerous noms, including Best Male Pop Vocal and Song of the Year, at the 2000 Grammys.
2. Bobby Vee. He (and some high school friends) filled in at the last minute on Feb. 3, 1959, when Ritchie Valens, Buddy Holly and The Big Bopper were killed in a plane crash on the way to the Iowa gig.
3. Orleans, in 1975.
4. The Persuaders, in 1973. Rod Stewart followed with a cover in 1984.
5. "All Night Long (All Night)" by Lionel Richie in 1983. The alleged "African" lyrics in the song (such as "Tom bo li de say de moi ya") are fake, made up by Richie, as he didn't have anyone to write real ones.

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GRIN and BEAR IT ^{by Wagner}



"So when do you think you can finish putting up the Christmas decorations?"

Just Like Cats & Dogs

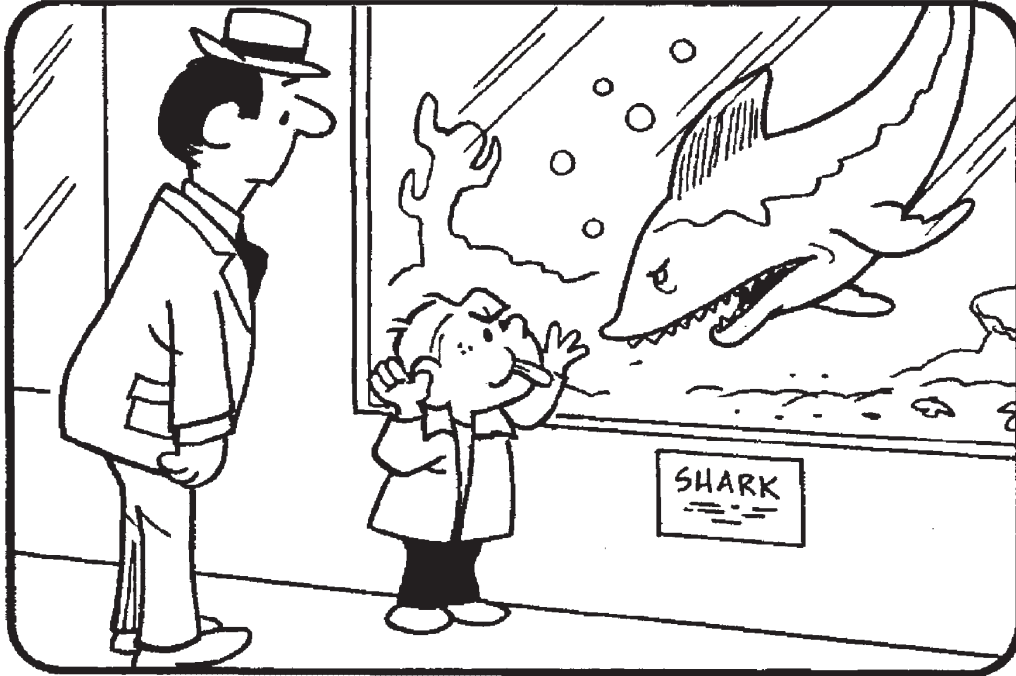
by Dave T. Phipps



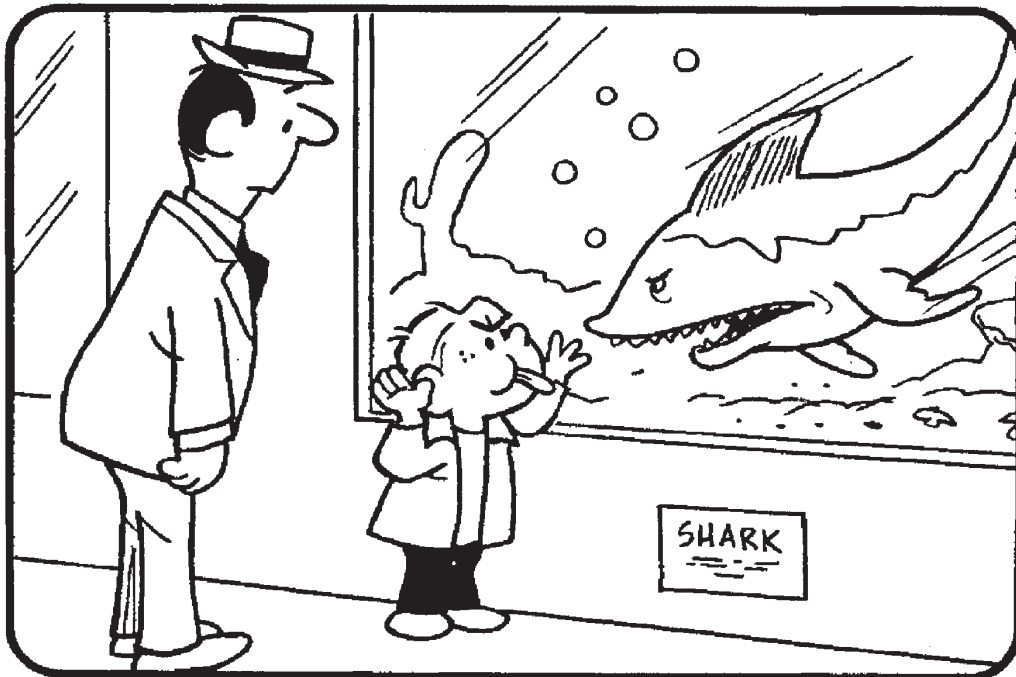
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HOCUS-FOCUS

BY
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Hair is different. 2. Pocket is missing. 3. Coral is different. 4. Jacket is opened. 5. Shark is moved. 6. Sign is moved.

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* Burned rice? No problem. While it's still hot, carefully remove to a new pot any rice not browned or blackened. Then top it with a single slice of white bread. Allow it to sit for several minutes under a tightly fitted lid. The burned smell is absorbed by the bread, and the rice is fit to eat. -- M.U. in Michigan

* Plastic holiday tablecloths can be a festive addition to any family celebration. But what to do if you unpack yours and it's wrinkled? Get those wrinkles out in a hurry with a hair dryer. Set the hair dryer to a low setting, and gently run the warm air over the wrinkles. Smooth and set the table.

* Freshen rugs without the heavy perfume smell of store-bought brands; Simply sprinkle a little baking soda on your carpet and let it sit for about 10 minutes before vacuuming.

* Wrap the lint from your dryer in 6-inch strips of wax paper. Roll it up, twist both ends and you have a perfect firestarter.

* For light and unbelievably fluffy pancakes, try subbing the water in your recipe with club soda. Yummo. -- E.S. in Florida

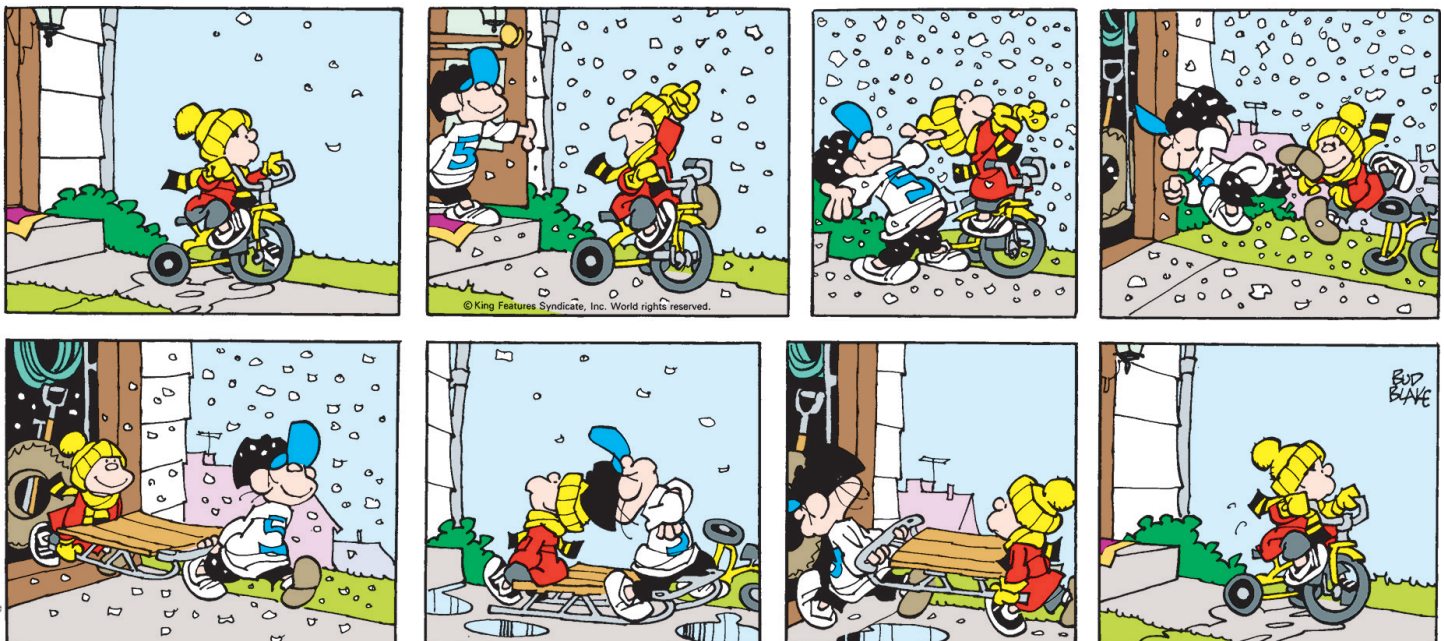
* Add a few drops of water to votive cups before adding a candle. The wax will float on the water, and when the candle burns down, it won't get stuck in the votive glass. -- O.J. in Wyoming

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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 **TIGER**

by **BUD BLAKE**



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Singer Lovett
- 5 "Ben-Hur" studio
- 8 Beanies
- 12 "Madam Secretary" actress
- 14 Opposite of "sans"
- 15 Very hungry
- 16 Gambling city
- 17 Coq au —
- 18 Painter Georges
- 20 Watched surreptitiously
- 23 Pot covers
- 24 Any time now
- 25 Stuffed Italian pasta
- 28 Boy king
- 29 Doctrine
- 30 NYPD alert
- 32 Gulches
- 34 Potter's medium
- 35 New newts
- 36 Tint
- 37 Import duty
- 40 JFK info
- 41 Portent
- 42 Enraptured
- 47 Theater award
- 48 Eternally
- 49 Variety
- 50 Still, in verse

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
15									16			
			17				18	19				
20	21	22				23						
24					25					26	27	
28				29					30		31	
	32		33						34			
			35					36				
37	38	39					40					
41					42	43				44	45	46
47					48							
49					50				51			

- 51 Playwright O'Casey
- 10 Elizabeth of "Jacob's Ladder"
- 27 Apple tablet
- 29 Squabble
- 31 "See ya!"
- 33 Like marble
- 34 Great divides
- 36 Commotion
- 37 Grabbed
- 38 Both (Pref.)
- 39 Check
- 40 Divisible by two
- 43 St. crosser
- 44 Weed whacker
- 45 Notable time
- 46 Lair

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— King Crossword —

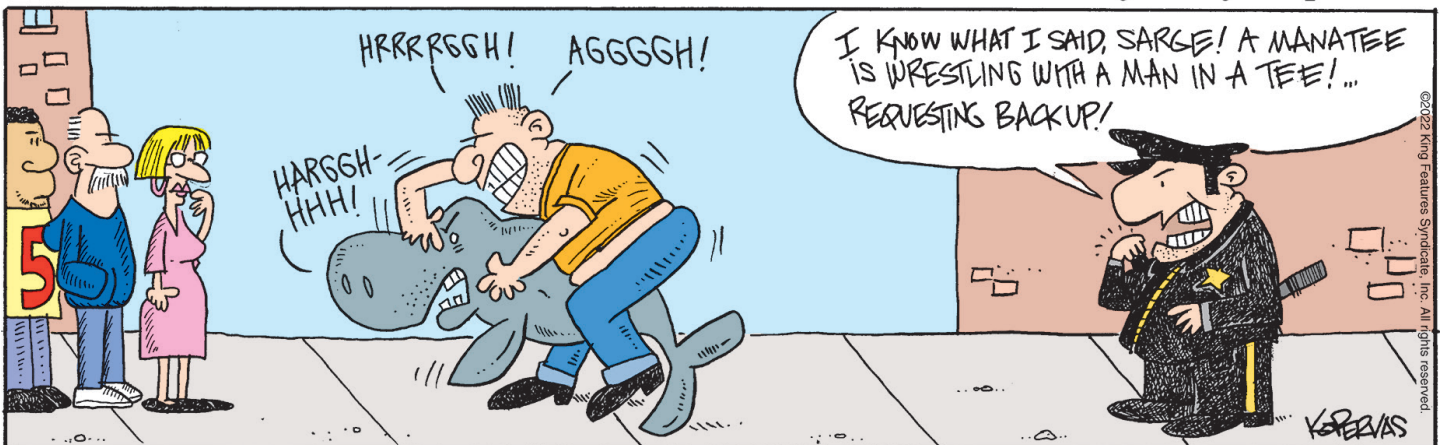
Answers

Solution time: 22 mins.

L	Y	L	E		M	G	M		C	A	P	S	
T	E	A	L	E	O	N	I		A	V	E	C	
R	A	V	E	N	O	U	S		R	E	N	O	
			V	I	N			S	E	U	R	A	T
S	P	I	E	D		L	I	D	S				
S	O	O	N		R	A	V	I	O	L	I		
T	U	T		T	E	N	E	T		A	P	B	
		R	A	V	I	N	E	S		C	L	A	Y
			E	F	T	S			S	H	A	D	E
T	A	R	I	F	F		E	T	A				
O	M	E	N		R	A	V	I	S	H	E	D	
O	B	I	E		E	V	E	R	M	O	R	E	
K	I	N	D		E	E	N		S	E	A	N	

Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



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THIMBLE THEATRE PRESENTS
POPEYE
BY RANDY NICHOLLAND

WOT'S WRONG, SWEET'PEA?!

I JUST REALIZED ONE DAY EVERYTHING I CARE ABOUT AS A KID WON'T MATTER ANYMORE AND I WON'T EVEN KNOW IT!

WHY CAN'T YA BE SCARED OF MONSTERS IN YER CLOSET LIKE OTHER KIDS?

'CUZ HE'S GOT US TOO BUMMED OUT TO SCARE HIM.

KID, WORRYING ISN'T A HOBBY.

POPEYE, GIT YER CORPSE OUTTA THAT BED!

WOT IN BLAZES—

'TIS I, YER ANCESTOR, DREAD PIRATE PATCHEY!

AND I COMMAND YE TO COMES FORTH AN' HELP ME RECOVER A SACRED TREASURE!

NOPE. G'NIGHT.

BUT YE GOTTA—

NO, I DONTSK!

YA HAUNTS ME E'RY FEW MONTHS, SQUAWKIN' 'BOUTSK A NEW TREASURE, SWEARS ITLL LET YER SOUL REST...
... AND THEN YA RETURNS LIKE CLOCKWORK.

I KNOWS I AIN'TSK ALWAYS STEERED YE RIGHT, AN' IN LIFE I WAS LOWDOWN AN' EVIL, BUT I NEED YE TO TRUST ME.

WHEN IT'S ALL DONE AND YE FURL YER SAILS FER THE LAST TIME, IT'S THE ADVENTURES YE LET BE THAT YE REGRETSK.

FINE. LET'S HAVE YER ADVENTURE.

THEY SAYS THEY DONTSK SERVE MILKSHAKES AFTER MIDNIGHT.

WELL, THAT'S TOO BAD, 'CUZ HAUNTIN' THEM SILLY IS ALWAYS ON THE MENU!

I SEE WHY PAPPY IDOLIZES YA.

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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland

I WANT A **DISCOUNT** ON THIS **WREATH!** IT'S ONLY 22 INCHES, NOT THE 24 IT SAYS ON THE TAG!

WELL, THAT 24 IS JUST, Y'KNOW, A BALLPARK FIGURE.

HMPF! WHATEVER HAPPENED TO "THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS RIGHT" ?!

URNS OUT THAT WAS JUST A BIG OL' HUNK'A MISINFORMATION.

POOLE FAMILY FARM STAND

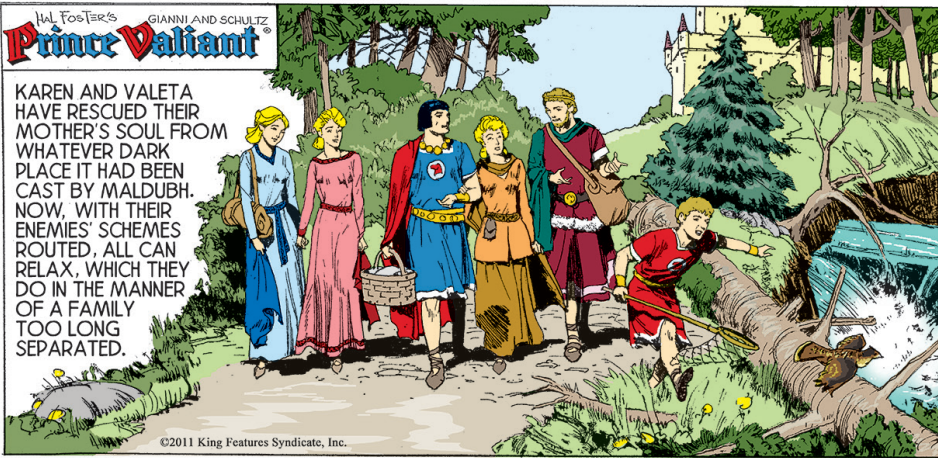
MARLAND

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BUT VAL STILL HAS NAGGING QUESTIONS: "WHAT OF ALL THIS HORRIBLE WITCHCRAFT YOU PRACTICE? SHOULD WE NOT TALK?" ALETA SMILES A BIT INDULGENTLY...



"HUSBAND, DO YOU REALLY NEED TO KNOW THE TIREDSOME DETAILS? SUFFICE TO SAY THAT MEN HAVE THEIR WAYS TO DEFEND THE HEARTH, AND WOMEN THEIRS. THE CRISIS IS OVER AND NO LONGER OF CONSEQUENCE..."



NO CONSEQUENCE? ALETA DOES NOT KNOW THAT AS HER TWO DAUGHTERS TRIED TO SAVE HER, WEIRD STORMS LASHED THE SKIES OVER BRITAIN...

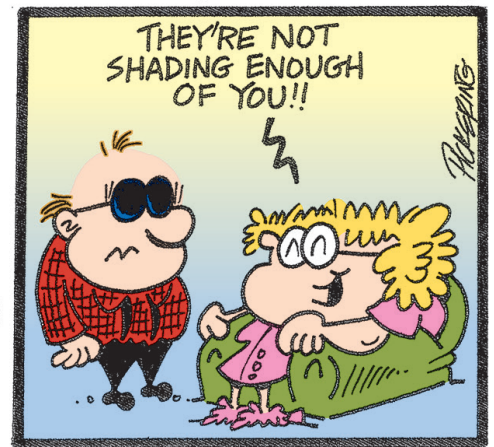
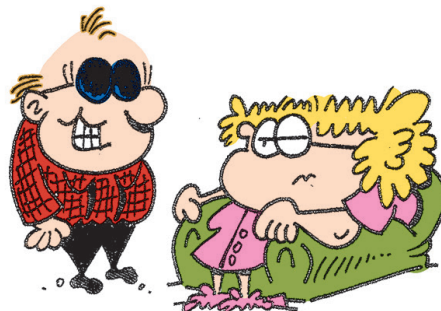
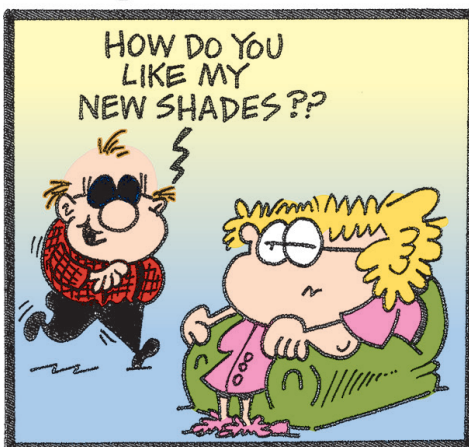


... AND THE FOLLOWING MORNING, STRANGE VISITATIONS WERE FOUND IN THE FIELDS.



