

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 1 of 85

[1- Upcoming Events](#)

[2- Easter Egg Hunt in a snowy park](#)

[5- Geese on a frozen pond](#)

[5- Groton Area Kindergarten Roundup](#)

[6- Help Wanted Ads](#)

[7- Large Crowd at Shilhank Fundraiser](#)

[7- Many vendors at Vender Fair](#)

[7- GDI Living Heart Fitness Center ad](#)

[8- Sixth graders take first at YMCA Tourney](#)

[9- Easter Baskets by Tina](#)

[10- Obit: Marlene Ahern Coon](#)

[11- Weekly Vikings Roundup](#)

[12- Senior All Star Game](#)

[13- Sunday Extras](#)

[31- Gov. Noem's Weekly Column](#)

[32- Sen. Thune's Weekly Column](#)

[33- Rep. Johnson's Weekly Column](#)

[34- Rev. Snyder's Column](#)

[36- EarthTalk - Trump](#)

[37- SD Search Light: Legislature's unsung role:](#)

[Protecting us from bad bills](#)

[38- SD Search Light: With yes votes from Thune and Rounds, U.S. Senate passes spending package overnight](#)

[40- Weather Pages](#)

[45- Daily Devotional](#)

[46- Subscription Form](#)

[47- Lottery Numbers](#)

[48- News from the Associated Press](#)

"While we try to teach our children all about life, our children teach us what life is all about."

ANGELA SCHWINDT



Sunday, March 24

Palm Sunday

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.; **POSTPONED TO THURSDAY:** Easter Cantata entailed, "Because He Lives . . . Amen", 6:30 p.m.

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

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m. (Palm procession by Sunday school), Choir, 6 p.m.

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

Cancelled: United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:30 a.m., and at Groton, 10:30 a.m. with Sunday school singing; Coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.

POSTPONED

Due to expected weather conditions for today, the Easter Cantata at the Groton C&MA Church is postponed to Thursday at 6:30 p.m. with refreshments following.

**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.
© 2024 Groton Daily Independent



Easter Egg Hunt in a snowy park

Briggs Sperry, son of Tyler and Carla Sperry attended the Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt Saturday in the Groton SD Community and found a special egg! Inside his special egg, was a certificate for a free bike sponsored by the Groton Chamber! Pictured here is Briggs with his certificate, smiling with excitement. (Courtesy Photo from April Abeln)



The Easter Egg Hunt was done as planned at the Groton City Park Saturday morning. Even the Easter Bunny showed up and hid the eggs throughout the snow in the park. (Photos by Paul Kosel)



Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 3 of 85



Children race through the City Park picking up Easter eggs during the Groton Lions Club Annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, March 23. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



BayleeAnn Kupcho, a kindergartener in Groton, shows off the eggs she collected during the Groton Lions Club Annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, March 23. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Six-year-old River Wipf grabs some Easter eggs at the base of a tree during the Groton Lions Club Annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, March 23. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 4 of 85



A crowd filled the City Park for the Groton Lions Club Annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, March 23. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



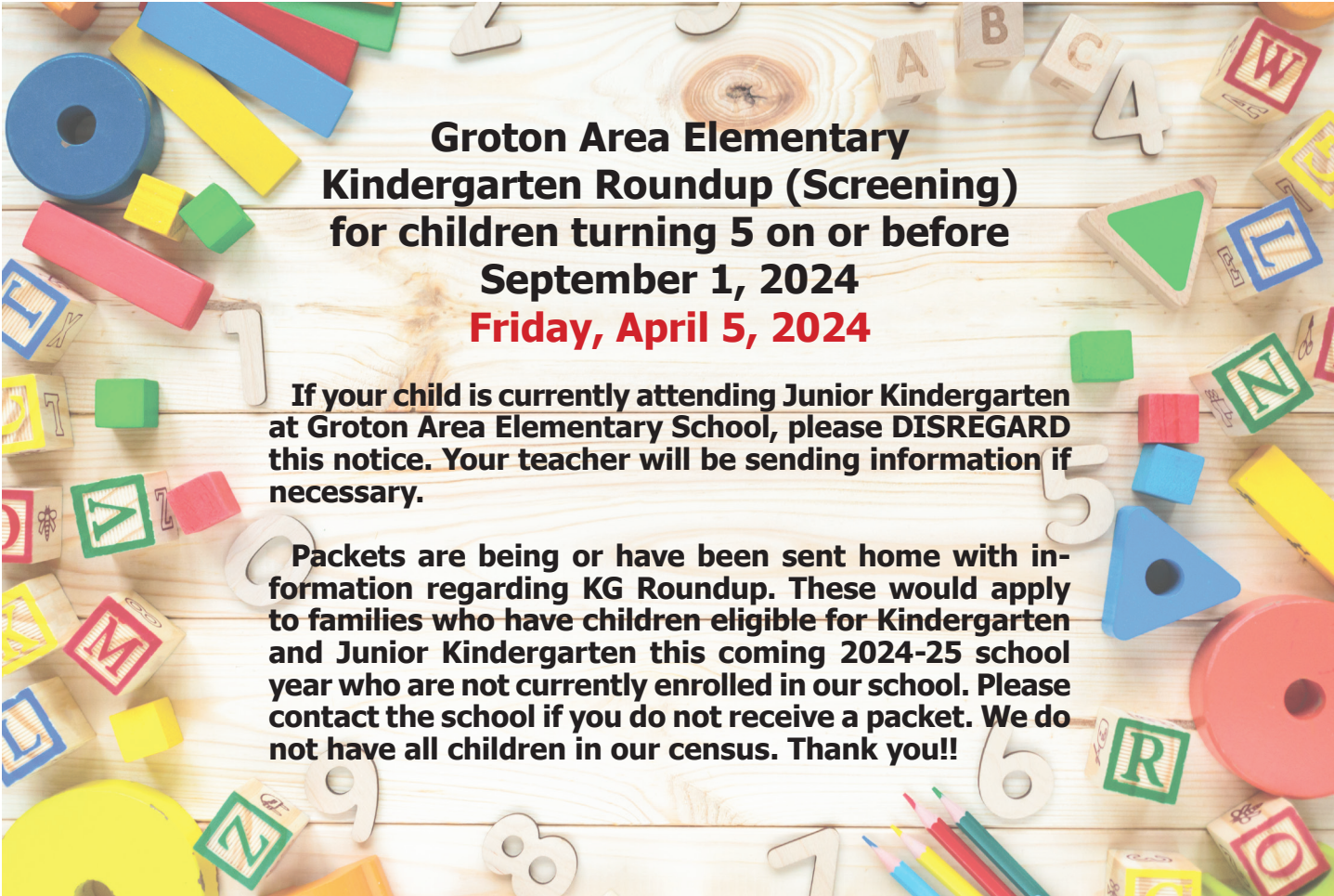
Mayor Scott Hanlon, right, talks to community members after the Groton Lions Club Annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, March 23. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 5 of 85



The geese that have been migrating back to the north probably wished they'd stay south a little longer. While the water was open, it froze over with nights dipping into the single digits. To add insult to injury, now they will have to battle the winter storm that is going to hit the area. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Groton Area Elementary Kindergarten Roundup (Screening) for children turning 5 on or before September 1, 2024 Friday, April 5, 2024

If your child is currently attending Junior Kindergarten at Groton Area Elementary School, please **DISREGARD** this notice. Your teacher will be sending information if necessary.

Packets are being or have been sent home with information regarding KG Roundup. These would apply to families who have children eligible for Kindergarten and Junior Kindergarten this coming 2024-25 school year who are not currently enrolled in our school. Please contact the school if you do not receive a packet. We do not have all children in our census. Thank you!!

EMPLOYMENT

Dairy Queen in Groton is hiring! If you're looking for a fun job with lots of variety, look no further! We're looking for energetic, smiling people – we provide free meals, uniforms, competitive wages, fun atmosphere and flexible scheduling. Part-time – day, evening, week-end shifts available. We will work with your schedule. Stop in today and pick up an application.

.....

Position available for full-time Public Works Laborer. Formal training and/or experience preferred. Salary negotiable DOE. Benefits include medical insurance, life insurance, and SD State Retirement. Please send application and resume to the City of Groton, PO Box 587, Groton, SD 57445, or email to city.doug@nvc.net. Applications will be accepted until 5pm on April 16, 2024. Full job description and application may be found at <https://www.grotonsd.gov/o/grotoncity/page/employment-options>. For more information, please call 605-397-8422. Equal opportunity employer.

.....

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 7 of 85



There was a large crowd on hand for the Billy Shilhanek fundraiser held Saturday at the Groton American Legion. There were many, many items that were donated for the silent auction and food was also served. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



The Vender Fair was held at the GHS Gym on Saturday with a large number of vendors in attendance. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

15 N Main St. - Ste. 101
Downtown Groton

Call/Text Paul: 605-397-7460
Call/Text Tina: 605-397-7285



Don't listen to the enemy in your mind telling
you that you can't improve yourself!

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 8 of 85



The Sixth Grade basketball team ended their season Saturday afternoon by winning first place at the YMCA Interstate Basketball Tournament held in Aberdeen.

Pictured in back, left to right, are Coach Tom Tietz, Major Dolan, Trayce Schelle, Axel Abeln, Ryder Schwan and Coach Brett Schwan; in front, left to right, are Liam Lord, Trey Tietz and Asher Zimmerman. Liam Johnson also played the first game of the tourney and was awarded player of the game. (Photo courtesy April Abeln)

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 9 of 85

Easter Baskets by Tina ~ 605-397-7285



Only
\$20
each



Fire truck Easter basket with a light up cup three mystery eggs, a light up football, a space game, blue peeps bubbles and a blue fan



It has a blue speaker , pink bubbles a blue fan, and stress carrot a stuffed bunny with three clear Easter bunnies with jelly beans in side them



The stuff inside it a cup that lights up, a stuffed cow, a bow with a arrow toy, a shooter game, a blue peeps bubble and a green bubble fan



The stuff that's in this basket yellow peeps bubbles a duck puzzle, a stuffed bunny, four mystery colored Easter eggs with prize inside a jump rope, a cup that lights up on top and a pink fan with bubbles in it

The Life of Marlene Deloris Schuelke Ahern Coon



A Celebration of Life for Marlene Ahern Coon, 88, will be 2:00 p.m., Tuesday, July 9th at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton. Rev. Craig Grams will officiate. Inurnment will follow in Union Cemetery, Groton.

