

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 1 of 69

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Brown County Commission Meeting Agenda](#)
- [3- Groton Legion Christmas Ad](#)
- [3- Groton Post Office Christmas Ad](#)
- [4- Third installment of Groton Area Kindergarten](#)
- [5- Groton Vet Clinic Christmas Ad](#)
- [5 Hanlon's Gravel Christmas Ad](#)
- [6- Talent winners sing National Anthem](#)
- [7- Dance teams perform](#)
- [8- SD SearchLight: Supreme Court won't yet rule on presidential immunity question in Trump case](#)
- [10- Sunday Extras](#)
- [28- Gov. Noem's Weekly Column](#)
- [29- Thune's Weekly Column](#)
- [30- Johnson's Weekly Column](#)
- [31- Rev. Snyder's Column](#)
- [33- EarthTalk - New Years Resolutions](#)
- [34- Weather Pages](#)
- [39- Daily Devotional](#)
- [40- 2023 Community Events](#)
- [41- Subscription Form](#)
- [42- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [43- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Sunday, Dec. 24

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; No Sunday school, worship with communion, 7 p.m.

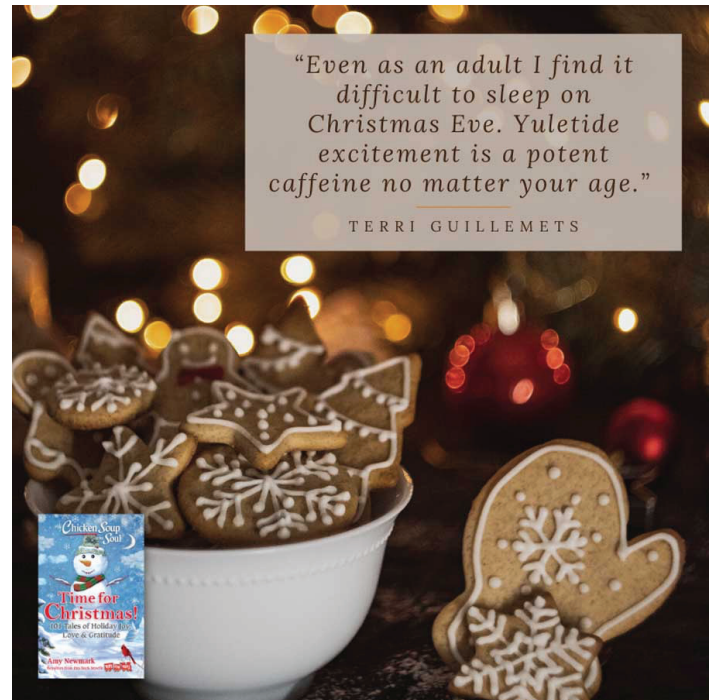
St. John's Lutheran: Christmas Eve Service, 10:30 a.m.

United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.; Conde Christmas Eve service, 5 p.m.; Groton Christmas Eve service, 7 p.m.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.; Candlelight Christmas Eve service, 5 p.m.

Catholic: SEAS Mass, 4 p.m. and 8 p.m.; St. Joseph, Turton, Mass, 6 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.



*"Even as an adult I find it difficult to sleep on Christmas Eve. Yuletide excitement is a potent caffeine no matter your age."*

TERRI GUILLEMETS

## Monday, Dec. 25

CHRISTMAS DAY!

City office and public works departments closed. No senior menu.

St. John's Lutheran: Christmas Day Service at Zion, 9 a.m.

No School - Christmas Break

## Tuesday, Dec. 26

Senior Menu: Chicken Alfredo, lemon buttered broccoli, pumpkin bar, cookie, whole wheat bread.

No School - Christmas Break

City office and public works departments closed.

## Wednesday, Dec. 27

Senior Menu: Chili, corn bread, coleslaw, lime pear Jell-O.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

No School - Christmas Break

Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm

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

**OPEN:** **Recycling Trailer in Groton**  
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.  
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# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 2 of 69

**BROWN COUNTY  
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA  
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY  
December 27, 2023, 8:45 A.M.**

**COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS, COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD**

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Opportunity of Public Comment
4. Public Hearing for Malt Beverage & SD Farm Wine Licenses:
  - a. Stacy Gossman – DBA: Ollie’s
  - b. Stacy Gossman – DBA: Annie’s
  - c. Stacy Gossman – DBA: Bergyz
  - d. Stacy Gossman – DBA: BigZ
  - e. Stacy Gossman – DBA: Caponez
  - f. Stacy Gossman – DBA: Tinkaz
5. Judy Dosch, Building Superintendent
  - a. Discuss & Possibly Award Bid for Tuckpointing Project
6. Authorize Chairman to sign YMCA Drawdown #2
  - a. Authorize publication for Public Progress Hearing on January 23, 2024
7. Consent Calendar
  - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of December 19, 2023
  - b. Claims/Payroll
  - c. HR Report
  - d. Auto Supplements
  - e. Contingency Transfers
  - f. Zoning Ordinances – Set Hearing Date/Authorize Advertising
  - g. Plats
  - h. Claim Assignments
  - i. Township Bond
  - j. Discuss Certificates of Deposits
8. Other Business
9. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
10. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

**Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet, or smartphone.**

<https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>

**You can also dial in using your phone.** United States: +1 (872) 240-3311

**Access Code:** 601-168-909 #

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

Public comment provides an opportunity for the public to address the county commission but may not exceed 3 minutes.

Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes (or at the discretion of the board).

Public comment will be accepted virtually when the virtual attendance option is available.

**Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at**

<https://www.brown.sd.us/node/454>

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 3 of 69

The  
American Legion wishes you and your  
family a very  
Merry Christmas!

Groton American Legion  
Post #39  
Legion Lounge



## *Sending Our Best At The Holidays*

*Hope the holiday delivers a bundle  
of glad tidings to your home.*

WITH OUR THANKS for  
your business all year long.

Groton SD 57445  
Mindy Vander Vorst  
Postmaster



 **UNITED STATES  
POSTAL SERVICE**

## Groton Area Kindergarten



**Kennedy Ball is the daughter of Brock and Rosalie Ball of Bath. What Christmas means to me is I love Santa**



**Molly Swisher is the daughter of Travis and Taylor Swisher of Groton. What Christmas means to me is being with my family**



**Maya Anderson is the daughter of Taylor and Laura Anderson of Groton. What Christmas means to me is being together as a family**



**Indria Rodriguez Centeno is the daughter of Carlos Rodriguez and Karely Centeno. What Christmas means to me is celebrating Christmas**



**Ruby Henderson is the daughter of Brad and Michelle Henderson of Groton. What Christmas means to me is you spend time with your family and friends**



**Raven Bahr is the daughter of Brian and Liz Bahr of Groton. What Christmas means to me is I get to build a snow man and get presents**

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 5 of 69

*The season of joy is  
here once again.  
Let's rejoice and  
welcome this holiday  
with a smile.*

*Wishing you a  
Christmas filled with  
love and happiness.*

*Merry Christmas  
from*



**GROTON**  
**VET CLINIC**

1503 N Broadway  
Groton  
605/397-8145



**Wishing You A  
Picture-Perfect  
Season!**



Here's hoping your holiday is all you've dreamed of and more.  
We thank you for your friendship and support.

**Hanlon's Gravel & Manure Hauling**

605/395-6531

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 6 of 69



**Gavin Kroll, Camryn Kurtz and Kyrie Yeigh sang the National Anthem Thursday night at the boys basketball game with Aberdeen Roncalli. The three were winners at the Snow Queen Contest and will represent Groton Area at the Snow Queen pageant in Aberdeen in January. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)**

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 7 of 69



**The Aberdeen Roncalli dance team (above) and the Groton Area dance team (below) performed at halftime of the Groton Area and Aberdeen Roncalli boys basketball game on Thursday in Groton.** (Photos lifted from GDILIVE.COM)





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Supreme Court won't yet rule on presidential immunity question in Trump case

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY AND JENNIFER SHUTT - DECEMBER 23, 2023 8:01 AM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court has declined to quickly decide if former President Donald Trump holds immunity from federal prosecution in the case linked to his actions surrounding the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Department of Justice Special Counsel Jack Smith had asked the justices to determine if “a former President is absolutely immune from federal prosecution for crimes committed while in office or is constitutionally protected from federal prosecution when he has been impeached but not convicted before the criminal proceedings begin.”

The docket entry for the case showed a new entry Friday, announcing that Smith’s petition for the court to quickly hear the case had been denied.

The justices didn’t include any comments for why they declined to take up the case before the D.C. Circuit Court does. The lack of explanation is typical when the Supreme Court grants or denies a so-called writ of certiorari.

Trump’s legal team noted in a 44-page brief to the Supreme Court filed Wednesday that “the D.C. Circuit has already granted highly expedited review of President Trump’s appeal over President Trump’s opposition, with briefing to be concluded by January 2, 2024, and oral argument scheduled for January 9, 2024.”

“The Special Counsel urges this Court to bypass those ordinary procedures, including the longstanding preference for prior consideration by at least one court of appeals, and rush to decide the issues with reckless abandon,” Trump’s legal team wrote. “The Court should decline that invitation at this time, for several reasons.”

#### Trump lawyers ‘incorrect,’ Smith says

Smith disagreed with that assessment, writing in a 14-page brief filed with the Supreme Court on Thursday that the Trump legal team’s belief the justices should wait to take up the issue of his immunity from prosecution was “incorrect.”

Smith noted the U.S. District Court handling the Jan. 6 case has set a March 4 trial date.

“The public interest in a prompt resolution of this case favors an immediate, definitive decision by this Court,” Smith wrote. “The charges here are of the utmost gravity.”

This federal case against Trump, Smith wrote, marks the first time in American history that criminal charges have been filed “against a former President based on his actions while in office.”

“And not just any actions: alleged acts to perpetuate himself in power by frustrating the constitutionally prescribed process for certifying the lawful winner of an election,” Smith continued. “The Nation has a compelling interest in a decision on respondent’s claim of immunity from these charges — and if they are to be tried, a resolution by conviction or acquittal, without undue delay.”

The Supreme Court appeared to disagree with Smith’s argument on Friday when it denied his request to determine if Trump or any other president holds immunity for acts committed while in office.



# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 9 of 69

## Timeline of filings

Smith in early December asked the justices to expedite Trump's claims of presidential immunity in the 2020 election interference case.

Trump's legal team had filed the motion to dismiss the case in early October, but U.S. District Court Judge Tanya Chutkan denied it on Dec. 1.

Trump's team appealed the decision Dec. 7, requesting the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals to take the case and pause proceedings.

Trump was indicted by a federal grand jury in August on four charges related to his alleged role in knowingly spreading false statements and engaging in fake elector schemes to overturn the 2020 presidential election results.

Trump is also scheduled to begin several other court proceedings, including a late March trial in New York state for charges related to alleged hush money payments to an adult film star.

In addition, the former president also faces a criminal trial starting in May in Florida for allegedly removing classified material from the White House and improperly storing them at his Mar-a-Lago, his Florida estate.

A trial date has not yet been set for racketeering and organized crime charges he faces in Georgia related to the 2020 presidential election results.

*Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.*

*Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.*



## THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE



*When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.*

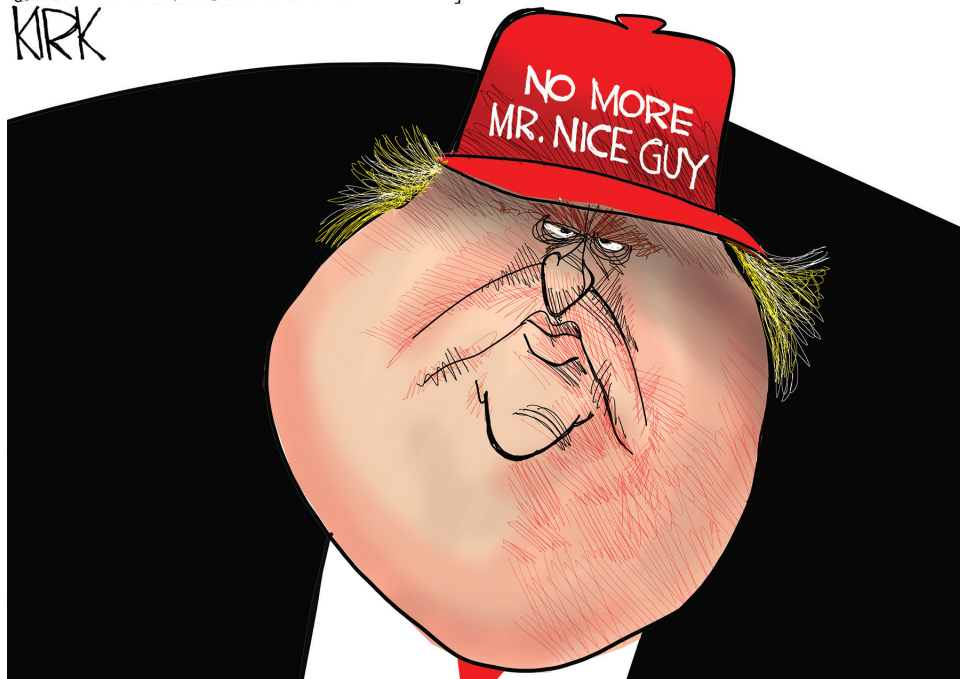
LUKE 2:39, 40

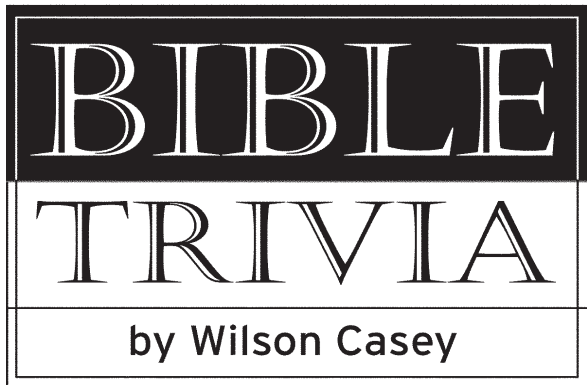
15th-century woodcut

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KIRK





1. The main Christmas story is paraphrased from what two New Testament books (KJV)? *Mark/John, Acts/Romans, Matthew/Luke, Jude/Revelation*

2. Who visited Jesus on the night of His birth and found Mary, Joseph and the babe lying in a manger? *Innkeeper, Shepherds, Herod, Magi*

3. Where was the young child when the Magi came to visit Him to present gifts? *Manger, Under the stars, House, Temple*

4. How many times does the word "Christmas" appear in the Bible (KJV)? *Zero, 1, 2, 7*

5. Who was King of Judaea at the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem? *Solomon, Herod, Balak, Belshazzar*

6. What animals were present at Jesus' birth? *Lions and bears, Sheep and goats, Cows and donkeys, No mention of animals*

ANSWERS: 1) Matthew/Luke, 2) Shepherds, 3) House, 4) Zero, 5) Herod, 6) No mention of animals (in Bible)

*"Test Your Bible Knowledge," a book with 1,206 multiple-choice questions by columnist Wilson Casey, is available in stores and online.*

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 12 of 69



**FLASH GORDON**

WHEN OUR GUNSHIP WAS IN ACTIVE SERVICE, I WAS JUST A JUNIOR AIRMAN.

I WAS ORDERED TO CRAWL INTO COFFIN-WIDE MISSILE TUBES TO CHIP OFF THERMOPLUTONIC RESIDUE WITH A HAND CHISEL.



THEN WE CRASHED IN THE JUNGLE, CUT OFF FROM THE WAR, AND THE CREW'S DYNAMIC... SHIFTED.


FOR TRUE LEADERSHIP COMES FROM THE MOST UNEXPECTED PLACES.

WE ARE ALL DESERTERS FROM EMPEROR MING'S AEROFORCE, LIVING FREE FROM HIS RULE IN THE JUNGLES OF VALKR...




...AND I AM OUR BROTHER LEADER, SOJAS.

AREA PATROL BRINGS IN TWO STRANGERS SPOUTING A BALD-FACED LIE: THEY CLAIM THE EMPEROR HAS FALLEN.



SPIES! MUST BE. EVERY CHILD OF MONGO KNOWS MING IS FOREVER.

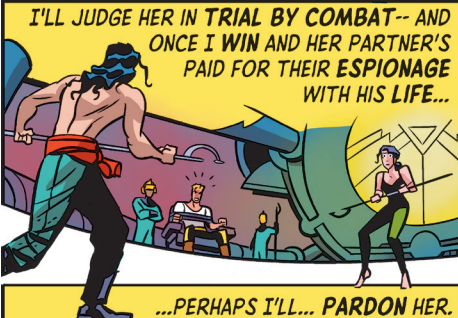


BUT ONE OF THEM, THIS DALE ARDEN... INTERESTS ME.

SO FRAGILE. SO SCARED.

THERE JUST MIGHT BE A PLACE FOR HER HERE...

I'LL JUDGE HER IN TRIAL BY COMBAT-- AND ONCE I WIN AND HER PARTNER'S PAID FOR THEIR ESPIONAGE WITH HIS LIFE...



...PERHAPS I'LL... PARDON HER.

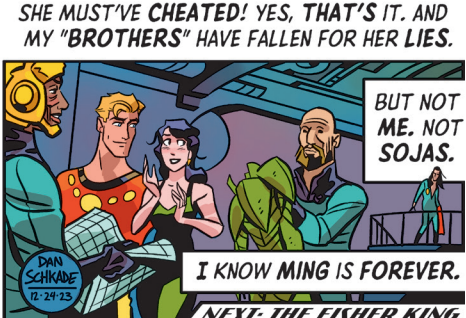


BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT HAPPENS.

SHE... SHE WINS.

BY LAW, SHE'S PROVEN THEIR CLAIMS ARE TRUE.

SHE MUST'VE CHEATED! YES, THAT'S IT. AND MY "BROTHERS" HAVE FALLEN FOR HER LIES.



BUT NOT ME. NOT SOJAS.

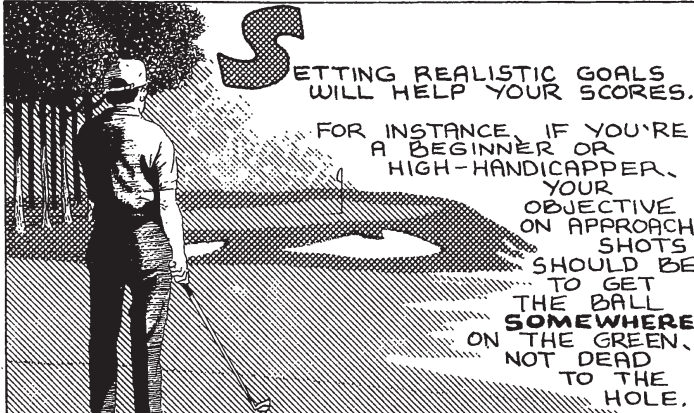
I KNOW MING IS FOREVER.

**NEXT: THE FISHER KING**

DAN SCHKABE 12-24-23

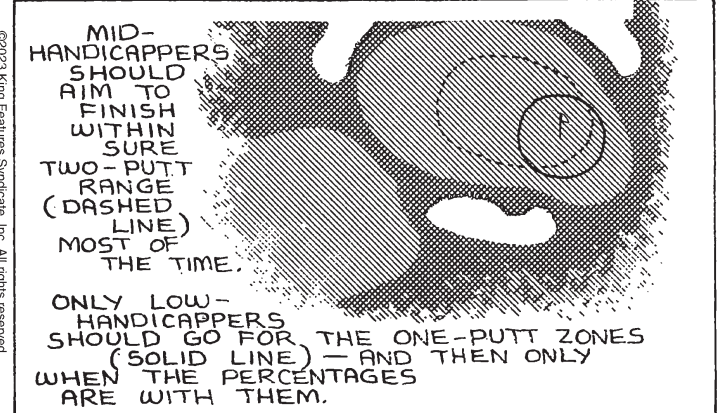
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## Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



SETTING REALISTIC GOALS WILL HELP YOUR SCORES.

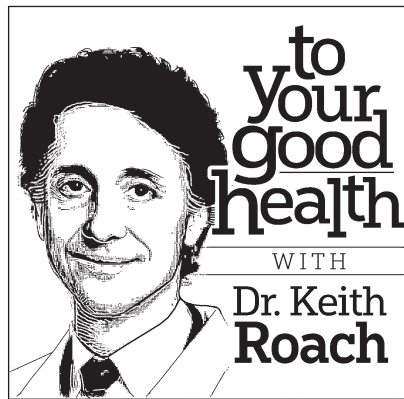
FOR INSTANCE, IF YOU'RE A BEGINNER OR HIGH-HANDICAPPER, YOUR OBJECTIVE ON APPROACH SHOTS SHOULD BE TO GET THE BALL SOMEWHERE ON THE GREEN, NOT DEAD TO THE HOLE.



MID-HANDICAPPERS SHOULD AIM TO FINISH WITHIN SURE TWO-PUTT RANGE (DASHED LINE) MOST OF THE TIME.

ONLY LOW-HANDICAPPERS SHOULD GO FOR THE ONE-PUTT ZONES (SOLID LINE) — AND THEN ONLY WHEN THE PERCENTAGES ARE WITH THEM.

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## Estrace Cream Is Safe to Use in Woman Who Had Melanoma

**DEAR DR. ROACH:** I am a 70-year-old woman who has been using Estrace vaginal cream weekly for several years. I am in excellent health, work out daily, run half-marathons and have my own business. I take 10 mg of atorvastatin daily. Ten years ago, I had melanoma removed from my arm.

**My concern is the use of Estrace. My gynecologist recommended that I use it after a Pap smear, but my primary care physician is not of the same mind. I would appreciate your opinion on this. My mother had breast cancer in her 80s, my sister had uterine cancer, and my brother passed away from bladder cancer. — C.S.**

**ANSWER:** As far as the safety of using estradiol (Estrace), the bioidentical hormone to major natural estrogen, I am definitely of the same opinion as your gynecologist. When used topically, it works on the vulva and the lining of the vagina, keeping the tissue healthy.