The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Do You Feel Isolated?

Researchers must be worried about us. There are hundreds of studies done around the world on the topic of isolated seniors and how it's bad for our brain and physical health. While we can appreciate their concern, it would be nice if they could all agree on the facts they report.

A Norwegian university has released the results of a report on maintaining brain health and preventing cognitive decline. They've concluded, after reviewing 101 other studies, that social activity is important, along with physical exercise and interesting hobbies.

One study praised us for following the Covid rules and staying home and not having face-to-face social activity, saying we mentally weathered our isolation better than any other age group. Another study said that we didn't do well, that we suffered from sleep disturbances, depression and anxiety.

Another study analyzing information from before and during the pandemic concluded that yes, there was physical and social isolation, but not digital isolation. In other words, we've been online communicating with others.

One serious study looked at 12 possible relationships (friends, neighbors, family and so on) and concluded that being socially isolated made one more susceptible to the common cold.

Yet another study said that it was when the Covid rules were lifted, when we could go to stores and back to our meetings, that our real stress started.

In the U.S., 27% of seniors over the age of 60 live alone, as opposed to several other countries where multiple generations live together. One thing researchers need to consider: Some seniors might like the peace and quiet of living alone, might like having control about who comes over and when, and might prefer the independence.

Still, if you sense you don't get out enough, go. Take a walk. Volunteer to walk a dog at the shelter. Stroll the aisles at the library.

Or don't. It really is up to you.

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1. What actor played crazed former football referee Stanley Craver in a series of Nike commercials in the 1990s?

2. What first-round NFL Draft pick for the Kansas City Chiefs in 1990 missed the entire 1991 season due to injuries sustained in a scooter accident?

3. Name the British driver who won six of the first seven races and went on to win the Formula One World Drivers' Championship in the 2009 season?

4. Name the lawyer, college basketball analyst and former Duke basketball standout who successfully defended a costume company against a lawsuit by the creators of Barney the purple dinosaur in 1999?

5. What company introduced the pressurized can package for tennis balls in the 1920s?

6. What college football team's dominant seven-man offensive line earned the nickname "The Seven Blocks of Granite" in the 1930s?

7. Name the Baseball Hall of Famer who was named NL Manager of the Year and led the St. Louis Cardinals to a World Series championship in 1967.



by Ryan A. Berenz

Answers

1. Dennis Hopper.

2. Percy Snow.

3. Jenson Button.

4. Jay Bilas.

5. The Pennsylvania Rubber Company, which became Penn Racquet Sports.

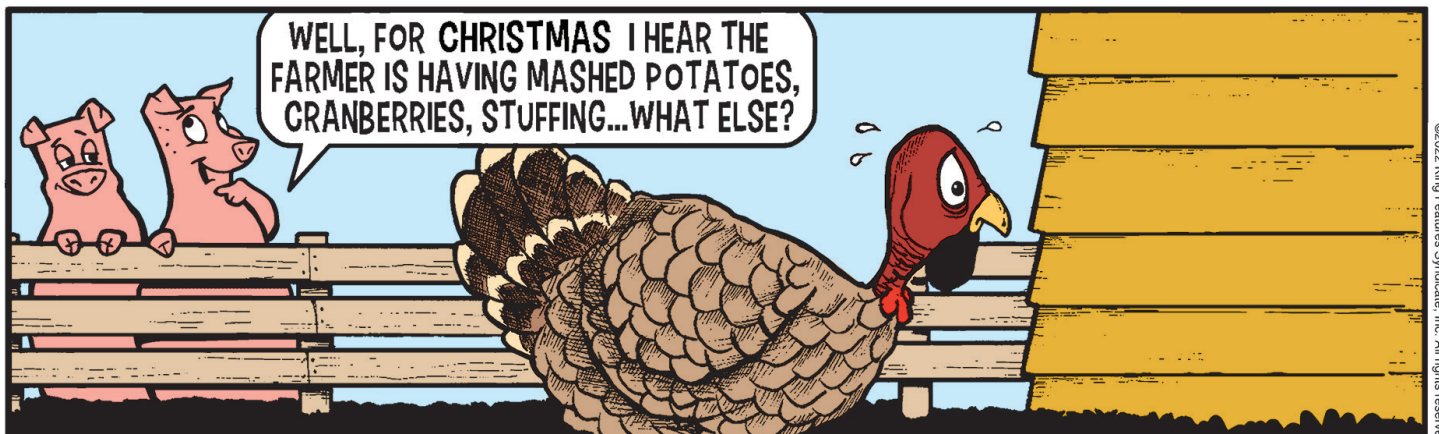
6. The Fordham University Rams.

7. Red Schoendienst.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Pet's Safety Is Paramount at Holiday Dinners

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: Last year, I caught my uncle and aunt feeding our King Charles Spaniel, Doogie, food from their plates after Thanksgiving dinner and pouring wine into a dish for him. As you know, holiday feasts have rich, fatty foods with ingredients that are bad for dogs, like onion, garlic, avocado and chocolate. Fortunately, Doogie only suffered a bit of indigestion. This year, I added a list of rules to the Thanksgiving invitation, including: Do not feed the dog; do not leave plates where Doogie can reach them; do not give alcohol to the dog; do not let Doogie out of his kennel.

My uncle and aunt posted the list on Facebook and said the rules are the reason they will not come this year. They're trying to shame me for protecting my dog. Some of our other relatives commented on the post and said they might not come because of the rules, either. What would you do? -- Carole & Chuck in Marietta, Georgia

DEAR CAROLE & CHUCK: I'm no master of etiquette, but I can speak on this issue: The welfare of your pet comes first.

Dogs will not turn down yummy food, especially if it's bad for them. Dogs don't know alcohol is bad for them. Many dogs don't know how to handle the stress of a sudden crowd of strangers in the house. Dogs will react badly to inconsiderate handling. Dogs will take advantage of your distraction to reach abandoned plates and countertops laden with deliciousness.

Your rules about Doogie are reasonable. You can respond to the post calmly with your side of the story, and let the other relatives decide for themselves what to do. Best of luck.

Do you have a story about pets and the holidays? Tell us at ask@pawscorner.com.

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

counter backfired when they later tried to sell the \$21 million worth of rocks. Roberts was caught and sentenced to eight years in prison.

* And speaking of romance: Tinder's not just for humans! Well, not at the Dutch zoo that created a "Tinder for orangutans" to help a female named Samboja find a breeding partner. The primate was shown photos of potential mates from an international breeding program on a tablet, but unfortunately her mother got hold of it ... and smashed it to pieces.

* Poet W.B. Yeats and magician Aleister Crowley were such bitter rivals in the world of the occult that Yeats once kicked Crowley down a flight of stairs for being a proponent of "black magic."

* Only humans have chins.

* In 2012, the police chief of Vaughn, New Mexico, stepped down because his own criminal record prevented him from carrying a gun. That left just a drug-sniffing dog named Nikita as the only certified member of the town's police department.

* Trained pigeons can tell the difference between paintings by Pablo Picasso and Claude Monet.

Thought for the Day: "What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals." -- Zig Ziglar



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* In 2020, a lightning bolt extending a total of 477.2 miles spread across Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas, setting a new world record for the longest flash.

* Rubber bands last longer if you refrigerate them.

* Rooms at the Null Stern ("zero star") Hotel are situated in repurposed nuclear bunkers and include open-air mountain rooms with equally zero walls. The designers obviously weren't kidding about that rating.

* In 2002, NASA intern Thad Roberts stole a safe full of moon rocks so he and his girlfriend could have "sex on the moon." Their otherworldly romantic en-



Count birds at your feeder

Project FeederWatch Tally Sheet

Project FeederWatch is an ongoing research project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Birds Canada. 4,000 people enrolled when this project began in 1987, and it has grown to 20,000 people in the U.S. and Canada collecting data on the birds visiting their feeders. The information is used to learn more about the current distribution and abundance of birds that exist in North America. - Brenda Weaver

Source: feederwatch.org



by Freddy Groves

Were You Stationed at Fort Ord?

I remember Fort Ord as a beautiful place to live, with perfect weather and the ocean right over the sand dunes. It was idyllic.

But now over a thousand veterans have developed cancer after having served at Fort Ord. The likely culprit: chemicals in the drinking water, 40 of them, with trichloroethylene, or TCE, being most notable for causing different types of cancer. And once again, leaking tanks allowed chemicals to leach into the water supply.

It wasn't until an anonymous call in 1984 that the EPA and other agencies learned about illegal dumping of drums of chemicals that were leaking into the soil. It was two years before the Army decided to clean it up. But there was concern in 1985 about the level of chemicals, and studies were done. The conclusion of many of the tests: Chemicals exceeded safe limits. An order went out that those doing cleanup were not to tell the community, the press or other government agencies.

The EPA labeled Fort Ord as a Super Fund site in 1990 because of leaking underground petroleum tanks, a landfill, a motor pool, a target range, a burn pit for drums of chemicals and other culprits.

The base closed in 1994, but the housing was still used until 1997.

Ring any bells? Think back to Camp Lejeune and all the years it took to get the illnesses listed as presumptive after exposure to all the chemicals. And at this writing, Lejeune is the only base where the Department of Veterans Affairs assumes that service there caused so many of the health problems ... not only in veterans but their spouses and children.

Veterans who have become ill after serving at Fort Ord have gone to the VA for care and have been told there's no service connection between their illnesses and Fort Ord.

To read more about Fort Ord, see www.fortordcleanup.com and click on "Cleanup Programs." To see what was known when, click on "Documents." Or call them at 800-852-9699.

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Wishing Well®

4	7	6	5	7	2	8	2	5	6	8	6	2
B	A	U	T	W	P	F	L	R	N	A	E	A
6	3	2	3	2	4	2	4	6	5	8	7	6
X	N	Y	O	H	E	A	G	P	U	M	O	E
5	7	6	7	3	8	6	2	3	2	6	7	8
S	N	C	D	B	I	T	R	O	D	E	E	L
6	4	5	3	2	6	2	5	2	3	5	7	3
D	E	T	U	W	F	O	I	R	N	N	R	D
5	2	8	6	8	3	2	5	6	2	8	5	7
T	K	Y	A	V	S	H	U	M	A	I	I	F
3	2	8	2	7	3	8	7	3	5	6	5	3
F	R	S	D	U	O	I	L	R	T	E	I	Y
5	4	3	7	3	5	4	8	7	4	7	4	8
O	N	O	D	U	N	T	T	A	L	Y	E	S

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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1. MOVIES: What does Susan Walker want as a gift from Santa in the movie "Miracle on 34th Street"?
2. MUSIC: Which famous rock band once called itself The New Yardbirds?
3. GEOGRAPHY: Where is the Thar Desert located?
4. TELEVISION: Which TV sitcom's theme song was "Thank You for Being a Friend"?
5. FOOD & DRINK: When was frozen food invented?
6. MOVIES: Which Disney princess is modeled after a real person?
7. ANATOMY: What is the only human organ capable of natural regeneration?
8. ANIMAL KINGDOM: What are male and female swans called?
9. U.S. STATES: Which state's motto is "Excelsior!"?
10. HISTORY: How many people signed the U.S. Declaration of Independence?

Answers

1. A house.
2. Led Zeppelin.
3. India and Pakistan.
4. "The Golden Girls."
5. 1924. Clarence Birdseye invented the quick freezing process.
6. Pocahontas.
7. The liver.
8. Cobs and pens.
9. New York ("Ever upward!").
10. 56.

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South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Fiscal Responsibility the South Dakota Way

Lots of politicians and bureaucrats like to argue that a government's budget is nothing like a family budget. They use that as an excuse for why Washington D.C. can continue to rack up record deficits and drive the national debt above \$30 trillion. But in South Dakota, we think of our state's budget exactly like a family budget – and the family who the money belongs to is the people of South Dakota.

We've built something truly special here. South Dakota has a AAA credit rating, a fully funded pension system, some of the lowest, fairest taxes in the country, and we have generated record surpluses for a couple years in a row. Because our economy is the strongest in America, we continue to shatter records for state revenues. And because of all the people and businesses moving here, we know that this growth can be sustained over the long term.

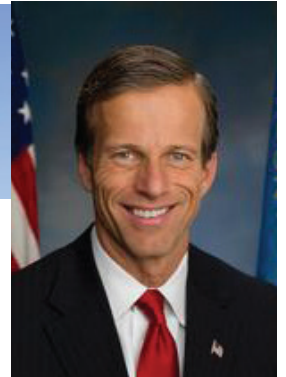
We achieved that by remembering who truly owns the money in the State Treasury – it's the people of South Dakota. Taxpayer dollars belong to the taxpayers. It is our duty to spend that money responsibly and fairly; to live within our means; to save what we can and pay down debt; and to give back to the people wherever possible.

On Tuesday, December 6, I will be unveiling my budget for the upcoming fiscal year. As I promised, this budget will include a complete elimination of the state sales tax on groceries. That is how we can return some of our record revenues to the people – and we can afford it thanks to our record growth.

We will also continue to support South Dakota schools, public safety, and our healthcare obligations. This budget funds essential state services. My budget also includes targeted investments to combat inflation that is being driven by President Biden's reckless spending out of Washington. It will focus on building stronger families in our state. And it will make key investments in both infrastructure and public safety to continue making our state safer and stronger.

I look forward to working with the legislature to pass and sign a budget that builds on South Dakota's success over the last few years. As I have said in the past, the best is yet to come! By recognizing that our state dollars belong to the people and investing it wisely with that in mind, I know we can achieve it.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



A Bright Future for Ellsworth

The Air Force and Northrop Grumman recently unveiled the brand-new B-21 Raider, a sixth-generation aircraft and the future backbone of the Air Force's bomber fleet. When this cutting-edge aircraft enters service, South Dakota's own Ellsworth Air Force Base will be the B-21 mission's first home base. The Raider is an incredible feat of engineering, and its unveiling is an exciting moment both for the future of the Air Force and for South Dakota's continued role in our national security.

As Ellsworth prepares for its new chapter as the "Home of the Raider," it's hard to believe that its future was uncertain not long ago. Shortly after I was elected to the U.S. Senate, Ellsworth was slated for closure by the Department of Defense, and one of my first priorities as a senator became keeping Ellsworth open. Statistically, our odds of success were not high, but thanks to an all-hands effort from state and community leaders, we got Ellsworth removed from the closure list.

We didn't stop with preventing Ellsworth from closing, though. We immediately got to work building up the base to ensure its future would never again be in jeopardy. In 2007, the Air Force Financial Services Center opened at Ellsworth. The 89th Attack Squadron arrived four years later, and, in 2015, a nearly decade-long effort paid off with the quadrupling of the base's training airspace.

When the first B-21 lands in the Black Hills, the airmen at Ellsworth will be ready to support the Air Force's most advanced aircraft. I am continuing to work toward securing full and timely funding for the new infrastructure that the B-21 training and operational missions will require, including those to support the Raider's stealth properties and weapons systems. I am also working to ensure Ellsworth remains a premier training space for our bombers, which is why I have proposed a "dynamic airspace" pilot program to develop how airspace boundaries are managed to accommodate modern training requirements like longer engagement distances.

While planes and equipment are essential, the greatest resources are the men and women who wear the uniform and all of the hardworking employees who help support the base's missions, and I am continuing to work to improve the quality of life for our Ellsworth airmen and their families. The arrival of the B-21 mission will bring more military families into the communities surrounding Box Elder, which is why I am working to ensure these families can secure housing in the area and that the Douglas School District has the school capacity to integrate and support Air Force families' children.

Ellsworth has come a long way in the 17 years since it was threatened with closure. It is an honor to be part of building up the base as a critical part of our West River communities and our national security. I am proud to represent the men and women of Ellsworth in the U.S. Senate, and I will continue to do everything I can to ensure our Ellsworth airmen – and all our men and women in uniform – have everything they need to carry out their missions.

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CONGRESSMAN

DUSTY JOHNSON

Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



Keeping our Trains on Track

Fifty-four tons. That's how much each American requires of goods shipped by freight each year.

This week as we approached the end of yet another extension to avert a strike by rail workers, the threat of canceled shipments was staring our nation in the face.

Let me be clear, no one benefits from a rail strike. It's not just Christmas presents on those cars, it's ethanol and fertilizer – this stuff can't sit around while parties argue over contract terms. These products are hazardous and regulated to ensure safe transportation. Shipments like these were going to be canceled as early as December 5, disrupting supply chains from east to west. Not only that, but our freight system carries products that generate electricity and clean our water. Without food, without clean water, and without necessary goods to produce energy, our economy faced huge risk.

While shutting down our freight system is never an optimal scenario, this was possibly the least opportune time for a rail strike. Mississippi River water levels are historically low, causing barges to be canceled or rerouted. We have a shortage of truck drivers and diesel fuel, not to mention high energy costs across the board. Twenty-eight percent of our freight is moved by rail. We don't have sufficient alternative infrastructure systems to carry the weight of a stalled rail system.

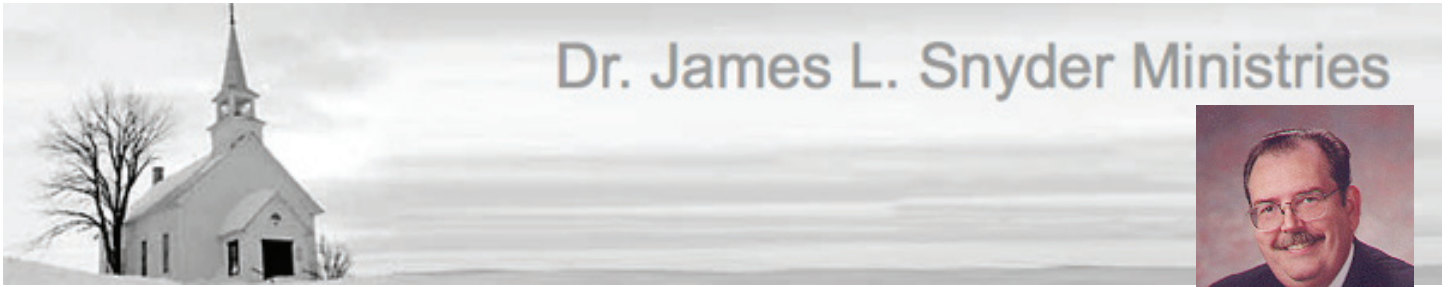
Fully shutting down this part of our supply chain would cost our economy up to \$2 billion per day, raise inflation, disrupt 7 million travelers per day, and create waves of disruption across almost every aspect of life.

It's embarrassing we reached the point where Congress had to intervene – the unions and rails have had years to come to an agreement. I voted in favor of a bill to resolve this dispute, keeping the trains on the tracks because ultimately, this isn't just a contract issue, it's an issue of national security.

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Do I Really Talk In My Sleep



For a long time, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage has accused me of talking in my sleep. I never believed her and just thought she was joking. At least, I thought it was a joke.

One time she accused me of that and said, "Why do you talk so much in your sleep at night?"

Thinking this was a platform for jokes, I said, "That's because, during the day, I don't have any opportunity to talk." Then I flashed her one of my signature smiles.

She didn't throw any smile back but stared at me for a few moments with that stare that went right through my body.

It was about our third Christmas, and as we gathered around the Christmas tree, I handed her a little Christmas box all wrapped up in red paper with a nice little bow on the top.

Looking at me, she smiled and said, "Is this the watch you were talking about in your sleep the other night?"

Quite frankly, I did not know how to respond to that. It was a watch, but I did not know I had been talking about it in my sleep. So there has to be another reason for that!