Marlene passed away Saturday, March 16, 2024 at Alive Hospice in Nashville, TN.

Marlene Deloris Schuelke was born July 9, 1935, in Niles, Michigan. She spent her childhood years with her parents Ora and Winifred (Odland) Schuelke and siblings, Linda and Bill, on a farm in Putney Township. She was in 4-H and attended school in Groton.

Marlene married Willis Lee Ahern on December 29, 1951. They lived in the Andover area and had four children, Michael (who died in infancy), Wallace, Richard, and Patti. When the children were young, the family moved to Rapid City, SD. Over the years, Marlene was employed as a retail clerk, a secretary, and at the Pennington County Register of Deeds. Willis passed away in February of 1964.

Marlene married Dwayne LeRoy Coon on May 29, 1965, and together with Dwayne's daughter, Jolene, they became a family of six. Dwayne's work kept him on the road most of the week, so she was frequently running their household

on her own. She was delighted when her sister Linda's family moved to the area, and the two families enjoyed five years of socializing and spending holidays together. When her grandchildren were young, she loved spending time with them, sharing her hobbies and interests. She was also a talented decorator, and many people remember her lovely home décor. After retirement, Marlene and Dwayne relocated to Hastings, MN, to be closer to their son, Richard & family.

In 1995, Marlene and Dwayne returned to the Schuelke family farm north of Groton. They were vital to the continued loving care of Marlene's mother, Winifred. It can be challenging to care for a loved one with dementia, but Marlene took on many hours of her care every day. While there were stressful times, too, she spent many a happy morning enjoying coffee and conversation with Winifred and Neola Schuelke. After Winifred passed away in 2002, Marlene and Dwayne continued to live next door to Bill and Eileen, spending many loving hours with their grandchildren, too. The children knew Marlene had a treasure trove of dolls, buttons, and other small toys, and they would while away the afternoon together. She taught generations of kids how to play card games.

In her years living in Groton, she was a member of Putney Ladies' Aid and St. John's Lutheran Church. She also worked as the church secretary St. John's Lutheran Church in Groton, retiring in March 2015 at the age of 80. She loved interacting with the preschool children every day.

In November of 2018, Marlene moved to Nashville, TN where she lived in the home of her daughter, Patti, for the remainder of her life. She enjoyed playing cards, even into her twilight years.

In spite of hardships she endured in her life, Marlene was a brave woman who had a forgiving heart. She remarked that she wasn't one to join things, so she focused her energy on her family members. She was known for her passion for making quilts, sewing, painting, and crafts, and her family members were grateful recipients of many of her projects.

She is survived by her daughters, Patti L. Hergenreder, of Nashville, TN, and Jolene J. (Joseph) Shear, of Clarksville, TN; brother, Bill (Eileen) Schuelke, of Groton, SD; daughters-in-law, Christina A. Ahern, of Cape Coral, FL, and Kristina A. Ahern, of Maiden Rock, WI; five grandchildren, Mikel, Linda, Brianna, Patrishia, and Jamison; and two great-grandchildren, Kaiden and Declan.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her husbands, Willis Ahern and Dwayne Coon; sons, Michael Ahern, Wallace Ahern, Richard Ahern; son-in-law Wilbert Hergenreder; and sister, Linda Schuelke Riggs.

The family requests that gifts in lieu of flowers be made to Abe's Garden Community, 115 Woodmont Blvd., Nashville, TN 37205 or online at www.abesgarden.org/givenow.

www.paetznick-garness.com

Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

Most of the big names are signed to expensive contracts during the first week of free agency, but the second week shouldn't be overlooked. An NFL team will carry 75 players into training camp, before whittling that number down to 53 for the regular season, so having a quality depth chart can make a big difference. The Vikings prioritized defense in the first week of free agency, and that trend continued into the second week, as all four players the team signed this past week are on that side of the ball.

The biggest pickup this past week was cornerback Shaquill Griffin, who signed a one-year deal. Griffin was a third-round pick for the Seattle Seahawks back in 2017 and made the Pro Bowl in 2019. After four seasons with the Seahawks, Griffin signed a massive contract with the Jacksonville Jaguars. Unfortunately, an injury forced him to miss most of the 2022 season, and Jacksonville cut him the following off-season. Last season Griffin signed with the Houston Texans but was cut midway through the season and was picked up by the Carolina Panthers. Now, Griffin gets a chance to come in and compete for a starting role in Brian Flores' defense.

Jihad Ward is another name Vikings fans will need to learn, as the defensive end/outside linebacker was brought in to add depth. Ward was a second-round pick for the Oakland Raiders in 2016 and started 13 games his rookie season. Since then, however, he has primarily been a backup as he bounced around from team to team – going from Oakland to Indianapolis, then to Baltimore and Jacksonville, before landing with the Giants in 2022 and starting 20 games for them the past two seasons.

Another player the Vikings brought in for depth was linebacker Kamu Grugier-Hill. Just like Ward, Grugier-Hill has played for a lot of different teams since entering the league in 2016. He was drafted by the Patriots in the sixth round but didn't make the final 53-man roster. He was claimed by Philadelphia, where he played for four seasons. In 2020 he played for Miami, Houston in 2021, and spent time in both Houston and Arizona last year. Grugier-Hill will compete with Brian Asamoah for snaps behind (presumed) starters Ivan Pace Jr. and Blake Cashman.

The final new player for the Vikings is defensive lineman Jonah Williams, who went undrafted in 2021 before making his way onto the Rams' roster. Williams didn't start a single game his rookie season (which is understandable for an undrafted player), but he continued to get better and earned six starts in 2022 and 16 starts last season. The defensive line was perhaps the Vikings' weakest link last season, so the team set out to fix it, bringing in Williams, Ward, and Jerry Tillery to battle Jonathan Bullard and Jaquelin Roy for the two open spots on the D-line next to Harrison Phillips.

With free agency entering week three, we won't have many new signings to report, so next week we turn our attention to the other three teams in the NFC North. Which Vikings' rival helped themselves the most so far this offseason, and which team is poised to take a step back? We'll find out next week. Skol!

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 12 of 85



2024 B103 Senior All-Star Game was held Saturday in Sisseton. Groton seniors Emily Clark and Sydney Leicht participated in the 24th annual event. (Courtesy photos)




Groton Daily Independent

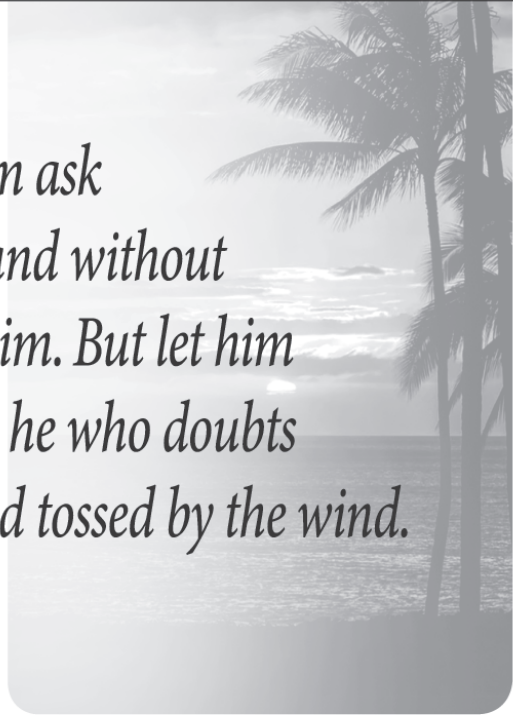
Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 13 of 85



THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

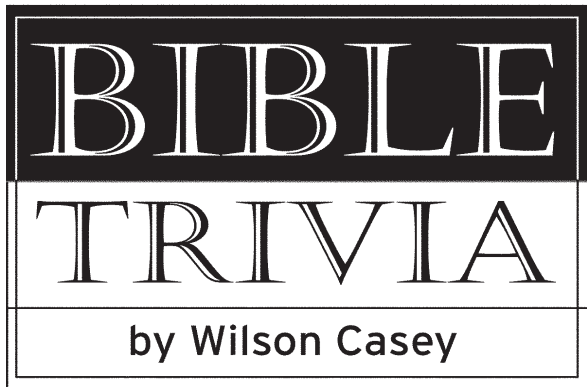
If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

JAMES 1: 5,6 



© 2024 by King Features Syndicate, Inc. World rights reserved.