Without estrogen, the tissues that line the female perineum can become atrophic (thinned), predisposing a woman to discomfort, infections and incontinence. The Pap smear may have resulted in a finding that was suggestive of vaginal atrophy (increased neutrophils). Without treatment, the labia can even fuse together.

With long-term use, the estrogen levels in the body are only slightly higher in women who use topical estrogen compared to those who do not, so the absorption into the body is minimal. The only

case where I get concerned is with someone who has a personal history of an estrogen-sensitive tumor, such as endometrial cancer and some breast cancers. In those cases, I discuss options with both the patient and their oncologist.

\*\*\*

**DEAR DR. ROACH:** Are you aware of any correlation between celiac disease and restless legs syndrome (RLS)? My 72-year-old husband has had RLS for decades. He currently takes gabapentin and pramipexole, but still has symptoms. Plus, he has periodic limb movement disorder (PLMD), which occurs while he's asleep. He isn't aware of it, but it can keep me awake; we sleep in separate beds when it gets bad. — C.S.

**ANSWER:** The terminology can be confusing. Most people with RLS have periodic limb movements of sleep (PLMS), which sound very similar to your husband's symptom. PLMD is a separate sleep issue that doesn't include other RLS features, such as an uncomfortable sensation in the legs while they're at rest that causes an urge to move them. A person with RLS often has PLMS, but doesn't have PLMD.

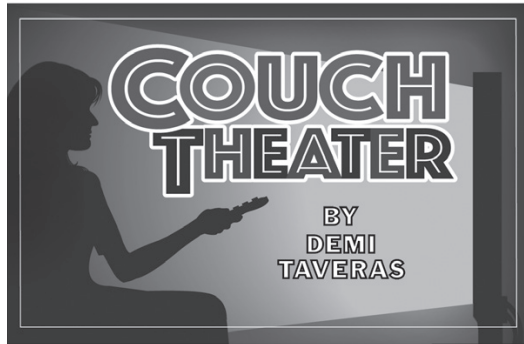
There is an increased risk of RLS among people with celiac disease. Most authorities tie these two together through iron deficiency. Unless celiac disease is managed with meticulous attention to diet, the body has difficulty absorbing iron.

Iron deficiency is very frequently found in people with RLS, and iron deficiency makes RLS worse. The diagnosis of iron deficiency needs to be made carefully because most people with RLS and iron deficiency do not have anemia. A ferritin level, rather than a blood count test, is the best initial test. If he does have iron deficiency, then treatment with iron supplementation can sometimes dramatically improve those nighttime symptoms.

*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](mailto:ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu).*

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 14 of 69



"Barbie" (PG-13) -- The highest-grossing film of 2023, clocking in at \$1.4 billion, is finally out on streaming! Margot Robbie stars as the titular character in director Greta Gerwig's fourth feature film, opposite a very sassy Ryan Gosling as none other than Ken. The film follows Barbie in Barbieland as she experiences an existential crisis after waking

up one day and no longer being "stereotypically perfect." With the help of Ken, Barbie travels to the real world in an attempt to find the child who's playing with her -- her "owner," if you will -- so that she can return to her perfectly pink life. So far, its director, lead actress and supporting actor are all nominated for Golden Globes, and the film itself is nominated in the Best Motion Picture and Cinematic and Box Office Achievement categories. With the cultural movement that "Barbie" became this summer, the last nomination should be theirs for the taking! (Max)



**Barry Keoghan, left, and Archie Madekwe star in "Saltburn."**

Courtesy of Prime Video

"Saltburn" (R) -- "The Banshees of Inisherin" star Barry Keoghan jumps into the role of Oliver Quick, a misunderstood, straight-edge student at Oxford University who struggles to fit in with his classmates. After a coincidental meeting with a popular student named Felix (Jacob Elordi), Oliver becomes fast friends with Felix and eventually gets invited to spend the summer at Felix's family estate, called Saltburn. The estate is buzzing with bizarre characters who filter in and out of the lavish property, including fellow Oxford student Farleigh (Archie Madekwe) and family friend Pamela (Carey Mulligan). As the summer comes to an end, Oliver realizes that the life he enjoyed at Saltburn is the only life he wants to live. Out now, this psychological thriller is director Emerald Fennell's sophomore film, her debut being "Promising Young Woman," which also features Mulligan. (Prime Video)

"Beau Is Afraid" (R) -- Directed by Ari Aster ("Midsommar"), this film features Oscar winner Joaquin Phoenix -- and got Phoenix his seventh Golden Globe nomination. He plays Beau, the son of a wealthy businesswoman named Mona, who grew up to become a very anxious, accident-prone adult. Beau receives news that his mother died in an accident as he was on his way to visit her, and as if his astronomically bad luck couldn't possibly get worse, he gets into an accident himself after hearing the news. While the date of his mother's funeral looms closer, all of his plans to get there goes awry, and Beau surrenders to a series of trippy experiences that push him to let out the grief and guilt surrounding him. With an ensemble cast of Patti LuPone, Nathan Lane, Michael Gandolfini and more, this surrealist horror film is out now, after a disappointing box-office release. (Paramount+)

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# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 15 of 69



1. Name the girl group that had a No. 1 hit with "Will You Love Me Tomorrow?"
2. Who released "The Name Game"?
3. What was the first song Tom Jones released that topped the charts?
4. Who wrote "Give Peace a Chance"?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "In the crowd of a million people I'll find my valentine, And then I'll climb to the highest steeple and tell the world he's mine."

## Answers

1. The Shirelles, in 1960. The Satintones came back with an answer song called "Tomorrow and Always," borrowing the original melody, but they forgot to credit the songwriters.
2. Shirley Ellis in 1964. The song, also called "The Banana Song," used nonsense words and syllables to make changes to someone's name.
3. "It's Not Unusual," in 1965. It was the second song he'd ever released. Several other artists quickly released covers, including The Dells and Brenda Lee.
4. Former Beatle John Lennon, in 1969.
5. "Where the Boys Are," by Connie Francis in 1961. The song was used as the theme song in the 1961 film of the same name. Francis eventually recorded the song in six other languages.

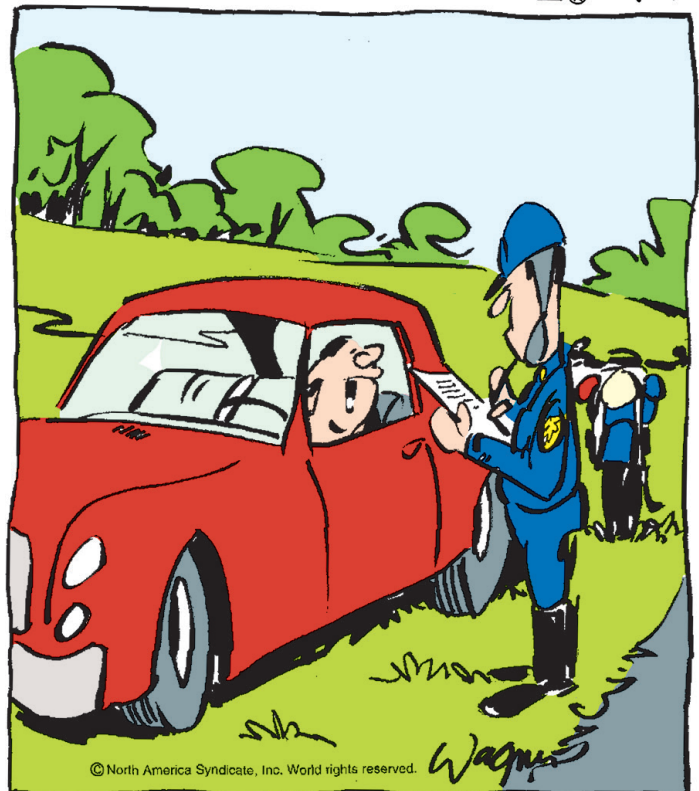
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## Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



## GRIN and BEAR IT <sup>by Wagner</sup>



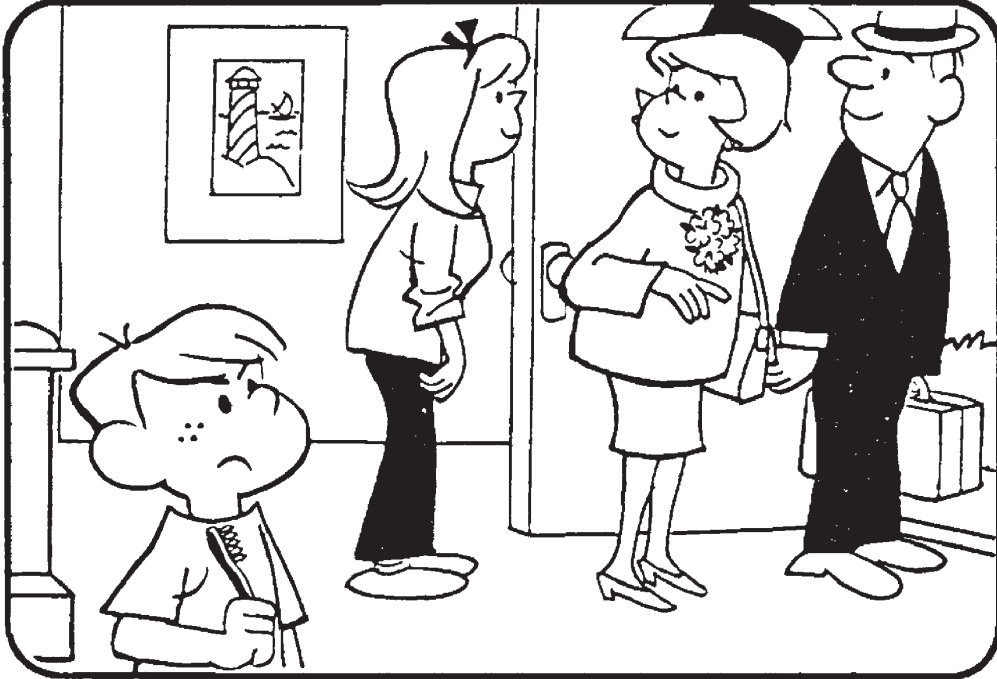
"I was a designated driver New Year's Eve.  
Don't I get credit for it?"

# Groton Daily Independent

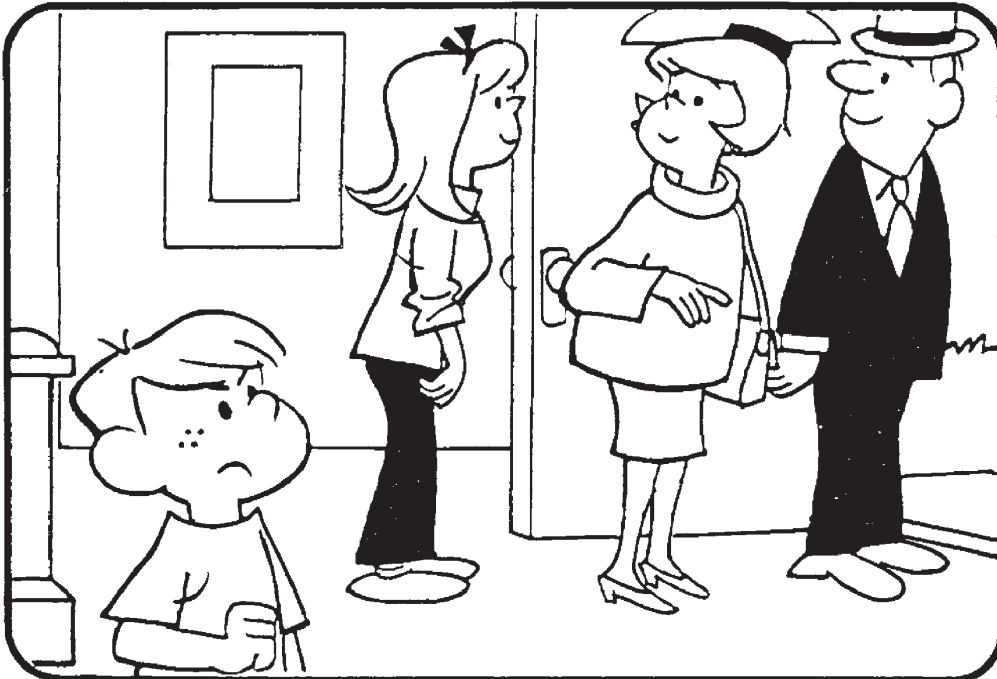
Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 16 of 69

## HOCUS-FOCUS

BY  
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Picture is missing. 2. Toothbrush is missing. 3. Body is slimmer. 4. Hat is smaller. 5. Corsage is missing. 6. Suitcase is missing.

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# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 17 of 69



\* Before you use your grater to grate cheese, give it a quick shot of nonstick spray. It will keep the cheese from gunking up in the grate. If you need softened butter for a recipe, you can grate it from frozen and it will soften up very quickly, but not melt like in a microwave.

\* Eliminate odor of peanut butter after you wash the jar by rinsing it with white vinegar. I use peanut butter jars for storing things in my shop because they are a good size and the twist off top is very secure. One time, the jar smelled like peanut butter and I guess a mouse decided he'd like to get a taste. I found the gnawed-on jar on my outside workbench. Luckily, there wasn't anything in it.

-- T.E. in Georgia

\* I have found a new way to grocery shop and stay on budget. I use my calculator as I am going through, and add up as I go. Once I hit my budget, I can't get anything else, so I have learned to get the things I really need first (most of them on the perimeter of the store), then shop the aisles for other things. I have stayed on budget for two months, when before I had been going over budget a lot! -- E.O. in Oregon

\* Clean your cellphone screen often. This is especially important if you have a smartphone. We use our fingers nonstop to touch the phone, then put it directly up to our face. It's a germ's paradise. Just remember: A quick swipe with an alcohol cloth might save you from getting the flu this season. Stay healthy!

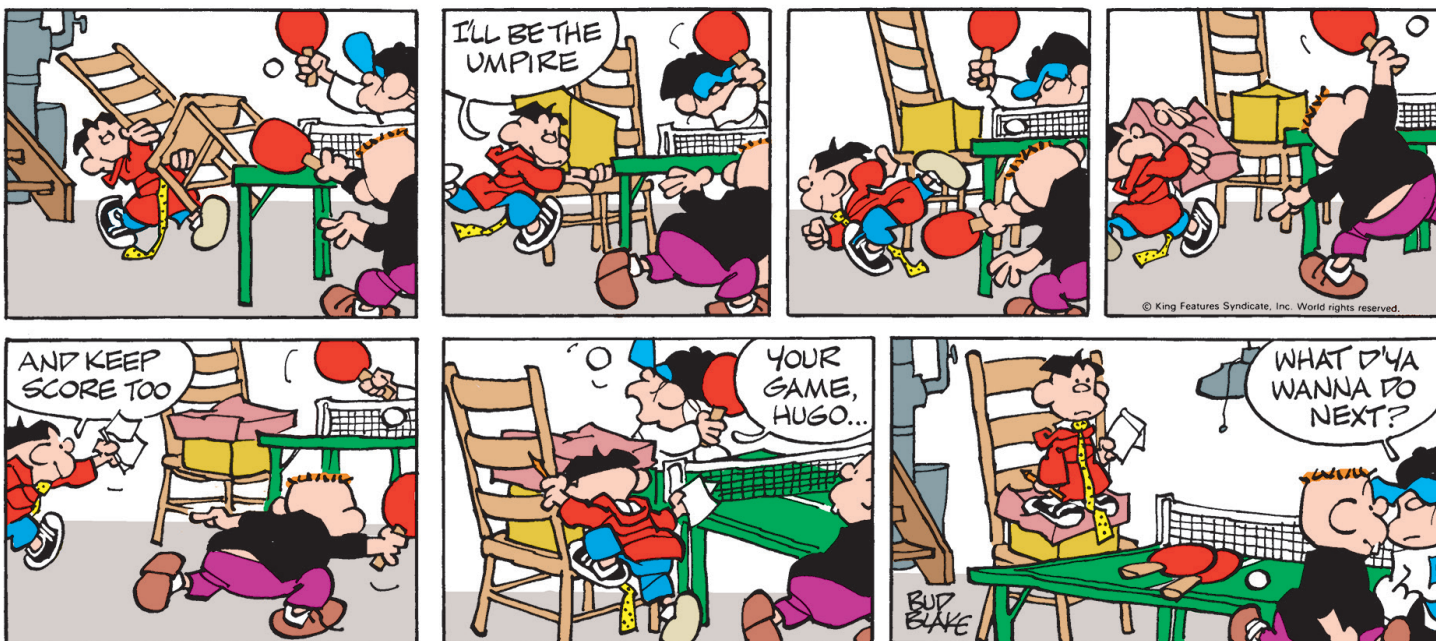
\* When heater season is in full effect -- like now -- I keep a spray bottle of water to which I add two tablespoons of liquid fabric softener. I spritz the house from time to time, and it will add humidity as well as a pleasant scent, but it also keeps my carpets from making my kids little zappers (from static buildup when dragging their feet!). -- M.A. in Ohio

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

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## TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 18 of 69

## King Crossword

### ACROSS

- 1 Jog
- 5 Cry
- 8 Goblet feature
- 12 Stead
- 13 Spanish aunt
- 14 Tortoise's opponent
- 15 Ride-sharing arrangements
- 17 Work units
- 18 Sixth sense
- 19 Forbidden acts
- 21 Stylish wrap
- 24 Flintstones' pet
- 25 Comic strip possum
- 26 "Yellow" band
- 30 Where Lux. is

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- 31 Primitive
- 32 Brit. record label
- 33 Slapstick missile
- 35 Perched on
- 36 Evergreens
- 37 Icky
- 38 Where Gauguin painted
- 41 Pen name
- 42 Out of the storm
- 43 Temporary lodging
- 48 Furnace fuel
- 49 Snaky fish
- 50 Jazzy Fitzgerald
- 51 Maintained
- 52 Lay down the lawn
- 53 Deli loaves
- 7 Historic French prison
- 8 Cyndi Lauper hit
- 9 Poi base
- 10 Thus
- 11 Disarray
- 16 Sugary suffix
- 20 Tennis champ Murray
- 21 Detail, briefly
- 22 Go sightseeing
- 23 Shrek, for one
- 24 Writer Lessing
- 26 Whims
- 27 Jared of
- "Panic Room"
- 28 Book after Joel
- 29 Shrill barks
- 31 Send forth
- 34 Off course
- 35 Sagittarius
- 37 USO audience
- 38 Dash gauge
- 39 Skin soother
- 40 Make well
- 41 Hardly hirsute
- 44 Old Olds
- 45 Layer
- 46 Pub order
- 47 " — Kapital"

### DOWN

- 1 Pampering, for short
- 2 Estuary
- 3 Not 'neath
- 4 Elvis' birth-place
- 5 Halt
- 6 Texas tea

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 19 of 69

## — King Crossword —

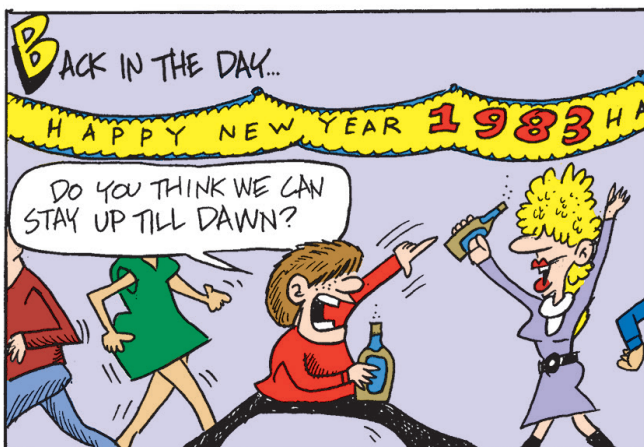
Answers

Solution time: 23 mins.

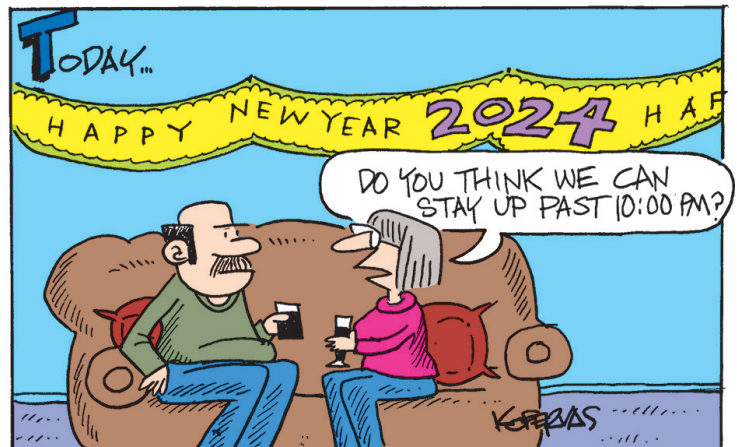
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Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



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# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 20 of 69

THIMBLE THEATRE PRESENTS  
**POPEYE**  
BY RANDY MILHOLLAND

AND AS THE SEA HAG HEARD THE PEOPLE OF SWEETHAVEN SINGING CHRISTMAS SONGS, SHE FELT HER HEART GROW FIVE TIMES BIGGER.

I FOUND YOUR HEART PILLS!

GOOD JOB, LINDEN. I DON'T NEED TO SPEND ANOTHER CHRISTMAS EVE IN THE E.R.

SANTA! YOU CAME! I'VE BEEN REALLY—

— GOOD? YOU'RE NOT SANTA!

I AM TONIGHT, KID.

"HELLO. I AM KRUNKLES. SANTA HIRED ME THROUGH iJOLLY, A YULETIDE APP TO DELIVER YOUR GIFTS."

"iJOLLY GUARANTEES ALL THE HOLIDAY CHEER AT A FRACTION OF THE COST."

I THOUGHT I'D GET TO SEE THE REAL SANTA.

WELCOME TO THE GIG ECONOMY. PLEASE RATE YOUR EXPERIENCE. FIVE STARS WOULD HELP ME OUT.

NO TIP, HUH?

I LEFT OUT COOKIES!

CAN'T WAIT TO PAY MY RENT IN BAKED GOODS.

"THANK YOU FOR USING iJOLLY FOR ALL YOUR MERRY NEEDS."