One morning at breakfast as we were finishing, I said to her, "I've been thinking that today..."

She interrupted me and said to me, "I know. You want to go and get that new computer you've been talking about in your sleep."

I have been worrying about what secrets I'm exposing at night while I'm sound asleep.

Then the other day at breakfast time, she looked at me and said, "I think that's an excellent idea you have."

Looking at her, I wondered what she was talking about, so I said, "What are you talking about?"

"You know," she said with a big smile, "that vacation you're planning for this coming summer. I think it is a wonderful idea."

To be truthful, I had been thinking about a special vacation this coming summer, but I hadn't said anything to her about it up to this point. How in the world does she know I'm thinking about this vacation?

Not knowing what to say, I looked at her, "Where did you ever get that idea?"

With one of her chuckles, she said, "You know. That vacation you were talking about in your sleep last night. I agree with everything you said about it."

I was a little bit off at this point. I was thinking about that vacation, but I had no idea what I said in my sleep last night. I was afraid to ask her about the details of that vacation.

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I'm not sure if I need a psychologist or what! How can I keep from talking in my sleep at night? And, what if while I'm sleeping, I'm talking nonsense and get myself into deep trouble with the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage? Can I really believe that what I say while I'm sleeping is actually true?

Thinking about this for some time, I devised a little plan. One night I would pretend I was asleep and talk in my sleep, or at least pretend to. It took me a while to come up with some idea, but eventually, I did.

I pretended I was asleep one night, and I began talking around the middle of the night. I said, "I think I'm going to surprise my wife by buying her a brand-new car. After all, she deserves it."

I thought this might bring some closure to all of these myths about me talking in my sleep.

Finally, I went to sleep and was quite anxious to get up in the morning and hear the response from The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage.

I was surprised when she said nothing about me talking in my sleep last night.

Maybe she fell asleep and didn't hear me. So, I decided to try it the next night.

That following day there was absolutely nothing she said about me talking in my sleep.

I did this for two more nights in a row, and to my surprise, she never even acknowledged that I talked in my sleep.

I wondered if all of this talking in my sleep was just a fantasy from her point of view. I didn't know what to do next because nothing I was doing was actually working.

Then I decided to do it one more night.

The following day at breakfast, while we were eating, she stared at me, and I said, "Is something wrong?"

"I don't think that was very funny."

"What are you talking about?" I asked her.

"You know what I mean, all that talking about buying me a new car, but I know you were not asleep when you said that. You are just trying to trick me, and I'm not going to have anything to do with that."

I have learned that it is true only when I'm talking in my sleep. When I talk when I'm awake, it is not true. Oh, for the life of a husband!

Then I was reminded of a verse in the Bible. "For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether" (Psalm 139:4).

I'm comfortable with knowing God hears everything I say. With that I need to discipline my tongue and keep it under control.

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: What is the EPA's new Green Bank all about? -- Rick D., Asheville, NC

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently proposed the creation of a so-called green bank, known as the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) to help leverage the power of traditional financial markets in solving the climate crisis. Investing in carbon offset projects from lower income communities across the United States, the GGRF, at face value, has a social-ecological conscience. However, beneath the guise of green goodwill, darker forces are at play.

As a by-product of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), there are fears that the GGRF is a 'green trojan horse' created to give fossil fuels another chance and push out foreign business. "The IRA is rife with corporate giveaways and handouts aimed at allowing the fossil fuel industry to continue business as usual," says Ebony Twilly Martin, the Executive Co-Director of Greenpeace USA. Meanwhile, Frederick Erixon, the Director of the European Centre for International Political Economy adds that the European Union (EU) has concerns about the discrimination inherent in the IRA: "Many of the IRA policies take an 'America first' attitude that will hurt European green industries and cleantech."

Furthermore, the new independent national green bank, by virtue of its association with the IRA, may struggle to convince a crucial player in the climate war, the risk-averse private sector, to invest in the development of low emissions services and products from disadvantaged communities.

Delegates to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) stressed that not enough finance is supplementing the right sectors of the economy to create green technologies and infrastructure.

In theory, championing green banks as an effective means of financing climate action and optimizing social-ecological system resilience is a good idea — especially for communities that have been left behind in the transition to cleaner energy, transport and living. However, green bank models like the GGRF can only succeed when detached from the design of coal barons, protectionist policies and political squabbling.

Global biodiversity is in the headlights of the climate crisis. With a burgeoning population of 8 billion, humans must take account of our carbon footprint and develop innovative strategies that lift nature and all walks of society to reduce our impact. Green banks can be part of 'the solution' but must first escape fossil fuel interests and discriminatory bills to coax the private sector to follow them into a brave new world of green financing.

"The climate test is simple. It requires jobs, justice and restoration of the environment," says Edward Markey, U.S. Senator from Massachusetts. An independent national green bank could be the answer. Through the GGRF, funding can be leveraged to advance green initiatives and infrastructure in disadvantaged communities while creating good, local jobs."

With less than six months for EPA to distribute funds to eligible projects across the U.S., stakeholder input on the implementation, design and structure of the GGRF is currently being sought. Now is the time for the public to question the evolution and motives of the scheme, so that when a national green bank does arrive, it is truly transformational to the global economy, ecology and climate. .



Massachusetts Senator Edward Markey is a leading light in Congress on sustainability issues and has worked hard championing the green bank concept. Credit: Fritz Myer, FlickrCC.

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South Dakota COVID-19 Report

New Cases* 1105 +258	Total Cases* 268,797	Currently Hospitalized 74 +2
New Hospitalizations 30	Total Hospitalized 12,075	Click to Visit SD COVID-19 Vaccination Coverage
New Deaths 3	Total Deaths 3,099	Click to Visit COVID-19 Community Levels

SD 2022/2023 Influenza Weekly Summary Week Ending November 26, 2022 (Week 47)

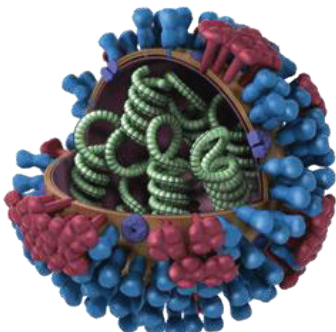
Provisional numbers, * Lab confirmed: PCR, Culture or DFA. The number of laboratories using rapid confirmatory tests has increased, which may account for some of the increase in confirmed cases observed this influenza season



Lab Confirmed Cases	Nov 20-26	Season to Date
Type A, H1	10	28
Type A, H3	25	65
Type A, Unspecified	1,117	2,158
Type B Unspecified	3	15
B Yamagata	0	0
B Victoria	0	0
Total*	1,155	2,266

Rapid Antigen Tests (48) sites reporting	Nov 20-26	Season to Date
Total Tested	978	4,875
Total Positive	258 (239A/19B)	801 (552A/249B)
% Rapid Antigen Tests Positive	26.38%	16.43%

	Nov 20-26	Season to Date
Hospitalizations	54	98
Deaths	0	0



3D Influenza Virus

SD Influenza Geographic: **REGIONAL**

SD Influenza Activity: **HIGH**

US Influenza Activity: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/fluactivitysurv.htm>

International Flu Activity: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/international/index.htm>

South Dakota Influenza information:
<http://doh.sd.gov/diseases/infectious/flu/>



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

SD counties to receive \$15M in federal money with few strings attached

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - DECEMBER 3, 2022 12:00 PM

South Dakota counties will receive over \$15 million in one-time funds from the U.S. Department of the Treasury over the next two years, with the ability to spend the money on nearly anything they want.

The federal money is another form of COVID-19 economic relief stemming from the American Rescue Plan Act. This time, the influx is a \$2 billion fund created to aid rural areas with public lands: the Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund (LATC).

The only restriction for county government is that commissioners cannot spend the money on lobbying efforts. The first year's funding is immediately available.

While most counties received the minimum of \$50,000 each for fiscal years 2022 and 2023, Pennington County received 14% of the state's total FY22 funds: \$1,094,839. The county will receive another \$1.09 million next year.

Each allocation used a formula based on federal lands within each county, defined by the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program, which incorporates population levels and economic conditions. Over 2,080 local governments across the county were eligible for the funds.

PILT money is a federal "reimbursement" to counties that can't tax federal lands under their jurisdiction, said Fall River County Auditor Sue Ganje.

Fall River County includes part of the Blacks Hills National Forest and the Buffalo Gap National Grasslands. "Schools don't get money and counties don't get money," Ganje said. "We're unable to tax those acres, so PILT money is that reimbursement."

The county received \$684,507 in LATC funds.

These one-time LATC funds help make up for years when PILT money wasn't received, Ganje said, adding that annual PILT money wasn't historically consistent like it is now.

There is no deadline attached to the funds as of right now, according to the Treasury. Counties will submit an annual expenditure report by March 31 of each year, beginning in 2023.

Ziebach County, which received \$50,000, is one of the first counties to spend the money. Based on a Nov. 10 commission meeting decision, \$21,000 will be spent on \$1,000 bonuses for county employees, which includes commissioners.

The remaining money will be saved for a new semi-truck for the Highway Department. Ziebach Auditor Cindy Longbrake said the county will likely wait until it receives fiscal year 2023's \$50,000 to purchase the truck.



Buffalo Gap National Grassland is located in southwestern South Dakota spanning several counties. (Courtesy of USDA)

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"Our trucks are in bad shape. They break down a lot, and there's one they're not sure they can use," Longbrake said, adding that the trucks are used to haul gravel for roads. All county roads in Ziebach County are gravel.

The LATCF considerations are not on upcoming commission meeting agendas for Pennington or Fall River counties. However, Ganje hopes to see the funds earmarked for future budgets and wage increases.

"We're working on wages and hopefully can work on wages to maintain and attract people," Ganje said. "We're having a hard time filling positions right now."

As for Pennington County, Auditor Cindy Mohler said the county will likely use the "unanticipated revenue for the year" to supplement increased costs.

"There's been a rising cost in wages, and the Sheriff's Office has had a lot of overtime costs with being understaffed," Mohler said. "There's quite a supplement needed again to cover everything we've already supplemented."



MAKENZIE HUBER  

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She's spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.

Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund allocations to South Dakota counties

One-time funds come from the U.S. Department of the Treasury

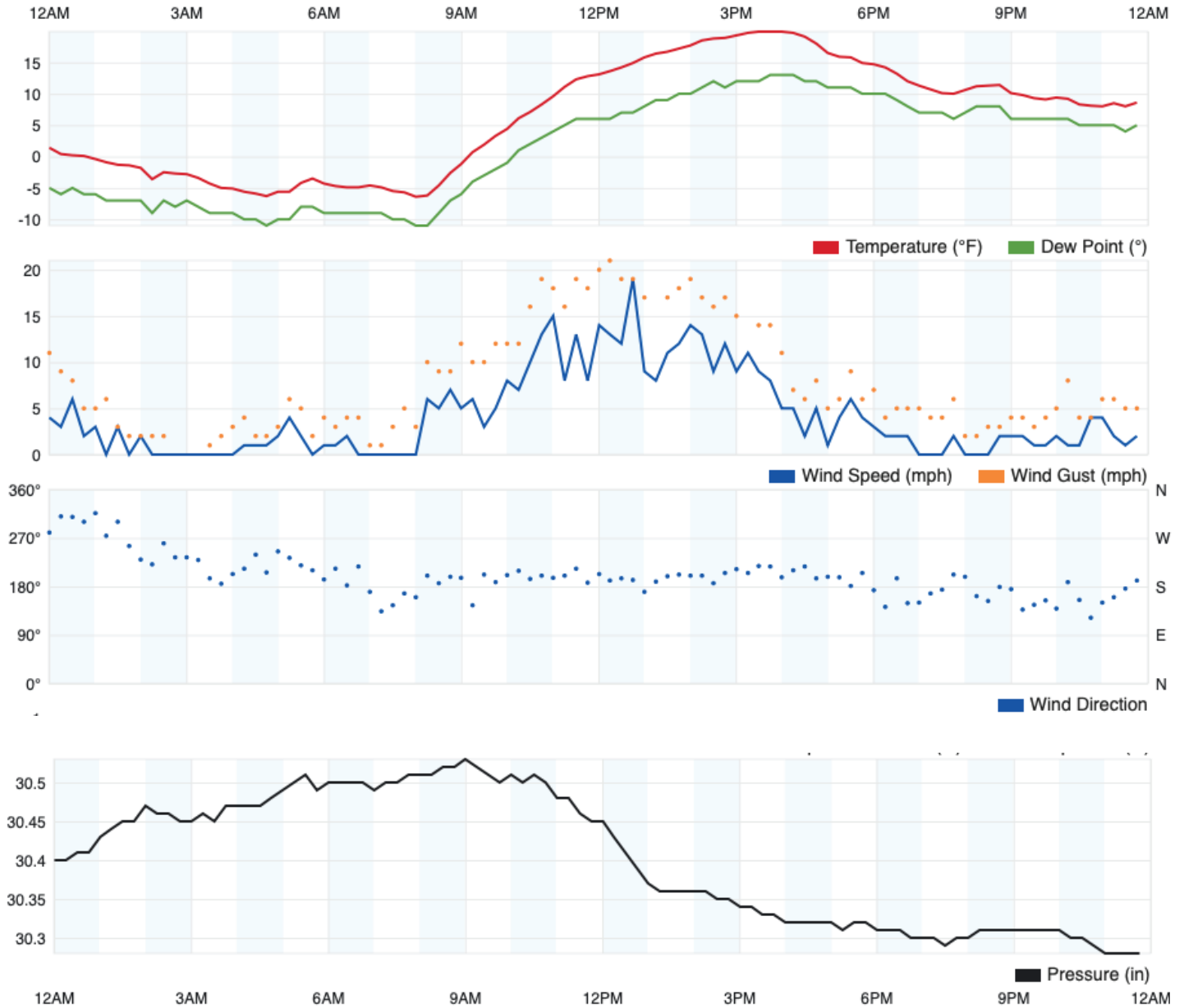


Source: [FY 2022 funds from U.S. Department of the Treasury](#)

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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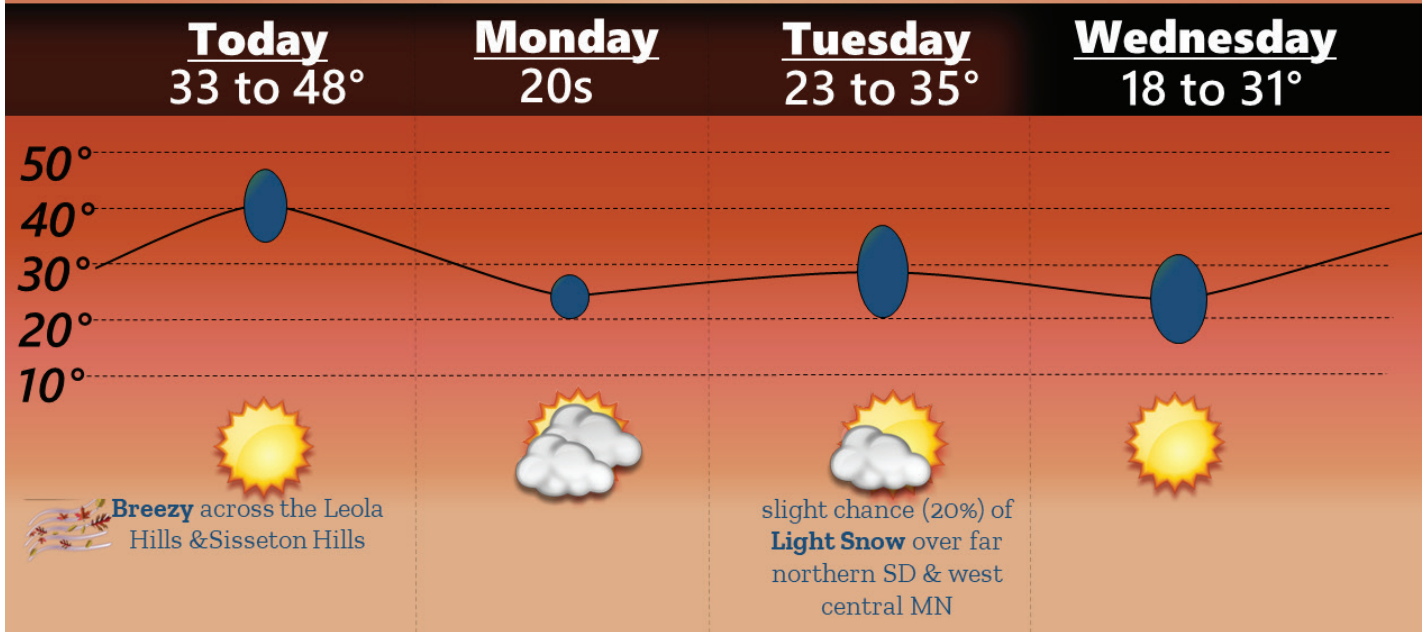
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Today	Tonight	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
						
Sunny	Increasing Clouds	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy then Slight Chance Snow	Chance Snow then Partly Sunny	Chance Snow	Sunny
High: 38 °F	Low: 17 °F	High: 24 °F	Low: 9 °F	High: 27 °F	Low: 0 °F	High: 19 °F



Aberdeen, SD
weather.gov/abr

Cooling Down for the Work Week

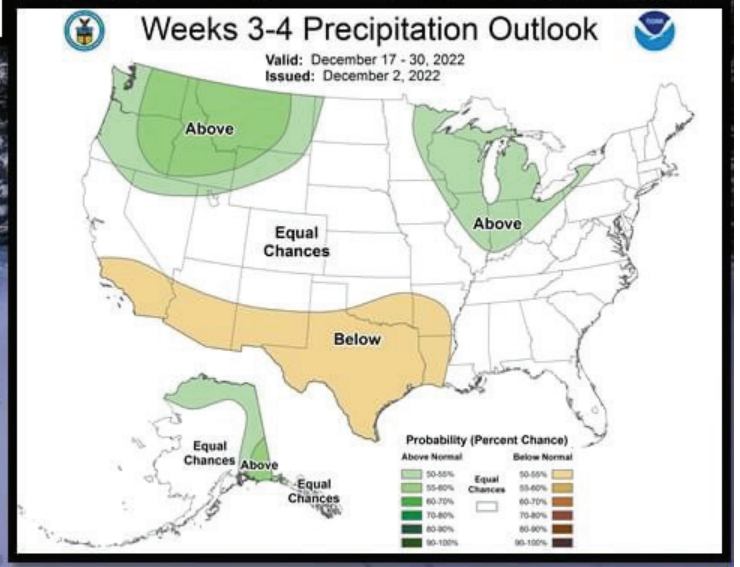
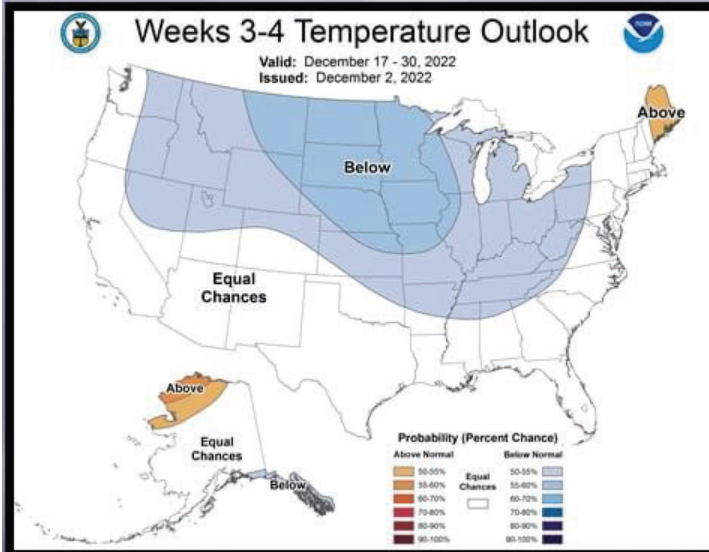


Cooling down for the work week! After highs in the 30s and 40s today, cold high pressure will move overhead for Monday. The next chance of off and on light snow will be over mainly far northern South Dakota and west central Minnesota Monday night into Tuesday night.