1. Is the book of Iscariot (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. From Matthew 28:2, who rolled back the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb and sat upon it? *Simon, An angel, Villagers, Disciples*

3. When Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" came upon the risen Jesus, who did He ask them to inform? *Priests, Disciples, No one, Villagers*

4. From John 20, which disciple doubted Jesus had risen unless he could see the wounds? *Peter, Andrew, Thomas, Thaddeus*

5. How long did Jesus remain after His resurrection before He ascended into heaven? *Instantaneously, 1 hour, 7 days, 40 days*

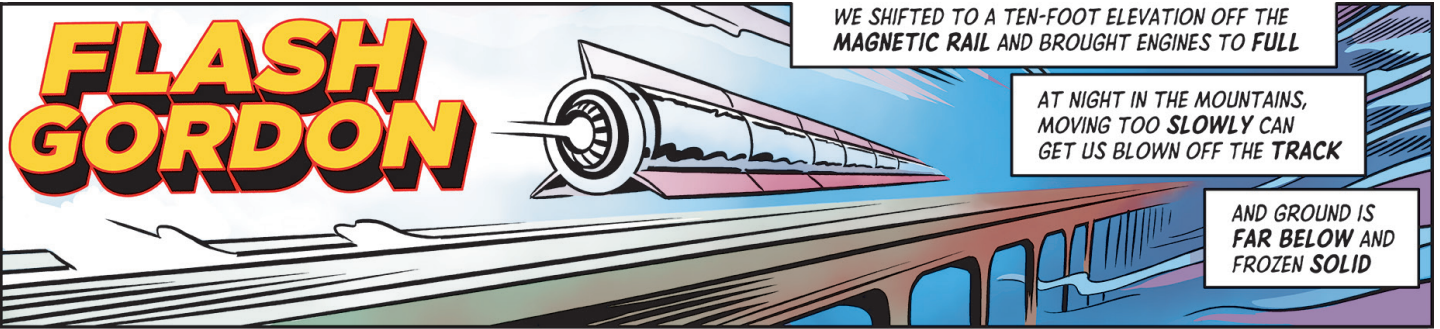
6. According to the apostle Paul, more than what number of people saw the risen Christ at one time? *100, 300, 500, 1,000*

ANSWERS: 1) Neither, 2) An angel, 3) Disciples, 3) Thomas (called Didymus), 4) 40 days (Acts 1:3), 5) 500 (1 Cor 15:3-8)

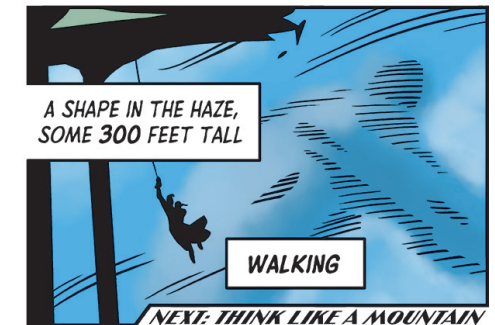
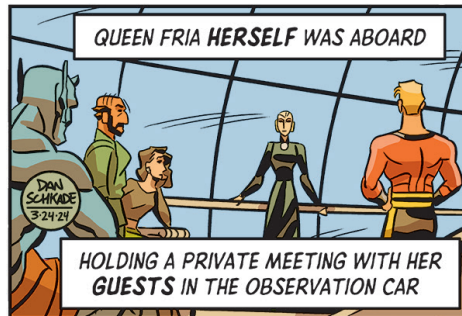
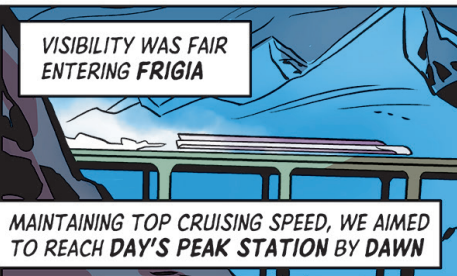
Find expanded trivia online with Wilson Casey at www.patreon.com/triviaguy. FREE TRIAL!

Groton Daily Independent

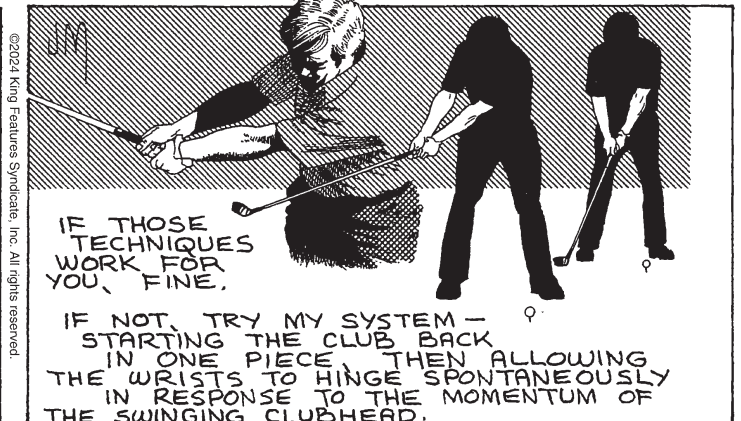
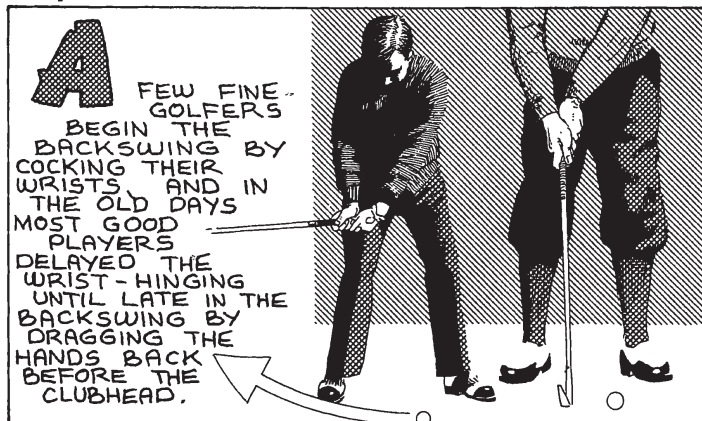
Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 15 of 85



ROCKET TRAIN "MARGELLA"-- PILOT NOTES:



Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



©2024 King Features Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.



Lone Star Tick Bites Cause Alpha-Gal Syndrome

DEAR DR. ROACH: I was recently diagnosed with alpha-gal syndrome (AGS). I live in the country, but I do not remember having a tick on me. My husband and I are very cautious and always check for them. I am struggling to understand what exactly are my symptoms, and what I can and cannot eat. I don't know if I am someone who can have dairy or not.

The biggest challenge seems to be eating out. If I order chicken, fish or vegetables and they are cooked on the same grill as meat, then they are not safe to eat due to cross contamination. Also, dairy, lard and whey are in many food items.

Is there a specialist I should consult? My doctor seems to know about some of this, but is unable to answer many of my questions. Any information you can share would be helpful. — S.N.

ANSWER: AGS is an allergy to galactose-alpha-1,3-galactose, a carbohydrate allergen found in all mammalian meats, such as beef, pork and lamb. The allergy can be serious as people develop symptoms, including various syndromes like skin itching and rashes; gastrointestinal symptoms; and even anaphylaxis, a severe allergy syndrome of cardiovascular collapse.

These reactions are delayed compared to other typical allergic responses, with people often developing symptoms the night after consuming meat — about two to six hours after consumption. A blood test for alpha-gal allergies can confirm the diagnosis.

These symptoms usually begin after getting bitten multiple times by a Lone Star tick. The tick has alpha-gal in its saliva, which triggers the sensitivity. Many medical professionals are unaware of this newly described condition (40% reported never having heard of the syndrome), which can prevent a diagnosis from being made in a timely fashion.

Because the condition is new, there are some factors that we don't really understand about it, like why some people tolerate muscle meat from an animal but react strongly to organ meat. There just aren't answers to some of the questions that you might be asking. For example, milk, whey and gelatin sensitivity have been described with AGS, but not lard (at least that I could find).

Sometimes a person tolerates cooked meat but is intolerant of raw (or barely cooked) meat. Some people lose the allergy over time (usually a few years), but additional tick bites may bring it back.

The ideal specialist in this case is an allergist. You should certainly have and know how to use an epinephrine injector in case of a severe reaction.

DEAR DR. ROACH: A dietician recommended that I drink six glasses of water every day. I tend to drink most of the water in the morning and early afternoon. My husband thinks I should drink it "equally" throughout the day. His logic is that I don't retain enough water to stay properly hydrated throughout the evening and night. Does timing really matter? — C.R.

ANSWER: Your body has a system in place to hold onto water so that you don't need to drink it during the night. Unless you are losing unusually high amounts of water (as you would in a very dry and hot environment, for example), there is no reason to hydrate at night. Most people realize that doing so will cause you to visit the bathroom rather than sleep.

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.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 17 of 85



Joey King, left, and Logan Lerman star in "We Were the Lucky Ones." Courtesy of Hulu

"Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom" (PG-13) -- Is it the end of Jason Momoa's "Aquaman"? In December 2023, Momoa told "Entertainment Tonight" that if the audience loves the sequel, "there's a possibility" of a third film getting greenlit. But after negative reviews and the film only making \$434 million against a budget of \$215 million, it

doesn't look too good. In the sequel, Momoa stars as Arthur Curry four years after the events of the first movie. Now a married family man, Arthur splits his life between the land and sea, while Black Manta still seeks revenge in the shadows. When he learns of Manta's plans, Arthur breaks Orm, his half-brother, out of prison to join him in the fight against Manta. Amber Heard, Yahya Abdul-Mateen II and Nicole Kidman reprise their roles from the first film. Out now. (Max)

"We Were the Lucky Ones" (TV-MA) -- After starring in the 2022 film "Bullet Train" together, Joey King and Logan Lerman reunite to lead this new eight-episode series based on the historical novel written by Georgia Hunter. King and Lerman respectively portray Halina and Addy Kurc, two siblings in a Jewish family of seven who live in Poland at the start of World War II. The large family inevitably gets separated as the war carries on, taking them far away from home and spreading them across continents. Amid the tragic circumstances they're forced to endure, the Kurc family is determined to keep their resilience and reunite with each other once the war ends. The first three episodes premiere March 28. (Hulu)

"Palm Royale" (TV-MA) -- In this period-comedy miniseries based on "Mr. & Mrs. American Pie" by Juliet McDaniel, Kristen Wiig ("Wonder Woman 1984") takes on the role of Maxine Simmons. Maxine is a woman desperate to join high-society life in 1969 Palm Springs, California, after getting dumped by her husband and social circle. She sets her sights on the Palm Royale, an exclusive club whose elite members are dripping with glamour and vanity. But if she truly wants to get to the top of the Palm Royale, Maxine must sacrifice parts of herself to become the person she wishes to be. The series co-stars Ricky Martin ("The Assassination of Gianna Versace"), Laura Dern ("Big Little Lies") and the legendary Carol Burnett. The first three episodes are out now! (Apple TV+)

"Road House" (R) -- Almost 35 years after the 1989 film "Road House" starring Patrick Swayze and Sam Elliot released, a reimagining starring Jake Gyllenhaal and Conor McGregor has made its way to streaming. Gyllenhaal takes on the lead role as Dalton, a former UFC fighter who gets hired to work as a bouncer at a roadhouse in the Florida Keys. The joint attracts a great number of rowdy customers, but none are a match for Dalton's fists. However, when news of Dalton's immaculate butt-kicking hits the ears of Ben Brandt (Billy Magnussen), the heir of a criminal empire, Ben will stop at nothing to shut Dalton and the roadhouse down. For anyone who loves nonstop action, this one's for you! Out now. (Prime Video)

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 18 of 85



1. Which female artist released "Everybody's Somebody's Fool"?
2. Name the first No. 1 single by England Dan & John Ford Coley.
3. Which two actors are mentioned in "Key Largo" by Bertie Higgins?
4. Which song is Chris de Burgh most known for?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Does she love me, with all her heart, should I worry, when we're apart?"