THERE ARE OTHER WAYS TO AMUSE YOURSELF THAN MESSING WITH OUR KID, CASTOR.

YEAH, BUT NAME ONE THAT'S NEARLY AS FUN!

BARNEY GOOGLE AND **SNUFFY SMITH**

ON TH' EIGHTH DAY'A CHRIS'MIS MY TRUE LOVE GAVE T'ME... EIGHT EXTRY ACES, SEVEN FRESH-CAUGHT FISHES, SIX POUNDS'A BUTTER...

FIVE O-OLD THINGS, FOUR I.O.U.S, THREE FRESH TENS, TWO REAL CUTE KIDS AN' A CHICKEN IN A GRAIN SACK !!

ON TH' NINTH DAY'A CHRIS'MIS MY TRUE LOVE GAVE T'ME... NINE NIGHTS'A DANCIN'...

ON TH' TENTH DAY'A CHRIS'MIS MY TRUE LOVE GAVE T'ME... TEN BUCKS T'BAIL ME...

ON TH' ELEVENTH DAY'A CHRIS'MIS MY TRUE LOVE GAVE T'ME... ELEVEN HOURS FER NAPPIN'...

ON TH' TWELFTH DAY'A CHRIS'MIS MY TRUE LOVE GAVE T'ME... A BIG BODACIOUS BREAKFAST, ELEVEN HOURS FER NAPPIN', TEN BUCKS T'BAIL ME, NINE NIGHTS'A DANCIN', EIGHT EXTRY ACES, SEVEN FRESH-CAUGHT FISHES, SIX POUNDS'A BUTTER, FIVE O-OLD THINGS, FOUR I.O.U.S, THREE FRESH TENS, TWO REAL CUTE KIDS AN' A CHICKEN IN A GRAIN SACK !!

MERRY CHRIS'MIS !!

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 21 of 69

Hal Foster's **Prince Valiant**  
BY SCHULTZ AND YEATES

VAL AND GAWAIN HAVE LURED THE REBELS FROM THEIR ENCAMPMENT AND ABDUCTED THEIR LEADER, RHODA— BUT ARE A BIT ABASHED TO FIND ONE SMALL WOMAN SO DIFFICULT TO CONTROL.

WHEN THEY ARE DEEP ENOUGH INTO THE FOREST THEY STOP. "WE ONLY WANT TO TALK— IF YOU DO NOT SCREAM, I WILL REMOVE THE GAG."



THE REBEL LEADER NODS AGREEMENT. VAL BEGINS: "WE KNOW IT WAS YOU WHO HAD US FREED. SIR GAWAIN IS MOST GRATEFUL. IN FACT, HE THINKS WE SHOULD AID YOUR CAUSE."

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GAWAIN INTERJECTS: "SIR ROGER IS HOLDING AN ARCHERY TOURNAMENT. IF ONE OF YOUR ARCHERS, DEAR RORY, WERE SHARP ENOUGH TO SHAME HIM BEFORE HIS PEOPLE, PERHAPS HE COULD BE FORCED TO BACK DOWN..."

"MY NAME IS RHODA, AND I COULD BEST THAT PRETENDER MYSELF— BUT HE WOULD HAVE ME SHOT DEAD ON SIGHT!"

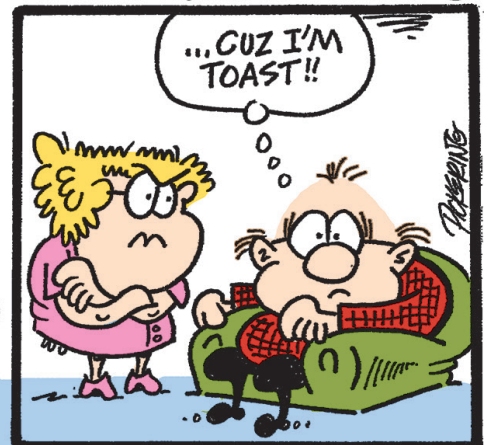
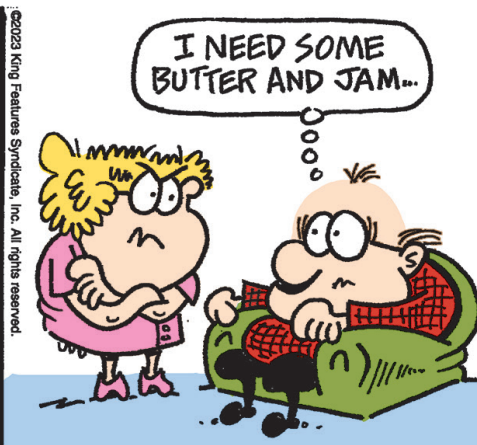
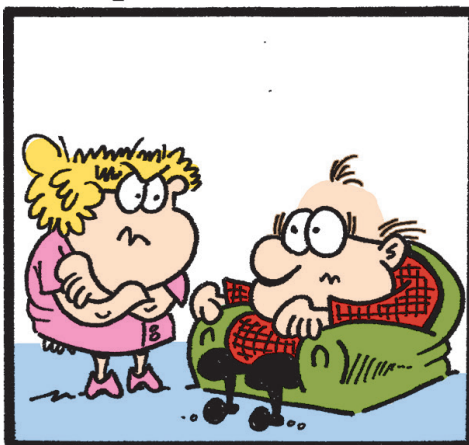
"NOT IF YOU CAME DISGUISED AS THE CHAMPION OF SIR GAWAIN— RORY."

NEXT  
**The Drunkards**

YEATES  
10/28/12

## The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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PICKERING

## SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

### Don't Give Up

This is not the world we grew up in, or even the world we knew for much of our lives. If my informal poll of friends and acquaintances is correct, we don't like it much. The current state of the world has taken an emotional, physical and social toll on us. This isn't the retirement we planned.

I hear:

We're too trusting and it gets us into trouble when we fall for scams coming to us via phone, email and the internet, and resulting in identity theft and loss of money.

The pandemic locked many of us away, and we haven't surfaced yet because Covid is still out there, as well as the annual flu and RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) this winter. Staying home seems to be the safest way to avoid it all.

And there's the television news. Some of us have started only watching the first five minutes to catch the weather and then turn to a different channel to avoid the political scene and crime reporting, some of which unfortunately is happening in our own areas. Channels showing reruns of retro programs are getting a lot of our attention now.

No, we don't like it much, and some of us wonder if we're sliding into depression.

But there are ways to regain some of what we've lost, and a trip to our physician might be the best first step. Go, and tell him or her what's going on with you. A simple blood test might point to a change in diet that could help how you feel.

At the same time, he might know of some community resources, even if it's having meals delivered.

Reconnect with friendships that matter (even if it's on the phone), ask if the library delivers books, become a pet foster parent, look for senior exercise videos on YouTube, etc.

Don't give up.

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# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 23 of 69

1. U.S. Olympian Jackie Joyner-Kersey won three gold medals competing in what two track and field events?

2. In the late 1980s, Hasbro included an action figure of what NFL player in their G.I. Joe toy line?

3. Broadcaster Lindsey Nelson became known as "Mr. New Year's Day" for his 26 years calling what college football event for CBS?

4. What is the nickname for the Miami University of Ohio's athletic teams?

5. What NASCAR team owner got into a physical altercation with driver Kyle Busch following a Truck Series race in June 2011?

6. Defensive lineman Otis Sistrunk played his entire NFL career from 1972-78 with what team?

7. Princess Anne, the only daughter of England's Queen Elizabeth II, was married to what Olympic gold-medal winning equestrian athlete from 1973-92?



by Ryan A. Berenz

## Answers

1. The heptathlon and long jump.
2. William "The Refrigerator" Perry.
3. The Cotton Bowl Classic.
4. The RedHawks.
5. Richard Childress.
6. The Oakland Raiders.
7. Mark Phillips.

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## Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





## Prepare Your Home for New Puppy

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: This Christmas, we planned to get a puppy, but it is too young to leave its mother yet. Instead of revealing the puppy on Christmas Day, we wrapped a big box that had a little note in it from Santa saying that a new puppy will arrive soon, and to write down their ideas for a name on the back of the card. Do you have any tips on how we can prepare the house for the puppy's arrival in a few weeks? -- Chet in Boise, Idaho

DEAR Chet: First, kudos to you for handling the Christmas announcement so well! That's a great way

to surprise the kids during the gift-opening while not having to supervise a puppy who has no idea what is going on. And keeping the puppy with its mother until it's at least 8 to 12 weeks old is so important.

Involving the kids in preparation for the puppy's arrival is important. Explain to them that puppies like to explore -- often with their teeth. So they need to put away their toys, clothing and anything that they don't want to get chewed up. Puppies can also get into foods and cleaning items that can be dangerous or deadly for them, so those items need to be lifted off the floor or removed from the house's common areas entirely.

Talk to them about how they can help train the new puppy. This will prepare them for how to handle, talk to and correct the puppy from the first day of its arrival.

Congratulations on the new family member! It sounds like you're doing a great job preparing the family for the arrival, and that'll make things so much easier for a new pup.

How did you help your kids adjust to a new pet? Tell us about it at [ask@pawscorner.com](mailto:ask@pawscorner.com).

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## Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

was merely his LSD-induced hallucination.

- \* Frozen cow manure was the first-ever puck used in a hockey game.
- \* The word "thug" comes from 1350s India and the Hindi word "thag," which means "deceiver" or "thief" or "swindler."
- \* Ten thousand light years away from Earth, a huge cloud 1,000 times larger than our solar system's diameter contains enough alcohol to fill 400 trillion pints. To drink it all, everyone on Earth would have to drink 300,000 pints each day for 1 billion years.
- \* A violin known as "the Blackbird," carved entirely from stone, produces sound comparable to traditional wooden violins.
- \* Research has shown that people born in September, October and November are more likely to live 100 years or longer.
- \* French performer Michel Lotito, aka "Monsieur Mangetout," or "Mr. Eat All," could hardly be accused of being a picky eater, having earned a Guinness World Record for strangest diet. His gastronomic feats included downing bicycles, razor blades and even an entire airplane.
- \* Much like humans, chimpanzees use strategic high ground for reconnaissance on rival groups during "chimp warfare."

Thought for the Day: "Every day the clock resets. Your wins don't matter. Your failures don't matter. Don't stress on what was, fight for what could be." -- Sean Higgins

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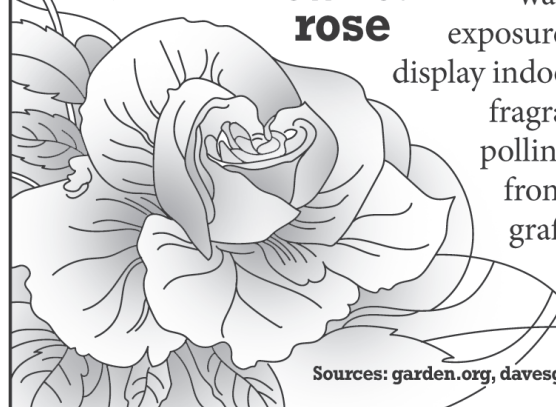
\* In 1837, Thomas Saverland took Caroline Newton to court for biting off part of his nose after he forcibly kissed her at a party.

\* The original Xbox had sound snippets of real space missions.

\* Korean college students once launched a protest against the amount of air in potato chip bags by building a raft out of them and sailing it across a river.

\* When Michael Orchard broke into his neighbor's burning home to rescue their dog, his heart was in the right place but his timing wasn't: The house fire

### The Garden Bug



### The "New Year" rose

This showy orange rose can display multiple blooms throughout spring, summer and fall. Its growth habit is upright, with 3'-4' possible in height. It likes warmer climates and full-sun exposure. It does well when cut for display indoors, giving a mild, pleasant fragrance. It is very attractive to pollinators. It can be propagated from cuttings, budding and by grafting. It is resistant to black spot, mildew and "rust."

- Brenda Weaver

Sources: [garden.org](http://garden.org), [davesgarden.com](http://davesgarden.com)



by Freddy Groves

## Veteran Suicides

Operation S.A.V.E. is a Department of Veterans Affairs training program designed to prevent suicide in veterans. While the program is geared for suicide-prevention coordinators, there are points that can be helpful for family and friends of veterans who might be at risk.

The initials themselves outline parts of the program:

Signs of suicide

Asking about suicide

Validating feelings

Encouraging help and expediting treatment

Those who work or live with veterans can help stop many veteran suicides. Here are some must-have resources:

-- Go online and study the program that is given to VA suicide prevention coordinators. Google this title: Operation S.A.V.E.: VA Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training.

-- Google "veteran suicide" and look for the PDF titled "Department of Veterans Affairs Operation SAVE Suicide Prevention." As you scroll, don't miss the Myths and Misinformation section, as well as the S.A.V.E steps.

-- Go to [www.mentalhealth.va.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov) and click "Suicide Prevention." You'll find a full menu of choices, including warning signs and resources.

The official guesstimate of the number of veteran suicides is 22 per day. As more people and groups read the "Suicide Data Report," they eventually come to the conclusion that the number is low, for many reasons: Not all states participated in the survey and didn't provide numbers. Information in some cases was provided by funeral homes (who got their information from family members) and not by the VA. Information from states with large veteran populations wasn't used. Information wasn't current, and so on. In other words, the problem might be even worse.

For more immediate help for yourself or someone you know, dial 988 and press 1. Or you can chat online at [www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net). Or send a text message to 838255 for free support.

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# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 27 of 69

## Wishing Well®

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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. GEOGRAPHY: In which city is the Brandenburg Gate located?
2. TELEVISION: Which 1990s TV show catapulted actor George Clooney to fame?
3. MOVIES: Which department store is featured in the 1947 holiday film, "Miracle on 34th Street"?
4. LEGAL: What kind of legislative body is bicameral?
5. FOOD & DRINK: What is the main ingredient in guacamole?
6. LITERATURE: In "The Night Before Christmas" poem, how many reindeer does Santa Claus have?
7. CHEMISTRY: Which chemical element's symbol is C?
8. HISTORY: Who is the first female chancellor of Germany?
9. MUSIC: Which female French singer had a hit song with "La Vie en Rose"?
10. SCIENCE: When did the Krakatoa volcano have its last major eruption?

### Answers

1. Berlin, Germany.
2. "ER."
3. Macy's.
4. A legislative body with two chambers, like House and Senate.
5. Avocado.
6. Eight.
7. Carbon.
8. Angela Merkel.
9. Edith Piaf.
10. 1883.

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South Dakota Governor

**Kristi Noem**



**South Dakota:** *Under God, the People Rule*

## The Greatest Gift

During the holiday season, we are surrounded by many gifts. I'm sure we can all remember growing up and not being able to sleep the night before Christmas. The anticipation and the excitement for the presents that would be underneath the tree the next morning was just too much to handle. Through all of that excitement, though, I hope we can all remember the greatest gift of them all: Jesus Christ.

I remember one year my parents got me a new saddle for Christmas. Now, this was significant because normally my mom did all the shopping, but I knew that my dad had to go and pick it out. Another year, we went on a scavenger hunt all over the ranch looking for a big family present. We finally found it and it was a brand-new snowmobile. This was very special because all of our friends had snowmobiles and we didn't. And searching for it as a family just made it even more special.

As we all get older, the gifts of the holidays shift from the material things that we unwrap on Christmas morning to the people we spend it with – the time that we all get to share together. I know that as my own kiddos have grown up and moved out of the house, I cherish the moments that our whole family gets to spend together even more than I did before. Christmas is one of the rare times when we all get to be under one roof again.

During this year's abundance of gifts and giving, we shouldn't forget that Jesus Christ is the greatest gift of all. The promise of Jesus' birth and the hope that it brought to the world will never grow old. It will never be broken. And we should never throw away that gift.

John 1:14 reads, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

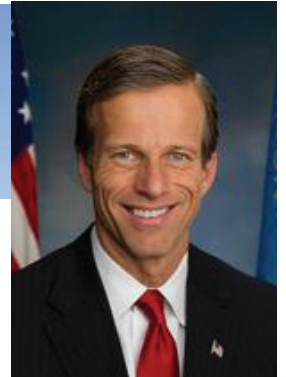
Jesus, the Son of God, became fully human. He humbled himself – knowing that He would suffer beyond what any of us could ever imagine – to save us. And Christmas is the day that we celebrate His birth. It's important for us all to remember how great a gift Jesus is.

As we head into a week full of gifts and time spent with loved ones, I encourage you to remember the greatest gift. We live in a world that is so often full of anger and violence. I think that we could all really benefit from slowing down and remembering Jesus this Christmas.

I pray that we are able to teach our kids and our grandkids that Jesus is the greatest gift. He is worthy of our love and praise every day of the year, but especially on Christmas.

This Christmas, I am thankful for the greatest gift the world has ever received: Jesus Christ. Bryon and I are wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas. God bless you.

**John Thune**  
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



## Home for Christmas

The holiday season is a time of homecoming for many Americans. This year, more than a third of South Dakotans will travel for the holidays, many of them going home to be with family – a feeling unlike most others at Christmastime. It can be a trip down memory lane as we celebrate cherished traditions, reconnect with loved ones, and reminisce about the good (and maybe the not so good) times of holidays past. No matter how, where, or with whom you spend the holiday season, it's a time to enjoy life's greatest gifts and to celebrate God's gift to the world: His son, Jesus.

Whether growing up in Murdo, raising my own family, or now with our home filled with my daughters, sons in-law, and grandkids, Christmas has always meant family. Christmas in Murdo was always a wonderful time of year. During the Christmas season, our family would go caroling at our neighbors' houses. On Christmas Eve, we would pile into the car for the trip to grandma's. The smell of lutefisk and lefse still takes me back to those holiday dinners. If there was snow, we would run over to Jackson Avenue with our sleds, enjoying every last bit of the days off from school.

We have since substituted clam chowder for the traditional Norwegian dishes we had when I was a kid, but Christmas Eve still has that same warm feeling. We attend our Christmas Eve church service and come home for chowder and to open gifts under the tree. The excitement on our daughters' faces, and now our five grandchildren's infectious joy, is something I look forward to and cherish each year.

Like a lot of families, we also have a tradition of reading The Christmas Story on Christmas Eve. Revisiting the story of Jesus' birth is a reminder of the reason for the season, and it's one of my favorite parts of our Christmas celebration. As I read the verses, I think about that first Christmas when God became man. An angel delivered the good news to the shepherds in the field, and the Magi followed a distant star to the manger. The Christmas Story is an incredible reminder of God's love for us, and the good news that His son came to earth for us.

Christmas is more than just a place on our calendar; there's a spirit about the holiday season that sets it apart and keeps us in eager anticipation the rest of the year. The sounds, smells, stories, and the feeling of home all come together to make it a truly joyful season. From my family to yours, may you have a very merry Christmas and a happy new year!

###

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 30 of 69



CONGRESSMAN  
**DUSTY JOHNSON**  
Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



## All I Want for Christmas

The year may be coming to a close, but it doesn't look like our southern border is.

A year ago, my Republican colleagues and I made a commitment to secure the border and combat illegal immigration. While immigration is an important part of our country, the current system is broken and needs reform. An open border only increases the stress on our immigration processing systems.

Recently, our southern border had its highest number of migrant encounters in a single day: 12,600. Because of these sustained high crossing numbers, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol has announced the closure of vital cross-border rail operations in Eagle Pass and El Paso, Texas, stalling essential trade between the U.S. and Mexico. The Biden administration's handling of the border crisis is now causing disruptions to our supply chain, just in time for Christmas. The bandages the administration is putting on the border are not solving the problem. They're only causing more stress on local communities across America.

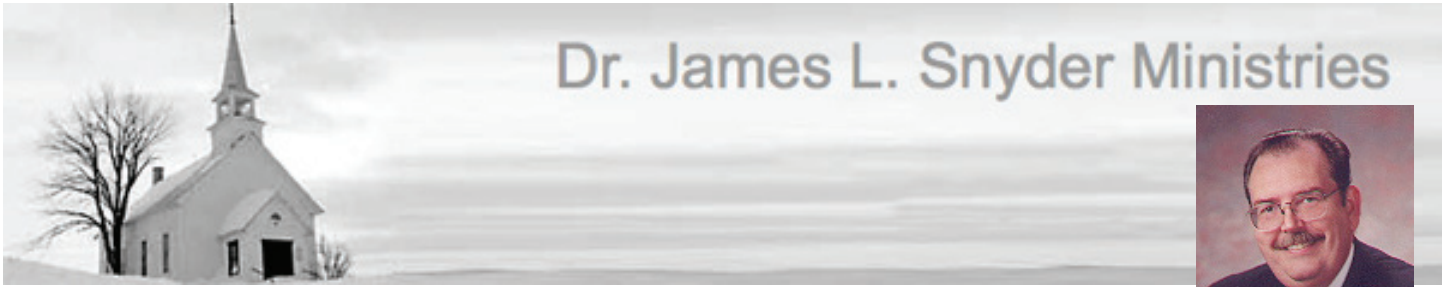
The House has passed H.R. 2, the Secure the Border Act, with the strongest border policies ever advanced out of the House. It's time for the Senate and the administration to follow suit and pass strong border policies.

All I want for Christmas is a secure southern border, and I will do everything I can to ensure we provide necessary border security and make important reforms to our immigration process.

This year has been one for the history books. House Republicans have taken many steps to fulfill our commitment to America, but there is still work to be done. I wish you and your family a merry Christmas and I look forward to what we can accomplish in the new year!

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 31 of 69



## Another Jingle Bell Christmas in the Tree

It doesn't seem possible another Christmas has come and gone. They come and go so fast that I'm not sure I can keep up with all of this. Every year, our family has more people, which is never bad.

One thing we do is gather as a family around the Christmas tree and enjoy a wonderful time of fellowship. We will open our Christmas gifts together and just laugh at all of those gifts.

After the gifts are opened, we play a game called "Jingle Bells on the Tree."

What it is, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage will get together a bunch of Jingle Bells. They will be different colors: blue, yellow, red and green.

This game is new to me, but with The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage, nothing seems to be new. Along with the colored Jingle Bells, there is a little box filled with tickets: each ticket has one of the four colors associated with the Jingle Bells.