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Second half of December Weather Outlook



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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 19.9 °F at 3:30 PM

Low Temp: -6.4 °F at 8:00 AM

Wind: 20 mph at Noon

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 8 hours, 57 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 56 in 1979

Record Low: -18 in 1927

Average High: 33°F

Average Low: 12°F

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.08

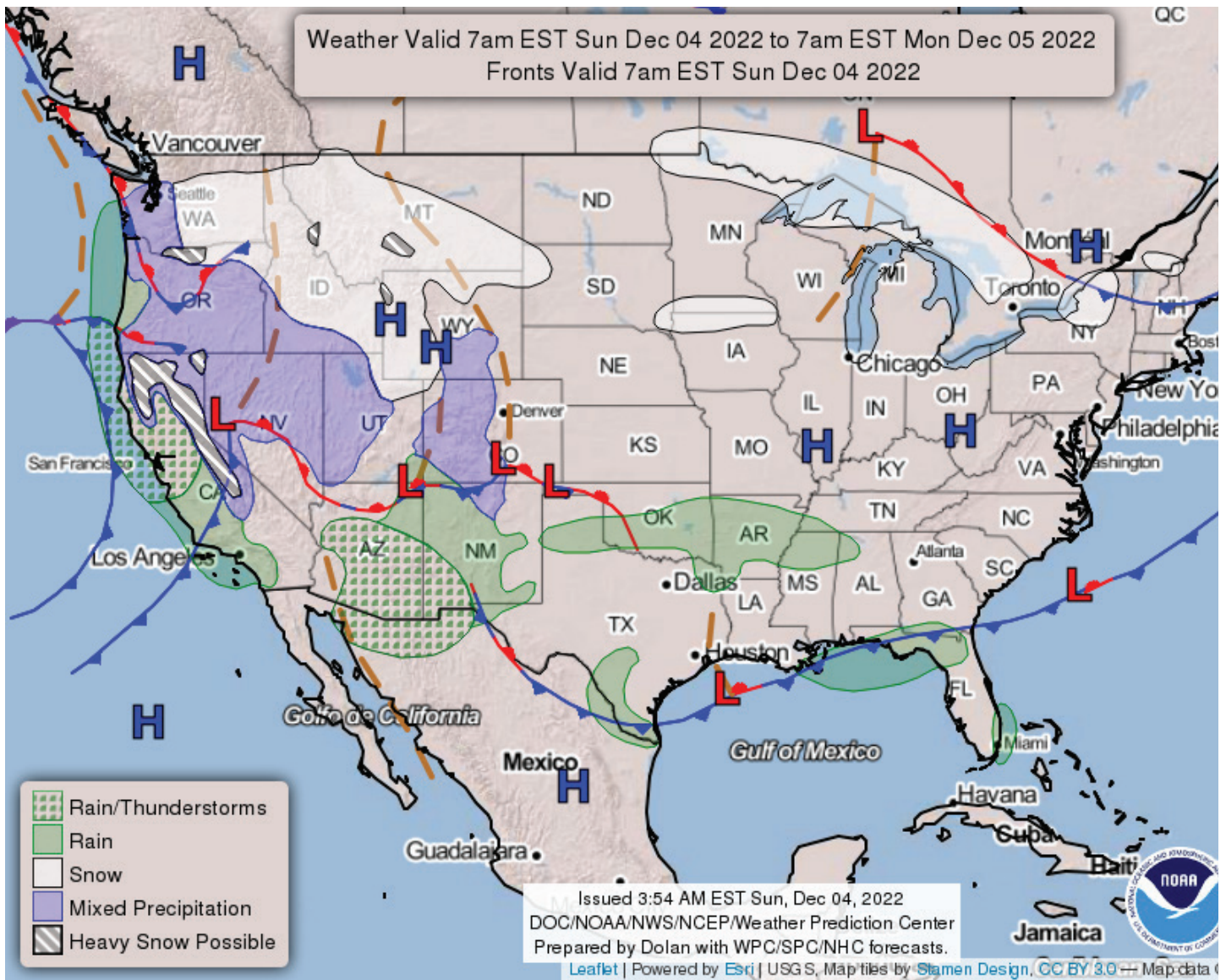
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.29

Precip Year to Date: 16.50

Sunset Tonight: 4:51:37 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:54:48 AM



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Today in Weather History

December 4, 1993: Winds gusting to 40 to 60 mph combined with snow cover along with new snow to cause blizzard conditions making travel hazardous across north central and northeast South Dakota. Several vehicles were stranded or slid into ditches. The winds toppled a private building under construction at Selby in Walworth County. New snowfall amounts were generally from one to three inches.

December 4, 1952: The month of December started off with chilly temperatures in London. This cold resulted in Londoners to burn more coal to heat up their homes. Then on December 5, a high pressure settled over the Thames River causing a dense layer of smog to develop. The smog became so thick and dense by December 7 that virtually no sunlight was seen in London. Most conservative estimates place the death toll at 4,000, with some estimating the smog killed as many as 8,000 individuals.

1786 - The first of two great early December storms began. The storm produced 18 inches of snow at Morristown NJ, and twenty inches of snow at New Haven CT. It also resulted in high tides at Nantucket which did great damage. (David Ludlum)

1972 - Winds gusting to 70 mph sent the temperature at Livingston, MT, plunging from 52 degrees to 18 degrees in just twenty minutes. (The Weather Channel)

1982 - The temperature in New York City's Central Park reached 72 degrees to establish a record high for December. The month as a whole was also the warmest of record. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A cold front crossing the Pacific Coast Region brought high winds and heavy rain to California. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 55 mph at Newport Beach CA, and Mount Wilson CA was drenched with 2.17 inches of rain in six hours. Gale force winds prevailed along the Northern Pacific Coast, and winds in the Tehachapis Mountains of southern California gusted to 60 mph. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Gale force winds continued to usher cold arctic air into the northeastern U.S. Winds gusted to 65 mph at Windsor Locks CT. Up to a foot of snow blanketed the higher elevations of Vermont. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Seventeen cities in the eastern U.S., including nine in Florida, reported record low temperatures for the date. Lakeland FL reported a record low of 31 degrees, and Watertown NY was the cold spot in the nation with a low of 20 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2002 - An early season winter storm brought an expansive shield of snow and ice through much of the eastern U.S., from the lower Ohio Valley, southern Appalachians and into the Northeast. Snow accumulations of 4-8 inches were common along the northern edge of the precipitation shield, while a significant accrual of glaze occurred in the Carolinas. The storm caused at least 17 fatalities, mostly from traffic accidents (CNN). In the Carolinas, electric utilities provider Duke Power characterized the ice storm as the worst in the company's history, with 1.2 million customers or nearly half its entire customer base without power on the morning of the 5th. This surpassed electrical outages inflicted by Hurricane Hugo as it swept through the central Carolinas in September 1989.

December 4, 2002: A total solar eclipse was experienced by millions of people from Africa to Australia, and from space.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

“LOVE WITH SKIN ON IT”

A young man, who grew up in a housing project, having little hope and few goods, heard an evangelist preaching “love” on a street corner. After listening for a few moments, he shouted to the preacher, “I’m sick and tired of you people talking about love. I want to see love. I want to feel love. I want to see love with some skin on it!”

That’s Christmas: “God’s love with skin on it.”

Paul wrote, “For in Christ the fullness of God lives in a human body!”

In Jesus, we see Someone bringing love to life – but a very special type of love. It is God’s love. We see this love coming to life when Jesus fed the hungry, gave sight to the blind, cleansed the lepers, healed the sick, offering water to a thirsty soul, calming the waves to relieve the fears of experienced fishermen, washing dirty feet, spending time with little children, teaching people the truth that brought meaning and purpose to their lives and finally hanging lifeless from a cross – abandoned and alone.

Jesus is God loving through a human heart, healing with a human hand, walking on errands of mercy with human feet, showing love, grace and mercy to those who would do Him harm.

Jesus is God loving the least, the last and the lost. In Jesus, God showed His love with “skin on it.”

Prayer: Help us, Father, to put Your “love in our skin” and take Your love to those in need. May we be as faithful in caring for others as You are in caring for us. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Colossians 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.



We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God’s grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God’s Word and we pray this good “seed” finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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2022-23 Community Events

- 07/21/2022: Pro Am Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
07/22/2022: Ferney Open Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start
07/24/2022: Moonlight Swim at the Swimming Pool 9-11pm for 9th grade to age 20
07/27/2022: Golf Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course 11a-1pm
08/05/2022: Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm
08/12/2022: GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
No Date Set: Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day 4-5pm GHS Parking Lot
09/10/2022: Lions Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
09/11/2022: 6th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3-5pm
09/11/2022: Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10 a.m.
09/02-04: Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
10/01/2022: Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
10/07/2022: Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
10/31/2022: Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
10/31/2022: United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
11/13/2022: Snow Queen Contest
11/19/2022: Legion Post #39 Turkey Party 6:30pm (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
11/24/2022 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
12/03/2022 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party at Olive Grove Golf Course
12/10/2022: Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm
01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center
01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
04/01/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
07/04/2023 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration, 10am Start (4th of July)
07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Saturday:

Dakota Cash

05-08-11-17-31

(five, eight, eleven, seventeen, thirty-one)

Estimated jackpot: \$214,000

Lotto America

30-32-36-42-43, Star Ball: 10, ASB: 2

(thirty, thirty-two, thirty-six, forty-two, forty-three; Star Ball: ten; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$30,740,000

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: 354,000,000

Powerball

06-13-33-36-37, Powerball: 7, Power Play: 4

(six, thirteen, thirty-three, thirty-six, thirty-seven; Powerball: seven; Power Play: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$89,000,000

Clowney, No. 11 Alabama recover to beat South Dakota St

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. (AP) — Freshman Noah Clowney's breakout game — 22 points, nine rebounds, four assists and a steal — helped No. 11 Alabama recover from blowing a 20-point lead and beat South Dakota State 78-65 on Saturday night.

Clowney shot 8 of 17, including 5 of 12 on 3s, in his highest-scoring game of the season.

"We've encouraged him to shoot it, I'm glad he did," Alabama coach Nate Oats said. "His senior year of high school, he started out pretty poorly from 3 then shot it 40% after that, so I kind of referenced that."

Alabama (7-1) led 37-17 with 6 1/2 minutes left in the first half. South Dakota State (3-6) rallied to go ahead 51-50 on Alex Arians' 3-pointer with 11 1/2 minutes remaining.

Nimari Burnett's foul shot a minute later put the Crimson Tide ahead for good at 54-53. Alabama used a 9-0 run to pull away.

Mark Sears scored 19 points and Brandon Miller had 16 points and nine rebounds for the Crimson Tide. Alabama made 14 of its first 26 shots to build a big lead before it slipped away.

"I'm not going to call them mature, we still have some room to grow," Oats said. "Our guys have to understand, no matter who we're playing, even if their record isn't great, they're Division I basketball players, they're good teams. Last year, we had issues with this going down the road."

Charlie Easley and Arians each scored 17 points for the Jackrabbits. Zeke Mayo added 12 points and Matt Dentlinger contributed nine rebounds.

BIG PICTURE

Sears continues to be a force at home for Alabama. In Alabama's last three home games — wins over Liberty, Jacksonville State and South Dakota State — he has scored 22, 18 and 19 points, making at least three 3-pointers in all three games. Alabama's next home game comes against a Memphis team that already has two wins over SEC competition.

SECOND HALF SPRING

South Dakota State coach Eric Henderson noticed that in Alabama's first two home games, Longwood and Liberty both trailed by fewer than 10 points at halftime before losing by 21 and 36 points, respectively. He viewed the first five minutes of the second half as critical in both instances, seeing an Alabama team using the home environment to its advantage.

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Henderson stressed to his team that it had to win those five minutes to have a chance. Down 42-35 at the break, it did, and ultimately took the lead.

"They really increase the pressure, they try to play a little faster, they get downhill and they really spray it," Henderson said. "I thought we were getting some 50-50 balls, I thought we were playing with some confidence. There's been a lot of schools to come in here and have a good first half and it ends up being a 30- or 40-point game."

UP NEXT

South Dakota State stays on the road to face Montana on Tuesday.

Alabama takes a weeklong break before its second game against the current No. 1 team in the nation, this time a road game against Houston on Saturday. The Crimson Tide beat former No. 1 North Carolina in its first shot at the top-ranked team, winning 103-101 in four overtimes on Nov. 27.

Saturday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Mobridge-Pollock 67, Dupree 48

POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=

Waverly-South Shore vs. Aberdeen Christian, ppd.

Some high school basketball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

South Dakota State wins in game ended after Delaware injury

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Isaiah Davis ran for two touchdowns and top-seeded South Dakota State defeated Delaware 42-6 on Saturday in a second-round FCS playoff game that ended with just over a minute to go after Blue Hens quarterback Ryan O'Connor was carted off the field.

O'Connor was beginning his slide after a 10-yard gain when he was hit. An unnecessary roughness penalty was called on Tucker Large, and after O'Connor was taken off the field the game was ended.

A post on a Delaware football's official Twitter feed reported that "O'Connor was responsive and moving all of his extremities upon leaving the field and is being examined further."

O'Connor was playing in relief of starter Nolan Henderson, who was hurt in the first quarter.

South Dakota State, on a school-record 11-game winning streak, will play eighth-seeded Holy Cross in the quarterfinals.

The Jackrabbits (11-1) scored touchdowns on their first three possessions, each on drives of 70-yards plus. Davis scored from 1 and 10 yards out and Mark Gronowski added a 1-yarder for a 21-6 halftime lead.

Armar Johnson scored on a 2-yard run, Matthew Durrance on a fumble recovery after a bad punt snap into the end zone and Jadon Janke had a 4-yard TD catch, all in the third quarter for a 42-6 lead.

Davis rushed for 104 yards on 14 carries. Gronowski had 131 yards passing and 73 more on the ground. South Dakota State outgained Delaware 353-192, with 222 of the Jackrabbits' yards coming on the ground.

O'Connor threw for 104 yards for the Blue Hens (8-5), whose only scoring came on Brandon Ratcliffe field goals.

US intel chief thinking 'optimistically' for Ukraine forces

By JAMEY KEATEN and NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The head of U.S. intelligence says fighting in Russia's war in Ukraine is running at a "reduced tempo" and suggests Ukrainian forces could have brighter prospects in coming months.

Avril Haines alluded to past allegations by some that Russian President Vladimir Putin's advisers could be shielding him from bad news — for Russia — about war developments, and said he "is becoming more informed of the challenges that the military faces in Russia."

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"But it's still not clear to us that he has a full picture of at this stage of just how challenged they are," the U.S. director of national intelligence said late Saturday at the Reagan National Defense Forum in Simi Valley, California.

Looking ahead, Haines said, "honestly we're seeing a kind of a reduced tempo already of the conflict" and her team expects that both sides will look to refit, resupply, and reconstitute for a possible Ukrainian counter-offensive in the spring.

"But we actually have a fair amount of skepticism as to whether or not the Russians will be in fact prepared to do that," she said. "And I think more optimistically for the Ukrainians in that timeframe."

On Sunday, the British Ministry of Defense, in its latest intelligence estimate, pointed to new signs from an independent Russian media outlet that public support in Russia for the military campaign was "falling significantly."

Meduza said it obtained a recent confidential opinion survey conducted by the Federal Protection Service, which is in charge of guarding the Kremlin and providing security to top government officials.

The survey, commissioned by the Kremlin, found that 55% of respondents backed peace talks with Ukraine while 25% wanted the war to go on. The report didn't mention the margin of error.

Levada Center, Russia's top independent pollster, found in a similar poll carried out in November poll that 53% of respondents supported peace talks, 41% spoke in favor of continuing the fight, and 6% were undecided. That poll of 1,600 people had a margin of error of no more than 3.4 percent.

The British Defense Ministry noted that "despite the Russian authorities' efforts to enforce pervasive control of the information environment, the conflict has become increasingly tangible for many Russians since the September 2022 'partial mobilization.'"

"With Russia unlikely to achieve major battlefield successes in the next several months, maintaining even tacit approval of the war amongst the population is likely to be increasingly difficult for the Kremlin," it said.

In recent weeks, Russia's military focus has been on striking Ukrainian infrastructure and pressing an offensive in the east, near the town of Bakhmut, while shelling sites in the city of Kherson, which Ukrainian forces liberated last month after an 8-month Russian occupation.

In his nightly address on Saturday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy lashed out at Western efforts to crimp Russia's crucial oil industry, a key source of funds for Putin's war machine, saying their \$60-per-barrel price cap on imports of Russian oil was insufficient.

"It is not a serious decision to set such a limit for Russian prices, which is quite comfortable for the budget of the terrorist state," Zelenskyy said, referring to Russia. He said the \$60-per-barrel level would still allow Russia to bring in \$100 billion in revenues per year.

"This money will go not only to the war and not only to further sponsorship by Russia of other terrorist regimes and organisations. This money will be used for further destabilisation of those countries that are now trying to avoid serious decisions," Zelenskyy said.

Australia, Britain, Canada, Japan, the United States and the 27-nation European Union agreed Friday to cap what they would pay for Russian oil at \$60 per barrel. The limit is set to take effect Monday, along with an EU embargo on Russian oil shipped by sea.

Russian authorities have rejected the price cap and threatened Saturday to stop supplying the nations that endorsed it.

In yet another show of Western support for Ukraine's efforts to battle back Russian forces and cope with fallout from the war, U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland on Saturday visited the operations of a Ukrainian aid group that provides support for internally displaced people in Ukraine, among her other visits with top Ukrainian officials.

Nuland assembled dolls out of yarn in the blue-and-yellow colors of Ukraine's flag with youngsters from regions including northeastern Kharkiv, southern Kherson, and eastern Donetsk.

"This is psychological support for them at an absolutely crucial time," Nuland said.

"As President Putin knows best, this war could stop today, if he chose to stop it and withdrew his forces — and then negotiations can begin," she added.

Fans' wild World Cup fashion draws praise, scorn in Qatar

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — The World Cup in Qatar has become a political lightning rod, so it comes as no surprise that soccer fans' sartorial style has sparked controversy.

Forget your classic soccer jerseys - the streets of Doha have been transformed into a chaotic runway show in terms of fashion.

Visitors from around the world are wearing revamped versions of traditional Gulf Arab headdresses and thobes. Western women have tried out hijabs. England fans have donned crusader costumes. The politically minded have made statements with rainbow accessories in Qatar, which criminalizes homosexuality.

Fan fashion has drawn everything from amusement to outrage from locals in the tiny Muslim emirate that has seen nothing remotely like the spectacle of the World Cup before.

The most popular style among foreign fans at this World Cup is the ghutra, the traditional head scarf worn by men across the Arabian Peninsula.

If photographed at a Halloween party back home in Cape Town, South Africa, 60-year-old Gavin Coetzee admits his wardrobe choice might seem ill-conceived — even cringe-worthy. He asked a tailor to stitch together four African flags into a ghutra and stereotypical Arabian thobe, the long flowing tunic that Qatari men wear in crisp white.

"I wouldn't wear this in a Western country," he said, referring to heightened cultural sensitivity there. But to his surprise, his costume has drawn elation and praise from locals in Qatar.

"It's been amazing. Everyone wants to take our photo, ask us where we're from, they're interested in why we put this outfit together," he said, alongside two friends wearing the same get-up.

The narrow alleys of Doha's central Souq Waqif teem with vendors hawking ghutras in various national colors, from Brazil's bright blue, green and yellow to Mexico's tricolor red, white and green. The sellers iron and fold them to create a widow's peak effect, carefully fitting the cloth to fans' heads in the so-called cobra style of worn by Qataris.