Answers

1. Connie Francis, in 1960. The ballad topped international charts in Canada, New Zealand and Norway, as well as in the U.S. Francis released a German language version called "Die Liebe ist ein seltsames Spiel," but it was speeded up as a polka.
2. "I'd Really Love to See You Tonight," in 1976. Unfortunately the duo didn't stay together long, with Dan Seals going out on his own.
3. "Bogie and Bacall." Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall starred in the film "Key Largo" in 1948.
4. "Lady in Red," in 1986. Popular around the globe, it won an ASCAP Pop Music Award in 1988 for the Most Performed Song.
5. "A Lover's Question," by Clyde McPhatter in 1958. McPhatter's version, co-written by Brook Benton, spent a week at the top of the R&B chart.

(c) 2024 King Features Syndicate

GRIN and BEAR IT ^{Wagner}



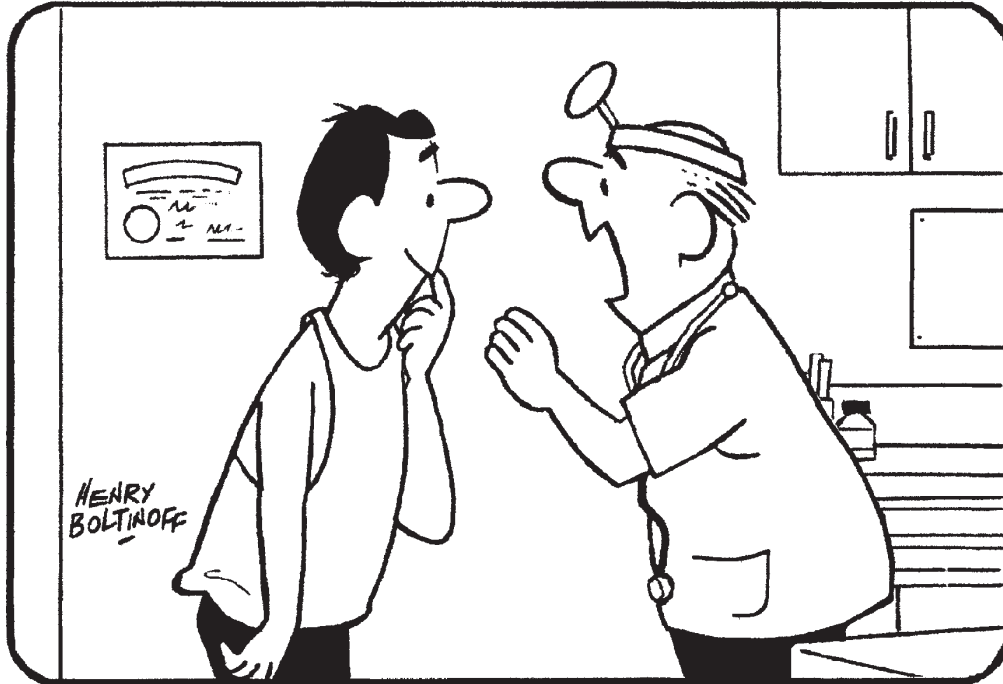
"I'll tell you the same thing my father told me.
... Go ask your mother."

Just Like Cats & Dogs ^{by Dave T. Phipps}

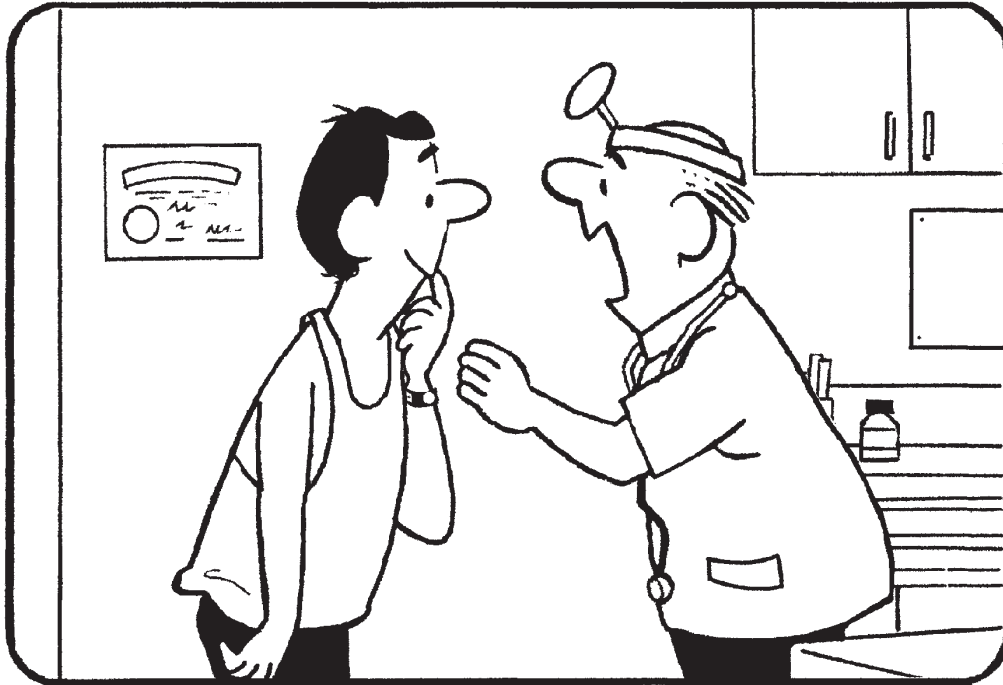


HOCUS-FOCUS

BY
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



©2024 King Features Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.

Differences: 1. Arm is moved. 2. Neck opening of undershirt is lower. 3. Pocket is different. 4. Cabinet door is wider. 5. Bottle on counter is moved. 6. Watch is added.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 20 of 85



* What's the best way to keep sheet sets together? Tuck all the pieces in a matching pillowcase, of course.

* Need to hull strawberries? Try using a straw. You position the straw at the bottom of the strawberry, then push up toward the stem. It works quickly and well.

* If you mount a magnet strip in your bathroom or on your vanity, you can use it to hold bobby pins or metal barrettes. Or mount a ribbon to hold all kinds of hair clips.

* Baby leg protectors are cute. And cheap, if you have some old athletic socks. Cut off the ends, slip over baby's legs, and watch cutie scoot across the floor.

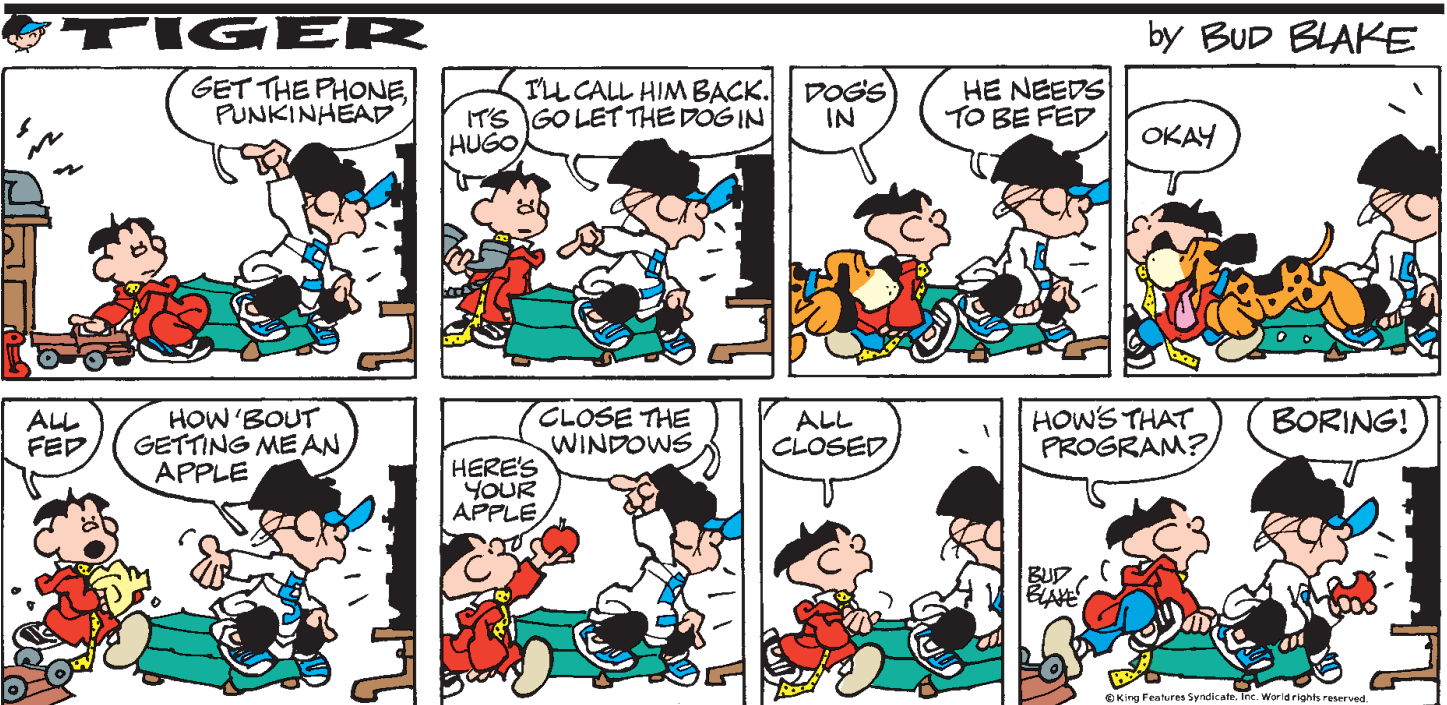
* If your entertainment electronics have a clock that is too bright, cover it with plain tape. You will still be able to read the time, but the tape will lessen the glare.