The idea of the game is that the box with the little tickets is passed around, and everyone would have to pick a ticket. Now, the color of that ticket matches the color of one of the Jingle Bells.

If, for example, you pick a blue ticket, you would have to get up and go to the blue Jingle Bell and jingle it for at least one minute. While that was happening, everybody was clapping and singing, "Jingle Bells."

I'm not sure where she came up with that idea, but I never know where she comes up with any of her ideas. But everybody enjoys the little game.

As I was sitting there participating in the game, the kitchen table was behind me. On the kitchen table, I had my coffee. I occasionally took a sip and then put it back on the table. But, also on that table were several plates of Christmas cookies. These were the cookies that The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage had baked in anticipation of our Christmas gathering.

I never thought too much about it, but this year, just before everybody came for the Christmas dinner and celebration, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage told me I could only have one cookie. As she said that, she handed me one cookie and then said, "This is your one cookie. Do you understand?"

Of course, I understood. I smiled and shook my head as I munched that delicious little cookie.

A thought began dancing in my head as we played the game. I love it when I have a thought, which, by the way, is very rare.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 32 of 69**

That thought had to do with the cookies on the table behind me. All the cookie plates were within reach because God gave me long arms. Now I know why I have such long arms.

How am I going to take advantage of this family game time? Nobody was paying attention to me; everybody was watching the person going up to ring the Jingle Bell on the tree.

I casually reached back, got my coffee, took a sip and returned the cup. When I did that, my thoughts began to crystallize.

It boils down to this: whenever someone picked a ticket and went up to the tree to ring the appropriate Jingle Bell, I could reach behind me and pick a cookie. Everybody was so focused on the game that nobody realized what I was doing.

I must confess I was smiling quite a bit because I was getting away with something, and I did not believe I would get caught.

I cheered the next person going up to ring the Jingle Bell as loud as I could get away with. Everybody was focused on that. While that was happening, my right arm reached behind me to collect the next cookie. I munched on that cookie while everybody laughed, clapped and sang Jingle Bells.

I have never enjoyed a family game as much as this one. I don't remember how many cookies I ate then, but I enjoyed every one.

Of course, there was that time when I had to pull my ticket, then go up, and ring the Jingle Bell, which cost me my next cookie. But I needed to keep the ruse moving to collect some more cookies.

Nobody makes better cookies than The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. I tell her that all the time, and once in a while, she will give me a cookie when I say it. But only one.

Finally, the family time was over, and everybody had gone home. The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and I sat in the living room smiling about our wonderful time. I looked at her and said, "We have a wonderful family and it was a great time tonight."

Looking at me, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage said, "You did not eat any of the Christmas cookies tonight, did you?"

I was unsure what she knew, so I said, "I don't think I did."

Still looking at me, she said, "Then why do you have cookie crumbs in your mustache?"

When you're caught, you're caught.

Later, I thought of a Bible verse in Numbers 32:23, "...be sure your sin will find you out."

You will eventually be found out, no matter how careful you think you are. God knows everything, and we will be held accountable. The best advice is to be honest.



# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 33 of 69

## EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: What are some New Year's Resolutions I can make to help the environment?

-- M. Lind, Sturges, MI

Given the escalating environmental challenges facing our planet, directing some of our New Year's aspirations toward eco-conscious endeavors can make a tangible difference. Luckily there are lots of ways to put your resolve to work for the planet...

For starters, one of the most impactful resolutions is to adopt a more mindful approach to consumption. Commit to reducing waste by embracing practices like reusing, repurposing and recycling. Shift to buying reusable items and those with minimal packaging. Support brands committed to sustainable practices. Minimize your use of single-use plastics, another way to make a big impact without much effort. Choose stainless-steel water bottles, cloth shopping bags and glass food containers. Say no to plastic straws, cutlery and excessive packaging whenever possible.

Making more sustainable food choices is yet another way to make 2024 greener than 2023. Adopting a more plant-based diet or reduce meat consumption to significantly reduce environmental impact. Pledge to support local, organic and sustainably sourced foods. Also, strive to reduce food waste by planning meals, composting organic waste and supporting initiatives that redistribute surplus food to those in need.

Another resolution that of us can make is to reduce personal carbon emissions. Embrace alternatives to fossil fuel-based transportation by walking, cycling, carpooling or using public transit. Also, consider investing in energy-efficient appliances, using renewable energy sources, and supporting initiatives that offset carbon emissions. While they might not be top of mind, changing up daily habits can also reduce your carbon footprint and overall environmental impact. Conserve water by fixing leaks, taking shorter showers and using water-saving appliances. Grow your own food, support local biodiversity by planting native species, and prioritize eco-friendly practices in your daily routine.

Another way to create positive change is to speak out more for environmental policies and initiatives. Support community groups and environmental organizations, and join in local clean-up efforts or conservation projects. Engage in discussions, educate others, and advocate for sustainable practices in your workplace, schools and social circles. Spread awareness about environmental issues and inspire others to take action. Share information on social media, organize educational events, or start a community garden or recycling program. Encourage friends, family and colleagues to join in your eco-friendly endeavors, fostering a collective effort toward a greener future.

Making a resolution is just the first step—commitment is key to achieving lasting change. Progress may require adjustments and perseverance, but every step contributes to a healthier planet. By incorporating these resolutions into your New Year's goals, you become an active participant in the global movement toward environmental stewardship. Together, let us embark on this journey to protect and preserve the natural world we all call home. Cheers to a more sustainable, eco-conscious year ahead!

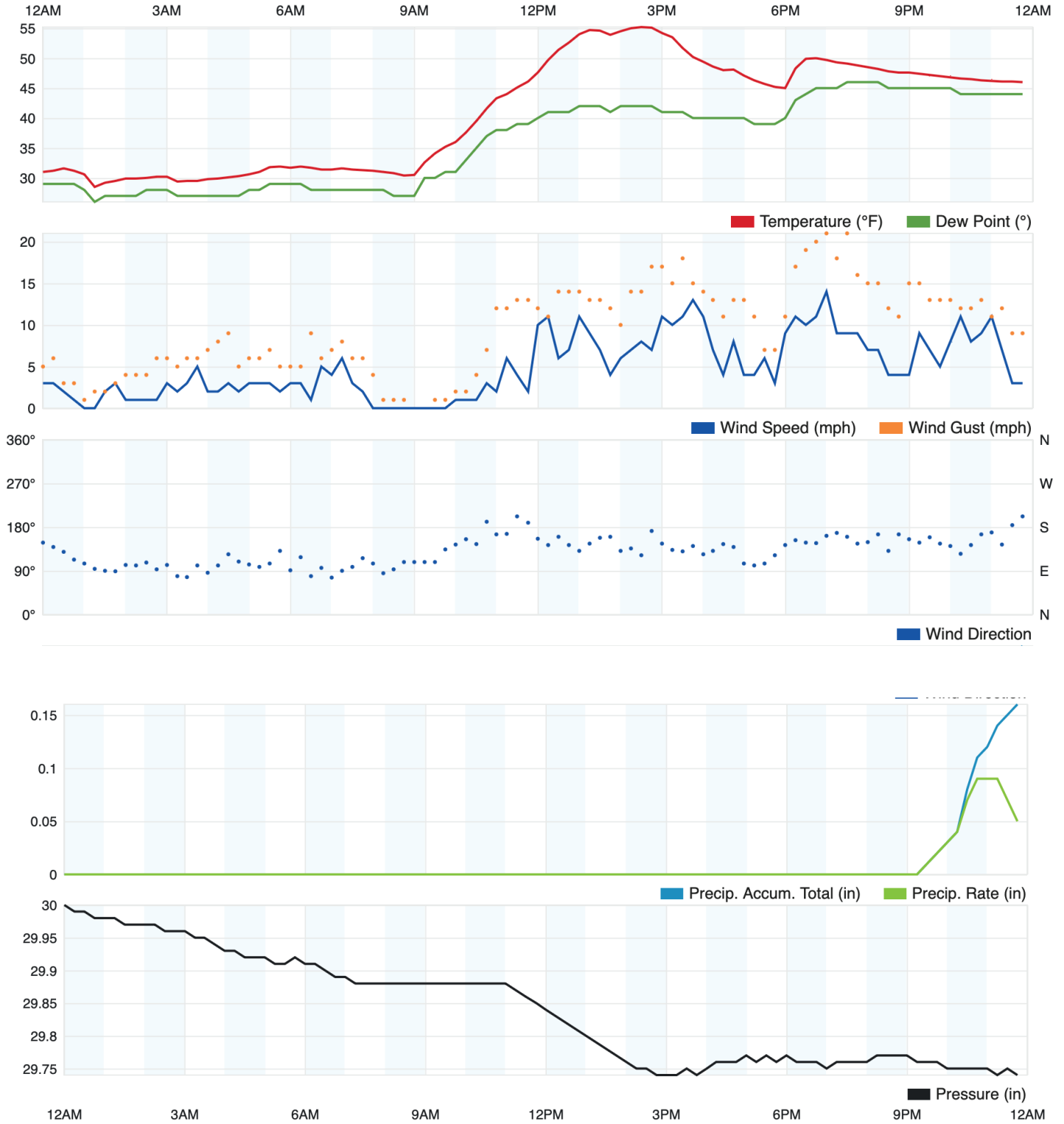


**It's that time of year again when you have to make some New Year's resolutions. How about factoring in climate and the environment this year?** Credit: Pexels..

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 34 of 69

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 35 of 69

## Winter Storm Watch

**URGENT - WINTER WEATHER MESSAGE**

**National Weather Service Aberdeen SD**

**155 AM CST Sun Dec 24 2023**

SDZ006-019-241600-

/O.EXA.KABR.WS.A.0007.231225T1200Z-231227T0000Z/

Brown-Clark-

Including the cities of Aberdeen and Clark

155 AM CST Sun Dec 24 2023

...WINTER STORM WATCH IN EFFECT FROM MONDAY MORNING THROUGH TUESDAY AFTERNOON...

\* **WHAT...**Heavy mixed precipitation possible. Total snow accumulations of 3 to 5 inches and ice accumulations of one tenth to two tenths of an inch possible. Winds could gust as high as 50 mph.

\* **WHERE...**Brown and Clark Counties.

\* **WHEN...**From Monday morning through Tuesday afternoon.

\* **IMPACTS...**Plan on slippery road conditions. Areas of blowing snow could significantly reduce visibility. The hazardous conditions could impact the morning or evening commute.

**PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...**

Monitor the latest forecasts for updates on this situation.

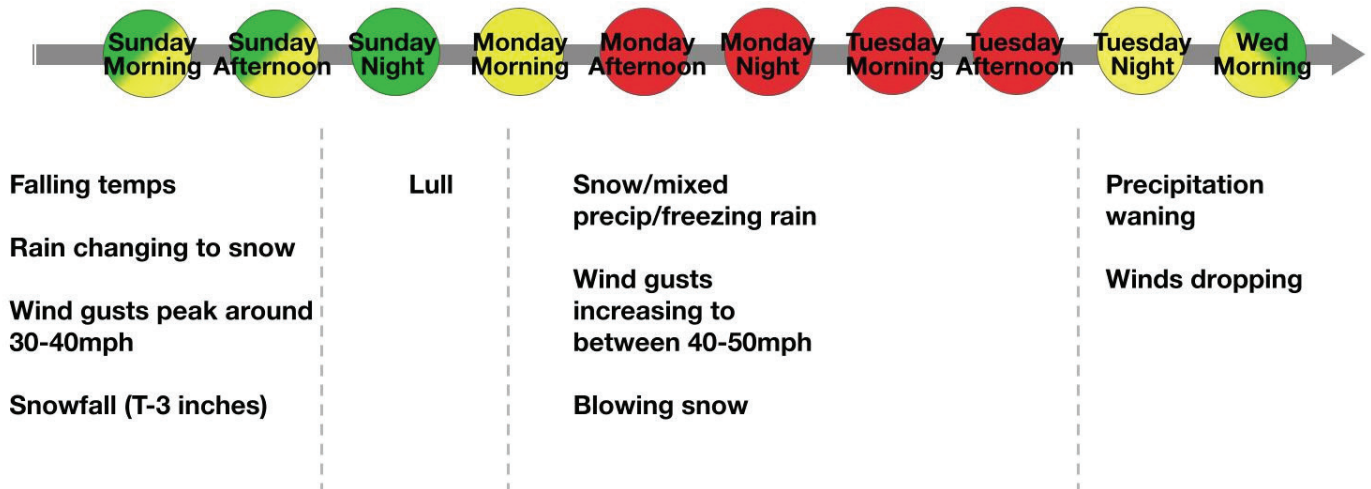


## Winter Storm Timeline

December 24, 2023

4:58 AM

Consider alternative travel arrangements during periods of highest impacts



Risk Levels

Little to None

Minor

Moderate

Major

Extreme










National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

# Broton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 36 of 69

| Sun<br>Dec 24   | Mon<br>Dec 25   | Tue<br>Dec 26   | Wed<br>Dec 27   | Thu<br>Dec 28  | Fri<br>Dec 29   | Sat<br>Dec 30   |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 38°F  | 31°F  | 34°F  | 34°F  | 29°F   | 28°F  | 25°F  |
| 23°F  | 26°F  | 27°F  | 17°F  | 14°F   | 13°F  | 11°F  |
| NNW   | N   | NNE   | N   | NW   | WSW   | NW  |
| 21 MPH  | 27 MPH  | 21 MPH  | 10 MPH  | 5 MPH  | 8 MPH   | 8 MPH   |
| 80%   | 80%   | 90%   | 40%   |  |   |   |



## Major Impacts For Holiday Travel

December 24, 2023

4:49 AM

### Key Messages

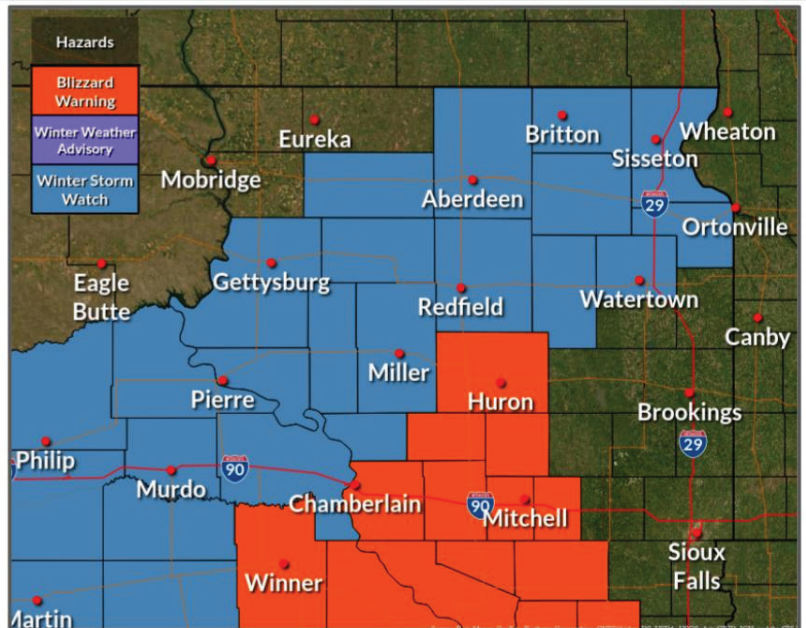
- Two systems to bring varied winter weather to the region (Today and Monday-Tuesday)
- **Today's system:** Transition to **snow** from west to east with pockets of freezing drizzle. Northwest wind gusts increase to 30-40mph.
- **Monday-Tuesday system:** Mainly **snow**, though with a risk for **mixed precipitation** and **ice** across northeastern SD. Winds increase to 40-50 mph

### NEW What Has Changed

- A **Winter Storm Watch** has been expanded to cover much of the forecast area: 6AM Monday and expires Tuesday at 6PM.

### Next Scheduled Update

- Sunday afternoon



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Continue to monitor for changes to the forecast as waves of moisture move across the region. While we expect minor impacts from snow and ice today, a more impressive system Monday/Tuesday is expected to have significant impacts for holiday travel.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 37 of 69

## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 55 °F at 2:31 PM (Record high)** (54 in 1893)

**Low Temp: 28 °F at 1:14 AM**

**Wind: 21 mph at 6:52 PM**

**Precip: : 0.15 (+.06 since midnight)**

Day length: 8 hours, 46 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 50 in 1943

Record Low: -24 in 1996

Average High: 26

Average Low: 5

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.46

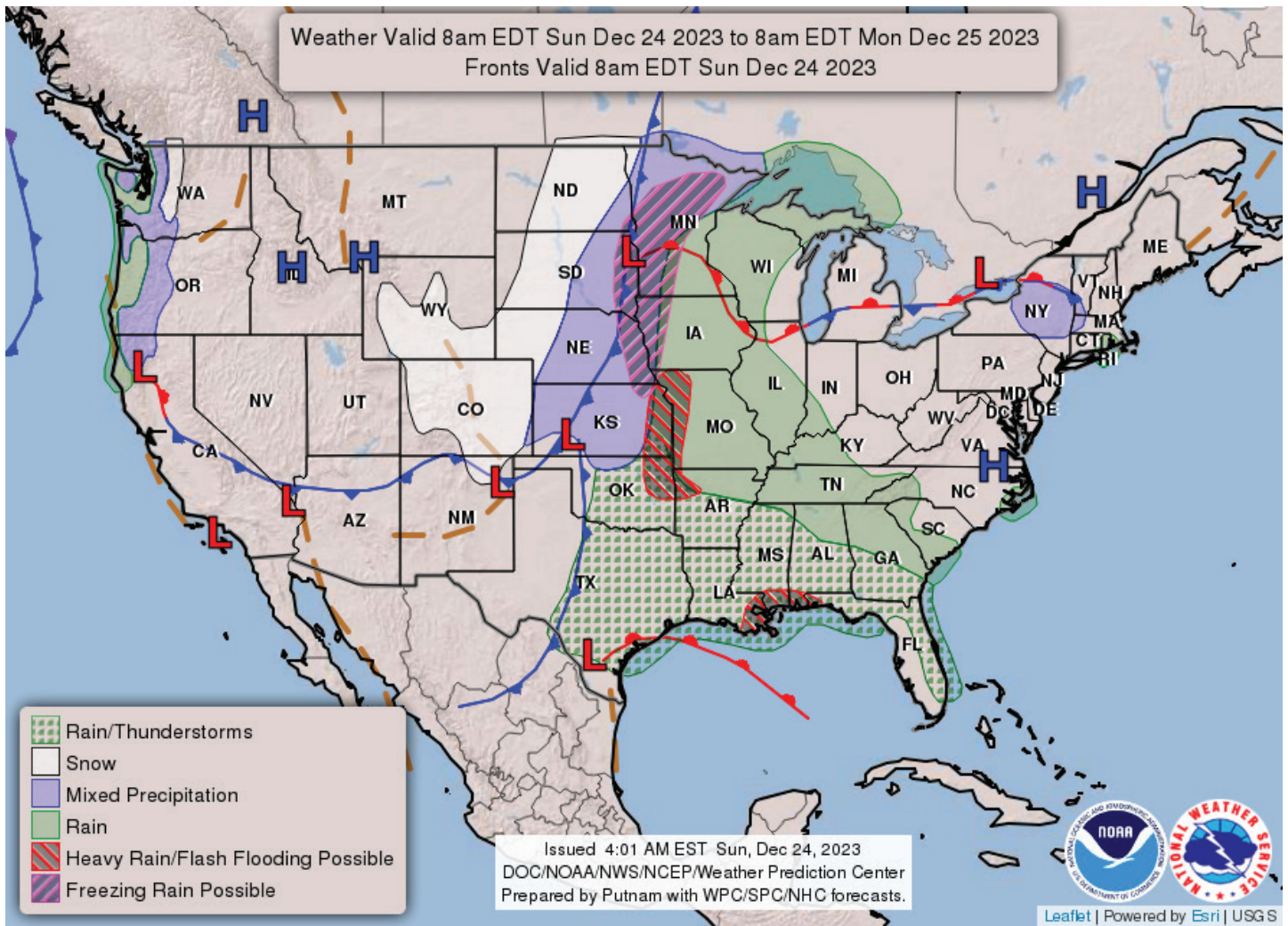
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.21

Average Precip to date: 21.67

Precip Year to Date: 23.38

Sunset Tonight: 4:55:11 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:09:05 am



# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 38 of 69

## Today in Weather History

December 24, 1985: Snow fell over western South Dakota on December 23, with the greatest amounts in the northern Black Hills. Strong winds gusting to 50-60 mph developed over the western part of the state on the evening of December 23rd and continued into the morning of the 24th, with gusts to above 40 mph in the east. The winds caused ground blizzard conditions in the northern and central sections of South Dakota, and many vehicles were reported in ditches. Many people were stranded for a time in Martin in Bennett County. Several roads were blocked entirely during this time, such as Highway 248 near Murdo in Jones County.

December 24, 1992: A deep area of low pressure traveled across the United States/Canada border, dragging a cold front southward across South Dakota and Minnesota by Christmas Day. Southerly winds gusted up to 50 mph over western Minnesota on the 23rd in advance of the storm, causing ground blizzard conditions. As the arctic cold front swept across the area, temperatures tumbled from the 20s and 30s to well below zero by Christmas morning. Wind gusts were up to 50 mph behind the front, causing ground blizzard conditions and wind chill readings from 40 to 60 degrees below zero. A church that was under construction in Litchfield in Meeker County, Minnesota, was destroyed by strong winds. Many motorists were stranded on Christmas Eve and spent the night at area homes and motels. Interstate 94 from Alexandria to Moorhead, MN, was closed for nearly eight hours. High winds gusted up to 55 mph in the Watertown, SD area, causing a steel frame building under construction to collapse sometime between 9 and 10 pm CST.