"I wanted to immerse in the culture. It's fun to get to try new things," said 41-year-old Ricardo Palacios from Venezuela, wearing a red-and-white checkered headdress. "Locals are in shock ... that someone wearing a Spanish shirt is wearing this."

Qataris' only complaint so far, Palacios added, is that "I don't know how to do it right." He said locals stop him in the street, restyling his headgear so it looks the way it should. Similar videos have been widely shared on social media.

Qatari citizen Naji al-Naimi, a board member of Majlis al-Dama, a lively hub of coffee and backgammon in Doha's outdoor marketplace, said the scores of international fans wearing his national dress don't bother him in the least. Instead, he finds the trend endearing. He compared it to citizens of the Arabian Peninsula wearing jeans or suits when traveling in Europe.

"We're always trying to adjust and appeal to the customs and traditions of the host country," he said.

Among non-Muslim visitors, even the hijab, the traditional Muslim headscarf showing piety to Allah, has emerged as trendy World Cup wear. Online videos show foreign women on the streets of Doha donning colorful headscarves, exclaiming how secure and cute they feel.

Qatari-funded broadcaster Al Jazeera published a video last week showing a woman off-camera wrap hijabs around female fans she encountered in the street.

"Amazing!" shrieked one Brazil fan.

Qatar's local population hasn't taken kindly to other outfits, particularly England fans' caped crusader costumes. The outfits, featuring a suit of chainmail armor, plastic helmet and shield emblazoned with an upright cross, are a nod to the Christian conquests of the Holy Land from the 11th to 13th centuries that pitted European invaders against Muslims.

Footage circulating on Twitter showed Qatari security turning away fans dressed as crusaders before the England-Iran match in the tournament's group stage. Others reported they were asked to surrender

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their costumes before England played the United States a few days later.

“What is so painful is to see some visitors in our country praising the glories of Crusader Europe, which disgraced the honor of all Muslims,” said Ashraf al-Khadeer, a 33-year-old Qatari citizen in Doha.

But the biggest flashpoint at the tournament so far has been rainbow clothing and other multicolored accessories as Qatar’s criminalization of homosexuality triggered a storm of criticism. After FIFA threatened European teams wearing “One Love” armbands with in-game discipline, some fans have taken it upon themselves to show solidarity with the LGBTQ community.

Days after fans complained they were blocked from stadiums because of rainbow attire, FIFA offered assurances that Qatari security would allow the items into matches. The rule has been unevenly enforced.

To avoid the hassle, a French advertising agency has promoted World Cup armbands printed with black-and-white Pantone cards that identify rainbow colors with numbers. Others have gone to extremes, such as the protester who stormed the field with a rainbow flag during the match between Portugal and Uruguay before being tackled by a steward.

More broadly, the question of what to wear at the World Cup in Qatar, a conservative Muslim emirate, has sparked anxiety for female fans long before the tournament kicked off.

Fan groups circulated advice for newcomers, discouraging women from wearing shorts and short-sleeved shirts. The government-run tourism website asks visitors to “show respect for local culture by avoiding excessively revealing clothing,” and recommends men and women cover their shoulders and knees.

So when Ivana Knöll, an Instagram model and former Croatian beauty queen, showed up to stadiums this week wearing a minidress that exposed much of her chest, some feared an international incident. But Knöll said she felt comfortable and that locals assured her she could wear whatever she wanted.

On Friday, Knöll posted a photo on Instagram of Qatari men snapping photos as she strutted down stadium bleachers in tight leggings and a bra.

“Thank you so much for your support!” she wrote to celebrate her 1 million followers, drawing comments in Qatar reflecting a mix of admiration, outrage and puzzlement.

IS claims attack at Pakistan embassy that wounded guard

By MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for last week’s shooting at the Pakistani embassy in Afghanistan in which the head of the mission escaped unharmed but a guard was wounded.

In a brief statement late Saturday, IS claimed two of its fighters attacked “the renegade Pakistani ambassador and his guards” while they were in the Pakistani embassy’s yard, wounding a guard and inflicting damage to the building. It gave no further details.

Friday’s assault in the Afghan capital Kabul wounded Pakistani guard Israr Mohammad, who belongs to the military’s commando unit. But the mission’s chief, Ubaid-ur-Rehman Nizamani, was unharmed.

The attack came amid rising tensions between the South Asian neighbors over Islamabad’s claims that anti-Pakistan government forces are orchestrating militant attacks from hideouts in Afghanistan.

Mohammad was transported to Pakistan for medical treatment.

In Islamabad, the Foreign Ministry said it trying to confirm the IS claim.

Survivors of Brussels suicide attacks seek closure at trial

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Jaana Mettala was six months pregnant and on her way to work when the bomb exploded in the heart of Brussels’ European Union quarter. She suffered severe burns, but Mettala and her baby survived — 32 other people did not.

It’s now more than six years since the deadliest peacetime attacks on Belgian soil. And Mettala yearns for closure as the trial of 10 men accused over the suicide bombings at Brussels airport and an underground metro station starts in earnest Monday.

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"I hope that the trial ends with a fair result and we can put this behind us," Mettala said. "Even if there are after-effects that we will keep forever."

She is going to testify at the trial — which will be the biggest in Belgium's judicial history with hundreds of plaintiffs. It is expected to last between six and nine months.

The 10 defendants face charges including murder, attempted murder and membership, or participation in the acts of a terrorist group, over the morning rush hour attacks at Belgium's main airport and on the central commuter line on March, 22, 2016.

If convicted, some of them could face up to 30 years in prison.

Among the accused is Salah Abdeslam — the only survivor among the Islamic State extremists who in 2015 struck the Bataclan theater in Paris, city cafes and France's national stadium. He was sentenced to life in prison without parole over the atrocities in the French capital.

He will be joined in the dock by his childhood friend, Mohamed Abrini, who walked away from Brussels' Zaventem airport after his explosives failed to detonate.

Abrini has been sentenced to life in prison with no possibility of parole for 22 years for charges including complicity to terrorist murder in the Paris attacks trial.

Oussama Atar, who has been identified as a possible organizer of the deadly attacks on both Paris and Brussels, will be tried in absentia. He is believed to have died in the Islamic State's final months of fighting in Iraq and Syria.

Mettala hopes that facing most of the accused will help her leave behind the anguish.

"It's a step on the path toward another kind of serenity," she said. "It will be very, very hard. But I'm not someone trying to avoid difficulty. Because you need confrontation to get stronger."

In addition to the 32 people who died in Brussels, some 900 were hurt or suffered mental trauma.

Frederic — who asked to be identified only by his first name — was in the metro when the bomb went off. He said he was only slightly injured in the leg. But what he saw that day in the carriage where the device exploded keeps haunting him.

"I'll skip the macabre details," he said. "These are the details that remain and that are hard to get rid of. This trial will be for me the possibility to heal, to go through the grief process."

When the bomb went off at the Maelbeek station at 9:11 a.m., Mettala was on the platform. She was badly hurt but did not lose consciousness. She sustained serious burn injuries to her face, legs and hands and was taken to the emergency room of a Brussels hospital where she was prepared for urgent surgery.

She only woke up a couple of days later. Mettala was then transferred to a intensive care unit in another hospital in the nearby town of Louvain.

"That's when I realized that I could have died," she recalled. "I did not think about it when (the attack) happened. I only thought about the baby in my belly. I did not think about my injuries, I was only focused on reaching the hospital to find out whether the baby was doing fine."

She and her newborn daughter were released from the hospital four months later.

"She is 6 1/2 years old now. She is healthy," Mettala said. "She knows I was injured when she was in my belly. And I always told her it's she who gave me the strength."

The trial at NATO's former headquarters was initially expected to start in October but was pushed back to allow sufficient time to replace individual glass boxes where the defendants were expected to sit. After defense lawyers argued that they could not consult with their clients and that the boxes make them look like animals in a cage, they have been replaced by one large cubicle shared by the defendants.

The new set-up has been welcomed by lawyers with Life4Brussels, a group supporting victims.

"The defendants were talking to each other (during the jury selection), it's not a bad thing since it is extremely important for the victims that they are in good condition to explain, to address the court, and answer questions," said Maryse Alié, a lawyer working with the group.

Because of the delay, the trial now coincides with the beginning of the festive season.

"When you have young children, there is a paradox between the ordeal of this trial and the end of year celebrations" Mettala said. "It's a bit unfortunate that this is happening right now, in the pre-holiday season."

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No. 1 Georgia romps into playoff with 50-30 SEC win vs LSU

By PAUL NEWBERRY AP Sports Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — Georgia swatted away the field goal attempt, the ball spinning to a stop at its 4-yard line. The LSU players trudged off the field, thinking the play was over.

Christopher Smith knew better. He suddenly scooped it up and took off the other way, sprinting 96 yards for a touchdown that epitomized the Bulldogs program.

They were a step ahead of LSU on Saturday.

They've been a step ahead of everyone for two years now.

With all sorts of turmoil behind them in the rankings, Georgia headed to the College Football Playoff as the clear No. 1, dismantling the No. 11 Tigers 50-30 in the Southeastern Conference championship game Saturday.

Stetson Bennett's threw a season-high four touchdown passes in another stellar postseason performance, while Smith's heads-up play gave the Bulldogs an early spark.

"I've got good players around me. I'm not that bad at football, either," Bennett said with a smile. "We've got a good team."

Georgia (13-0, No. 1 CFP) also caught a big break when Smith deflected a pass that bounced off an LSU receiver's helmet and wound up being picked off by the Bulldogs, setting up a score that contributed to a 35-10 lead by halftime.

LSU quarterback Jayden Daniels re-injured a sore right ankle late in the second quarter, giving way to Garrett Nussmeier in the second half.

The backup guiding the Tigers (9-4, No. 14 CFP) to three touchdowns, but it wasn't nearly enough.

Georgia accomplished something that not even last season's national championship squad could do — win its first SEC title since 2017. The Bulldogs were denied in this game a year ago by Alabama, before bouncing back to beat the Crimson Tide in the title game.

"I don't want one kid to walk out of our program without an SEC championship ring in their careers," coach Kirby Smart said. "That could've happened. They said enough is enough and got 'em one tonight."

Georgia heads into the playoff assured of a return trip to Atlanta for a de facto semifinal home game at Mercedes-Benz Stadium, just 75 miles from its Athens campus.

LSU's outside hopes of crashing the four-team playoff field were wiped out a week ago by a stunning loss at Texas A&M, one of several upsets that will give the selection committee plenty to think about before its announcement Sunday.

Tennessee and Clemson also ruined their playoff hopes with losses late in the regular season, while No. 4 Southern California is presumably out after getting blown out by Utah in the Pac-12 title game Friday night.

Just as the SEC game was kicking off, No. 3 TCU lost to Kansas State in overtime for the Big 12 championship, further clouding a playoff picture that suddenly looks much more favorable for No. 5 Ohio State and No. 6 Alabama.

No matter who makes the elite field, Georgia is firmly focused on becoming the first repeat national champion since Alabama in 2011-12, having won all but one game this season by double-digit margins.

"I've tried not to play attention to any of it," Smart said of all the chaos. "It didn't matter to me. That's so far away."

The Bulldogs showed they are more than just a bunch of talented athletes — this is a smart, well-coached group.

When Nazir Stackhouse burst through the middle of the line to block LSU's 32-yard field goal attempt late in the first quarter, Smith knew what to do.

"That's a scenario we go over a lot in practice," he said.

He looked toward the sideline to see if it was OK to grab it.

"You're not allowed to pick it up unless you can score with it," Smart said.

Smith took care of the rest, dashing to the end zone without a Tigers player in sight.

LSU coach Brian Kelly blamed himself and his staff for allowing the play to happen.

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"Obviously, we did a poor job if coaching," he said. "It's our responsibility to have our guys alert in that situation. They were not alert."

LSU quickly tied it up on Daniels' 53-yard touchdown pass to Kayshon Boutte, only to have Bennett take control from there.

The sixth-year senior, a former walk-on who was offensive MVP of both Georgia playoff wins a year ago, struck for four TD passes in a less than 15-minute span: 3 yards to Brock Bowers, 22 yards to Ladd McConkey, 14 yards to Darnell Washington and 3 yards to Dillon Bell.

Just like that, Georgia led 35-7.

"I was in a zone," Bennett said.

It's been that way for two years now.

THE TAKEAWAY

LSU: Kelly's debut season turned a bit ugly the last two weeks, but the Tigers are on the right track. "We want to get back here next year," Kelly said. "Get back here and win it."

Georgia: Win or lose in the SEC title game, the Bulldogs were assured of a spot in the playoff. But Smart continues to impress with his ability to keep the team motivated. While there were some huge defensive lapses in the second half, this game was never in doubt.

GOING FOR 2

When Georgia scored its final touchdown early in the fourth quarter for a 48-23 lead, Smart surprisingly called for a 2-point conversion.

The Bulldogs converted it with a trick play, but Smart insisted that he wasn't trying to run up the score.

"The books says you go for 2 there," he said.

When asked about the play, Kelly stumbled over his words a bit before finally saying, "I don't get too caught up in what other teams are doing."

INJURY REPORT

While Daniels went down for LSU, Georgia also lost a couple of players to injuries in the first half.

McConkey landed awkwardly making a catch along the sideline, inflaming a knee issue that's been bothering him all year. Tight offensive tackle Warren McClendon sustained what appears to be a mild MCL sprain.

Neither returned after halftime.

UP NEXT

LSU: The Tigers get their postseason assignment Sunday, with the Citrus Bowl among the possibilities.

Georgia: The only question is who the Bulldogs will meet in the Peach Bowl on New Year's Eve, with TCU, Ohio State and SEC rival Alabama all in the mix.

No. 3 TCU loses 31-28 in OT to K-State in Big 12 title game

By STEPHEN HAWKINS AP Sports Writer

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — TCU quarterback Max Duggan was battered and bloodied, physically exhausted and mentally drained. And still unsure if the third-ranked Horned Frogs had done enough to get into the four-team College Football Playoff.

Duggan dropped to his knees in the end zone after his 8-yard TD run ended his gutsy game-tying drive late in regulation of Saturday's Big 12 championship game, and buried his facemask into the turf after diving and coming up just inches short of another touchdown in overtime. He then stood alone in the middle of the field with both hands on his helmet when his running back Kendre Miller was stuffed for the second play in a row, on fourth down, to give No. 13 Kansas State the ball one last time.

Ty Zentner then kicked a 31-yard field goal as the Wildcats beat TCU 31-28.

"We got beat today and now it's out of our hands. That's something that we wanted to do is be in control," said Duggan, who had to gather himself after starting to talk on the podium. "All we can do is kind of watch."

Deuce Vaughn ran for 130 yards and a touchdown and Will Howard threw two TDs for the Wildcats (10-3, No. 10 CFP), who six weeks earlier had jumped out to a 28-10 lead early in the second quarter before

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TCU scored the game's last 28 points.

That was one of five games the Horned Frogs (12-1, No. 3 CFP) won when trailing after halftime. But they couldn't do it again with the chance to guarantee being the first Big 12 team other than Oklahoma to make the playoff.

TCU, the first Big 12 team to complete a regular season undefeated since Texas in 2009, could still get into the playoff. While their case was helped when fourth-ranked Southern California (11-2) lost 47-24 to Utah in the Pac-12 championship game Friday night, the Frogs now have to wait until the final CFP rankings come out Sunday.

"I think we're certainly deserving. I think the league is one of the best leagues in the country to go through, undefeated in the league, certainly we ought to get in," first-year TCU coach Sonny Dykes said. "And I don't think we should be punished for coming to the Big 12 championship game."

Big 12 Commissioner Brett Yormark said before the game that TCU, with first-year coach Sonny Dykes, already deserved to be in the playoff.

"You look at their strength of schedule. You think about how they've performed all year long," Yormark said. "I think regardless, they should be in, for sure."

Kansas State coach Chris Klieman agreed after his team reached 10 wins for the first time since 2012, when the Wildcats won the Big 12 title when there was no championship game.

"TCU should be in the in the CFP, they're one of the best four teams," Klieman said. "We went toe to toe with them. I thought we could go toe to toe with them and find a way to win. It was an exceptional football game."

Duggan, who went from losing his job as TCU's starting quarterback going into the season to now being a potential Heisman Trophy finalist, threw for 251 yards and a touchdown, and also ran for 110 yards with an 8-yard score with 1:51 remaining in regulation.

The quarterback was sacked three times, and hit numerous other times. He had to have patches on his bloody elbow replaced several times, and was so drained late in the game that the offensive linemen were basically carrying him off the field after drives.

"Obviously I was a little tired, but I think everybody else was and I wasn't going to come out," Duggan said.

"Typical Max Duggan performance," Dykes said. "Just gritty, tough, made plays when he had to. Did everything that he could do to give us a chance to win."

Vaughn's 44-yard touchdown, including an open-field move that led to a defensive back falling down yards from him, made it 28-17 and capped a drive set up after Julius Brent intercepted a pass by Duggan in the end zone on the first play of the fourth quarter.

But TCU scored the last 11 points of regulation, including Griffin Kell's 42-yard field goal with 7 1/2 minute left. The kick ended a drive that Duggan kept alive with a 16-yard pass to Taye Barber on fourth-and-10.

Duggan's TD run late in regulation came right after his 40-yard sprint down the left sideline after scrambling away from pressure on the previous play, though he still had to get up and throw a tying 2-point conversion to tight end Jared Wiley. He also had runs of 15, 13 and 19 yards on the drive, the longest of those three converting a fourth-and-2 from near midfield.

Just like 2014, the inaugural season of the four-team playoff, TCU went into its last game before the final rankings at No. 3, with Ohio State fifth.

TCU got left out that time, even after a seven-TD win over Iowa State in its regular-season finale before the Buckeyes beat Wisconsin 59-0 in the Big Ten title game later that day to make the playoff and win the national title. But this year, the Buckeyes (11-1) missed their conference title game after a loss last week to Michigan.

And now both of them are waiting for Sunday again.

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Messi scores, Argentina reaches World Cup quarterfinals

By STEVE DOUGLAS AP Sports Writer

AL RAYYAN, Qatar (AP) — Lionel Messi was pushed into the middle of a joyous post-match huddle as Argentina's players jumped up and down to celebrate reaching the World Cup quarterfinals.

Messi delivered again for his country, marking the 1,000th game of his era-defining career with his first goal in the knockout stage of a World Cup to lead Argentina to a 2-1 win over Australia on Saturday.

This was not the walkover most were expecting against the unheralded Australians, though.

At the final whistle, Argentina was just as grateful for its goalkeeper as the No. 10 with magic in his boots.

Emi Martinez came up with a sprawling save in the last seconds of an increasingly anxious match to prevent the need for extra time and the potential of another shock in a World Cup full of them.

"That is the World Cup for you," Messi said. "All the matches are difficult and what's important is that you win."

With a flourish of his famous left foot in the 35th minute, Messi put Argentina ahead with his third goal at this year's tournament and ninth in total at the World Cup — one more than Diego Maradona.

"Wow, he's just remarkable," Australia coach Graham Arnold said.

Julián Álvarez pounced on a heavy touch by Australia goalkeeper Mathew Ryan to tap into an empty net for the second goal, but this was no cruise to a quarterfinal meeting with the Netherlands.

Australia's fightback in the final 20 minutes was as stirring as it was unexpected. Craig Goodwin's shot deflected into the net off Argentina midfielder Enzo Fernandez in the 77th. Then, amid a late aerial bombardment from the Australians, Garang Kuol had a dramatic chance when he was left free at the far post. Shooting on the turn, his effort was smothered by Martinez and two Argentina players fell on top of their goalkeeper in relief as much as happiness.

"Before we came here, people were saying we were the worst team at the World Cup and the worst Socceroos team ever," Arnold said. "That's gone now."

On the only other occasion Australia reached the last 16 — in 2006 — the team lost to eventual champion Italy.

Maybe it's an omen for Argentina, which has fully recovered from its shocking loss to Saudi Arabia in its opening group match and won three straight games.