* My in-laws have a vaulted ceiling, and there is a corner that even the longest-handled duster won't reach. My brilliant son had an idea to get down the cobwebs that had accumulated there. He used a rubber band to secure a dish towel around a tennis ball. Then he just tossed it at the area repeatedly. I can't believe how well it worked.

* If new denims are too stiff, add half a cup of salt to your wash water along with the regular detergent.

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

(c) 2024 King Features Synd., Inc.



Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 21 of 85

King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Weighing device
- 6 Sitar tunes
- 11 Fearful
- 12 Using the Internet
- 14 Eagles' homes
- 15 Julianne and Demi
- 16 Away from SSW
- 17 Auto style
- 19 Wager
- 20 Food regimen
- 22 Cariou of Broadway
- 23 Visibility hindrance
- 24 Cancel
- 26 Journeys
- 28 Head of st.
- 30 Animal doc
- 31 "Lolita" author
- 35 Summary
- 39 Plow pullers
- 40 Felon's flight
- 42 Sitarist Shankar
- 43 Soccer's Hamm
- 44 Prom duds
- 46 Heavy weight
- 47 E-business
- 49 Boring type
- 51 New citizen, perhaps

	1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10	
11							12					13
14							15					
16				17		18				19		
20			21		22				23			
24				25		26		27				
			28		29		30					
31	32	33				34		35		36	37	38
39					40		41		42			
43				44			45		46			
47			48				49		50			
51							52					
	53						54					

- 52 Is anxious about
- 53 Messy places
- 54 Leaks slowly
- DOWN**
- 1 Picturesque
- 2 Life's work
- 3 Onassis nickname
- 4 Cask sediment
- 5 '50s Ford
- 6 Peter the Great, e.g.
- 7 Shortly
- 8 Day- — paint
- 9 Car safety feature
- 10 Allergy season sound
- 11 Hourglass fillers
- 13 "Melrose Place" actor Rob
- 18 "Lion" star Patel
- 21 Yank at
- 23 Misanthrope
- 25 — choy
- 27 " — outta here!"
- 29 Library array
- 31 — plume
- 32 Wise sayings
- 33 "Scram!"
- 34 Preventive shot, in slang
- 36 40 winks
- 37 Sidesteps
- 38 Lipstick shades
- 41 Repairs
- 44 Rent
- 45 Foolproof
- 48 Hollywood trickery (Abbr.)
- 50 Ruby or Sandra

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 22 of 85

— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 21 mins.

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

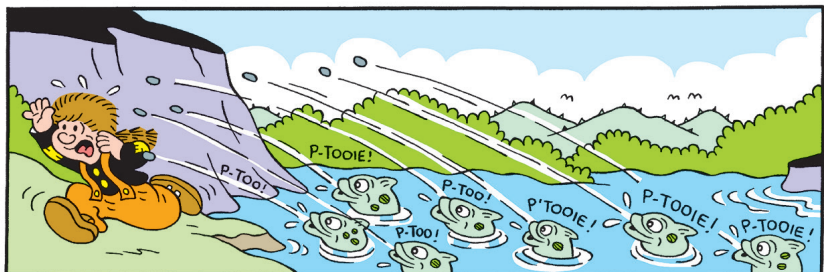
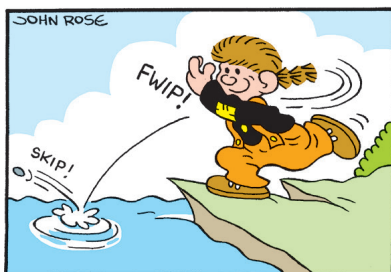
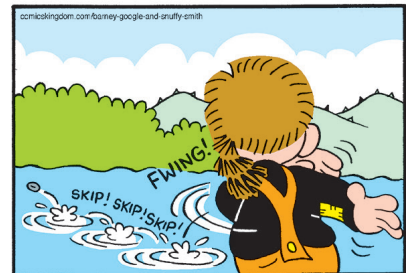
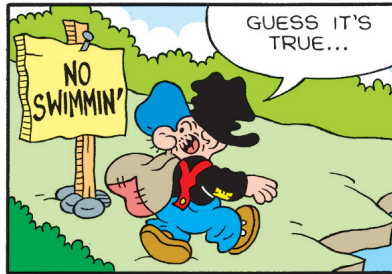
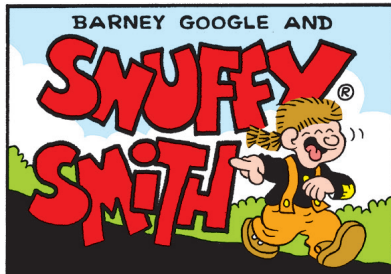
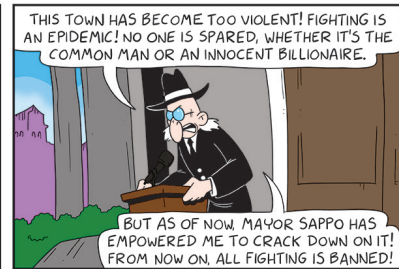
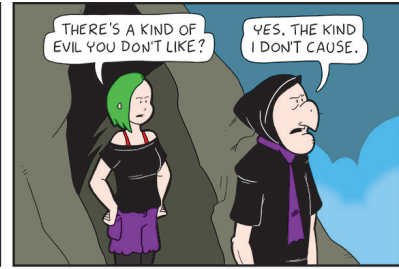
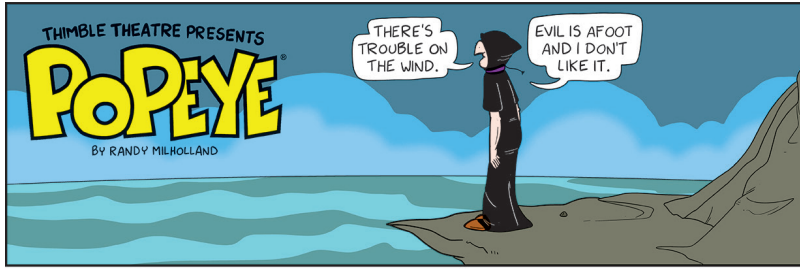
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



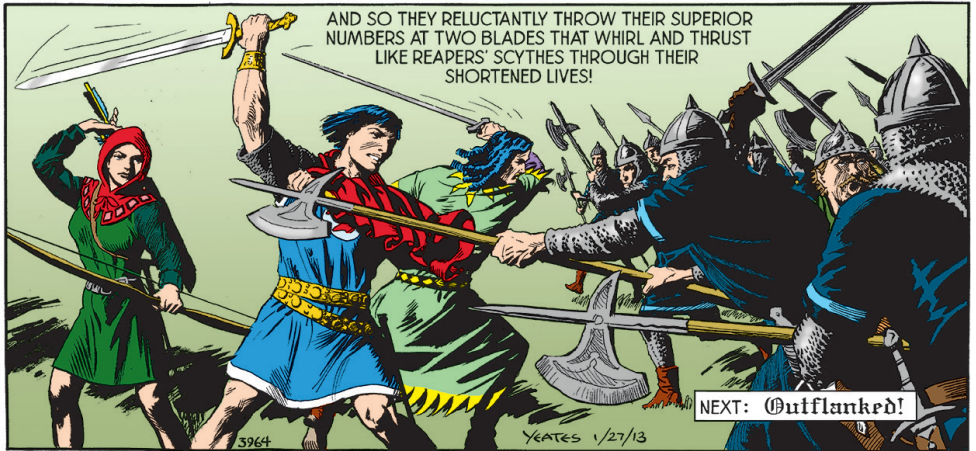
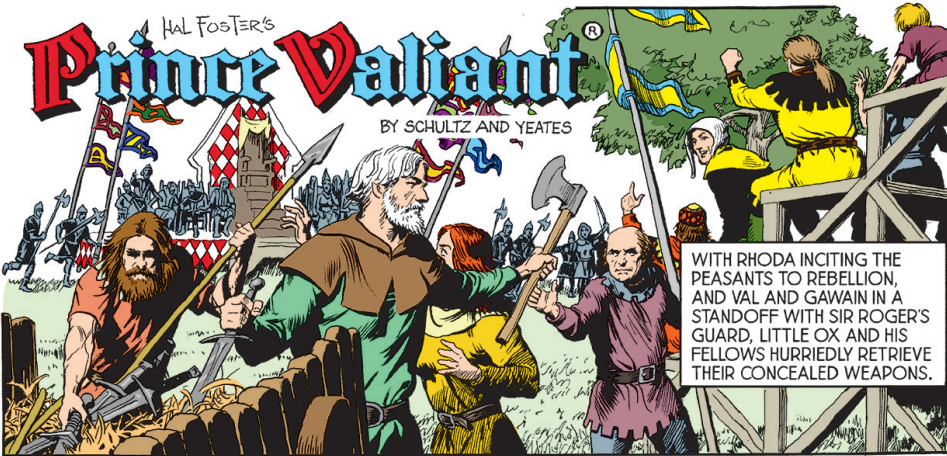
Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 23 of 85