December 24, 2009: A broad upper-level low-pressure area over the Upper Midwest associated with an intense surface low-pressure area brought widespread heavy snow along with blizzard conditions to central and northeast South Dakota as well as west-central Minnesota. The storm was a slow mover and produced several rounds of snow over three days. Total snowfall amounts were from 7 to as much as 25 inches. The heavy snow combined with winds of 25 to 40 mph with gusts to 50 mph brought widespread blowing and drifting snow with visibilities frequently less than a quarter of a mile. This blizzard ranked in the top three for South Dakota snowfall with a state average of 15.4 inches. Most of the state received 10 inches of snow or more with many locations with 20 inches or more. Pollock in north-central South Dakota set an all-time high three-day snowfall total with 17 inches. Before the onset of the storm, the Governor declared a state of emergency for South Dakota. Large portions of both Interstates 29 and 90 across South Dakota were closed late on Thursday, December 24th. Both Interstates were closed through Christmas Day and into Saturday, December 26th. There were some stranded holiday travelers due to the road closings, along with a few rescues. Most roads were reopened by Sunday morning, December 27th. There were also several vehicle accidents with nothing serious. Several airports were also closed throughout the storm, along with a few spotty power outages occurring in Lyman County in central South Dakota. Total snowfall amounts over the three days predominantly ranged from 1 to 2 feet. Snowfall amounts with a foot or more included; 12 inches at Mobridge, Eureka, Waubay, and Eagle Butte; 13 inches at Highmore and Miller; 14 inches at

Castlewood, Summit, Watertown, Pierre, and Ree Heights; 15 inches at Groton, Gettysburg, Webster, Wilmot, Hayti, and McLaughlin; 16 inches at McIntosh, east of Hayes and east of Hosmer; 17 inches at Timber Lake, Britton, and Pollock; 18 inches near Victor; 20 inches near Keldron; 22 inches at Murdo; 23 inches at Sisseton and 25 inches at Kennebec. In west-central Minnesota Wheaton received 11 inches, Browns Valley received 15 inches with 16 inches at Ortonville and Artichoke Lake.

1851: The Library of Congress caught fire. About 35,000 of the Library's 55,000 volumes were destroyed.

1963: At 0326 CDT on December 24th, 1963, a new all-time low for Memphis occurred with a reading of -13°F. The record still stands today.

1968: The crew of Apollo 8 took this photo, later dubbed "Earthrise," on December 24th, 1968. During a broadcast that night, pilot Jim Lovell said: "The vast loneliness is awe-inspiring, and it makes you realize just what you have back there on Earth."

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### THE ANGEL'S VISIT TO MARY

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"

Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think of what the angel could mean. "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"

Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and He will be called the Son of God. What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she's now in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."

Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And though the angel left her, she was not alone.

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for Your presence and the peace and protection that is ours when we are obedient to Your voice. Give us Your courage to be faithful to Your plan to fulfill Your purpose for our lives. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Luke 1:26-38 Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and will name him Jesus.



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

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 40 of 69

## 2023 Community Events

- 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)  
01/31/2023-02/03/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Drop Off 6-9pm, Community Center  
02/04/2023-02/05/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Sale 1-5pm, Community Center  
02/25/2023 Littles and Me, Art Making 10-11:30am, Wage Memorial Library  
03/25/2023 Spring Vendor Fair, 10am-3pm, Community Center  
04/01/2023 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm  
04/06/2023 Groton Career Development Event  
04/08/2023 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)  
06/16/2023 SDSU Alumni and Friends Golf Tournament  
06/17/2023 Groton Triathlon  
07/04/2023 Couples Firecracker Golf Tournament  
07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)  
07/26/2023 GGA Burger Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course  
08/04/2023 Wine on Nine 6pm  
08/10/2023 Family Fun Fest, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.  
08/11/2023 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament  
09/08/2023 Family Fun Fest 3:30-5:30pm  
09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm  
09/09-10/2023 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport  
09/10/2023 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am  
09/10/2023 Emmanuel Lutheran Church Sunday School Rally 9:00am  
09/10/2023 7th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 4-6pm  
09/15/2023 Homecoming Parade  
10/13/2023 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am  
10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm  
10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm  
10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm  
11/05/2023 St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church Fall Dinner, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.  
11/11/2023 Groton American Legion Annual Turkey Party 6:30 pm.  
11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm  
11/26/2023 Snow Queen Contest, 4 p.m.  
12/02/2023 Live & Silent Auctions at Olive Grove Golf Course 4pm-close



# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 41 of 69

## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.22.23

10 26 36 54 69 4

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$73,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.23.23

16 22 23 24 50 9

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$3,050,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.23.23

3 9 11 14 48 5

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 4 Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.23.23

4 14 19 29 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$20,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.23.23

20 37 39 40 43 1

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.23.23

9 14 17 18 53 6

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$638,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### **A weekend of combat in Gaza kills more than a dozen Israeli soldiers, a sign of Hamas' entrenchment**

By TIA GOLDENBERG, WAFAA SHURAFU and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — More than a dozen Israeli soldiers were killed in combat in the Gaza Strip over the weekend, the Israeli military said Sunday, in some of the bloodiest days of battle since the start of Israel's ground offensive in late October and a sign that Hamas is still putting up a fight despite weeks of brutal war.

The mounting death toll among Israeli troops is likely to play an important factor in Israeli public support for the war, which was sparked when Hamas-led militants stormed communities in southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing 1,200 and taking 240 hostage. The war has devastated parts of the Gaza Strip, killed more than 20,000 Palestinians and displaced nearly 85% of Gaza's 2.3 million people.

Israelis still stand firmly behind the country's stated goals of crushing Hamas' governing and military capabilities and releasing the remaining 129 captives. That support has stayed mostly steady despite rising international pressure against Israel's offensive and the soaring death toll and unprecedented suffering among Palestinians.

But the growing number of dead soldiers could undermine that support. Soldiers' deaths are a sensitive and emotional topic in Israel, a country with compulsory military service for most Jews.

The names of fallen soldiers are announced at the top of hourly newscasts, and in a small country of about 9 million people, virtually every family knows a relative, friend or co-worker who has lost a family member in war.

#### HAMAS EXACTS A PRICE

The 14 Israeli soldiers killed on Friday and Saturday died in battles in central and southern Gaza, an indication of how Hamas is still putting up tough resistance against advancing Israeli troops, even as Israel claims to have dealt a serious blow to the militant group.

According to Israeli Army Radio, four soldiers were killed when their vehicle was struck by an anti-tank missile. The others were killed in separate, sporadic fighting.

Another soldier was killed in northern Israel by fire from the Lebanese Shiite militant group Hezbollah, which has kept up low-level fighting with Israel since the war with Hamas erupted, raising fears of a wider regional conflict.

Their deaths bring the number of Israeli soldiers killed since the ground offensive began to 153.

"The war exacts a very heavy price from us but we have no choice but to continue fighting," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told a meeting of his Cabinet Sunday. "We are continuing with all the force, until the end, until victory, until we reach all our goals."

Even if Israelis have been supportive of the war effort, there has been widespread anger against Netanyahu's government, which many criticize for failing to protect civilians on Oct. 7 and promoting policies that allowed Hamas to gain strength over the years.

On Saturday night, thousands of people demonstrated in pouring rain in Tel Aviv, chanting "Bibi, Bibi, we don't want you anymore," referring to Netanyahu by his nickname.

Netanyahu has avoided accepting responsibility for the military and policy failures leading up to Oct. 7, saying he would answer tough questions once the fighting is over.

#### EXPANDING THE OFFENSIVE

On Saturday, Israeli military spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said forces were expanding their offensive in northern and southern Gaza and troops were fighting in "complex areas" in Khan Younis, Gaza's second-largest city, where Israel believes Hamas leaders are hiding.

Israel's offensive has been one of the most devastating military campaigns in recent history and has claimed a staggering toll on Palestinian civilians. More than two-thirds of the 20,000 killed were women

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 44 of 69

and children, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-controlled Gaza, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said Sunday morning that a 13-year-old boy was shot and killed by an Israeli drone attack while inside the building of al-Amal Hospital in Khan Younis. It provided no further details.

Palestinians reported heavy Israeli bombardment and gunfire Sunday morning in the town of Jabaliya, an area north of Gaza City that Israel had previously claimed to control. Sounds of explosions and gunfire echoed across the town with Israeli warplanes flying over the area, they said. Hamas' military arm said its fighters shelled Israeli troops in Jabaliya and Jabaliya refugee camp.

"There are bombings and fierce battles during the night," said Assad Radwan, a Palestinian fisherman from Jabaliya. "Sounds of explosions and gunfire never stopped."

On Saturday, rescuers and hospital officials said that more than 90 Palestinians, including dozens from an extended family, were killed in Israeli airstrikes on two homes in Gaza.

Israel has come under heavy international criticism for the rising civilian death toll, widespread damage and deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Israel blames Hamas for the high civilian death toll, citing the militants' use of crowded residential areas and tunnels. Israel has launched thousands of airstrikes since Oct. 7, and has largely refrained from commenting on specific attacks.

Israel says it has killed thousands of Hamas militants, including about 2,000 in the past three weeks since expanding its offensive to southern Gaza, but has not presented evidence. It says it is dismantling Hamas' vast underground tunnel network and killing off top Hamas commanders — an operation that leaders have said could take months.

## INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE

The mounting casualties on both sides came days after the United Nations Security Council passed a watered-down resolution calling for the speedy delivery of humanitarian aid for hungry and desperate Palestinians and the release of all the hostages, but not for a cease-fire.

Following the U.N. resolution, it was not immediately clear how and when aid deliveries would accelerate. Trucks enter through two crossings — Rafah on the border with Egypt and Kerem Shalom on the border with Israel. On Friday, fewer than 100 trucks entered, the U.N. said — far below the daily average of 500 before the war.

Both crossings were closed Saturday by mutual agreement among Israel, Egypt and the U.N., Israeli officials said.

Filippo Grandi, the U.N. high commissioner for refugees, on Sunday reiterated calls by other top U.N. officials for a humanitarian cease-fire in Gaza to allow the delivery of aid, and help release hostages.

"For aid to reach people in need, hostages to be released, more displacement to be avoided and above all the devastating loss of lives to stop a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza is the only way forward," he wrote on X.

Israel's allies in Europe have also stepped up calls for a stop to the fighting. But the U.S., Israel's top ally, appeared to remain firmly behind Israel even though it has intensified its calls for greater protection for civilians in Gaza.

U.S. President Joe Biden spoke with Netanyahu on Saturday, a day after Washington shielded Israel from a harsher U.N. resolution. Biden said he did not ask for a cease-fire, while Netanyahu's office said the prime minister "made clear that Israel would continue the war until achieving all its goals."

## **On Christmas Eve, Bethlehem resembles a ghost town. Celebrations are halted due to Israel-Hamas war.**

By MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

BETHLEHEM, West Bank (AP) — The normally bustling biblical birthplace of Jesus resembled a ghost town on Sunday, as Christmas Eve celebrations in Bethlehem were called off due to the Israel-Hamas war.

The festive lights and Christmas tree that normally decorate Manger Square were missing, as were the

throng of foreign tourists who gather each year to mark the holiday. Dozens of Palestinian security forces patrolled the empty square.

The gift shops were slow to open on Christmas Eve, although a few did once the rain had stopped pouring down. There were few visitors, however.

"This year, without the Christmas tree and without lights, there's just darkness," said Brother John Vinh, a Franciscan monk from Vietnam who has lived in Jerusalem for six years.

He said he always comes to Bethlehem to mark Christmas, but this year was especially sobering, as he gazed at a nativity scene in Manger Square with a baby Jesus wrapped in a white shroud, reminiscent of the hundreds of children killed in the fighting in Gaza. Barbed wire surrounded the scene, the grey rubble reflecting none of the joyous lights and bursts of color that normally fill the square during the Christmas season.

"We can't justify putting out a tree and celebrating as normal, when some people (in Gaza) don't even have houses to go to," said Ala'a Salameh, one of the owners of Afteem Restaurant, a family-owned falafel restaurant just steps from the square.

Salameh said Christmas Eve is usually the busiest day of the year. "Normally, you can't find a single chair to sit, we're full from morning till midnight," said Salameh. This year, just one table was taken, by journalists taking a break from the rain.

Salameh said his restaurant was operating at about 15% of normal business and wasn't able to cover operating costs. He estimated that even after the war ends, it will take another year for tourism to return to Bethlehem as normal.

The cancellation of Christmas festivities is a severe blow to the town's economy. Tourism accounts for an estimated 70% of Bethlehem's income — almost all of that during the Christmas season.

With many major airlines canceling flights to Israel, few foreigners are visiting. Local officials say over 70 hotels in Bethlehem have been forced to close, leaving thousands of people unemployed.

Over 20,000 Palestinians have been killed and more than 50,000 wounded during Israel's air and ground offensive against Gaza's Hamas rulers, according to health officials there, while some 85% of the territory's 2.3 million residents have been displaced. The war was triggered by Hamas' deadly assault Oct. 7 on southern Israel in which militants killed about 1,200 people, most of them civilians, and took more than 240 hostages.

The fighting in Gaza has also affected life in the West Bank. Since Oct. 7, access to Bethlehem and other Palestinian towns in the Israeli-occupied territory has been difficult, with long lines of motorists waiting to pass military checkpoints. The restrictions have also prevented tens of thousands of Palestinians from exiting the territory to work in Israel.

## **Man killed and a woman injured in a 'targeted' afternoon shooting at a Florida shopping mall**

OCALA, Fla. (AP) — A man died in a shooting at a shopping mall in central Florida two days before Christmas in which the victim was "targeted" for the attack, police said.

Ocala Police Chief Mike Balken told reporters Saturday evening that the man was killed after he was shot multiple times in a common area at Paddock Mall in Ocala, located about 79 miles (127 kilometers) northwest of Orlando.

A woman also was shot in the leg. She was treated at a local hospital and expected to recover, Balken said.

The suspect fled the scene and left behind the firearm, Balken said.

Police arrived at the mall around 3:40 p.m. after a call of multiple shots being fired at the mall.

"Officers immediately made entry into the mall (and) ultimately discovered that this was not what we would consider an active shooter," Balken told reporters.

The attack was likely a "targeted act of violence" against the man, Balken said.

Several other mall patrons suffered injuries during the shooting, with one person having chest pain and

another reporting a broken arm, police said.

The Ocala police posted photos overnight of a person of interest that appear to be taken from a mall security camera. The three images show a male with a red cap and dark clothing. Balken previously said the suspect wore a hooded sweatshirt and a mask partially covering his face.

The police also asked the public for assistance by submitting mobile phone video of the shooting scene.

The mall's corporate owner, WPG, did not immediately respond to an email seeking additional information. The mall has dozens of stores, including J.C. Penney and Foot Locker.

Calvin and Diana Amos, who were shopping in the J.C. Penney store, told the Ocala Star-Banner that they evacuated the store quickly once they figured out what was going on. They described themselves as scared and apprehensive.

## **A Christmas rush to get passports to leave Zimbabwe is fed by economic gloom and a price hike**

By FARAI MUTSAKA Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — Atop many Christmas wish lists in economically troubled Zimbabwe is a travel document, and people are flooding the passport office this holiday season ahead of a price hike planned in the New Year.

The desperation at the office in the capital city of Harare is palpable as some people fear the hike could push the cost of obtaining a passport out of reach and economic gloom feeds a surge in migration.

Nolan Mukona said he woke up at dawn to get in line at the passport office but when he arrived at 5 a.m. there were already more than 100 people waiting. Some people had slept outside the office overnight.

"The only thing that can make my Christmas a cheerful one is if I manage to get a passport," said the 49-year-old father of three. "I have been saving for it for the last three months and I have to make sure I get it before January."

At \$120, passports were already pricey for many in a country where the majority struggle to put food on the table. The finance minister's budget proposals for 2024 said passport fees would rise to \$200 in January, sparking an outcry. The hike was then reduced to \$150.

Several million Zimbabweans are estimated to have left the southern African country over the past two decades when its economy began collapsing. The migration has taken renewed vigor in recent years as hopes of a better life following the 2017 ouster of longtime president Robert Mugabe fade. The late president was accused of running down the country.

Many people, including professionals such as schoolteachers, are taking short nursing courses and seeking passports to leave for the United Kingdom to take up health care work.

According to figures released by the U.K.'s immigration department in November, 21,130 Zimbabweans were issued visas to work in the health and care sector from September last year to September this year, up from 7,846 the previous year.

Only India and Nigeria, countries with significantly larger populations than Zimbabwe, have more people issued such work visas.

Many more Zimbabweans choose to settle in neighboring South Africa.

According to South Africa's statistics agency, just over 1 million Zimbabweans are living in that country, up from more than 600,000 during its last census in 2011, although some believe the figure could be much higher as many cross the porous border illegally.

The economic desperation has coupled with the expected increase in the price of travel documents to create an end-of-year rush.

The passport office has increased working hours to operate at night to cater to the growing numbers. Enterprising touts sell spots for \$5 for those who want to skip the line.

"It's my gateway to a better life," said Mukona of the passport he hopes to get.

He plans to leave his work as an English teacher at a private college to migrate to the United Kingdom as a carer. Once there, he hopes to have his family follow, a move that may be endangered by recent

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 47 of 69

proposals by U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to change migration visa rules to limit the ability of migrant workers to bring their families to the U.K.

Harare-based economist Prosper Chitambara said a lack of formal jobs and low prospects of economic recovery have turned the passport from a mere travel document into a life-changing document for many.

"The challenging economic situation is not showing signs of remission so this is an incentive for Zimbabweans to migrate," said Chitambara. "The passport is now more than just a travel document. Being in possession of a passport means changed economic fortunes because it's a major step towards leaving."

The economist predicted a tougher New Year for Zimbabweans, citing a raft of new or higher taxes proposed by the finance minister.

Zimbabwe's government says the migration comes at a huge cost to the country because of a brain drain, particularly in the health sector. It has pleaded to the World Health Organization to intervene and stop richer countries from recruiting Zimbabwean nurses, doctors and other health professionals.

Vice President Constantino Chiwenga earlier this year described the recruitment as "a crime against humanity" and proposed a law to stop health professionals from migrating.

Life has not always turned out rosy for those leaving.

The British press has reported the abuse of people settling in the United Kingdom as care workers, with some ending up living on the streets or barely earning enough to survive.

A report by Unseen, a U.K. charity, in October said "the care sector is susceptible to worker exploitation and modern slavery. Many people providing their labor in the sector receive low pay and the work is considered low-skilled."

The group, which campaigns against modern slavery and exploitation, said Zimbabweans were among the top nationalities to be victimized in the care sector.

Despite such reports, many in Zimbabwe are not deterred.

"I will deal with those issues when I get there. Right now my priority is getting hold of a passport and leaving. Anything is better than being in Zimbabwe right now," said Mukona.

## Josh Allen accounts for 3 touchdowns as Bills escape with 24-22 victory over Chargers

By JOE REEDY AP Sports Writer

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — Josh Allen continues to reach milestones in his sixth NFL season, but he's more concerned about getting the Buffalo Bills back into the playoffs.

Allen did his part Saturday night by rushing for two TDs and throwing for one, but it took a 29-yard field goal by Tyler Bass with 28 seconds remaining for the Bills to escape with a 24-22 victory over the Los Angeles Chargers.

Allen became the first player in NFL history with four consecutive seasons of 40 combined touchdowns and the second quarterback to reach 50 career rushing scores.

"It's tough because when you're playing a team with nothing to lose, that's a dangerous team. We gutted it out and we found a way," said Allen, who completed 15 of 21 passes for 237 yards with an interception. "This is our playoffs. It didn't matter how we get them done, just get them done."

The Bills (9-6) have won four of their last five. Buffalo's playoff chances got some help earlier in the day when Pittsburgh beat Cincinnati.

Indianapolis and Houston are both 8-6 and hold the tiebreaker over the Bills by virtue of a better conference record. If either team loses, Buffalo would control one of the AFC's final two spots heading into the last two weeks of the season.

Buffalo fell behind 10-0 early in the second quarter but rallied from a double-digit deficit to win for the fourth time since Sean McDermott became coach in 2017.

The Bills turned the ball over three times to keep the short-handed Chargers in the game in their first outing under interim coach Giff Smith. Brandon Staley and general manager Tom Telesco were fired on

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 48 of 69

Dec. 15, one day after the Chargers were pummeled 63-21 at Las Vegas.

"(The Chargers) were doing some things that they hadn't shown (this season). They came in well-prepared," McDermott said. "I thought our guys settled in and responded. We did a good job in the red zone and had some big plays on third down to help us out."

Cameron Dicker kicked a career-high five field goals and Easton Stick passed for 210 yards for Los Angeles (5-10), which has lost six of seven.

"I think we went into this game thinking it was going to be a heavyweight fight, and we wanted to have a chance at the end for a knockout," Smith said. "We were going to play it a little close to the vest. Get points on the board and give ourselves a chance to win, and that's the way it went. Came up a little bit short."

Allen had four completions on the 13-play, 64-yard game-winning drive, including a 15-yard reception by Khalil Shakir on third-and-4 at the LA 28 line with 2:29 remaining. Shakir got up after making the catch and ran to the end zone, and officials signaled a touchdown, but a replay review determined he was down by contact.

"As an offense we want to score a touchdown and put them in an even more difficult situation. Obviously not scoring there allowed us to run down the clock down and they wasted their third and final timeout," Allen said.

Allen leads the league with 40 total touchdowns (27 passing, 13 rushing). His 2-yard run off right tackle with 38 seconds remaining in the second quarter gave the Bills a 14-10 lead.

Allen had a 1-yard sneak late in the third quarter — his 51st career rushing TD — to make it 21-13. Allen benefited from a late push by running back Latavius Murray.

Gabe Davis, who had not caught a pass in the past two games after having six receptions for 105 yards against Philadelphia, had four receptions for a season-high 130 yards, including a 57-yard touchdown early in the second quarter to get the Bills within 10-7.

Allen scrambled right and found Davis open downfield. Davis hauled in the pass at the Chargers 19 and beat linebacker Kenneth Murray into the end zone. It was Allen's second-longest completion of the season.

## STICKING WITH IT

Stick, making his second NFL start in place of the injured Justin Herbert, was 23 of 33 passing and rushed for a touchdown.

The fifth-year quarterback directed the Chargers to scores on two of their first three drives. He rolled right and scored from 1 yard out early in the second quarter to give Los Angeles a 10-0 lead.