As for Messi, he now has 789 goals in a career that might yet reach a crescendo on Dec. 18 by winning soccer's biggest trophy in his fifth and likely last World Cup.

The dream is still alive for the seven-time world player of the year and the tens of thousands of Argentina fans who dominated the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, massively outnumbering the small pockets of green-and-gold-clad Australia supporters to make it feel like a match in Buenos Aires or Rosario.

Argentina's players linked arms and formed a long line to celebrate in front of their scarf-waving fans at one of end of the stadium after the game.

"The whole of Argentina would like to be here, but it's not possible," Messi said. "This bond, this union we have, it's beautiful."

Messi had been quiet before his goal, crowded out by a compact and defensively solid Australia team. He's never quiet for long, though.

He sent a pass inside to the edge of the area and kept running, eventually receiving a lay-off from Nicolas Otamendi to take one touch and stroke his finish through the long legs of Australia defender Harry Souttar — the tallest outfield player at the World Cup.

When Alvarez added the second to score in successive games, Australia looked out of it and Messi began to put on a show.

One 40-meter (yard) dribble wowed the crowd as he slalomed past three defenders and was tackled just as he was about to shoot.

"MESSI! MESSI!" came the chant.

Messi used his control and vision to set up two opportunities in the frantic finale — one being curled over the crossbar by Martinez — before Australia came on strong after putting Souttar up front in stoppage time for his aerial threat.

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"We gave it everything," Australia striker Jackson Irvine said through tears, "but it wasn't enough."

QUARTERFINALS

Argentina and the Netherlands will play their quarterfinal match at Lusail Stadium, the 89,000-seat venue where the final will be staged. The teams last met at the World Cup in 2014, when Argentina won a penalty shootout in the semifinals.

DI MARIA

Angel Di Maria, who linked up well with Messi during the group stage, missed the match because he hadn't recovered from a thigh injury. "Hopefully he will be able to play (against the Netherlands)," Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said. "He wasn't ready for today."

TARGETING BATISTUTA

Messi is one goal behind Gabriel Batistuta's record of 10 for Argentina at World Cups.

US knocked out of World Cup, loses to the Netherlands 3-1

By RONALD BLUM AP Sports Writer

AL RAYYAN, Qatar (AP) — Christian Pulisic covered his face as he walked off. Tyler Adams, Weston McKennie and Kellyn Acosta gathered for a group hug. Tim Weah, DeAndre Yedlin and Sean Johnson sat on the field in a small circle with their cleats off.

"It hurts after a tough loss like that when we feel like we could have had more," Pulisic said, managing a voice only just above a whisper. "We don't want to feel like this again."

The United States' return to the World Cup ended with a 3-1 loss to the Netherlands on Saturday in the round of 16. While the Oranje extended their unbeaten streak to 19 games and advanced to a quarterfinal with Argentina, the Americans contemplated how far they came and how short they fell.

Defensive lapses gave the Dutch a treat as Memphis Depay scored in the 10th minute and Daley Blind in first-half stoppage time.

U.S. hope revived when Pulisic's cross hit the trailing foot of second-half substitute Haji Wright and popped over goalkeeper Andries Noppert and into the net in the 76th. But Denzel Dumfries, named after actor Denzel Washington, scored on a volley in the 81st after assisting on the first two goals.

"The American public should be optimistic," said Gregg Berhalter, the first person to play for and coach the U.S. team at a World Cup. "When you look at the way we wanted to play and did play, it should be positive."

The U.S. hasn't reached the quarterfinals since 2002 and was eliminated in the first knockout round, just like in 2010 and 2014.

After the American failure to qualify for the 2018, Yedlin was the only holdover on a roster that was the tournament's second-youngest, averaging just over 25 years.

"Now they know that feeling of what it's like to lose after putting so much into it," the 29-year-old defender said, "and the feeling of defeat from the past can only fuel success in the future."

The U.S. is winless in 12 games against European opponents at the World Cup since 2002 and has won once and lost seven in knockout rounds since the championship launched in 1930.

"This tournament has really restored a lot of belief, restored a lot of respect to U.S. soccer and to soccer in our country," McKennie said. "I think we've shown that we can be giants eventually. Maybe we may not be there yet, but I think we're definitely on our way."

Before a crowd of 44,846 at the renovated Khalifa International Stadium, Pulisic had a chance to put the U.S. ahead in the third minute. McKennie knocked a poor clearance back into the penalty area, but Noppert blocked his point-blank shot with his left thigh.

"I thought I was way offside when it happened, but I still hit it and he made a good save," Pulisic said.

The Dutch went ahead when Cody Gakpo played the ball to Dumfries on the right flank. Depay sprinted into the penalty area as Adams failed to track him, and Dumfries one-timed a cross that Depay redirected inside Matt Turner's far post for the first goal against the U.S. during the run of play in the tournament.

Blind scored in the first minute of stoppage time. Following a throw-in, Dumfries got a cross around

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Adams and Blind beat a late-arriving Sergiño Dest to the ball at the penalty spot for his first international goal in eight years.

Wright entered in the 67th and scored his second international goal on the unusual touch from three yards out, sparking U.S. hopes. But Dumfries was left unmarked by Tim Ream and Antonee Robinson and scored off Blind's cross from six yards for his sixth goal.

"When you play a team with so much quality like that and you give them three, four chances, they're going to put three or four away," Adams said. "We can show that we can hang with some of the best teams in the world, some of the best players in world, and that's a lot of progress for U.S. soccer."

Players didn't want to leave the field at first, wanting more time together.

"Just putting perspective and reflecting on the journey," Yedlin said. "Just giving thanks to the Earth. After every training and game we try to do a thing called grounding. It just helps put in perspective to come, good or bad."

Others absorbed the defeat without words.

"Just looking around that locker room, the silence is deafening," Turner said. "We all want to create moments for people back at home to fall in love with the game and tonight was not one of those nights, unfortunately."

MOVING UP

Depay took sole possession of second in the Dutch career scoring list with 43 goals, trailing only Robin van Persie's 50.

UP NEXT

The Americans begin the 2026 cycle with a match against Serbia on Jan. 25 in Los Angeles.

Pelé responding well to treatment for respiratory infection

By MAURICIO SAVARESE AP Sports Writer

SAO PAULO (AP) — Brazilian soccer great Pelé is responding well to treatment for a respiratory infection and his health condition has not worsened over the latest 24 hours, the Albert Einstein hospital said Saturday.

The 82-year-old Pelé has been at the hospital since Tuesday.

"I'm strong, with a lot of hope and I follow my treatment as usual. I want to thank the entire medical and nursing team for all the care I have received," Pelé said in a statement posted on Instagram. "I have a lot of faith in God and every message of love I receive from you all over the world keeps me full of energy. And watch Brazil in the World Cup, too."

Get well messages have poured in from around the world for the three-time World Cup winner, who is also undergoing cancer treatment. Kely Nascimento, Pelé's daughter, posted several pictures on Instagram from Brazil fans in Qatar wishing her father well with flags and banners. Buildings in the Middle Eastern nation also displayed messages in support of the former soccer great.

Brazil will face South Korea at the World Cup on Monday in the round of 16.

Pelé helped Brazil win the 1958, 1962 and 1970 World Cups and remains the team's all-time leading scorer with 77 goals in 92 matches.

The Albert Einstein hospital said Friday that Pelé is getting antibiotics to treat an infection at the same time he undergoes chemotherapy against cancer. Pelé, whose real name is Edson Arantes do Nascimento, had a colon tumor removed in September 2021.

Neither his family nor the hospital has said whether the cancer had spread to other organs.

Newspaper Folha de S.Paulo reported Saturday that Pelé's chemotherapy is not working and that doctors had decided to put him on palliative care. The Associated Press could not confirm that information.

ESPN Brasil reported Wednesday that Pelé was taken to the hospital because of "general swelling."

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Russia rejects \$60-a-barrel cap on its oil, warns of cutoffs

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian authorities rejected a price cap on the country's oil set by Ukraine's Western supporters and threatened Saturday to stop supplying the nations that endorsed it.

Australia, Britain, Canada, Japan, the United States and the 27-nation European Union agreed Friday to cap what they would pay for Russian oil at \$60-per-barrel. The limit is set to take effect Monday, along with an EU embargo on Russian oil shipped by sea.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia needed to analyze the situation before deciding on a specific response but that it would not accept the price ceiling. Russia's permanent representative to international organizations in Vienna, Mikhail Ulyanov, warned that the cap's European backers would come to rue their decision.

"From this year, Europe will live without Russian oil," Ulyanov tweeted. "Moscow has already made it clear that it will not supply oil to those countries that support anti-market price caps. Wait, very soon the EU will accuse Russia of using oil as a weapon."

The office of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, meanwhile, called Saturday for a lower price cap, saying the one adopted by the EU and the Group of Seven leading economies didn't go far enough.

"It would be necessary to lower it to \$30 in order to destroy the enemy's economy faster," Andriy Yermak, the head of Zelenskyy's office, wrote on Telegram, staking out a position also favored by Poland — a leading critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine.

Under Friday's agreements, insurance companies and other firms needed to ship oil would only be able to deal with Russian crude if the oil is priced at or below the cap. Most insurers are located in the EU and the United Kingdom and could be required to observe the ceiling.

Russia's crude has already been selling for around \$60 a barrel, a deep discount from international benchmark Brent, which closed Friday at \$85.42 per barrel.

The Russian Embassy in Washington insisted that Russian oil "will continue to be in demand" and criticized the price limit as "reshaping the basic principles of the functioning of free markets." A post on the embassy's Telegram channel predicted the per-barrel cap would lead to "a widespread increase in uncertainty and higher costs for consumers of raw materials."

"What happens in China will help shape whether the price cap has any teeth," said Jim Burkhard, an oil markets analyst with IHS Markit. He said dampened demand from China means most Russian crude exports are already selling below \$60.

The price cap aims to put an economic squeeze on Russia and further crimp its ability to finance a war that has killed an untold number of civilians and fighters, driven millions of Ukrainians from their homes and weighed on the world economy for more than nine months.

The General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces reported that since Friday Russia's forces had fired five missiles, carried out 27 airstrikes and launched 44 shelling attacks against Ukraine's military positions and civilian infrastructure.

Kyrylo Tymoshenko, the deputy head of the president's office, said the attacks killed one civilian and wounded four others in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk region. According to the U.K. Defense Ministry, Russian forces "continue to invest a large element of their overall military effort and firepower" around the small Donetsk city of Bakhmut, which they have spent weeks trying to capture.

In southern Ukraine's Kherson province, whose capital city of the same name was liberated by Ukrainian forces three weeks ago following a Russian retreat, Gov. Yaroslav Yanushkevich said evacuations of civilians stuck in Russian-held territory across the Dnieper River would resume temporarily.

Russian forces pulled back to the river's eastern bank last month. Yanushkevich said a ban on crossing the waterway would be lifted during daylight hours for three days for Ukrainian citizens who "did not have time to leave the temporarily occupied territory." His announcement cited a "possible intensification of hostilities in this area."

Kherson is one of four regions that Putin illegally annexed in September and vowed to defend as Rus-

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sian territory. From their new positions, Russian troops have regularly shelled Kherson city and nearby infrastructure in recent days, leaving many residents without power. Running water remained unavailable in much of the city — and one resident was seen scooping up water from a dirty puddle.

The city continued to suffer heavy shelling Saturday that left many residents disoriented, toppled power lines and dumped torn-off tree branches on the roads.

"When we start to repair (electricity networks), the shelling starts immediately," said Oleksandr Kravchenko, who is in charge of high-voltage networks in Kherson. "We just repair electric lines and on the next day we have to repair lines again."

Ukrainian authorities also reported intense fighting in Luhansk and Russian shelling of northeastern Ukraine's Kharkiv region, which Russia's soldiers mostly withdrew from in September.

The mayor of the city of Kharkiv, which remained under Ukrainian control during Russia's occupation of other parts of the region, said some 500 apartment buildings were damaged beyond repair, and nearly 220 schools and kindergartens were damaged or destroyed. He estimated the cost of the damage at \$9 billion.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu met Saturday in Minsk with the president and defense minister of Belarus, which hosts Russian troops and artillery. Belarus has said its own forces are not taking part in the war, but Ukrainian officials have frequently expressed concern that they could be induced to cross the border into northern Ukraine.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said at the meeting that his troops and Russian forces train in coordination. "We ready ourselves as one grouping, one army. Everyone knows it. We were not hiding it," he was quoted as saying by the news agency Interfax.

Body of 7-year-old Texas girl found, FedEx driver arrested

PARADISE, Texas (AP) — A 7-year-old Texas girl has been found dead, two days after being reported missing, and a FedEx delivery driver arrested in her death, authorities said.

The body of Athena Strand was found Friday and Tanner Lynn Horner, 31, was arrested on kidnapping and murder charges after confessing to killing the girl and telling authorities where to find her body, according to Wise County Sheriff Lane Akin.

Horner remained jailed Saturday on \$1.5 million bond. Jail records did not list an attorney who could speak on his behalf.

Akin said during a late Friday news conference that a tip led authorities to Horner, who the sheriff said had made a delivery to the girl's home shortly before she disappeared.

Horner did not know the girl's family, according to Akin, who declined to discuss a motive for the crime.

"We really can't get into the content of the confession, but I will say we have a confession" from Horner, Akin said.

The girl's stepmother had reported her missing on Wednesday from the family home near Paradise on the northwestern outskirts of the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area.

Her body was found near the town of Boyd, about 6 miles (9.6 kilometers) southeast of Paradise, a town of about 475 people, Akin said.

James Dwyer, acting special agent in charge of the FBI's Dallas field office, said FedEx cooperated with investigators.

FedEx said in a statement that it is working with law enforcement agencies investigating the case.

"Our thoughts are with the family of Athena Strand during this most difficult time," according to the statement. "Words cannot describe our shock and sorrow surrounding this tragic event."

Pentagon chief: US faces pivotal years in countering China

By Tara Copp Associated Press

SIMI VALLEY, Calif. (AP) — The U.S. is at a pivotal point with China and will need military strength to ensure that American values, not Beijing's, set global norms in the 21st century, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said Saturday.

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Austin's speech at the Reagan National Defense Forum capped a week in which the Pentagon was squarely focused on China's rise and what that might mean for America's position in the world.

On Monday it released an annual China security report that warned Beijing would likely have 1,500 nuclear warheads by 2035, with no clarity on how China would seek to use them.

On Friday in a dramatic nighttime rollout, Austin was on hand as the public got its first glimpse of the military's newest, highly classified nuclear stealth bomber, the B-21 Raider, which is being designed to best the quickly growing cyber, space and nuclear capabilities of Beijing.

China "is the only country with both the will and, increasingly, the power to reshape its region and the international order to suit its authoritarian preferences," Austin said Saturday. "So let me be clear: We will not let that happen."

The Pentagon is also concerned about Russia and remains committed to arming Ukraine while avoiding escalating that conflict into a U.S. war with Moscow, he said at the forum, held at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

"We will not be dragged into Putin's war," Austin said.

"These next few years will set the terms of our competition with the People's Republic of China. They will shape the future of security in Europe," Austin said. "And they will determine whether our children and grandchildren inherit an open world of rules and rights — or whether they face emboldened autocrats who seek to dominate by force and fear."

Still, between the two nuclear power threats, China remains the greater risk, Austin said.

To meet that rise, "we're aligning our budget as never before to the China challenge," Austin said. "In our imperfect world, deterrence does come through strength."

The bomber is part of a major nuclear triad overhaul underway that the Congressional Budget Office has estimated will cost \$1.2 trillion through 2046.

It includes the Raider serving as the backbone of the future air leg of the triad, but it also requires modernizing the nation's silo-launched nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles and its nuclear submarine fleet.

The Defense Department has the largest discretionary budget of all the federal agencies, and it may receive up to \$847 billion in the 2023 budget if Congress passes the current funding bill before this legislative session ends.

However, defense advocates argue it is still not enough to modernize and keep up with China because much of that spending goes to military personnel. The CBO estimates that about one-quarter of the defense budget is spent on personnel costs such as salaries, health care and retirement accounts.

Polynesian pride: Three-day canoe voyage in mid-Pacific

By MARÍA TERESA HERNÁNDEZ Associated Press

RAPA NUI, Chile (AP) — The causes are worthy, the course is daunting — almost 500 kilometers (about 300 miles) across a stretch of the Pacific Ocean in a large canoe.

It's the Hoki Mai Challenge, which started Saturday in Rapa Nui, a territory in the Pacific that is part of Chile and is better known as Easter Island.

The event consists of a canoe voyage in which nine Rapanuis, two Chileans and one Hawaiian seek to raise awareness about the importance of women in the world, urge protection of the environment, and celebrate the union of the islands of Polynesia.

The 12 athletes have been training six days a week since mid-September, preparing for a voyage that will take them from Rapa Nui to Motu Motiro Hiva, another island in the mid-Pacific that belongs to Chile.

"It won't be easy," said Gilles Bordes, coordinator of Hoki Mai. "Three days and three nights."

Bordes moved to Rapa Nui earlier this year, but he has lived in Polynesia for three decades, devoting much of his time to rowing.

"I am very grateful to all the Tahitians for teaching me their culture and how to row," he said. "I came from France, but they accepted me and allowed me to share this with them."

Hoki Mai pursues three goals. The first is to honor canoeing in Polynesia, which has been practiced for

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centuries. The second relates to the environment. Motu Motiro Hiva --also called Salas y Gómez-- is an uninhabited island, but its land and the surrounding waters have been affected by pollution.

The third purpose relates to gender equality. The team will carry a small female moai – one of the ancient statues that Easter Island is famous for -- to raise awareness about the importance of women in the world. A bigger statue -- carved by a local artisan for Hoki Mai -- will be taken to Motu Motiro Hiva in March.

During the voyage, rowing will be done in relays: groups of six will row for about four hours, then be replaced by the next shift. Those who need to rest will do so in a Chilean navy ship escorting the canoe.

"The training has been hard, especially for those of us who are less experienced," said Konturi Atán, a 36-year-old historian.

Atán said a crewmember invited him to join a few months ago while he was out paddling a one-person canoe.

"He told me: I need you to come on Tuesdays and Thursdays to help us; we're lacking enough people to train," said Atán, who rowed with them, shared a meal, then said "yes" to joining the challenge.

On training days, they often started before dawn to get accustomed to the darkness they will face during much of the Hoki Mai.

"We practiced rowing at night, we practiced getting little sleep, we practiced training every day. Gym, rowing, gym, rowing, gym, rowing. Except for Sunday, when we rest," Atán said.

Spirituality and sacredness are pervasive in Rapa Nui, including with cooking rituals and songs about their history. Sports also incorporates spirituality.

Several days before the trip, the canoe built for Hoki Mai was blessed with a "umu", which involves cooking underground with hot stones in a sacred ceremony.

"We did it with a white chicken," Atán said. "It is something spiritual. Eating a piece is a connection to our roots."

Their cultural legacy is also linked to the moai, like the one they'll carry with them to Motu Motiro Hiva.

The moai are perhaps the most recognizable symbols of Rapa Nui.

Carved in volcanic stone between 1000 and 1600 AD from the slopes of the Rano Raraku volcano, they represent the ancestors of the various clans whose descendants still inhabit Rapa Nui. They were placed on ceremonial platforms called "ahus" with their torsos facing the island to provide protection. They attracted international attention in October after a fire damaged dozens of them.

Ahus were built in some other places in Polynesia, but moais are exclusive to Rapa Nui. The bond between neighboring islands is still strong. Rapa Nui, Tahiti, Hawaii and even New Zealand share language similarities and other features.

Now, with Hoki Mai, there's also an expectation that those ties expand beyond Polynesia. That's why the Rapanui and the Hawaiian will row with two "continental" Chileans, as the locals identify those who come from the Chilean mainland in South America.