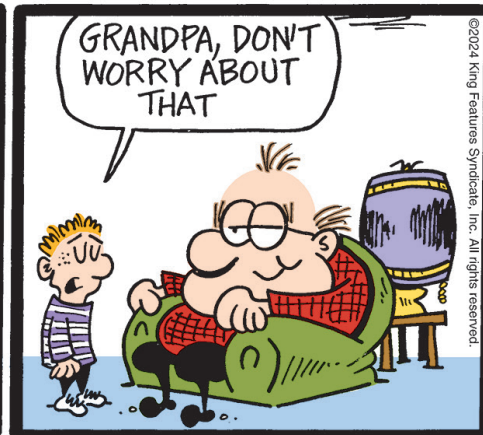
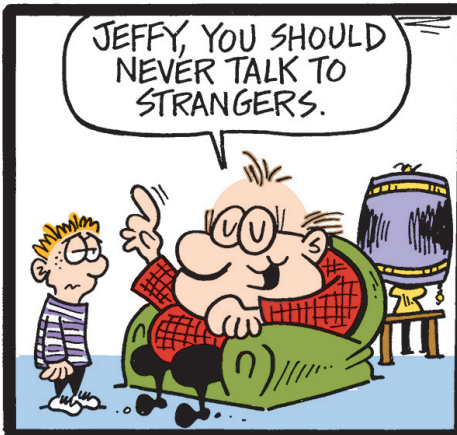
Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 24 of 85



The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Staying Safe

I never thought this kind of thing would happen where I live: A woman was kidnapped in front of a store, in broad daylight, by a man carrying a gun.

It's hard to even type those words, so shocked am I to learn of it.

To cut to the chase, the woman is thankfully fine, although no doubt rattled and upset. After being forced to drive the kidnapper to another location, she was able to drive away safely after he fled the vehicle.

Still, it might not have turned out that way.

I can't count the thousands of times I've gone to that same store, or strolled down the main street to the ice cream shop, or come out of a restaurant ... at night ... and never been afraid. After all, the relative safety in this area is why I moved here. But there are no guarantees that things will stay the same, are there?

That woman's experience has been a life changer for me, unfortunately.

I now carry my wallet and cellphone in an inside coat pocket. If a thief wants my purse, he can have it, with no hesitation that might cause him to do bodily harm to me.

I'm now paying more attention to what's around me -- people in parking lots, people milling around -- instead of just going on my merry way oblivious to my surroundings.

If I'm headed to the car, my keys are in my hand. Once in the car, I lock the doors, something I've never felt compelled to do.

I trust my instincts if something makes me uneasy. After a recent trip to a store, I waited a minute and walked out with a couple of college students after asking if I could walk across the parking lot with them. They were pleased to escort me all the way to my car.

Stay safe out there and beware of what's going on around you.

(c) 2024 King Features Synd., Inc.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 26 of 85

1. Pitcher Masanori Murakami, the first Japanese player to play on Major League Baseball club, debuted in 1964 with what team?

2. The Cresta Run is a natural toboggan track located in what Swiss mountain resort town? (Hint: It hosted Winter Olympics in 1928 and 1948.)

3. George "Punch" Imlach won four Stanley Cups (1962-64, '67) as head coach of what NHL team?

4. In 2021, Formula 1 held its first race on the Jeddah Corniche Circuit located in what country?

5. Who was the first three-time winner of golf's Masters tournament?

6. Warren Beatty starred as Joe Pendleton, backup quarterback for the Los Angeles Rams, in what 1978 film?

7. In 2014, thieves stole nine World Series rings, two MVP plaques and other memorabilia worth over \$1 million from a Little Falls, New Jersey, museum dedicated to what Baseball Hall of Famer?



by Ryan A. Berenz

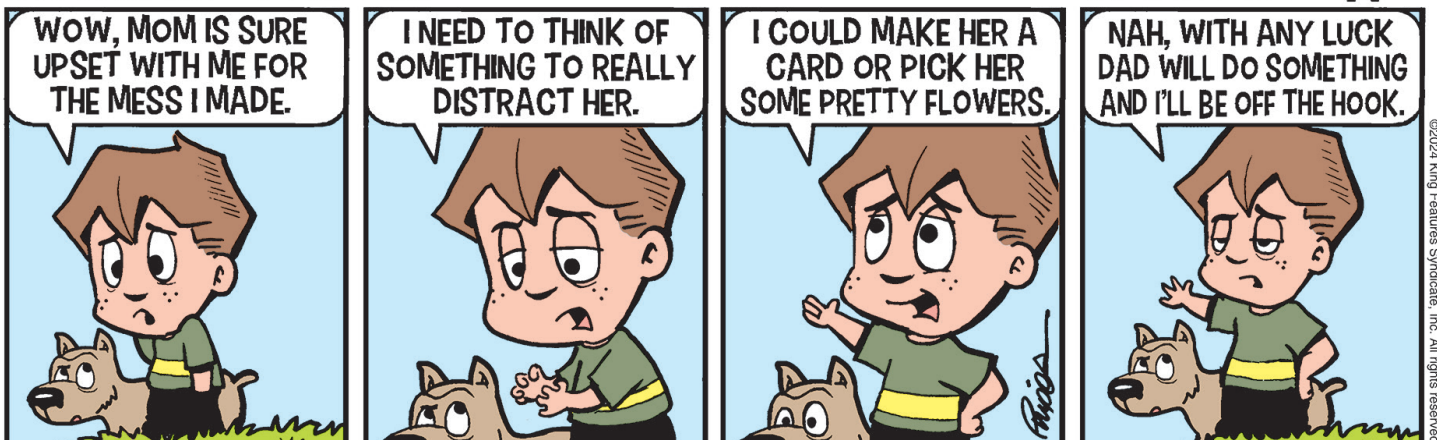
Answers

1. The San Francisco Giants.
2. St. Moritz.
3. The Toronto Maple Leafs.
4. Saudi Arabia.
5. Jimmy Demaret (1940, '47, '50).
6. "Heaven Can Wait."
7. Yogi Berra.

(c) 2024 King Features Syndicate, Inc.

Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



©2024 King Features Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.



Flea Onslaught Strikes Early in the Season

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I can't believe it -- it's only March, and my cat Flicker is already scratching himself silly with fleas! He has terrible skin reactions to flea bites. How can I get rid of them? -- Jesse B., Oak Ridge, Tennessee

DEAR JESSE: Flea infestations are awful, aren't they? As the seasons change and the weather warms up, flea activity rises, and pet owners start seeing more evidence of fleas on their pets and around their homes.

Fleas aren't just annoying. They can carry diseases that are transmissible to pets and humans. Tapeworms and cat scratch disease are just two of the potential ills that a flea infestation can bring into your home.

Tackle a flea problem head-on, and don't wait -- because it will continue to get worse as the summer approaches.

Because of Flicker's allergic reaction to flea bites, he needs direct treatment to repel fleas and prevent them from latching on to his fur again. Talk to his veterinarian about the most effective flea treatments. For example, a monthly or quarterly topical flea treatment may be a good option. Oral medication -- as pills or chewables -- is also very effective. The vet may also recommend medication to clear up his current skin issues.

Reduce the risk of another flea infestation by making your home difficult for fleas to exist in.

- Have your home treated for fleas by a pest control service.
- Pick up clutter from the floor and replace any plush or felted toys with new ones.
- Vacuum twice a week to pick up fleas and their eggs.
- Repair or replace damaged window and door screens.
- Remove any debris piles near your home, and shift wood piles farther away.

Send your tips, comments or questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

(c) 2024 King Features Synd., Inc.

Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

- * According to the record-holder for tallest waffle stack, Guinness World Records has a 40-page document defining what a waffle is. (Frankly, we think we could have managed it in just 30.)
- * Alaska is simultaneously the westernmost and easternmost state.
- * High schools and universities in New Zealand are allowed to keep up to a pound of uranium on the premises for educational purposes.
- * Marie Curie's notebooks are still radioactive.
- * In 2010, rock band Nickelback approached Dark Horse Brewery about having their beer featured in a video, which would have provided great exposure for the small Michigan company. They declined, however, as "none of us at the brewery really care for the band."
- * The German version of the term "Average Joe" is Otto Normalverbraucher, which translates to "Otto normal consumer."
- * An ordinance in Gainesville, GA, states that everyone must eat fried chicken, "a culinary delicacy sacred to this municipality, this county, this state, the Southland and this republic," with their hands. The tongue-in-cheek law began as a publicity stunt aimed at getting folks to think of Gainesville as the fried chicken capital of the world.
- * Polar bears gain more than 400 pounds during pregnancy.

Thought for the Day: "If you're going to do something tonight that you'll be sorry for tomorrow morning, sleep late." -- Henry Youngman

(c) 2024 King Features Synd., Inc.



John Parkinson began his apprenticeship

to a London apothecary in 1585. He went on to have a distinguished career as a medical practitioner. In 1622, he gave up this career to concentrate on his garden in London's Long Acre. He started researching and writing his first book, *Paradisi in sole paradisus terrestris*. The book included descriptions and illustrations of hundreds of plants, their origins, alternative names and medicinal properties. Parkinson was given the title "First Botanist to the King"

by King Charles I. – Brenda Weaver

Sources: www.parksandgardens.org,
wikipedia.org



by Freddy Groves

Help for Financial Stresses

If your debts are so bad the stress of it is making you physically ill, you're not alone. And if the weight of it all is stressing you mentally, you're not alone there either. The past several years, with the economy and Covid and everything else, have made many of us wonder if there's hope.

But yes ... there is hope. The Department of Veterans Affairs has created the National Veterans Financial Resource Center (FINVET).

The purpose of FINVET is to help veterans learn to manage finances and handle the mental uncertainty of debt -- and lower the risk of suicide, which can come with the stresses of finances.

The website (www.mirecc.va.gov/visn19/finvet) has tools, videos, calculators and resources for five different money-related issues: paying for essentials, saving money, increasing your income, managing debt and protecting your money.