Stick took advantage of a short field after Amen Ogbongbemiga recovered a fumbled punt by the Bills' Deonte Harty.

"We were able to get the ball into the end zone and take the lead, that's the way that you want to play it. We just have to consistently execute better so that we feel better at the end," Stick said.

## THAT'S GRAND

James Cook finished with 70 yards on 20 carries and became the first Bills running back to reach 1,000 yards since LeSean McCoy in 2017.

## INJURIES

Bills: LB Terrel Bernard missed part of the first quarter due to a non-contact foot injury. ... S Damar Hamlin (shoulder) missed part of the first half but was cleared to return. ... RB Ty Johnson (shoulder), S Micah Hyde (neck) and DE A.J. Epenesa (rib) were inactive.

Chargers: WR Keenan Allen missed his second straight game and DB Deane Leonard his fourth consecutive, both due to heel injuries.

## UP NEXT

Bills: Host New England on Dec. 31.

Chargers: At Denver on Dec. 31.



## Decaying Pillsbury mill in Illinois that once churned flour into opportunity is now getting new life

By JOHN O'CONNOR Associated Press

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP) — It was the dog, stuck atop skyscraping grain silos on Springfield's northeast side in 2019, that forced Chris Richmond's hand.

The stray had found its way to the top of the behemoth Pillsbury Mills, for decades a flour-churning engine of the central Illinois city's economy but now vacant more than 20 years. Rescue was too risky amid such decay, officials said.

The brief but precarious appearance by the dog, found dead at ground level days later after ingesting rat poison, represented the hopelessness posed by the vacant campus, Richmond recalled.

"That's when I said, 'This is just unacceptable in our community,'" said the 54-year-old retired city fire marshal, whose father's Pillsbury paycheck made him and his brother first-generation college graduates.

A year later, Richmond and allies emerged with a nonprofit called Moving Pillsbury Forward and a five-year, \$10 million plan to raze the century-old plant and renew the 18-acre (7.3-hectare) site.

Richmond, the group's president and treasurer, vice president Polly Poskin and secretary Tony DelGiorno have \$6 million in commitments and targets for collecting the balance.

Having already razed two structures, the group expects the wrecking ball to swing even more feverishly next year. Next door to a railyard with nationwide connections, they envision a light industrial future.

Meanwhile, Moving Pillsbury Forward has managed to turn the decrepit site in Illinois' capital city into a leisure destination verging on cultural phenomenon.

Tours have been highly popular and repeated. Oral histories have emerged. Spray-paint vandals, boosted instead of busted, have become artists in residence for nighttime graffiti exhibitions, which more than 1,000 people attended.

Retired University of Illinois archeologist Robert Mazrim has mined artifacts and assembled an "Echoes of Pillsbury" museum beneath a leaking loading dock roof. This month, the plant's towering headhouse is ablaze with holiday lights.

Perhaps the exuberance with which Moving Pillsbury Forward approaches its task sets it apart. But in terms of activist groups pursuing such formidable reclamation aspirations, it's not unusual, said David Holmes, a Wisconsin-based environmental scientist and brownfields redevelopment consultant.

Government funding has expanded to accommodate them.

"You find some high-caliber organizations that are really focused on the areas with the biggest problems, these most-in-need neighborhoods," Holmes said. "A lot of times, cities (local governments) are focused on their downtowns or whatever gets the mayor the ribbon cutting."

Minneapolis-based Pillsbury built the Springfield campus in 1929 and expanded it several times through the 1950s. A bakery mix division after World War II turned out the world's first boxed cake mixes.

There is circumstantial evidence that the Pillsbury doughboy, the brand's seminal mascot, was first drawn by a Springfield plant manager who eschewed credit, not, as the company maintains, in a Chicago ad agency.

Pillsbury sold the plant in 1991 to Cargill, which departed a decade later. A scrap dealer ran afoul of the law with improper asbestos disposal in 2015, prompting a \$3 million U.S. Environmental Protection Agency cleanup. After the dog's cameo, Moving Pillsbury Forward persuaded the EPA to drop a lien for its cleanup costs and purchased the property for \$1.

Now, all that's left is to sweep up a the remaining asbestos and lead paint chips before pulling down more than 500,000 square feet (46,450 square meters) of factory, including a 242-foot (73.8-meter) headhouse that's the city's third-tallest structure and 160 silos, four abreast and standing 100 feet (30.5 meters).

"It's daunting. Everything about this place is daunting," Richmond concedes. "But a journey of 1,000 miles starts with the first step, right?"

The timing is right. There is more money than ever available to mop up America's left-behinds, according to Holmes.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 50 of 69

The 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act included \$1.2 billion for brownfields cleanup, four times the typical annual allotment. The Pillsbury group wants \$2.6 million of the total added to what the group already has been promised by the federal, state and Springfield governments.

The application plays up the intangible benefits: economic and environmental justice availing the 12,000 people who live within 1 mile (1.61 kilometers) of the plant, only 25% of whom have a high school diploma and whose median household income is \$25,000.

"It's a tough sell but at some point, there are enough people who have a vision for what it could be that that's a powerful incentive," Poskin said. "It isn't going to be anything until what's there is gone. No developer is going to take on a \$10 million cleanup job."

The group also set out to preserve memories of the place they are working to tear down. Ex-workers and neighbors have clamored for spots in ongoing tours and posed for group photos.

In a historical seniority list on display, next to "Jackson, Ernest, 1937," is the message, "Hi Grandpa. We are visiting your workplace of 42 yrs." Richmond and Mazrim have collected more than a dozen oral histories from past employees. Photographers are documenting what remains for historical context.

And it's become an unlikely canvas. Minneapolis-based graffiti artists who tag their work "Shock" and "Static" were surreptitiously decorating the place in September when Richmond and Mazrim confronted them. Instead of pressing a trespassing charge, Richmond invited them to stage an exhibition. The nighttime November showing proved so popular that Richmond added a second date.

Artist Eric Rieger, known to fans as HOTTEA, also took part, creating in a "cathedral-like" setting a huge, rectangular grid of black-light-lit neon strings of yarn suspended from the ceiling. His goal was "a sense of really positive energy" reminiscent of the fond memories employees experienced.

"They were so enthusiastic and that's rare to find nowadays," Rieger said the night of the first exhibit Nov. 9. "I really respect what they did for this community because they're the backbone of America — they were feeding America."

## **New migrants face fear and loneliness. A town on the Great Plains has a storied support network**

By JESSE BEDAYN The Associated Press/Report for America

FORT MORGAN, Colo. (AP) — Magdalena Simon's only consolation after immigration officers handcuffed and led her husband away was the contents of his wallet, a few bills.

The hopes that had pushed her to trudge thousands of miles from Guatemala in 2019, her son's small frame clutched to her chest, ceded to despair and loneliness in Fort Morgan, a ranching outpost on Colorado's eastern plains, where some locals stared at her too long and the wind howls so fiercely it once blew the doors half off a hotel.

The pregnant Simon tried to mask the despair every morning when her toddlers asked, "Where's papa?"

To millions of migrants who have crossed the U.S. southern border in the past few years, stepping off greyhound buses in places across America, such feelings can be constant companions. What Simon would find in this unassuming city of a little more than 11,400, however, was a community that pulled her in, connecting her with legal council, charities, schools and soon friends, a unique support network built by generations of immigrants.

In this small town, migrants are building quiet lives, far from big cities like New York, Chicago and Denver that have struggled to house asylum-seekers and from the halls of Congress where their futures are bandied about in negotiations.

The Fort Morgan migrant community has become a boon for newcomers, nearly all of whom arrive from perilous journeys to new challenges: pursuing asylum cases; finding a paycheck big enough for food, an attorney and a roof; placing their kids in school; and navigating a language barrier, all while facing the threat of deportation.

The United Nations used the community, 80 miles (129 kilometers) west of Denver, as a case study for rural refugee integration after a thousand Somalis arrived to work in meatpacking plants in the late 2000s.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 51 of 69

In 2022, grassroots groups sent migrants living in mobile homes to Congress to tell their stories.

In the last year, hundreds more migrants have arrived in Morgan County. More than 30 languages are spoken in Fort Morgan's only high school, which has translators for the most common languages and a phone service for others. On Sundays, Spanish is heard from the pulpits of six churches.

The demographic shift in recent decades has forced the community to adapt: Local organizations hold monthly support groups, train students and adults about their rights, teach others how to drive, ensure kids are in school and direct people to immigration attorneys.

Simon herself now tells her story to those stepping off buses. The community can't wave away the burdens, but they can make them lighter.

"It's not like home where you have your parents and all of your family around you," Simon tells those she meets in grocery stores and school pickup lines. "If you run into a problem, you need to find your own family."

The work has grown amid negotiations in Washington, D.C., on a deal that could toughen asylum protocols and bolster border enforcement.

On a recent Sunday, advocacy groups organized a posada, a Mexican celebration of the biblical Joseph and Mary seeking shelter for Mary to give birth and being turned away until they were given the stable.

Before marching down the street singing a song adaptation in which migrants are seeking shelter instead of Joseph and Mary, participants signed letters urging Colorado's two Democratic senators and Republican U.S. Rep. Ken Buck to reject stiffer asylum rules.

A century ago, it was sugar beet production that brought German and Russian migration to the area. Now, many migrants work inside dairy plants.

When area businesses were raided several times in the 2000s, friends disappeared overnight, seats sat empty in schools and gaps opened on factory lines.

"That really changed the the understanding of how deeply embedded migrants are in community," said Jennifer Piper of American Friends Service Committee, which organized the posada celebration.

Guadalupe "Lupe" Lopez Chavez, who arrived in the U.S. alone in 1998 from Guatemala at age 16, spends long hours working with migrants, including helping connect Simon to a lawyer after her husband was detained.

One recent Saturday, Lopez Chavez sat in the low-ceilinged office of One Morgan County, a nearly 20-year-old migration nonprofit. In a folding chair, Maria Ramirez sifted through manila folders dated November 2023, when she'd arrived in the U.S.

Ramirez fled central Mexico, where cartel violence claimed her younger brother's life, and asked Lopez Chavez how she could get health care. Ramirez's 4-year-old daughter — who pranced behind her mother, blowing bubbles and popping the ones that landed in her brown curls — has a lung condition.

Ramirez said she would work anywhere to move from the living room they sleep in, with just a blanket on the floor as cushioning.

In the offices resembling a hostel's well-loved communal space, Lopez Chavez cautioned Ramirez to consult a lawyer before applying for health care. Sitting aside Ramirez were two settled migrants offering support and advice.

"A lot of stuff that you heard in Mexico (about the U.S.) was you couldn't walk on the streets, you had to live in the shadows, you'd be targeted," said Ramirez. "It's beautiful to come into a community that's united."

Lopez Chavez works with new migrants because she remembers shackles snapping around her ankles after she was stopped for a traffic violation in 2012 and turned over to the U.S. immigration authorities.

"I just wanted to leave there because I'd never been in a cage before," Lopez Chavez said in an interview, her eyes filling with tears.

At her first court hearing, Lopez Chavez and her husband stood alone. At her second hearing, after Lopez Chavez was connected to the community, she was flanked by new friends. That wall of support allowed her to keep her chin up as she fought her immigration case before being granted residency last year.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 52 of 69

Lopez Chavez now works to cultivate that strength across the community.

"I don't want any more families to go through what we went through," said Lopez Chavez, who also encourages others to tell their stories. "Those examples give people the idea: If they can manage their case and win, maybe I can too."

In Fort Morgan, train tracks divide a mobile home park, where many migrants live, and the city's older homes. Some older migrants see new arrivals as getting better treatment by the U.S. and feel that is unfair. The community can't solve every challenge, and hasn't laid the last brick on cultural bridges between the diverse communities.

But at the posada event, crowded in the One Morgan County offices, the assurances of community itself showed through the eyes of partygoers as children in cultural regalia danced traditional Mexican dances.

Among those bouncing around the long room was 7-year-old Francisco Mateo Simon. He doesn't remember the journey to the U.S., but his mother, Magdalena, does.

She remembers how ill he became as she carried him the last miles to the border. Now he spits out armadillo facts between the nubs of incoming front teeth in their mobile home, then points to his favorite ornament on their white, plastic Christmas tree.

"That's our brand new tree," said his mother, as her eldest daughter practiced English with a kids' book.

"It's new," she repeated, "It's our first new tree because in the past we've only had trees from the thrift store."

## **Nevada tribe says coalitions, not lawsuits, will protect sacred sites as US advances energy agenda**

By SCOTT SONNER Associated Press

RENO, Nev. (AP) — The room was packed with Native American leaders from across the United States, all invited to Washington to hear from federal officials about President Joe Biden's accomplishments and new policy directives aimed at improving relationships and protecting sacred sites.

Arlan Melendez was not among them.

The longtime chairman of the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony convened his own meeting 2,500 miles (4,023 kilometers) away. He wanted to show his community would find another way to fight the U.S. government's approval of a massive lithium mine at the site where more than two dozen of their Paiute and Shoshone ancestors were massacred in 1865.

Opposed by government lawyers at every legal turn, Melendez said another arduous appeal would not save sacred sites from being desecrated.

"We're not giving up the fight, but we are changing our strategy," Melendez said.

That shift for the Nevada tribe comes as Biden and other top federal officials double down on their vows to do a better job of working with Native American leaders on everything from making federal funding more accessible to incorporating tribal voices into land preservation efforts and resource management planning.

The administration also has touted more spending on infrastructure and health care across Indian Country.

Many tribes have benefited, including those who led campaigns to establish new national monuments in Utah and Arizona. In New Mexico, pueblos have succeeded in getting the Interior Department to ban new oil and natural gas development on hundreds of square miles of federal land for 20 years to protect culturally significant areas.

But the colony in Reno and others like the Tohono O'odham Nation in Arizona say promises of more cooperation ring hollow when it comes to high-stakes battles over multibillion-dollar "green energy" projects. Some tribal leaders have said consultation resulted in little more than listening sessions, with federal officials not incorporating tribal comments into the decision making.

Rather than pursue its claims in court that the federal government failed to engage in meaningful consultation regarding the lithium mine at Thacker Pass, the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony will focus on organizing a broad coalition to build public support for sacred places.

Tribal members are concerned other culturally significant areas will end up in the path of a modern

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 53 of 69

day Gold Rush that has companies scouting for lithium and other materials needed to meet Biden's clean energy agenda.

Melendez was among those thrilled when Biden appointed Deb Haaland to lead the Interior Department. A member of Laguna Pueblo, Haaland is the first Native American to serve as a cabinet secretary.

Melendez, a former member of the U.S. Human Rights Commission who has led his colony for 32 years, said he understands the difficulty of navigating the electoral landscape in a western swing state where the mining industry's political clout is second only to the power wielded by casinos.

Still, he was disappointed Haaland declined an invitation to visit the massacre site.

"The largest lithium project in the United States and they don't even have the time to come out here and meet with the tribal nations in the state of Nevada," he said.

The tribe's lawyer, Will Falk, urged other tribes to resist "tricking ourselves into believing that just because the first Native American secretary of Interior is in office that she actually cares about protecting sacred sites."

Interior Department spokeswoman Melissa Schwartz didn't respond directly to that criticism but said in an email to The Associated Press that there has been "significant communications and partnership with tribes in Nevada."

The federal government in early December published new guidance for dealing with sacred sites. While Falk and others are skeptical, they acknowledged the document speaks to concerns tribes have raised for decades.

Among other things, the guidance says federal agencies should involve tribes as early as possible when planning projects to identify potential impacts to sacred sites and to determine whether mitigation measures can allay concerns. Agencies also should consult with tribes that attach significance to the project area, regardless of where they are located.

It also suggests Indigenous knowledge should be on equal footing with other sciences and incorporated into the federal decision-making process. That knowledge can consist of practices, cultural beliefs and oral and written histories that tribes have developed over many generations.

Justin C. Ahasteen, executive director of the Navajo Nation Washington (D.C.) Office, said the new guidance appears to have incorporated some of the recommendations made by tribal leaders but that it could have gone further.

"If this guidebook increases transparency in the consultation process, we will take it as a win," Ahasteen said. "But ultimately the thing we all seek is for the federal government to acknowledge the necessity of tribal consent before changing rules that affect tribes."

The problem, Falk said, is none of it is legally binding.

"These kinds of documents function more as pacifying propaganda," he said.

Western Shoshone Defense Project Director Fermina Stevens said the changes were "more 'lip service' for the government to deal with the 'Indian problem' in this new day and age of mineral extraction."

Morgan Rodman, executive director of the White House Council on Native American Affairs, disagrees. He said the guidance is intended to serve as a springboard to improve engagement with tribes and that the administration will be aggressive with training to make sure employees have an understanding of what sacred sites are.

"While change certainly doesn't happen overnight, it's part of a continuum of important policy statements — part of the momentum we've been building the last three years," he said in an interview.

Rodman made clear he wasn't referencing Thacker Pass, but some directives he highlighted have been key points of contention in that case.

U.S. Judge Miranda Du in Reno twice ruled the tribe failed to prove the massacre occurred on the specific grounds of the mining project, or that far-flung tribes had a legal stake in the fight. The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld her earlier ruling in July.

The tribe says the government has ignored evidence that the land they consider sacred isn't limited to a specific site where the U.S. Cavalry first attacked men, women and children as they slept.

They cited newspaper accounts, diaries and a government surveyor's report documenting human skulls discovered along a miles-long escape route crossing the mine site where troops killed and scalped those who tried to flee.

Tribal historic preservation officer Michon Eben said the whole stretch is an unmarked burial ground.

Melendez said he's pleased Biden has promised to enhance consultation.

But if federal agencies don't follow through, he said, "Well, it's just words that really don't mean anything to us."

## **Strong earthquake in northwest China that killed at least 148 causes economic losses worth millions**

BEIJING (AP) — The strong earthquake that hit northwest China this week, killing at least 148 people, caused economic losses estimated to be worth tens of millions in the agricultural and fisheries industries, state media said Saturday.

Officials in Gansu conducted preliminary assessments that showed the province's agricultural and fisheries industries have lost 532 million yuan (about \$74.6 million), state broadcaster CCTV reported.

Authorities were considering the best use of the relief fund, set up days before, for the agricultural sector to resume production as soon as possible, the report said.

The magnitude 6.2 quake struck in a mountainous region Monday night between Gansu and Qinghai provinces and about 1,300 kilometers (800 miles) southwest of Beijing, the Chinese capital. CCTV said 117 people were killed in Gansu and 31 others died in neighboring Qinghai, while three people remained missing. Nearly 1,000 were injured and more than 14,000 homes were destroyed.

During a visit Saturday to several villages in Gansu and a county in Qinghai, Chinese Premier Li Qiang urged authorities to improve living conditions for the survivors of the quake by every available method, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

Li said the top priority of relief efforts was to make sure people stay warm and safe in winter, the report added.

CGTN, the Chinese state broadcaster's international arm, said the first batch of 500 temporary housing units had been built for residents in Meipo, a village in Gansu, on Friday night.

Many had spent the night in shelters set up in the area as temperatures plunged well below freezing. Funerals were held, some following the Muslim traditions of much of the population in the affected area.

Most of China's earthquakes strike in the western part of the country, including Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces, as well as the Xinjiang region and Tibet. The latest quake was the deadliest one in the country in nine years.

## **Pistons match NBA single-season record with 26th straight loss, fall 126-115 to the Nets**

By BRIAN MAHONEY AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Pistons players sat in stunned silence in one corner of the locker room, stared blankly ahead in another.

The worst stretch of basketball in their lives now ranks as one of the worst in NBA history.

Detroit matched the league record for the longest losing streak in a single season, falling 126-115 to the Brooklyn Nets on Saturday night for its 26th straight loss.

"None of us went through this, ever," center Isaiah Stewart said. "This is the hardest thing probably all of us went through, especially being in the pros."

The Pistons joined the 2010-11 Cleveland Cavaliers and 2013-14 Philadelphia 76ers, dropping to 2-27 in their first season under Monty Williams. They were in the game in the second half before the Nets put them away with a 15-0 run to open a 21-point lead and ensure that Detroit would remain winless since Oct. 28.

The teams will meet again Tuesday night in Detroit, with the Pistons nearing the overall longest skid in

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 55 of 69

league history. The 76ers lost 28 consecutive games from late in the 2014-15 season through early 2015-16.

"Everybody wants to win, everybody hates losing, so it's hard," guard Cade Cunningham said. "We've got to be realistic as well. Can't just keep saying the same things over and over, like we'll get the next one. There has to be like a plan of action, so we're just trying to figure that out."

Mikal Bridges had 29 points, seven assists and six rebounds for the Nets, who put seven players in double figures and snapped their five-game losing streak. Cam Thomas scored 20 points.

The Nets shot 52% from the field, showing plenty of energy in their second night of back-to-back games after losing to the NBA champion Denver Nuggets on Friday. They got some easy baskets thanks to the Pistons, whose 14 turnovers led to 22 points.

Williams said he didn't feel like their bad play was leading to bad luck for the Pistons.

"We had a lot of tough breaks this year, but I try not to look at life that way. It just happens," he said. "When you turn it over 14 times you don't expect 22 points, but it happens. Those live turnovers, they're basketball death for possessions and we've had a lot of those this year."

The Pistons were within two midway through the third quarter before a quick seven straight points by the Nets pushed the lead back to nine. It was still just 88-82 with under three minutes remaining, but Royce O'Neale made a 3-pointer and Day'Ron Sharpe followed with consecutive baskets to trigger a 10-0 finish to the period that made it 98-82.

Thomas scored the first five of the fourth quarter to make it 103-82, giving the Nets their largest lead.

Jaden Ivey scored 23 points for the Pistons, who started 2-1 in their first season under Williams before their free fall toward infamy. Cunningham finished with 22 points after being limited to just 11 minutes in the first half after picking up three fouls.

Williams, the NBA Coach of the Year in Phoenix in 2021-22, said he was the one to blame before the game. But the bigger problem might be a roster whose average age is slightly under 25 years old, making the Pistons one of the youngest teams in the league.

They foul too much (most in the league with 22.8 per game) and turn it over too often (29th, with 16.6 per game) and just haven't been able to overcome the combination of errors.