"The idea of the canoe is also union," said Gilles Bordes. "Six people doing the same thing to go forward. The union of cultures. That is why people from Chile are going to row, to show that together we can move towards a better future."

Turkish strikes on US Kurd allies resonate in Ukraine war

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP) — Biden administration officials are toughening their language toward NATO ally Turkey as they try to talk Turkish President Recep Erdogan out of launching a bloody and destabilizing ground offensive against American-allied Kurdish forces in neighboring Syria.

Since Nov. 20, after six people died in an Istanbul bombing a week before that Turkey blamed, without evidence, on the U.S. and its Kurdish allies in Syria, Turkey has launched cross-border airstrikes, rockets and shells into U.S.- and Kurdish-patrolled areas of Syria, leaving Kurdish funeral corteges burying scores of dead.

Some criticized the initial muted U.S. response to the near-daily Turkish bombardment — a broad call for

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“de-escalation” — as a U.S. green light for more. With Erdogan not backing down on his threat to escalate, the U.S. began speaking more forcefully.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin called his Turkish counterpart on Wednesday to express “strong opposition” to Turkey launching a new military operation in northern Syria.

And National Security Council spokesman John Kirby on Friday made one of the administration’s first specific mentions of the impact of the Turkish strikes on the Kurdish militia, known as the Syrian Democratic Forces, that works with the United States against Islamic State militants bottled up in northern Syria.

How successfully the United States manages Erdogan’s threat to send troops in against America’s Kurdish partners over coming weeks will affect global security concerns far from that isolated corner of Syria.

That’s especially true for the Ukraine conflict. The Biden administration is eager for Erdogan’s cooperation with other NATO partners in countering Russia, particularly when it comes to persuading Turkey to drop its objections to Finland and Sweden joining NATO.

But giving Turkey free rein in attacks on the Syrian Kurds in hopes of securing Erdogan’s cooperation within NATO would have big security implications of its own.

U.S. forces on Friday stopped joint military patrols with the Kurdish forces in northern Syria to counter Islamic State extremists, as the Kurds concentrate on defending themselves from the Turkish air and artillery attacks and a possible ground invasion.

Since 2015, the Syrian Kurdish forces have worked with the few hundred forces the U.S. has on the ground there, winning back territory from the Islamic State and then detaining thousands of Islamic State fighters and their families and battling remnant Islamic State fighters. On Saturday, the U.S. and Kurds resumed limited patrols at one of the detention camps.

“ISIS is the forgotten story for the world and the United States, because of the focus on Ukraine,” said Omer Taspinar, an expert on Turkey and European security at the Brookings Institution and the National War College. ISIS is one widely used acronym for the Islamic State.

“Tragically, what would revive Western support for the Kurds ... would be another ISIS terrorist attack, God forbid, in Europe or in the United States that will remind people that we actually have not defeated ISIS,” Taspinar said.

Turkey says the Syrian Kurds are allied to a nearly four-decade PKK Kurdish insurgency in southeast Turkey that has resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of people on both sides. The United States’ Syrian Kurdish allies deny any attacks in Turkey.

U.S. Central Command, and many in Congress, praise the Syrian Kurds as brave comrades in arms. In July, Central Command angered Turkey by tweeting condolences for a Syrian Kurdish deputy commander and two other female fighters killed by a drone strike blamed on Turkey.

In 2019, a public outcry by his fellow Republicans and many others killed a plan by President Donald Trump, which he announced after a call with Erdogan, to clear U.S. troops out of the way of an expected Turkish attack on the Kurdish allies in Syria.

Then-presidential contender Joe Biden was among those expressing outrage.

“The Kurds were integral in helping us defeat ISIS — and too many lost their lives. Now, President Trump has abandoned them. It’s shameful,” Biden tweeted at the time.

The measured U.S. response now — even after some Turkish strikes hit near sites that host U.S. forces — reflects the significant strategic role that Turkey, as a NATO member, plays in the alliance’s efforts to counter Russia in Europe. The State Department and USAID did not immediately answer questions about whether the Turkish strikes had hindered aid workers and operations that partner with the United States.

Turkey, with strong ties to both Russia and the United States, has contributed to its NATO allies’ efforts against Russia in key ways during the Ukraine conflict. That includes supplying armed drones to Ukraine, and helping mediate between Russia and the United States and others.

But Turkey is also seeking to exert leverage within the alliance by blocking Finland and Sweden from joining NATO. Turkey is demanding that Sweden surrender Kurdish exiles that it says are affiliated with the PKK Kurdish insurgents.

Turkey’s state-run news agency reported that Sweden extradited a member of the PKK and he was ar-

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rested Saturday upon arrival in Istanbul.

Turkey is one of only two of the 30 NATO members not to have signed off yet on the Nordic countries' NATO memberships. Hungary, the other, is expected to do so.

At a gathering of NATO foreign ministers in Bucharest, Romania, this past week, NATO diplomats refrained from publicly confronting Turkey, avoiding giving offense that might further set back the cause of Finland's and Sweden's NATO membership.

Turkey's foreign minister made clear to his European counterparts that Turkey had yet to be appeased, when it came to Finland or Sweden hosting Kurdish exiles there.

"We reminded that in the end, it's the Turkish people and the Turkish parliament that need to be convinced," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told reporters on the sidelines.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is expected to talk Thursday with Finland's and Sweden's foreign ministers on dealing with Turkey's objections to their NATO accession.

Experts say the Biden administration has plenty of leverage to wield privately in urging Erdogan to relent in the threatened escalated attack on Syrian Kurds. That includes U.S. F-16 fighter sales that Turkey wants but have been opposed by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Robert Menendez and others in Congress.

There's a third big security risk in the U.S. handling of Turkey's invasion threat, along with the possible impact on the Ukraine conflict and on efforts to contain the Islamic State.

That's the risk to Kurds, a stateless people and frequent U.S. ally often abandoned by the U.S. and the West in past conflicts over the past century.

If the U.S. stands by while Turkey escalates attacks on the Syrian Kurds who were instrumental in quelling the Islamic State, "especially in the aftermath of Afghanistan, what message are we sending to the Middle East?" asked Henri J. Barkey, an expert on Kurds and Turkey at the Council on Foreign Relations and at Lehigh University.

"And to all allies in general?" Barkey asked.

An ethnic group of millions at the intersection of Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria, Kurds lost out on a state of their own as the U.S. and other powers carved up the remnants of the Turkish Ottoman Empire after World War I.

Saddam Hussein and other regional leaders used poison gas, airstrikes and other tools of mass slaughter over the decades to suppress the Kurds. As under U.S. President George H.W. Bush in 1991 after the Gulf War, the United States at times encouraged popular uprisings but stood by as Kurds died in the resulting massacres.

On Nov. 28, hundreds of Syrian Kurds gathered for the victims of one of the Turkish airstrikes — five guards killed securing the al-Hol camp, which holds thousands of family members of Islamic State fighters.

Relatives of one of the Kurdish guards, Saifuddin Mohammed, placed his photo on his grave.

"Of course, we are proud," said his brother, Abbas Mohammed. "He defended his land and his honor against the Turkish invading forces."

Antisemitic celebrities stoke fears of normalizing hate

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

A surge of anti-Jewish vitriol, spread by a world-famous rapper, an NBA star and other prominent people, is stoking fears that public figures are normalizing hate and ramping up the risk of violence in a country already experiencing a sharp increase in antisemitism.

Leaders of the Jewish community in the U.S. and extremism experts have been alarmed to see celebrities with massive followings spew antisemitic tropes in a way that has been taboo for decades. Some said it harkens back to a darker time in America when powerful people routinely spread conspiracy theories about Jews with impunity.

Former President Donald Trump hosted a Holocaust-denying white supremacist at Mar-a-Lago. The rapper Ye expressed love for Adolf Hitler in an interview. Basketball star Kyrie Irving appeared to promote an

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antisemitic film on social media. Neo-Nazi trolls are clamoring to return to Twitter as new CEO Elon Musk grants "amnesty" to suspended accounts.

"These are not fringe outliers sending emails from their parents garage or idiots no one has ever heard of. When influential mainstream cultural, political and even sports icons normalize hate speech, everyone needs to be very concerned," said Miami Beach Mayor Dan Gelber, a leader in South Florida's Jewish community.

Northwestern University history professor Peter Hayes, who specializes in Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, said normalizing antisemitism is a "real possibility" when there is a "public discussion of things that used to be beneath contempt."

"I'm very concerned about it," Hayes said. "It's one of the many ways in which America has to get a grip and stop toying with concepts and ideas that are potentially murderous."

Trump hosted Ye — the rapper formerly known as Kanye West — and Holocaust denier Nick Fuentes for dinner at his Florida home on Nov. 22.

Fuentes was a Boston University student when he attended a white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, that erupted in violence in 2017. He became an internet personality who used his platform to spread white supremacist and antisemitic views. Fuentes leads a far-right extremist movement called "America First," with supporters known as "Groypers."

On Thursday, Fuentes joined Ye in appearing on the Infowars show hosted by conspiracy theorist Alex Jones. Ye praised Hitler during the interview, ratcheting up the rhetoric that already cost him a lucrative business deal with Adidas.

Jonathan Greenblatt, national director and CEO of the Anti-Defamation League, said it is astonishing and alarming that two of the nation's leading purveyors of antisemitism were "breaking bread with the erstwhile head of the GOP."

"I would characterize this as the normalization of antisemitism. It has now become part of the political process in a way we hadn't seen before," Greenblatt said. "And that is not unique to Republicans. It is not just a Republican problem. It is a societal problem."

Most Americans knew it was "beyond the pale" when torch-toting white supremacists marched through the University of Virginia's campus on the eve of the 2017 rally, said Amy Spitalnick, executive director of Integrity First for America, a group that backed a lawsuit against organizers of the Charlottesville rally.

"What's even more dangerous than Nazis with torches chanting, 'Jews will not replace us,' is when we have political leaders and others espousing those same conspiracy theories in increasingly normalized ways," she said.

Spitalnick said the virulent hatred that Ye has been spewing can make diluted expressions of antisemitism seem more normal in contrast.

"It's crucial that we hold Kanye and Irving and these other public figures accountable for their antisemitism. But it means nothing if we're not also recognizing and holding accountable the ways in which this antisemitism and extremism has seeped into the mainstream of one of our major political parties and become commonplace in our political discourse," she said.

Trump's critics and even some of his allies condemned the former president for hosting Fuentes at Mar-a-Lago. Trump claimed that he knew nothing about Fuentes before the dinner and defended his decision to host Ye at his club.

Twitter suspended Ye's account this week after he tweeted a picture of a swastika merged with the Star of David. Musk tweeted that Ye had violated a rule against inciting violence.

Musk announced last week that his "amnesty" plan applied to accounts that haven't "broken the law or engaged in egregious spam." Online safety experts predict that the move will lead to a rise in harassment and hate speech.

Groups that monitor Twitter for racist and antisemitic content say toxic speech already has been on the rise in the month since Musk took over the platform and fired thousands of employees. Content moderators were among those who lost their jobs.

Watchdogs also have rebuked Musk for some of his own tweets, including posting a meme featuring

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Pepe the Frog, a cartoon character that was hijacked by far-right extremists.

In April, the Anti-Defamation League announced that its annual tally of antisemitic incidents reached a record high last year. The organization counted 2,717 incidents of assault, harassment and vandalism in 2021, a 34% increase over the previous year and the highest number since the ADL began tracking the events in 1979.

Generations ago, famous Americans including Henry Ford and Charles Lindbergh unapologetically expressed antisemitic sentiments in a way that would have shocked Americans in more recent decades. Now, the internet and social media make it easy for world-famous celebrities to normalize anti-Jewish hate.

For somebody of Ye's status to praise Nazis and Hitler is "escalating from ugliness to a kind of incitement," Greenblatt said. He noted that Jewish institutions already have to beef up security to protect against attacks such as the one in which a gunman killed 11 people at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh in 2018.

"Our community still has to brace for the consequences of those ideas going mainstream," Greenblatt said.

Both sides see high stakes in gay rights Supreme Court case

By JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is being warned about the potentially dire consequences of a case next week involving a Christian graphic artist who objects to designing wedding websites for same-sex couples.

Rule for the designer and the justices will expose not only same-sex couples but also Black people, immigrants, Jews, Muslims and others to discrimination, liberal groups say.

Rule against her and the justices will force artists — from painters and photographers to writers and musicians — to do work that is against their faith, conservative groups argue.

Both sides have described for the court what lawyers sometimes call "a parade of horrors" that could result if the ruling doesn't go their way.

The case marks the second time in five years that the Supreme Court has confronted the issue of a business owner who says their religion prevents them from creating works for a gay wedding. This time, most experts expect that the court now dominated 6-3 by conservatives and particularly sympathetic to religious plaintiffs will side with Lorie Smith, the Denver-area designer in the case.

But the American Civil Liberties Union, in a brief filed with the court, was among those that called Smith's argument "carte blanche to discriminate whenever a business's product or service could be characterized as 'expressive,'" a category of businesses that could range from "luggage to linens to landscaping." Those businesses, they said, could announce, "We Do Not Serve Blacks, Gays, or Muslims."

Smith's attorneys at the Arizona-based Alliance Defending Freedom say that's not true. "I think it's disingenuous and false to say that a win for Lorie in this case would take us back to those times where people ... were denied access to essential goods and services based on who they were," said ADF attorney Kellie Fiedorek, adding, "A win for Lorie here would never permit such conduct, like some of the hypotheticals that they're raising."

Smith's case follows that of Colorado baker Jack Phillips, who objected to creating a wedding cake for a gay couple. The couple sued, but the case ended with a limited decision. Phillips' lawyer, Kristen Waggoner, is back before the high court Monday arguing for Smith.

Smith wants to begin offering wedding websites, but she says her Christian faith prevents her from creating websites celebrating same-sex marriages. That could get her in trouble with state law. Colorado, like most other states, has a public accommodation law that says if Smith offers wedding websites to the public, she must provide them to all customers. Businesses that violate the law can be fined, among other things.

Smith, for her part, says Colorado's law violates the Constitution's First Amendment by forcing her to express a message with which she disagrees.

Among Smith's other opponents are the Biden administration and 20 mostly Democratic-leaning states including California, New York and Pennsylvania. The states told the court in one of 75 legal briefs filed by

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outside groups in the case that accepting Smith's arguments would allow for widespread discrimination. "A bakery whose owner opposed mixed-race relationships could refuse to bake wedding cakes for interracial couples," the states said. A "real estate agency whose owner opposed racial integration could refuse to represent Black couples seeking to purchase a home in a predominantly white neighborhood; or a portrait studio whose proprietor opposes interracial adoption could refuse to take pictures of white parents with their Black adopted children."

Those race-based examples could get particular attention on a court with two Black justices, Clarence Thomas and Ketanji Brown Jackson, who are married to white spouses and another justice, Amy Coney Barrett, who has two adopted children who are Black. But the states gave an example involving a person's national origin too. "A tattoo studio could ink American flag tattoos on customers born in the United States while refusing to sell identical tattoos to immigrants," they said.

Brianne Gorod of the Constitutional Accountability Center, representing a group of law professors, hypothesized other examples of what could happen if Smith succeeds at the high court.

"A web designer could refuse to create a web page celebrating a female CEO's retirement — violating Colorado's prohibition on sex discrimination — if he believed all women have a duty to stay home and raise children. Similarly, a furniture-maker — who considers his furniture pieces to be artistically expressive — could refuse to serve an interracial couple if he believed that interracial couples should not share a home together. Or an architect could refuse to design a home for an interfaith couple," she told the court.

Smith's supporters, however, among them 20 mostly Republican-leaning states, say ruling against her has negative consequences, too. A lawyer for the CatholicVote.org education fund told the court that if the lower court ruling stands and Smith loses, "a Jewish choreographer will have to stage a dramatic Easter performance, a Catholic singer will be required to perform at a marriage of two divorcees, and a Muslim who operates an advertising agency will be unable to refuse to create a campaign for a liquor company."

The Jewish Coalition for Religious Liberty put it differently, telling the court that a Jewish baker could have to fulfill the request of a Neo-Nazi who wants a cake saying "Happy November 9th!" — a reference to Kristallnacht, the night in 1938 when Nazis burned synagogues and vandalized Jewish businesses throughout Germany and Austria.

Alan B. Morrison, a constitutional law expert at Georgetown University, underscored that Smith doesn't currently do wedding websites, making the case particularly speculative and, he says, problematic. Still, Morrison chuckled at some of the hypothetical scenarios both sides came up with, suggesting they are "a bit overblown."

The examples, he said, are "the kind of thing a law professor would think of."

Non-religious voters wield clout, tilt heavily Democratic

By PETER SMITH Associated Press

When members of the small Pennsylvania chapter of Secular Democrats of America log on for their monthly meetings, they're not there for a virtual happy hour.

"We don't sit around at our meetings patting ourselves on the back for not believing in God together," said David Brown, a founder from the Philadelphia suburb of Ardmore.

The group, mostly consisting of atheists and agnostics, mobilizes to knock on doors and make phone calls on behalf of Democratic candidates "who are pro-science, pro-democracy, whether or not they are actually self-identified secular people," he said. "We are trying to keep church and state separate. That encompasses LGBTQIA+, COVID science, bodily autonomy and reproductive rights."

Brown describes his group as "small but mighty," yet they're riding a big wave.

Voters with no religious affiliation supported Democratic candidates and abortion rights by staggering percentages in the 2022 midterm elections.

And they're voting in large numbers. In 2022, some 22% of voters claimed no religious affiliation, according to AP VoteCast, an expansive survey of more than 94,000 voters nationwide. They contributed to voting coalitions that gave Democrats victories in battleground states such as Pennsylvania, Wisconsin

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and Arizona.

The unaffiliated — often nicknamed the “nones” — voted for Democratic House candidates nationwide over Republicans by more than a 2-1 margin (65% to 31%), according to VoteCast. That echoes the 2020 president election, when Democrat Joe Biden took 72% of voters with no religious affiliation, while Republican Donald Trump took 25%, according to VoteCast.

For all the talk of the overwhelmingly Republican voting by white evangelical Christians in recent elections, the unaffiliated are making their presence felt.

Among all U.S. adults, 29% are nones — those who identify as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular” — according a 2021 report by the Pew Research Center. That’s up 10 percentage points from a decade earlier, according to Pew. And the younger the adults, the more likely they are to be unaffiliated, according to a 2019 Pew analysis, further signaling the growing clout of the nones.

“People talk about how engaged white evangelicals are, but you don’t know the half of it,” said Ryan Burge, a professor of political science at Eastern Illinois University who focuses on the interaction of religious and political behavior.

Atheists and agnostics form only a subset of nones and are less numerous than evangelicals. But they are more likely than evangelicals to make a campaign donation, attend a political meeting or join a protest, Burge said, citing the Harvard-affiliated Cooperative Election Study.

“When you consider how involved they are in political activity, you realize how important they are at the ballot box,” he said.

The nones equaled Catholics at 22% of the electorate, though they were barely half the figure for Protestants and other Christians (43%), according to VoteCast. Other religious groups totaled 13%, including 3% Jewish and 1% Muslim.

Separately, 30% of voters identified as born again or evangelical Christians.

In several bellwether races this year, the secular vote made its impact felt, according to AP VoteCast.

___About four in five people with no religious affiliation voted against abortion restrictions in referendums in Michigan and Kentucky.

___Between two-thirds and three-quarters of nones supported Democratic candidates in statewide races in Arizona and Wisconsin.

___About four in five people with no religion voted for Josh Shapiro and John Fetterman, the Democrats elected Pennsylvania’s newest governor and senator, respectively.

While Shapiro openly speaks about his Jewish values motivating his public service, Fetterman has not incorporated any discernible religious tradition in his public statements. He often frames issues in ethical terms— such as promoting criminal justice reform and raising the minimum wage, even calling abortion rights “sacred” — without reference to a religious tradition.

Fetterman’s campaign did not return a request for comment.