Depending on your situation, one of those might be more important than the other right now, but they all have value.

Protecting your money can be a big one, with scammers on the line each time you answer the phone. Dozens of scams are identified, from payday lending to identity theft and scams aimed directly at veterans. Get familiar with all that the page has to offer so you're not caught unaware.

Managing debt sometimes takes more than just additional income. Often it requires good information with advice and tools or learning ways to improve your credit score so you qualify for lower interest rates on big purchases like vehicles.

Paying for essentials can be a serious problem as well. Check the website for the many sources of help, ranging from emergency food assistance, to the national hunger hotline, to housing counselors.

The whole FINVET website is very well done, with mountains of good information no matter your financial situation, everything in one place. Bookmark the page so you can find your way back as time goes on and your situation changes.

And don't give up. Sometimes all you need to fix a financial situation is information and a bit of support.

(c) 2024 King Features Synd., Inc.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 30 of 85

Wishing Well®

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

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

©2024 King Features Syndicate



- GEOGRAPHY:** Where are the Seychelles islands located?
- TELEVISION:** In which sitcom is the catchphrase "Hello, Newman" used often?
- FOOD & DRINK:** What is a cornichon?
- HISTORY:** According to a WWII government slogan, what should citizens do after they "Keep calm ..."?
- MOVIES:** What is the name of John Wayne's character in "True Grit"?
- LANGUAGE:** The Latin word "genu" refers to which part of the human body?
- U.S. STATES:** How many states begin with the letter "R"?
- MEDICAL:** The first vaccine was created to protect against which disease?
- GENERAL KNOWLEDGE:** What is the name of Helen Keller's teacher, who taught the blind and deaf girl how to communicate?
- ANATOMY:** What is the smallest organ in the human body?

Answers

- Indian Ocean.
- "Seinfeld."
- A small pickle.
- "... and carry on."
- Rooster Cogburn.
- The knee.
- One: Rhode Island.
- Smallpox.
- Anne Sullivan.
- Pineal gland.

© 2024 King Features Synd., Inc.

South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Evil Foreign Governments Should Not be our Neighbors

When you think of South Dakota, you might think about rolling fields of corn and soybeans and hills full of cattle, the Black Hills, or Mount Rushmore. You probably don't think of the Chinese Communist Party. And that's a good thing – we don't want evil foreign governments for our neighbors. We don't want nations that hate us to be part of our way of life.

The Chinese Communist Party is trying to infiltrate every aspect of our way of life. Sadly, we have a President and an administration here in Washington that has no interest in stopping them.

I have been involved in ag policy for 30 years. Throughout that time, I have watched China systematically take over more and more of our food supply chain. For years, they've been buying up our chemical, fertilizer companies, and food processing companies. Now, they're trying to buy up our land.

The Chinese Communist Party are not our friends. They should not be free to purchase our precious ag land. Unfortunately, that has been allowed to take place. Between 2010 and 2020, the Chinese Communist Party's holdings of US agricultural land increased by 5,300%. They now own more than 350,000 acres of US ag land valued at about \$2 billion.

Recent media reporting indicates that the largest Chinese holder of American ag land is shipping food and medical supplies to China, where it is being stockpiled by the Chinese military. The Chinese Communist Party are using our ag land to steal from the American people.

The entire nation noticed when China purchased land in North Dakota that they claimed was for a corn processing plant. But there were two details about this purchase that raised suspicions. There wasn't enough corn around to support that kind of a facility, and it was just a few miles from a US Air Force base.

I was determined to prevent a similar story in South Dakota. Ellsworth Air Force Base is home to the B-1 bomber. We house the MQ-9 Reaper drone. Very soon, we will be the first ever home of the brand-new state-of-the-art B-21 bomber. China wants intelligence on that bomber – but they will not get it by buying our ag land. Not in South Dakota.

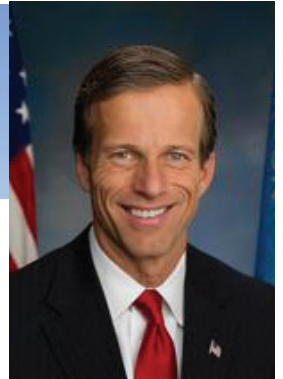
For almost two years, I worked with our legislature, our ag community, and our business community to stop China and five other Evil Foreign Governments from buying ag land in South Dakota. Now, we've banned them.

We were not willing to wait for the federal government to take action. The Biden Administration has not stood up to this Chinese Communist threat.

States like South Dakota will step up where we can. But now that we've acted, the executive branch to do their duty. It is primarily the job of the federal government to keep our people safe.

It is time for the Congress and the Biden Administration to act to stop China and other nations that hate us from buying our ag land. Our security depends on it. And the Freedom of our kids and our grandkids depends on it.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Biden's Budget Balks at Reality

For a lot of Americans, making a budget means making tough choices in order to live within their means. But President Biden's recently released budget seems to lack similar trade-offs. In fact, what the president put forward is a progressive wish list that promises the same reckless tax-and-spend policies that have led to an inflation crisis that is still going three years later. The president's refusal to acknowledge reality puts our fiscal future in peril.

In only three years, President Biden has added \$6.8 trillion to the national debt, yet in his latest budget, the president proposes growing government spending even further to \$7.3 trillion next year. As a share of our economy, that would be more than the government has spent in a single year at any time outside of World War II and COVID. The president's spending priorities are also concerning. President Biden's budget would fund new social programs, hire 50,000 Americans for the climate corps, and further grow the IRS – all of that, but he couldn't find an extra dollar for the military, which continues to face readiness and recruiting challenges.

On the revenue side of the ledger, the president is proposing more than \$5 trillion in tax hikes over the next decade. Although the president would have you believe that the burden of these tax hikes would fall on wealthy Americans and big companies, the reality is that raising taxes has consequences for all Americans. For example, the president's proposal to raise taxes on energy producers could make Americans' energy bills even more expensive. And workers and consumers would bear a large share of the burden of the president's proposal to raise the corporate tax rate, not to mention the small businesses that would be affected.

As the country faces a rocky fiscal future, the president's budget does nothing to improve its outlook. This year, the cost of interest on the debt alone will be the second largest federal expenditure. For the first time, the federal government will spend more on interest payments than it does on defense. The national debt is on a dangerous trajectory. And Social Security is approaching insolvency and mandatory benefit cuts within the next 10 years. But President Biden's budget does not address these very serious challenges.

What the president has proposed is the height of fiscal irresponsibility. While the president's plan is almost certainly dead on arrival in Congress, it's a revealing statement of the administration's vision and values. The future the president contemplates is one of more government, larger deficits, and higher taxes. The American people deserve a budget rooted in reality.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 33 of 85



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



Great Faces, Great Places

BIG Update

This week, my bill, the Ocean Shipping Reform Implementation Act, passed the House overwhelmingly. This is a great victory for our nation's supply chain. South Dakota exports \$7 billion of manufactured and agricultural goods each year. The ocean shipping supply chain is crucial to producers and consumers in our state.

My bill gets tough on China and their unfair shipping practices. It bans the use of Chinese state-sponsored LOGINK software at U.S. ports and permits the Federal Maritime Commission (FMC) to investigate foreign shipping exchanges, like the Shanghai Shipping Exchange, to prevent unfair business practices. It also authorizes the FMC to simplify data standards for maritime freight logistics.

It's got a lot of support, and I hope the Senate considers it soon.

BIG News

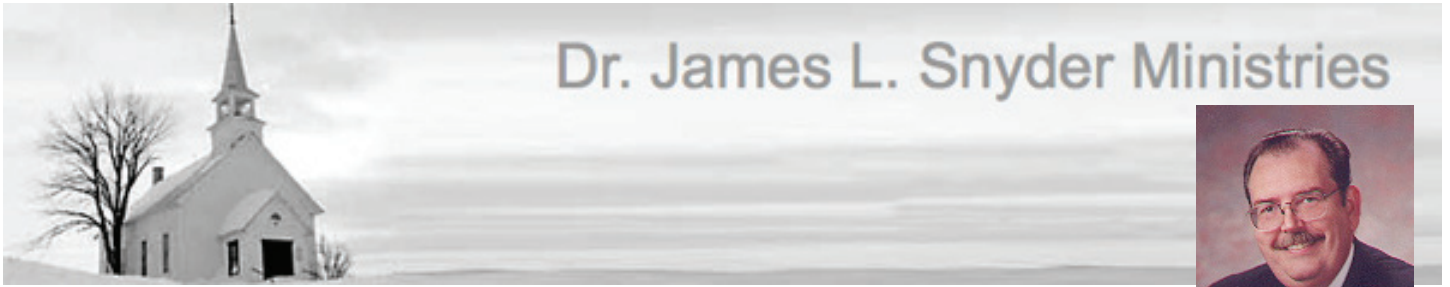
Governor Kristi Noem and South Dakota Farm Bureau President Scott VanderWal were in D.C. this week to be witnesses at two of my committee hearings. Governor Noem spoke at the Agriculture Committee hearing, testifying on the danger that China poses to American farmland and agriculture. She and I have worked to secure America and South Dakota from the Chinese Communist Party threat, especially preventing the CCP from buying American ag land. Food security is national security – we can't allow our biggest adversary to have control over our food supply. I'm grateful for Governor Noem's partnership on this issue.

BIG Idea

In 2023, we welcomed 14.7 million people to our beautiful state. Our tourism industry relies heavily on the ease of getting here. Secretary Jim Hagen and his team from Travel S.D. were in D.C. to discuss some of the ways we can get travel back on track and eliminate obstacles for tourists. We're working together to make it easier to visit South Dakota. We talked about the need to reauthorize the annual aviation bill to improve our access to air travel. Last year, I voted in support of the Securing Growth and Robust Leadership in American Aviation Act, which does exactly that.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 34 of 85



Don't Knock on the Door If You Like Breathing

I'm unsure if this is a new phenomenon or I'm just starting to catch up on the culture. I know I have a lot to catch up on, and I'm slowly doing it.