Nets forward Cam Johnson, who along with Bridges played for Williams in Phoenix, believes his former coach can build a contender with his new team.

"I told them, some of the young guys on the team after the game, that sometimes you got to lose before you can win, sometimes you got to fall before you crawl, walk before you can run," Johnson said.

Detroit started with a couple nice possessions in jumping to a 6-0 lead but then got careless, turning it over six times in the first quarter. The Nets cashed those in for 11 points, which was the margin when the quarter ended with Brooklyn ahead 32-21.

The Pistons played better in the second quarter but could only cut two points off the deficit, trailing 65-56 at the break.

## 'The Boys in the Boat' gives the Hollywood treatment to rowing during an Olympic year

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (AP) — The journey from nowhere to an Olympic gold medal is a tale as old as time.

Just as well-worn, but far less explored, are the stories about great athletes who realize they can't make it anywhere unless they have a way to bankroll the trip.

"The Boys in the Boat" is Hollywood and director George Clooney's way of stringing those plot lines together. That it opens Christmas Day, a mere seven months before the start of the Paris Olympics, is good fortune for the people who oversee rowing in the U.S. and know the general public mostly either a) doesn't think about that sport or b) sees it as the exclusive playground for East Coast and Ivy League elites.

USRowing worked with producers of the movie to sponsor dozens of screenings across the country with

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 56 of 69

two purposes: raising funds for an organization that received about \$3.5 million of its \$15 million budget in 2023 from charitable donations, and building awareness across racial and socioeconomic lines. One jarring stat: In 2021, a study found that only 2% of women who competed in NCAA rowing were Black. (Men's rowing isn't sanctioned by the NCAA, and so, wasn't part of the study.)

"What we're trying to do here, and what so many clubs are doing around the country, is trying to create programs and opportunities" for people to row, said USRowing CEO Amanda Kraus.

"TBITB" is about a group of poor students at the University of Washington who try out for the junior varsity crew team. It's 1936, and far from seeking Olympic glory, these guys are simply trying to find a way to make a buck.

"All you gotta do is make the team," one of them says. "How hard can that be?"

Plenty hard, it turns out, and what ensues is the Miracle on Ice, except on water — and with one other notable difference: Most of those hockey kids always knew where their next meal was coming from.

Certainly there are others out there in a country of 330 million looking for a fresh start, a taste of the great outdoors and a chance to try something new. Kraus believes her sport might be that thing — and that all those potential rowers don't have to be daughters and sons of millionaires.

Rowing is hoping to inspire more people like Arshay Cooper, who was a member of the first all-Black high school rowing team at Manley High School in Chicago. Cooper authored a book, "A Most Beautiful Thing," that itself was made into a movie produced by basketball stars Grant Hill and Dwyane Wade.

"In rowing, you move forward by looking in the opposite direction," is a quote from Cooper on his website that describes his worldview. "I learned that it's OK to look back, as long as you keep pushing forward."

The sport also hopes to build more programs, such as Learn to Row Day, when rowing clubs are urged to welcome newcomers and teach them about the sport.

So much about rowing is a steep climb. Kraus says it costs around \$50,000 a year to support a Team USA rower; that comes after the tens of thousands expended on their development at the grassroots and college levels. But, she said, building a pipeline is an investment worth making, and it doesn't mean everyone has to end up at the Olympics.

"We hope people can get inspired to really check the sport out for themselves," Kraus said. "You can be 30 or 40 or 70 and go do a 'Learn to Row' course at your local club. That's a real thing. You don't have to row in college to be part of this sport."

USRowing has around 74,000 members (by comparison, the U.S. Tennis Association has 680,000) and, like all niche sports, the Olympics are its time to shine. That makes a rowing movie a Christmas present for this sport.

The high point in the film — based on the 2013 book of the same name by Daniel James Brown that's considered rowing's bible — takes place during a particularly fraught time. At the 1936 Berlin Games, Nazi flags get better placement than the Olympic rings and Adolf Hitler is a constantly glowering presence.

Nobody, however, poses a bigger threat to the boys from Washington than the leader of America's Olympic committee, who appears unbothered as he tells their coach that, even though they won their era's version of the Olympic trials, a team with a better pedigree and more money will take their place in Berlin unless they raise \$5,000 in a week.

It's an absurd and unfair insult, and one that, sadly, isn't that far removed from today's realities: Politics rule. And even in a billion-dollar Olympics industry, so many athletes have to scratch for pennies, especially in America, where the government doesn't pay for anything.

They make it — getting over the hump with a bit of unexpected help — and soon find themselves rubbing elbows at the opening ceremony with Jesse Owens. The great sprinter assures the rowers he's not there to prove anything to Hitler, but rather to his own country, which still treats Blacks like second-class citizens.

We know how the Owens story ends. Now, we know how the rowers' story ends, too.

It's a quintessential underdog sports drama, all the way to the short epilogue that's intended to give moviegoers the feels about the mysticism of a sport very few understand. If only a few of them put down the popcorn and navigate to an online donations page — or maybe even a local crew club — then the



small rowing community in the U.S. will have a hit on its hands.

## **Israel strikes 2 homes, killing more than 90 Palestinians. Biden says he didn't request a cease-fire**

By NAJIB JOBAIN and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — More than 90 Palestinians, including dozens from an extended family, were killed in Israeli airstrikes on two homes in Gaza, rescuers and hospital officials said Saturday, a day after the U.N. chief warned that nowhere is safe in the territory and that Israel's offensive creates "massive obstacles" to distribution of humanitarian aid.

U.S. President Joe Biden spoke with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday, calling it a long and private conversation a day after the Biden administration again shielded Israel in the diplomatic arena. On Friday, the U.N. Security Council adopted a watered-down resolution that calls for immediately speeding up aid deliveries to desperate civilians in Gaza, but not for a cease-fire.

"I did not ask for a cease-fire," Biden said of the call. Netanyahu's office said the prime minister "made clear that Israel would continue the war until achieving all its goals."

Also Saturday, the Israeli military said troops arrested hundreds of alleged militants in Gaza over the past week and transferred more than 200 to Israel for further interrogation, providing rare details on a controversial policy of mass roundups of Palestinian men. The army said more than 700 people with alleged ties to the militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad have so far been sent to Israeli lockups.

Israel declared war after Hamas gunmen stormed across the border on Oct. 7, killing some 1,200 people and taking some 240 hostages. More than 20,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's war to destroy Hamas and more than 53,000 have been wounded, according to health officials in Gaza, a besieged territory ruled by the Islamic militant group for the past 16 years.

The Health Ministry in Gaza on Saturday evening said 201 people had been killed over the past 24 hours.

Airstrikes on Friday flattened two homes, including one in Gaza City, where 76 people from the al-Mughrabi family were killed, making the attack one of the deadliest of the war, said Mahmoud Bassal, a spokesman for Gaza's Civil Defense department.

Among those killed were Issam al-Mughrabi, a veteran employee of the U.N. Development Program, his wife, and their five children.

"The U.N. and civilians in Gaza are not a target," said Achim Steiner, the head of the agency. "This war must end."

And a strike pulverized the home of Mohammed Khalifa, a local TV journalist, killing him and at least 14 others in the urban refugee camp of Nuseirat, according to officials at the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Hospital where the bodies were taken.

Israel blames Hamas for the high civilian death toll, citing the militants' use of crowded residential areas and tunnels. Israel has launched thousands of airstrikes since Oct. 7, and has largely refrained from commenting on specific attacks.

Israel's offensive has been one of the most devastating military campaigns in recent history, displacing nearly 85% of Gaza's 2.3 million people and leveling wide swaths of the tiny coastal enclave. More than a half million people in Gaza — a quarter of the population — are starving, according to a report this week from the United Nations and other agencies.

In the southern city of Khan Younis, men walking through the rubble tried to shoo away cats feeding on unclaimed bodies. One man covered a body with a blanket. Another wished to call an ambulance but had no phone signal.

The Israeli military spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, said forces were expanding their offensive in northern and southern Gaza and troops were fighting in "complex areas" in Khan Younis.

The army's statement on detentions followed earlier Palestinian reports of large-scale roundups of teenage boys and men from homes, shelters and hospitals in northern Gaza where troops have established firmer control. Some of the released detainees have said they were stripped to their underwear, beaten

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 58 of 69

and held for days with minimal water.

Channel 13 in Israel showed new footage of Palestinian men stripped to their underwear and walking in single file, with soldiers nearby. It was not clear when the footage was taken. In response to widespread criticism, the army has said detainees are stripped to check them for weapons. It has denied abuse allegations and said those without links to militants are quickly released.

Hamas called on the International Committee of the Red Cross and other organizations to pressure Israeli authorities to reveal the whereabouts and conditions of people detained.

Israel says it has killed thousands of Hamas militants, including about 2,000 in the past three weeks, but has not presented evidence. It says 144 of its soldiers have been killed in the ground offensive.

Following the U.N. resolution, it was not immediately clear how and when aid deliveries would accelerate. Trucks enter through two crossings — Rafah on the border with Egypt and Kerem Shalom on the border with Israel. On Friday, fewer than 100 trucks entered, the U.N. said — far below the daily average of 500 before the war.

Both crossings were closed Saturday by mutual agreement among Israel, Egypt and the U.N., Israeli officials said.

Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan criticized the Security Council resolution that called for aid into Gaza without suspending hostilities, calling it “weak” and “insufficient.”

Ahead of the council vote, the U.S. negotiated the removal of language that would have given the U.N. authority to inspect aid going into Gaza, something Israel says it must continue to do itself to ensure material does not reach Hamas.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Friday that it’s a mistake to measure the effectiveness of the humanitarian operation by the number of trucks.

“The real problem is that the way Israel is conducting this offensive is creating massive obstacles to the distribution of humanitarian aid inside Gaza,” he said.

Netanyahu and his government also faced pressure at home, with calls to get the remaining hostages freed. “Bibi, Bibi retire. We don’t want you anymore,” a crowd of thousands chanted in Tel Aviv.

## **US tensions with China are fraying long-cultivated academic ties. Will the chill hurt US interests?**

By DIDI TANG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In the 1980s, Fu Xiangdong was a young Chinese virology student who came to the United States to study biochemistry. More than three decades later, he had a prestigious professorship in California and was conducting promising research on Parkinson’s disease.

But now Fu is doing his research at a Chinese university. His American career was derailed as U.S.-China relations unraveled, putting his collaborations with a Chinese university under scrutiny. He ended up resigning.

Fu’s story mirrors the rise and fall of U.S.-China academic engagement.

Beginning in 1978, such cooperation expanded for decades, largely insulated from the fluctuations in relations between the two countries. Today, it’s in decline, with Washington viewing Beijing as a strategic rival and there are growing fears about Chinese spying. The number of Chinese students in the United States is down, and U.S.-Chinese research collaboration is shrinking. Academics are shying away from potential China projects over fears that seemingly minor missteps could end their careers.

This decline isn’t hurting just students and researchers. Analysts say it will undercut American competitiveness and weaken global efforts to address health issues. Previous collaborations have led to significant advances, including in influenza surveillance and vaccine development.

“That’s been really harmful to U.S. science,” said Deborah Seligsohn, a former U.S. diplomat in Beijing and now a political scientist at Villanova University. “We are producing less science because of this falloff.”

For some, given the heightened U.S.-China tensions, the prospect for scientific advances needs to take a back seat to security concerns. In their view, such cooperation aids China by giving it access to sensi-

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 59 of 69

tive commercial, defense and technological information. They also fear the Chinese government is using its presence in American universities to monitor and harass dissidents.

Those concerns were at the core of the China Initiative, a program begun in 2018 by the Justice Department under the Trump administration to uncover acts of economic espionage. While it failed to catch any spies, the effort did have an impact on researchers in American schools.

Under the initiative, Gang Chen, a professor of mechanical engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was charged in 2021 with hiding links with the Chinese government. Prosecutors eventually dropped all charges, but Chen lost his research group. He said his family went through a hard time and has yet to recover.

Chen said investigations and wrongful prosecutions like his "are pushing out talents."

"That's going to hurt U.S. scientific enterprise, hurt U.S. competitiveness," he said.

The Biden administration ended the China Initiative in 2022, but there are other efforts targeting scholars with Chinese connections.

In Florida, a state law aimed at curbing influences from foreign countries has raised concerns that students from China could effectively be banned from labs at the state's public universities.

This month, a group of Republican senators expressed concerns about Beijing's influence on American campuses through student groups and urged the Justice Department to determine whether such groups should be registered as foreign agents.

Miles Yu, director of the China Center at Hudson Institute, said Beijing has exploited U.S. higher education and research institutes to modernize its economy and military.

"For some time, out of cultural, self-interest reasons, many people have double loyalty, erroneously thinking it's OK to serve the interests of both the U.S. and China," Yu said.

The U.S.-China Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement — the first major pact between the two countries, signed in 1979 — was set to lapse this year. In August, Congress extended the agreement by six months, but its future also hangs in the balance.

If there is a new agreement, it should take into account new advances in science and technology, Nicholas Burns, the U.S. ambassador to China, said recently.

There were only 700 American students studying in China, Burns said, compared with nearly 300,000 Chinese students in the U.S., which is down from a peak of about 372,000 in 2019-2020.

By October, nearly all Confucius Institutes, a Beijing-backed Chinese language and culture program, had closed on American university campuses. Their number fell from about 100 in 2019 to fewer than five now, according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

The National Institute of Health in 2018 began an investigation into foreign ties by asking dozens of American institutions to look into whether their faculty members might have violated policies regarding use of federal money, usually in cases involving partnerships with Chinese institutions.

In the case of Fu, then a professor at the University of California, San Diego, his links with Wuhan University were the focus of the NIH investigation. Fu insisted that federal money was never used toward work there, according to the local news outlet La Jolla Light, but the university ruled against him.

In a China Initiative case, Charles Lieber, a former chair of chemistry and chemical biology at Harvard University, was found guilty in December 2021 of lying to the federal government about his affiliations with a Chinese university and a Chinese government talent-recruitment program.

Chen, the MIT professor, said once-encouraged collaborations suddenly became problematic. Disclosure rules had been unclear, and in many cases such collaborations had been commended, he said.

"Very few people in the general public understand that most U.S. universities, including MIT, don't take on any secret research projects on campus," Chen said. "We aim to publish our research findings."

The investigations have had negative effects on university campuses. "People are so fearful that, if you check the wrong box, you could be accused of lying to the government," Chen said.

In June, an academic study published in the peer-reviewed Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences journal said the China Initiative likely has caused widespread fear and anxiety among scientists

of Chinese descent.

The study, which surveyed 1,304 scientists of Chinese descent employed by American universities, showed many considered leaving the U.S. or no longer applying for federal grants, the researchers wrote.

An analysis of research papers in the PubMed database showed that, as of 2021, U.S. scientists still co-wrote more papers with scientists from China than from any other country, but those with a history of collaborating with China experienced a decline in research productivity after 2019, soon after the NIH investigation started.

The study, to be published in the PNAS journal by the year's end, found the impact of U.S.-based scholars in collaboration with China, as measured by citations, fell by 10%.

"It has a chilling effect on science" said Ruixue Jia, the study's leading researcher, of the NIH investigation. "While researchers tried to finish existing cooperative projects, they were unwilling to start new ones, and the results could become worse. Both countries have been hurt."

Three months after Fu resigned from the California school, his name appeared on the website of Westlake University, a private research university in the Chinese city of Hangzhou. At Westlake, Fu leads a lab to tackle issues in RNA biology and regenerative medicine.

In August, Fu was joined by Guan Kunliang, a fellow scientist in San Diego, who also was investigated. Guan was banned from applying for NIH grants for two years. Guan didn't lose his job, but his lab had shrunk. Now, he's rebuilding a molecular cell biology lab at Westlake.

Li Chenjian, a former vice provost of Peking University, said the talent loss to China is a complicated question and the worry might be overblown because the U.S. remains the go-to place for the world's best brains and has an excess of talent.

More than 87% of Chinese students who received their doctorates in the U.S. had planned to stay in the U.S. from 2005 to 2015, according to the National Science Foundation. The percentage fell to 73.9 in 2021 but rose to 76.7 in 2022, above the average of 74.3% for all foreign students who had earned research doctorate degrees in the U.S.

Rao Yi, a prominent neurobiologist who returned to China from the U.S. in 2007, said American policies related to the China Initiative were "morally wrong."

"We will see how long it will take for the U.S. government and its morally upright scientists to correct such mistakes and come around to see the bigger picture of human development, beyond petty-mindedness and shortsightedness," he said. "Throughout history, it is always the morally corrupt governments which advocate the blocking of scientific communication and persecution of scientists."

## **New York governor commutes sentence of rapper G. Dep who had turned self in for cold case killing**

NEW YORK (AP) — Rapper Travell "G. Dep" Coleman, who walked into a New York police precinct in 2010 and admitted to committing a nearly two-decade-old cold case murder to clear his conscience, has been granted clemency by Gov. Kathy Hochul.

Now 49, Coleman has served 13 of a 15-year-to-life sentence. With his sentence being commuted by the Democratic governor, he will now be allowed to seek parole earlier than his original 2025 date.

Coleman is one of 16 individuals granted clemency by Hochul in an announcement made Friday. They include 12 pardons and four commutations. It marked the third time Hochul has granted clemency in 2023.

"Through the clemency process, it is my solemn responsibility as governor to recognize the efforts individuals have made to improve their lives and show that redemption is possible," Hochul said in a written statement.

The rapper earned an associate's degree while in prison and facilitated violence prevention and sobriety counseling programs, while also participating in a variety of educational and rehabilitative classes, according to Hochul's office. His clemency application was supported by the prosecutor in the case and the judge who sentenced him.

As G. Dep, Coleman had hits with "Special Delivery" and "Let's Get It" and helped popularize a loose-

limbed dance called the Harlem shake in the early 2000s. The rapper was one of the rising stars of hip-hop impresario Sean "Diddy" Combs' Bad Boy Records label in the late 1990s and early 2000s. But his career slumped after his 2001 debut album, "Child of the Ghetto," and the rapper became mired in drug use and low-level arrests, his lawyer said in 2011.

Attorney Anthony L. Ricco said at the time that Coleman "had been haunted" by the 1993 fatal shooting of John Henkel and decided to confess to shooting someone as a teenager during a robbery in East Harlem. Henkel was shot three times in the chest outside an apartment complex.

His brother, Robert Henkel, had demanded Hochul reject the urgings by prosecutor David Drucker to release Coleman, calling it a "farce." He told the New York Post that "it is one thing to seek (clemency) for drug crimes - but not murder."

## Paramedics were convicted in Elijah McClain's death. That could make other first responders pause

By COLLEEN SLEVIN and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

BRIGHTON, Colo. (AP) — Two Denver-area paramedics were convicted Friday for giving a fatal overdose of the sedative ketamine to Elijah McClain in 2019 — a jury verdict that experts said could have a chilling effect on first responders around the country.

The case involving the 23-year-old Black man's death was the first among several recent criminal prosecutions against medical first responders to reach trial, potentially setting the bar for prosecutors for future cases.

It also was the last of three trials against police and paramedics charged in the death of McClain, whom officers stopped following a suspicious person complaint. He was injected with the sedative after being forcibly restrained. The case received little attention until protests over the 2020 killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

An Aurora police officer was convicted of homicide and third degree assault earlier this year, while two other officers were acquitted.

The jury on Friday found Aurora Fire Rescue paramedics Jeremy Cooper and Peter Cichuniec guilty of criminally negligent homicide following a weekslong trial in state district court. They could face years in prison at sentencing.

The jury also found Cichuniec guilty on one of two second-degree assault charges, which brings the possibility of an enhanced prison sentence and required that he be taken into immediate custody. Cooper was found not guilty on the assault charges and was not taken into custody.

McClain's mother, Sheneen, raised her fist in the air following the verdict. "We did it! We did it! We did it!" she said as she walked away from the courthouse.

Cichuniec's wife had her head bowed as deputies handcuffed him. Cooper's wife sobbed alongside her.

Neither the paramedics nor their attorneys spoke outside court. They did not immediately respond to emails and telephone messages from The Associated Press seeking comment.

The outcome could set a precedent for how emergency personnel respond to situations with people in police custody, said University of Miami criminologist Alex Piquero.

"Imagine if you're a paramedic," Piquero said. "They could be hesitant. They could say, 'I'm not going to do anything' or 'I'm going to do less. I don't want to be found guilty.'"

The International Association of Fire Fighters said in a statement that in pursuing the charges, Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser had criminalized split-second medical decisions and set "a dangerous, chilling precedent for pre-hospital care."

Weiser, who convened the grand jury that indicted the first responders, said he was satisfied with the verdict.

"We remain confident that bringing these cases forward was the right thing to do for justice for Elijah McClain and for healing in the Aurora community," he said outside court.

The city of Aurora said Friday night that the two paramedics were fired following their convictions.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 62 of 69

The verdict was announced after two days of deliberations. When jurors told the judge Friday afternoon they were stuck on one of the charges, the judge told them to keep trying to reach a verdict.

Police stopped McClain while he was walking home from a convenience store on Aug. 24, 2019, following a suspicious person complaint. After an officer said McClain reached for an officer's gun — a claim disputed by prosecutors — another officer put him in a neck hold that rendered him temporarily unconscious. Officers also pinned down McClain before Cooper injected him with an overdose of ketamine. Cichuniec was the senior officer and said it was his decision to use ketamine.

Prosecutors said the paramedics did not conduct basic medical checks of McClain, such as taking his pulse, before giving him the ketamine. The dose was too much for someone of his size — 140 pounds (64 kilograms), experts testified. Prosecutors say they also did not monitor McClain immediately after giving him the sedative but instead left him lying on the ground, making it harder to breathe.

McClain's pleading words captured on police body camera video, "I'm an introvert and I'm different," struck a chord with protesters and people around the country.

In a statement released prior to the verdict, McClain's mother said that everyone present during the police stop of her son displayed a lack of humanity.

"They can not blame their job training for their indifference to evil or their participation in an evil action," McClain wrote. "That is completely on them. May all of their souls rot in hell when their time comes."