The secular population is a diverse group, Pew reported in 2021. Two-thirds identify as “nothing in particular” — a group that is alienated from politics as well as religion, Burge said.

But atheists and agnostics, though only a third of the nones, punch above their weight, given their heavy involvement in politics.

The twin trends of a growing secular cohort among Democrats and the increased religiosity of Republicans are not coincidental.

Several prominent Republican candidates and their supporters have promoted Christian nationalism, which fuses an American and Christian sense of identity, mission and symbols.

That prompts a reaction by many secular voters, Burge said: “At least among white people, it’s become clear the Democratic Party has become the party for the non-religious people.”

Yet it’s not their party alone. The Democratic coalition draws heavily from religious groups — Black Protestants, liberal Jews, Catholics of color. The Black church tradition, in particular, has a highly devout base in support of moderate and progressive policies.

“I think the Democrats have the biggest problem in the world because they have to keep atheists and Black Protestants happy at the same time,” Burge said.

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Tensions surfaced in 2019 when the Democratic National Committee passed a resolution praising the religiously unaffiliated in language that some saw as overstating their clout and denigrating religious values.

Differences between secular and religious Democrats showed up in VoteCast. Majorities of Democratic voters across all religious affiliations say abortion should be legal at least most of the time, but 6 in 10 Democratic voters unaffiliated with a religion say it should always be legal, compared with about 4 in 10 Democratic voters affiliated with Christian traditions. In general, 69% of Democratic voters unaffiliated with a religion identify as liberal, compared with 46% of Christians who voted for Democrats.

But growing secular constituency doesn't worry Bishop William Barber, a leader in one of the nation's most prominent faith-based progressive movements.

"Jesus didn't worry about it, so why would I?" said Barber, president of Repairers of the Breach, which calls for moral advocacy by faith and other leaders on behalf of the poor, immigrants and other marginalized communities. "Jesus said the one who is not against me is for me."

"We have a lot of people who claim they're agnostic or atheist, and they will come to our rallies," said Barber, who is also co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign. "They will say, 'I don't necessarily believe in God, but I believe in right. I believe in love. I do believe in justice.'"

Brown, of the Secular Democrats group in Pennsylvania, said he had no problem supporting Democratic candidates like Shapiro, who talked openly about his Jewish values on the campaign trail. His opponent, Republican Doug Mastriano, incorporated Christian nationalist themes and imagery in his campaign.

"While on the one hand I am frustrated that politicians feel the need to justify their doing the right thing by religious affiliation, I also appreciate that this was a calculated decision to appeal to religious voters," Brown said. "I have no problem with it because I feel it was in the service of defeating a Christian nationalist candidate on the other side."

In fact, Brown even traveled to Georgia in late November to campaign door-to-door for an ordained minister — Georgia Sen. Raphael Warnock, the Democrat in a runoff election. And for the same reason — despite religious differences, he sees Warnock as sharing many of the values of secular voters.

Defeated election conspiracists seek to lead Michigan GOP

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press/Report for America

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — The Republicans who lost their races for Michigan's top three statewide offices after promoting falsehoods about the 2020 presidential election are not planning to go quietly.

Two of the candidates who denied President Joe Biden's victory in the state have announced plans to run for the position that leads the state GOP, while the third has said she is considering a challenge for the top post.

That is raising concerns within the party after it suffered a drubbing in Michigan, a perennial political battleground that is poised to play a pivotal role in the 2024 presidential race. Their attempts to gain control of the party apparatus also show how far-right conservatives are trying to maintain their grip on the party's grassroots at a time the GOP nationally is wrestling with its direction after lackluster midterm results.

Kristina Karamo, a community college professor who lost her race for secretary of state after mounting a campaign filled with election conspiracies, used the same kind of charged language she had throughout her campaign in announcing her intention to run for Michigan party chair.

In a statement posted this week to social media, she said the state Republican Party had begun operating as "mini-gangs instead of soldiers fighting for freedom," and that the state was on "the precipice of tyranny, which voting alone will not be able to overcome."

Instead of being afraid of attacks, she wrote, "we must strike fear in the heart of the enemy at the gate."

The race for Michigan GOP chair, which will be decided at a February party convention, comes after Democrats took control of all levels of power for the first time since the 1980s. Democrats won control of both houses of the Legislature and defeated Republicans by significant margins for governor, attorney general and secretary of state.

Many state and national Republicans have expressed concern that similar defeats could become com-

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monplace without a course correction within the state Republican Party.

"It's hard to think of a state where Republicans lost more than in Michigan," said Stu Sandler, a national Republican consultant. The state party wasn't the traditional partner it had been in the past, he said, in part due to a chair he described as not very active.

"The chair could be very important, particularly, because they have no statewide elected official or prominent Republican as a voice, and that's something that chair could be under the right circumstances," Sandler said.

In addition to Karamo, attorney general candidate Matthew DePerno has announced he will seek the position. Republican Tudor Dixon, who lost the governor's race by 11 percentage points to Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, said she also is considering running.

All three candidates were endorsed by former President Donald Trump and echoed his false claims of a stolen election — although Dixon pivoted away from her earlier statements after she won the Republican primary for governor.

"This race is unique because it's the fruition of a very long battle between grassroots elements and the so-called establishment," said John Sellek, a Republican consultant in Michigan. "For the first time, this race is a choice between multiple MAGA candidates, meaning the grassroots may have finally taken over."

A state party memo written days after the Nov. 8 election, and shared on social media by Dixon, blamed the grassroots takeover for the Republicans' midterm losses. Michigan GOP chief of staff Paul Cordes wrote that the party struggled due to a lack of "high quality, substantive candidates and well-funded campaigns."

"Over the course of this cycle, the Michigan Republican Party operated within the political reality that President Trump was popular amongst our grassroots and a motivating factor for his supporters, but provided challenges on a statewide ballot, especially with independents and women in the midterm election," Cordes wrote.

The memo also pointed to an abortion rights ballot proposal, which passed overwhelmingly, as one reason for the Democrats' sweep. Candidates in the state also ran in new districts drawn by an independent citizens commission that had been created previously by votes, instead of the heavily gerrymandered districts that had been drawn by Republican lawmakers.

Dixon said in response that the memo was a "perfect example of what is wrong" with the party and that there is "an issue of leadership."

Current chair Ron Weiser has said he will not seek reelection, while co-chair Meshawn Maddock has not announced whether she will run. Michigan Republican Party spokesperson Gustavo Portela said the party would have no further comment about the chair competition.

Similar to party conventions last spring, where delegates nominated DePerno and Karamo, the chair position will be chosen by county precinct delegates during the Feb. 18 convention. Jamie Roe, a GOP consultant and county delegate, expects the delegates attending the convention to once again be grassroots activists that favor Trump-backed candidates.

"There is no way on God's earth that the donors of the state would entrust a DePerno or Karamo with the resources needed to regain power," said Roe. "There will have to be something done outside the traditional structure."

With over two months remaining before the convention, some in the party still hope a candidate will emerge that can unite both the grassroots and establishment sides of the party.

Former U.S. Rep. Pete Hoekstra, who served as an ambassador to the Netherlands from 2018 to 2021, said during a recent interview that he's considering running. State Sen. Tom Barrett, who lost the 7th Congressional District race to Democrat Elissa Slotkin, also has been pushed by Republicans to seek the position, according to spokesman Jason Roe.

DePerno said he believes he can unite both sides of the party. In an interview Friday, he said the party needs to be rebuilt to "bring together the grassroots activists with the legacy donor class."

"The legacy donors, although they didn't want to publicly support candidates that they thought were associated with Donald Trump, they did support me at least through third party PACs," DePerno said.

The former tax lawyer rose to prominence in the party by pushing Trump's lies of a stolen election in

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the state following the 2020 presidential election. A special prosecutor is currently reviewing whether to criminally charge DePerno and others for attempting to gain access to voting machines after that election.

Lavora Barnes, chair of the Michigan Democratic Party, said the "biggest gift the Republicans can continue to give us" is infighting within the state party and nominating candidates who are "crazy and right of crazy."

"Looking at this group of folks who are interested in running for chair, I think we might see a little bit of the same in terms of the kind of candidates that these folks would support," Barnes said. "And I think that will help us hold the legislature going forward."

Iowa caucuses, built on myth, lose place at head of the line

By THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — The Hy-Vee Hall ballroom in Des Moines erupted in cheers in 2008 when the youthful Illinois senator hinted at the improbable possibility of the feat ahead: "Our time for change has come!"

That Iowa, an overwhelmingly white state, would propel Barack Obama's rise to become America's first Black president seemed to ratify its first-in-the-nation position in the presidential nominating process.

But in the half-century arc of the state's quirky caucuses, Obama's victory proved to be an outlier. All other Democratic winners turned out to be also-rans.

The caucuses and their outsize importance were largely an exercise in myth-making, that candidates could earn a path to the White House by meeting voters in person where they live, and earnest, civic-minded Midwesterners would brave the winter cold to stand sometimes for hours to discuss issues and literally stand for their candidate.

As the caucuses have played out, the flaws have become glaring. First among them: The state's Democrats botched the count in 2020, leaving an embarrassing muddle. But there were more. Since 2008, the state's political makeup has changed dramatically, from a reliable swing state to solidly Republican. And with the Democratic Party increasingly becoming a party of diversity, Iowa's lack of it left the state without much of a rationale for leading the way.

"We've been headed this way for a while," said Joe Trippi, who managed Missouri Rep. Dick Gephardt's winning Iowa campaign in 1988, adding "2020 broke the camel's back."

The Democratic National Committee's rulemaking arm voted Friday to remove Iowa as the leadoff state in the presidential nominating order and replace it with South Carolina starting in 2024, a dramatic shakeup championed by President Joe Biden to better reflect the party's deeply diverse electorate.

The caucuses were once a novel effort to expand local participation in national party decision-making, but this vestige of 19th century Midwestern civic engagement has simply been unable to keep pace with the demands of 21st century national politics.

"The times have changed and maybe it's time for this nominating process to change," said Emily Parcell, Obama's 2008 Iowa political director.

To much of the nation, the caucuses were a quadrennial curiosity, seen in TV shots framed by snowy cornfields, with a reminder piece the summer before featuring candidates awkwardly sampling the Iowa State Fair's menu of fried food or gazing at a life-sized cow carved from butter.

The seeds of the myth were etched into the national narrative in the 1970s by a cadre of political writers, mostly from Washington, who tracked Indiana's Birch Bayh, Arizona's Mo Udall, Idaho's Frank Church and an obscure governor from Georgia, Jimmy Carter, to cafes, VFW halls and living rooms.

Their stories offered a sheen of quaint civic responsibility, citizens meeting candidates, often several times, and a willingness to brave a bone-chilling winter night for them.

Despite the lore, Carter did not actually win Iowa. He received more votes than his rivals, but more participants chose "uncommitted." The early votes weren't even binding and were actually just the first step in a national delegate selection process ultimately determined at the state convention months later.

Having a contest where rules allowed for no winner was an early sign the arcane process would one day become a key point in the argument against keeping Iowa first.

But in 1976, the legend was born. An outsider could generate momentum heading into the first-in-the-

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nation New Hampshire primary election.

Richard Bender, an architect of Iowa's caucuses, never expected his work to become a national spectacle. "We knew this was a story. And we knew it was first, and that was fun," said Bender. "But we didn't realize when we did it that this was going to be huge. In a sense, it was an accident."

The caucuses are not elections, but rather party-run events, conducted by local Democratic officials and volunteers, a concept that has long bedeviled outsiders.

Like Iowa's Republican Party caucuses, which remain first in the GOP's 2024 presidential sequence, the Democratic caucuses are open only to voters who note the party affiliation on their voter registration.

Iowa first moved its caucuses from spring to winter before the 1972 campaign, and added a presidential vote to the agenda to invite more participation during an era of unrest.

Young activists, like then-25-year-old Bender, felt antiwar voices were missing as the Vietnam War dragged on.

In 1972, antiwar outsider Eugene McCarthy finished stronger than expected in the low-turnout affair, so lightly covered by the news media that the handful of national reporters present fit into a single office at state party headquarters in Des Moines.

But it set in motion increased attention that would over time celebrate and caricature Iowa, make and bury candidacies and eventually reveal structural problems that would lead to the caucuses' downfall.

"There was a kind of romanticism of neighbors gathering to make this important decision. There was something wholesome about that," said Democratic strategist David Axelrod, who was senior adviser to Obama's 2008 campaign.

"They took on sort of mythic importance and, over time, they became somewhat of an industry," said Axelrod, who also advised the late Illinois Sen. Paul Simon's 1988 campaign and former North Carolina Sen. John Edwards' in 2004. "Some of that wholesomeness wore off."

One landmark, Cronk's Cafe in Denison, served as the backdrop for countless campaign events. It is now closed. The old bar at the Savery Hotel, where candidates would often stop by for a drink, has been renovated. And candidates, strategists and national news figures now tend to favor the indulgent 801 Chophouse in the apex tower of Des Moines' skyline.

Likewise, the campaigns evolved from tests of more provincial interests to national trial runs.

Missouri Rep. Dick Gephardt won the 1988 Iowa caucuses on a local economic populist message aimed at addressing the financial crisis gripping Iowa farmers.

Sixteen years later, Iowa became the battleground over the Iraq War, the dominant issue roiling Democrats nationally.

Vermont Gov. Howard Dean wandered Iowa in anonymity before would-be rivals voted in 2002 to authorize military force in Iraq. He leapt the following summer to Iowa favorite as an antiwar voice. Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry's comeback victory signaled national Democrats' priority to nominate a combat veteran with national security credentials to challenge wartime President George W. Bush.

Four years later, the showdown between national Democratic favorite Hillary Clinton and the rocketing newcomer Obama would complete the transition from the little-noticed 1970s campaigns to national referendum on the party's direction.

With each cycle, the Democrats' criticism of Iowa as non-representative of the party increased, coming to a calamitous head on caucus night in February 2020.

A smartphone app designed to calculate and report results failed, prompting a telephone backlog that prevented the party from reporting final results for nearly a week after the Feb. 3 contest.

The Associated Press was unable to declare a winner after irregularities and inconsistencies marred the results. Top finishers Bernie Sanders and Pete Buttigieg were denied the full measure of momentum ahead of New Hampshire eight days later.

"I think we all look back and recognize that was the death knell," said John Norris, who managed Kerry's 2004 Iowa campaign and the Rev. Jesse Jackson's in 1988.

"The huge uptick in social media, it's opened the floodgates for people to criticize it; every flaw, every

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critique of Iowa is now magnified," Norris added.

In desperation, Iowa Democrats proposed an all-vote-by-mail caucus. The change would have excised the very heart of the caucus campaign, grassroots organizing punctuated by candidate contact, said Trippi.

"Money and celebrity are going to be more important at a time when money and celebrity has gotten us where we're at today," he said. "Maybe we should be marveling at how long they held on."

Today in History: December 4, the "Million Dollar Quartet"

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Dec. 4, the 338th day of 2022. There are 27 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On Dec. 4, 1956, Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and Carl Perkins gathered for the first and only time for a jam session at Sun Records in Memphis.

On this date:

In 1783, Gen. George Washington bade farewell to his Continental Army officers at Fraunces Tavern in New York.

In 1918, President Woodrow Wilson left Washington on a trip to France to attend the Versailles (veh-SY') Peace Conference.

In 1942, during World War II, U.S. bombers struck the Italian mainland for the first time with a raid on Naples. President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the dismantling of the Works Progress Administration, which had been created to provide jobs during the Depression.

In 1965, the United States launched Gemini 7 with Air Force Lt. Col. Frank Borman and Navy Cmdr. James A. Lovell aboard on a two-week mission. (While Gemini 7 was in orbit, its sister ship, Gemini 6A, was launched on Dec. 15 on a one-day mission; the two spacecraft were able to rendezvous within a foot of each other.)

In 1978, San Francisco got its first female mayor as City Supervisor Dianne Feinstein (FYN'-styn) was named to replace the assassinated George Moscone (mahs-KOH'-nee).

In 1980, the bodies of four American churchwomen slain in El Salvador two days earlier were unearthed. (Five Salvadoran national guardsmen were later convicted of murdering nuns Ita Ford, Maura Clarke and Dorothy Kazel, and lay worker Jean Donovan.)

In 1986, both houses of Congress moved to establish special committees to conduct their own investigations of the Iran-Contra affair.

In 1992, President George H.W. Bush ordered American troops to lead a mercy mission to Somalia, threatening military action against warlords and gangs who were blocking food for starving millions.

In 1995, the first NATO troops landed in the Balkans to begin setting up a peace mission that brought American soldiers into the middle of the Bosnian conflict.

In 2000, in a pair of legal setbacks for Al Gore, a Florida state judge refused to overturn George W. Bush's certified victory in Florida and the U.S. Supreme Court set aside a ruling that had allowed manual recounts.

In 2016, a North Carolina man armed with a rifle fired several shots inside Comet Ping Pong, a Washington, D.C., pizzeria, as he attempted to investigate an online conspiracy theory that prominent Democrats were harboring child sex slaves at the restaurant; no one was hurt, and the man surrendered to police. (He was later sentenced to four years in prison.)

In 2018, long lines of people wound through the Capitol Rotunda to view the casket of former President George H.W. Bush; former Sen. Bob Dole steadied himself out of his wheelchair to salute his old friend and one-time rival.

Ten years ago: Two Australian radio disc jockeys impersonating Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Charles made a prank call to a London hospital and succeeded in getting a nurse to tell them the condition of the Duchess of Cambridge, who was being treated for acute morning sickness; another nurse who had put the call through would be found dead three days later in an apparent suicide.

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Five years ago: Declaring that “public lands will once again be for public use,” President Donald Trump scaled back two sprawling national monuments in Utah; it was the first time in a half century that a president had undone that type of land protection. The Supreme Court allowed the Trump administration to fully enforce a ban on travel to the United States by residents of six mostly Muslim countries. Trump formally endorsed Republican Roy Moore in the Alabama Senate race, looking past sexual misconduct allegations against the GOP candidate.

One year ago: James and Jennifer Crumbley, the parents of a Michigan teen charged with killing four students at a high school earlier in the week, were arrested in a Detroit commercial building where police said they’d been hiding; a judge later imposed a combined \$1 million bond for the couple, who pleaded not guilty to charges of involuntary manslaughter in connection with the shooting rampage. CNN fired anchor Chris Cuomo less than a week after new information emerged about how he assisted his brother, former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, as the politician faced sexual harassment allegations earlier in the year. Country musician Stonewall Jackson, who sang on the Grand Ole Opry for more than 50 years and had No. 1 hits with “Waterloo” and others, died after a long battle with vascular dementia; he was 89.

Today’s Birthdays: Game show host Wink Martindale is 89. Pop singer Freddy Cannon is 86. Actor-producer Max Baer Jr. is 85. Actor Gemma Jones is 80. Rock musician Bob Mosley (Moby Grape) is 80. Singer-musician Chris Hillman is 78. Musician Terry Woods (The Pogues) is 75. Rock singer Southside Johnny Lyon is 74. Actor Jeff Bridges is 73. Rock musician Gary Rossington (Lynyrd Skynyrd; the Rossington Collins Band) is 71. Actor Patricia Wettig is 71. Actor Tony Todd is 68. Jazz singer Cassandra Wilson is 67. Country musician Brian Prout (Diamond Rio) is 67. Rock musician Bob Griffin (formerly with The BoDeans) is 63. Rock singer Vinnie Dombroski (Sponge) is 60. Actor Marisa Tomei is 58. Actor Chelsea Noble is 58. Actor-comedian Fred Armisen is 56. Rapper Jay-Z is 53. Actor Kevin Sussman is 52. Actor-model Tyra Banks is 49. Country singer Lila McCann is 41. Actor Lindsay Felton is 38. Actor Orlando Brown is 35. MLB pitcher Joe Musgrove is 30. Actor Scarlett Estevez (TV: “Lucifer”) is 15.