Defense attorneys argued that the paramedics followed their training in giving ketamine to McClain after diagnosing him with "excited delirium," a disputed condition some say is unscientific and has been used to justify excessive force.

The verdicts came after a jury in Washington state cleared three police officers of all criminal charges on Thursday in the 2020 death of Manuel Ellis, a Black man who was shocked, beaten and restrained face-down on a Tacoma sidewalk as he pleaded for breath.

In the Colorado case, the prosecution said Cooper lied to investigators to try to cover up his actions, telling detectives that McClain was actively resisting when he decided to inject McClain with ketamine, even though the body camera showed McClain lying on the ground unconscious. It also disputed Cooper's claim that McClain tried to get away from police holding him down — and that he took McClain's pulse as he bent down to give him the shot of ketamine, which others testified they did not see.

"He's trying to cover up the recklessness of his conduct," Senior Assistant Attorney General Jason Slothouber told jurors in closing statements.

Cichuniec, who testified along with Cooper this week, said paramedics were trained that they had to work quickly to treat excited delirium with ketamine and said they were told numerous times that it was a safe, effective drug and were not warned about the possibility of it killing anyone.

Colorado now tells paramedics not to give ketamine to people suspected of having the controversial condition, which has symptoms including increased strength and has been associated with racial bias against Black men.

When the police stopped McClain, a massage therapist, he was listening to music and wearing a mask that covered most of his face because he had a blood circulation disorder. The police stop quickly became physical after McClain, seemingly caught off guard, asked to be left alone. He had not been accused of committing any crime.

The case's prominence means the specter of criminal charges and accompanying lawsuits over emergency care will be a concern for paramedics going forward, said Arizona State University law professor James G. Hodge, Jr.

It could prompt them to better document what police tell them about people needing treatment and to ask doctors to sign off before paramedics use life-saving but potentially harmful treatments on patients, he said.

"The national coverage of the cases against these paramedics unquestionably influences practices in real-time," Hodge said.

## Suspect arrested in alleged theft of a Banksy stop sign decorated with military drones

LONDON (AP) — A man suspected of stealing an artwork by Banksy of a stop sign adorned with three military drones, was arrested Saturday, London police said.

A man in his 20s was in custody on suspicion of theft and criminal damage, the Metropolitan police said. The sign was taken less than an hour after the elusive street artist posted a photo of the work on his Instagram page Friday.

Video showed a man with bolt cutters climbing up on a bicycle to remove the work from a sign post on a street corner in the Peckham area of south London while another man steadied the bike. The man who cut the sign free then ran off with it in his hand.

A voice on a video of the incident could be heard saying, "it makes me so annoyed," as the man ran away.

A witness who only wanted to be called Alex told the PA news agency that the small crowd of people that had shown up to view the work stood around watching in awe as the scene unfolded.

"We said, 'What are you doing? But no one really knew what to do, we sort of just watched it happen,'" Alex said. "We were all a bit bemused; there was some honking of car horns."

Jasmine Ali, deputy leader of the local borough council, called for the piece to be returned.

"It should not have been removed and we'd like it back so everyone in the community can enjoy Banksy's brilliant work," Ali said.

The stop sign was replaced.

Banksy's thought-provoking and satirical art often takes aim at war. Many of his followers on Instagram interpreted the work as calling for a cease-fire in the Gaza Strip.

## About 300 Indian travelers are stuck in a French airport in a human trafficking probe

By CHRISTOPHE ENA and ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

VATRY, France (AP) — About 300 Indian citizens heading to Central America were sequestered in a French airport for a third day Saturday after a dramatic police operation prompted by a tip that those aboard might be victims of human trafficking, authorities said.

Those aboard included children and families. The youngest passenger is a toddler of 21 months, and among the children are several unaccompanied minors, according to the local civil protection agency.

Two of the passengers have been detained as part of a special investigation into suspected human trafficking by an organized criminal group, according to the Paris prosecutor's office. Prosecutors wouldn't comment on what kind of trafficking was alleged, or whether the ultimate destination was the U.S., which has seen a surge in Indians crossing the Mexico-U.S. border this year.

French authorities hung white tarps across the soaring bay windows of the small Vatry Airport in Champagne country to ensure privacy for the passengers held inside. The unmarked A340 plane, grounded since Thursday, can be seen parked near the terminal. Other flights were canceled or rerouted as the airport was transformed into the hub of a vast trafficking investigation.

The 15 crew members of the Legend Airlines charter flight — en route from Fujairah airport in the United Arab Emirates to Managua, Nicaragua — were questioned and released, according to a lawyer for the Romania-based airline.

A surreal holiday weekend scene has been unfolding in the Vatry Airport since Thursday. The flight stopped for refueling, and was grounded by French police based on an anonymous tip that it could be carrying victims of human trafficking, the prosecutor's office said.

The unusual and sudden probe disrupted air travel as police cordoned off the airport and flights were disrupted, according to the administration for the Marne region. The airfield is used primarily for charter and cargo flights.

Police sequestered the passengers in the airport, where they spent two nights on camp beds while the

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 64 of 69

investigation continues, according to an official with the Marne administration. The official said the passengers initially remained in the plane, surrounded by police on the tarmac, but were then transferred into the main hall of the airport to sleep.

Emergency workers, a doctor and local volunteers are on the scene and the passengers are being given regular meals, medical care and access to toilets and showers, said Patrick Jaloux, head of the regional civil protection service. A special section of the terminal has been equipped for families.

As the ordeal drags on, "we are trying to find ways to help them pass the time" and reduce their distress, Jaloux told the Associated Press.

Indian consular representatives are stationed at the airport and working with the French government "for the welfare of the Indians" and for an "early resolution of the situation," the Indian Embassy in France posted Saturday on X.

Legend Airlines lawyer Liliana Bakayoko said the company is cooperating with French authorities, denies any role in possible human trafficking and "has not committed any infraction."

A "partner" company that chartered the plane was responsible for verifying the identity documents of each passenger, and communicated their passport information to the airline 48 hours before the flight, Bakayoko told The Associated Press.

The customer had chartered multiple flights on Legend Airlines from Dubai to Nicaragua, and a few other flights have already made the journey without incident, she said. She would not identify the customer, saying only that it is not a European company.

The crew members, who are of multiple nationalities, "are rather traumatized," she said. "They wrote me messages that they want to see their families for Christmas."

The U.S. government has designated Nicaragua as one of several countries deemed as failing to meet minimum standards for eliminating human trafficking.

Nicaragua has also been used as a migratory springboard for people fleeing poverty or conflict in the Caribbean as well as far-flung countries in Africa or Asia, because of relaxed or visa-free entry requirements for some countries. Sometimes charter flights are used for the journey. From there, the migrants travel north by bus with the help of smugglers.

The influx of Indian migrants through Mexico has increased from fewer than 3,000 in 2022 to more than 11,000 from January to November this year, according to the Mexican Immigration Agency. Indian citizens were arrested 41,770 times entering the U.S. illegally from Mexico in the U.S. government's budget year that ended Sept. 30, more than double from 18,308 the previous year.

## **Americans beg for help getting family out of Gaza. "I just want to see my mother again," a son says**

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Fadi Sckak has already lost his father to the violence in Gaza. He wants to help his mother escape that fate.

"I just want to see my mother again, that's the goal," said Sckak, a university student in Sunnyvale, California. The 25-year-old is one of the Palestinian couple's three American sons, including an active-duty U.S. soldier serving in South Korea. "Being able to hold her again. I can't bear to lose her."

His mother, Zahra Sckak, 44, was holed up Saturday with an older, ailing American relative in a Gaza City building along with 100 others. She is among what the State Department says are 300 American citizens, permanent legal residents or their parents and young children still trapped by the fighting between Israel and Hamas militants in Gaza.

Relatives in the United States and other advocates are pleading for the Biden administration and Congress to help them flee.

Gaza's Health Ministry has reported more than 20,000 deaths in the fighting and more than 53,600 wounded. According to the United Nations, more than a half-million people are starving in Gaza because of the war.



# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 65 of 69

Fadi Sckak's mother was on her sixth day with only water from the sewers to drink and with little or no food and rescue hopes waning, he said. His dad, Abedalla, was shot and wounded last month, after a bombing forced the family to flee the building where they had been sheltering, and died days later without treatment, he said.

Their son had listened over the phone as his mother begged for help after the shooting. He could hear his 56-year-old father, who had diabetes and corresponding health problems, in the background, crying out in pain.

"He didn't deserve a painful experience like that. To die, with no help, no one even trying to help," Sckak said.

Some U.S. citizens and legal residents and their immediate family are stranded near Gaza's Rafah crossing into Egypt, desperately waiting for placement on a list of U.S.-government-provided names that would authorize them to leave Gaza.

Others, like Zahra Schkak, are trapped by fighting, and some are too ill or wounded to reach the crossing. They tell their families in voice messages and sporadic phone calls and texts of danger, hunger and fear.

"This is the part of the missile that fall down on our heads yesterday," American citizen Borak Alagha, 18, texted his cousin, Yasmeen Elagha, a law student in Chicago, sending a photo of him holding a jagged chunk of metal.

"This is the hole next to the place we are living now," Alagha said in another text. It showed a deep bomb crater next to their building near Khan Younis, where the family of 10 fled after Israeli officials identified the area as a safe place for civilians.

Yasmeen Elagha has reached out to State Department officials and members of a special task force. She has sued to force the U.S. government to do more after hearing from American officials that there is noting more they can do at the moment.

"They are fully leaving them for dead," she said.

The State Department said Friday it has helped more than 1,300 people who were eligible for U.S. assistance — American citizens, green-card holders and their immediate family members — make it through the Rafah crossing to Egypt. The department is tracking 300 more still seeking U.S. help to escape; that includes what it says are fewer than 50 U.S. citizens.

"U.S. citizens and their families will make their own decisions and adjust their plans as this difficult situation changes," the department said in a statement.

The case of Sckak's family in Gaza has gotten more attention in Washington, given 24-year-old Ragi Sckak's Army duty in South Korea.

Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., said he has pushed the administration to get Americans out of Gaza. "I know this is a top priority for the administration," he said in a statement, adding that U.S. officials would "exhaust every option."

Maria Kari is an immigration lawyer in Houston working on behalf of the stranded American citizens and legal residents. She points to the air and sea charters that the U.S. helped arrange to bring out more than 1,000 Americans and others from Israel after the Hamas attacks on Oct. 7 that started the war.

She has filed a lawsuit accusing the U.S. government of failing to protect Americans in danger abroad and unconstitutionally denying Palestinian Americans the kind of assistance it gave Israeli Americans.

"We're not asking them to do anything political here," she said. "We're simply saying the State Department has a job. And it's not doing that job, for one class of citizens."

## Czech Republic marks a day of mourning for the victims of its worst mass killing

By KAREL JANICEK Associated Press

PRAGUE (AP) — The Czech Republic came to a standstill at noon Saturday as people across the country observed a minute of silence for the victims of its worst mass killing that left 14 dead and questions about the shooter's motive.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 66 of 69

National flags on public buildings flew at half-staff and bells tolled at noon. President Petr Pavel and speakers of both houses of Parliament attended a Mass for the victims at St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague, the country's biggest, which was packed.

"We're all still in a shock in our own ways," Prague Archbishop Jan Graubner said. "We need to clearly condemn what happened but we also need to look into the future."

"Nobody should be left alone in these tough moments," Charles University rector Milena Kralickova said in her remarks toward the end of the Mass. The shooting occurred inside the university's Faculty of Arts on Thursday. Twenty-five other people were wounded before the gunman killed himself.

Police and prosecutors said they have evidence the 24-year-old shooter also killed his father earlier in the day and a man and a baby in Prague last week.

Similar religious services were held in other cities and towns, while Christmas markets in a number of places were closed or reduced their programs amid boosted security measures.

A sea of candles was shining at an impromptu memorial for the victims in front of the university headquarters.

"It's been a horrible experience for us all but it still can't be compared with what the victims had to experience at the time of the attack and what their dear ones have to experience now," said Milos Vystrcil, speaker of the Senate who came to light a candle.

"I think that to help them at this point we express our support and that's what we're all doing now."

The 14 fatalities are being slowly identified. The university confirmed two staff members were among them, including the head of the Institute of Music Sciences, Lenka Hlávková. First-year student Lucie Spindlerová also was killed, said the Lidove noviny daily, where she worked.

Among the other students were Aneta Richterová, according to her group of volunteer firefighters in the town of Helichovky; Klára Holcová, 20, a talented shot putter who won nine medals at national championships, the Czech athletics association said; and Magdalena Křístková, her hometown of Rožtoky confirmed.

The shooter was Czech and a student at the Faculty of Arts. Investigators do not suspect a link to any extremist ideology or groups. Officials said they believed he acted alone but his motive is not yet clear.

Previously, the nation's worst mass shooting was in 2015, when a gunman opened fire in the southeastern town of Uhersky Brod, killing eight before fatally shooting himself.

## Israel and Hamas measures get a look as most US state legislatures meet for first time since Oct. 7

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

Most U.S. state legislatures will reconvene in January for the first time since Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel sparked a war in Gaza and protests worldwide — and they're preparing to take action in response, both symbolic and concrete.

Legislatures in at least eight states that were in session late in 2023 have already condemned the attacks.

"My worldview was shaped by the fact that my forbearers were not protected during the Holocaust, that no one came to their aid," said Florida state Sen. Lori Berman, a Democrat who sponsored a resolution that passed unanimously last month in her state. "Silence and indifference are the reason why bad — evil — is able to prevail."

Measures have been introduced already for the 2024 sessions in states from New Hampshire to Tennessee, and more are likely.

In the Oct. 7 attack, Hamas killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took about 240 others hostage. Israel responded with attacks on Gaza, leveling buildings, including hospitals, killing more than 19,000, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza, and causing 1.9 million Palestinian residents to flee their homes.

Strong emotions about the ongoing war are informed by a long history of conflict.

Since Oct. 7, at least 59 Hamas- or Israel-related pieces of legislation have been introduced in state legislatures. Most are resolutions condemning the attack and supporting Israel.

In states including Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Texas, resolutions in condemnation of the attack

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 67 of 69

passed unanimously or nearly so.

Others have different aims: Resolutions in Pennsylvania and Texas would encourage President Joe Biden to facilitate an end to the conflict between Israel and Palestinians. A New Jersey bill would have the state reimburse travel bills for state residents who were evacuated from Israel during the attack or afterward.

The issue could become more complex as the war goes on, with Democrats in some states becoming divided on resolutions.

In Michigan, the Democratic-led state House adjourned their 2023 session without agreeing on a resolution, as Arab American lawmakers refused to support a resolution condemning Hamas and supporting Israel's response.

Another resolution in Michigan would call on Democrat U.S. Rep. Rashida Tlaib — the only Palestinian American in Congress — to resign over rhetoric that's widely seen as a calling for the eradication of Israel. Her statements have already brought her censure from Congress.

While condemning the attack is a largely popular position, how the bills do so varies.

During a special session this month, the Georgia House of Representatives approved a resolution condemning the attacks. Only two of the 180 representatives voted against the resolution, but 49 didn't vote. Among those not voting was Rep. Ruwa Romman, a Democrat and the first Muslim woman elected to the chamber.

She said in an interview that she told the bill's authors that she would have supported it if it had said the state stands with the Israeli people, instead of Israel.

"You can't ask me to stand with a country that displaced my grandparents and is now killing people en masse," Romman said.

Lawmakers are also weighing in on how to handle protests and Palestinian-oriented events at universities, some of them accused of allowing antisemitism.

Republican lawmakers in Pennsylvania this month defeated legislation to send \$33.5 million to the private University of Pennsylvania's veterinary school amid criticism and claims that the university was tolerating antisemitism.

Indiana's Republican House Speaker Todd Huston told his caucus in November that he would prioritize addressing antisemitism on college campuses in light of the Israel-Hamas war.

The Indiana House passed a bill during the 2023 legislative session that sought to define antisemitism as religious discrimination and "provide educational opportunities free of religious discrimination." The bill died in the Senate.

"Our Jewish students should know they will be safe on campuses throughout Indiana and not be subjected to antisemitic teaching or materials," Huston told colleagues in a speech.

A Florida measure introduced in 2023 would force public university students who support Hamas and other groups designated as terrorist organizations to pay out-of-state tuition.

"I saw videos of protests on Florida's campuses and wondered to myself 'how many of these pro-Hamas students chanting for the destruction of Israel are taxpayers subsidizing with reduced tuition rates?'" the bill's sponsor, GOP state Sen. Blaise Ingoglia, told The Associated Press in an email.

The bill did not advance in a special session in November, but he said he would bring it back.

A New Jersey measure would target funding for universities, rather than individual students, prohibiting them from "authorizing, facilitating, providing funding for, or otherwise supporting any event or organization promoting antisemitism or hate speech on campus." Its sponsor in the Assembly, Republican Alex Sauickie, said he believes the idea can pick up the bipartisan support needed to pass in a Democrat-controlled legislature.

Edward Ahmed Michell, the national deputy director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, said that measures restricting speech could be found unconstitutional and he doesn't expect them to gain traction. He said that many of the others, which focus on support for Israel but not for the people of Gaza killed or displaced in the war, are also troubling.

"I understand state legislators want to comment on international incidents that are relevant to their

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 68 of 69

constituents, and that's fine," said Edward Ahmed Michell, the national deputy director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations. "But they need to be morally consistent."

## Vatican to publish never-before-seen homilies by Pope Benedict XVI during his 10-year retirement

ROME (AP) — The Vatican next year will publish a collection of never-before-seen homilies delivered by the late Pope Benedict XVI during his private Sunday Masses, most of them penned during his 10-year retirement, officials said Saturday.

The consecrated women who tended to Benedict during his pontificate and retirement recorded the homilies as he delivered them, and have now transcribed them for publication by the Vatican's publishing house.

Thirty of the homilies date from Benedict's pontificate, while around 100 more are from his retirement, said a statement from the publisher, the Joseph Ratzinger Foundation and the Vatican's communications office. All are in Italian, the German-born theologian's adopted language.

The Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*, in conjunction with Germany's *Welt am Sonntag*, published the first of the homilies Saturday. It is a meditation on the figure of Joseph that Benedict delivered on Dec. 22, 2013, just a few months after he became the first pope in 600 years to resign.

Benedict died on Dec. 31, 2022, at the age of 95.

His longtime spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi, who heads the Ratzinger Foundation, is curating the collection. Organizers of the project said the homilies don't contain any news or theological novelties, but rather are of "substantial spiritual nutrition."

## Today in History: December 24, astronauts orbiting the moon read from Genesis on Christmas Eve

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Dec. 24, the 358th day of 2023. There are seven days left in the year. This is Christmas Eve.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 24, 1968, the Apollo 8 astronauts, orbiting the moon, read passages from the Old Testament Book of Genesis during a Christmas Eve telecast.

On this date:

In 1814, the United States and Britain signed the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812 following ratification by both the British Parliament and the U.S. Senate.

In 1851, fire devastated the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., destroying about 35,000 volumes.

In 1865, several veterans of the Confederate Army formed a private social club in Pulaski, Tennessee, that was the original version of the Ku Klux Klan.

In 1906, Canadian physicist Reginald A. Fessenden became the first person to transmit the human voice (his own) as well as music over radio, from Brant Rock, Massachusetts.

In 1913, 73 people, most of them children, died in a crush of panic after a false cry of "Fire!" during a Christmas party for striking miners and their families at the Italian Hall in Calumet, Michigan.

In 1914, during World War I, impromptu Christmas truces began to take hold along parts of the Western Front between British and German soldiers.

In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower supreme commander of Allied forces in Europe as part of Operation Overlord.

In 1951, Gian Carlo Menotti's "Amahl and the Night Visitors," the first opera written specifically for television, was broadcast by NBC-TV.

In 1990, actor Tom Cruise married his "Days of Thunder" co-star, Nicole Kidman, during a private cer-

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 183 ~ 69 of 69

emony at a Colorado ski resort.

In 1992, President George H.W. Bush pardoned former Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and five others in the Iran-Contra scandal.

In 2012, actors Charles Durning, 89, and Jack Klugman, 90, died on the same day.

In 2013, Britain's Queen Elizabeth II granted a posthumous pardon to code-breaker Alan Turing, who was convicted of homosexual behavior in the 1950s.

In 2017, Peru's president announced that he had granted a medical pardon to jailed former strongman Alberto Fujimori, 79, who had been serving a 25-year sentence for human rights abuses, corruption and the sanctioning of death squads.

In 2020, Bethlehem ushered in Christmas Eve with a stream of joyous marching bands and the triumphant arrival of the top Catholic clergyman in the Holy Land, but few people were there to greet them as the pandemic and a strict lockdown dampened celebrations.

In 2021, Pope Francis celebrated Christmas Eve Mass before an estimated 2,000 people in St. Peter's Basilica, going ahead with the service despite the resurgence in COVID-19 cases that had prompted a new vaccine mandate for Vatican employees.

In 2022, Kathy Whitworth, the golfer whose 88 career LPGA victories were the most by any player on a single professional tour, died at age 83.

Today's Birthdays: Dr. Anthony Fauci is 83. Recording company executive Mike Curb is 79. Former U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions is 77. Actor Grand L. Bush is 68. Actor Stephanie Hodge is 67. The former president of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai (HAH'-mihd KAHR'-zeye), is 66. Rock musician Ian Burden (The Human League) is 66. Actor Anil Kapoor (ah-NEEL' kuh-POOR') is 64. Actor Eva Tamargo is 63. Actor Wade Williams is 62. Rock singer Mary Ramsey (10,000 Maniacs) is 60. Actor Mark Valley is 59. Actor Diedrich Bader is 57. Actor Amaury Nolasco is 53. Singer Ricky Martin is 52. Author Stephenie Meyer is 50. TV personality Ryan Seacrest (TV: "Live With Kelly & Ryan") is 49. Actor Michael Raymond-James is 46. Actor Austin Stowell is 39. Actor Sofia Black-D'Elia is 32. Rock singer Louis Tomlinson (One Direction) is 32. NFL wide receiver Davante Adams is 31. Estonian tennis player Anett Kontaveit is 28.