Lately, there's been a lot of activity at our front door.

That's not to diminish the activity at the back porch door. That activity has to do with a variety of critters in the neighborhood. The food dish is out there, and the critters come throughout the day at their own discretion. It is an open invitation.

Two cats live on the porch, about three cats visit us to have something to eat, two possums show up regularly, and, last but not least, three raccoons show up nightly.

These critters come for the food I put out daily. I welcome them to the porch and to the food, unlike The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage, who makes sure they never get inside the house.

But the front door is a different situation altogether. I've noticed lately that the activity and visitors to our front door has increased and that just frustrates me to no end.

When I answer the door, there will be somebody who has something for me that I just can't turn away. If only he knew.

When anybody tells me they can do something for free and that it will lower some bills in the house, I know what they are saying is not true at all. If it was free, how in the world do they get paid?

Several of them talked about the idea of climate control. If we switch over to solar panel power, we will solve the climate control problems.

Once, when they were telling me how much money I could save, I interrupted them and said, "If you're really interested in helping me save money, how about paying my electric bill for the year. That I would be interested in."

He looked at me as though I was an idiot. I think he was seeing his reflection in my eyes.

Another group of people that come to our front door has to do with our security system. They want to come in and examine our security system, and then they have a proposition for a brand-new security system that won't cost me anything.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 35 of 85

I may be a country boy, but I have two brain cells that are still working. I know why they want to come in and examine my security system. The purpose is to be able to understand what my security is, and then they can override that security system and rob me.

They want to go through my house to see all of the treasures I have that they can steal for their profit. I would pay them a finder's fee if they found any money in our house. I've been looking for years and have come up empty.

If I let them in, and that'll never happen, I will only let them see my library, where I have approximately 8,500 books. If they plan to steal some of my books, they are dumber than the dead possum up the street. I have nothing worth anything that a smart-minded person would want to steal.

I was sitting in my office doing work when I heard somebody at the front door. Before I could get up and go to the door, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage beat me and opened the door.

"Yes," she asked, "can I help you?"

I didn't hear everything, but I listened to the guy at the door go into his spiel about the solar panel system he wanted to give her.

"I guarantee," he said to her with the biggest smile I've seen in a long time, "that it will cut your electric bill in half or even more."

At times like this, I wish we had a security camera to record this activity at the front door.

The guy hardly finished his spiel before The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage jumped in.

"Do you have a permit for this?" She said with a great deal of authority in her voice. "You're not allowed to come in our neighborhood and knock on our doors without a permit. Let me see your permit."

He stammered and said, "No, ma'am. I don't need a permit to do this."

Looking at him as he had not been looked at for a long time, she said, "If I say you need a permit to do this, you better believe you need a permit to do this. Now show me your permit or I'm gonna call the cops."

Can life get any better than this? If only I had the sense to turn a tape recorder on, I could at least get the audio of this interaction.

She talked to him very briefly, and as I looked at his face, I could see the blood draining out of his face; he didn't say a word but turned and walked away as fast as he possibly could.

As he walked away, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage said, "And don't you dare come back here ever again if you love breathing."

I couldn't help but think of Psalm 118:8, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man."

Man will fail me, but God will never fail me. I'm going to put my trust in God, not man.

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: What would a second Trump term in the White House mean for efforts to stave off cataclysmic climate change?

-- George B., Saginaw, MI

For years former President Trump has repeatedly made false claims that climate change is a hoax. His efforts to negate progressive climate change policies were evident in his first term, when he pulled the U.S. out of the Paris climate agreement, rolled back environmental regulation, and relaxed regulations on oil and gas drilling. According to Trump's allies and advisors, a second term for Trump would mean even more extreme environmental policies. While efforts to fight climate change are stronger now than when Trump first attacked them, he can still do substantial damage.

Trump has said that should he become president again, boosting fossil fuels would be one of his top priorities. Trump's allies have said that Trump plans to drive forward fossil fuel production, which would overturn rules made to curb planet-heating emissions. The Trump campaign has also promised to once again pull the U.S. out of the Paris agreement, an act that Biden had reversed earlier in his presidency. Reversing executive orders is surprisingly easy for a newly instated president. On Biden's first day of his presidency, he canceled 11 of Trump's climate-related orders. Trump will certainly move to do the same and undo Biden's climate-related executive orders.

In 2023, Kevin Robert, president of the conservative Heritage Foundation, released a series of policy initiatives called Project 2025 that Trump could take if he wins the presidency again, including reversing climate actions taken by the Biden administration. The project calls for the president to use an executive order to "reshape the U.S. Global Change Research Program and related climate change research programs." The Global Change Research Program was established by Congress in 1990 to coordinate federal research and spending to better understand climate change. The Trump administration already moved to tamper with the Research Program during his first term, and a second term will surely mean further manipulation.

The damage that Trump could do to climate change policy would set the U.S. back years. He believes that climate change should not be a priority and isn't something we should be worried about. He wants to boost the U.S. economy by boosting fossil fuels, when we should be looking for other, clean alternatives.

If Trump is awarded a second term his climate-related policies could add an additional four billion tons of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere by 2030, compared to the Biden administration's existing plans. We would also likely miss our global climate pledge under the Paris agreement by a wide margin. The U.S. should be a leader in climate change policy and we are taking steps toward that goal, but if Trump is elected to a second term, all that work could be flushed down the drain.



Donald Trump promises to make the lives of environmentalists & their supporters hell if he wins his bid for a second term in the White House. Credit: Gage Skidmore, FlickrCC.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

COMMENTARY

Legislature's unsung role: Protecting us from bad bills

by DANA HESS

The end of the legislative session is usually a time for congratulations, much of it well-deserved. The 2024 Legislature balanced a \$7.3 billion budget. That budget included 4% raises for state employees, education and health care providers; more than \$220 million for new prisons; the creation of a statewide public defender office; and a freeze on tuition at the state's universities. Sure, some bills made it through that were more partisanship than practicality, but overall it was a job well done.

What's lost in the end-of-the-session look back at the bills that were passed is any scrutiny of the bills that didn't make it, often relegated to the mythical wastelands of the 41st day (a motion legislators use to defeat bills during a session that has, in this year's case, only 38 days). Keeping South Dakota safe from bad laws is an important role for legislators.

The struggle to keep children safe from porn

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart once said of hard-core pornography: I know it when I see it. Lawmakers know that they want to protect children from porn. They just haven't yet seen the way to do that.

After sailing through the House, a bill to protect children from being able to access pornography on the internet bogged down in the Senate. Originally the bill called on porn sites to offer an age verification system. If they didn't, that would allow parents to sue if their teen made it on to that site, which is kind of like pulling the plug on the computer after Junior already got to see "Debbie does Dallas."

Getting the seamier portions of the internet to bow to the will of the South Dakota Legislature seems like a tall order, but it has worked in other states. Pornhub blocks internet addresses in Virginia, Utah and Mississippi. That site, however, it just the tip of a creepy, mostly lawless iceberg.

After the bill's defeat, some lawmakers are hoping to tackle the subject again in a summer study. Here's hoping they can make that happen, if only for the delight it will bring to the state's headline writers: Lawmakers take the summer to study porn.

Exceptionalism fails a second time

A bill that would create a civic engagement center at Black Hills State University failed to pass muster, again. A similar bill in 2023, seeking to create a Center for Exceptionalism at BHSU, failed twice, each time by just one vote.

"Exceptionalism" is a buzzword for teaching history and civics with an emphasis on this country's superiority. For its practitioners, it's not enough for students to emerge from class smarter, they must also have a new-found love of country.

Just enough lawmakers saw the 2024 bill for what it was, a watered-down version that tried to hide its exceptionalism roots. This year's version failed, too, by just one vote. Now that's exceptional.

Lawmakers help keep 2024 ballot smaller

There are as many as nine constitutional amendments, initiated measures and referendums circulating for the 2024 ballot and two that have already made it onto the ballot. Lawmakers did their best to make

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 38 of 85

sure that the ballot doesn't get even longer, defeating eight joint resolutions to put additional amendments on the ballot and one measure that called for a statewide vote.

The one constitutional amendment that lawmakers agreed to put on the ballot, a work requirement for people enrolled in Medicaid, is likely a wasted effort. The federal government, which pays for 90% of the program, doesn't currently allow work requirements.

Some bills seek to really, really, really protect gun rights

One of the constitutional amendments that didn't make it onto the ballot called for boosting the right of citizens to bear arms. It went beyond the usual Second Amendment protections to outlaw taxes on arms and ammunition purchases while it also curtailed the ability of law enforcement to confiscate firearms used in the commission of a crime until after a conviction.

Usually any legislation that has to do with firearms ricochets through the Capitol without much fuss. After all, we live in the land of constitutional carry and a state government that picks up the tab for federal background checks.

In this case, however, the Senate Judiciary Committee agreed unanimously that citizens' rights to bear arms could be protected without endorsing an amendment that would play hell with both the state's tax system and the judiciary system.

Even for our gun-loving Legislature, sometimes the Second Amendment is just enough.

With yes votes from Thune and Rounds, U.S. Senate passes spending package overnight

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - MARCH 23, 2024 8:31 AM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Senate took a broadly bipartisan vote early Saturday to approve a \$1.2 trillion spending package, sending the measure to President Joe Biden for his signature with no time to spare after missing a midnight deadline.

The 74-24 vote wraps up the government funding process for fiscal year 2024, which began back on Oct. 1, making lawmakers just about six months behind schedule. Congress passed the other six bills in mid-March after relying on short-term spending measures to bridge the gap.

South Dakota Republicans John Thune and Mike Rounds both voted yes.

Senate approval came shortly after 2 a.m. Saturday, creating a minor funding lapse that was not expected to have any real effect. Biden was expected to sign the bill later Saturday.

Senate Appropriations Chair Patty Murray, a Washington state Democrat, said Friday hours before the vote that the agreement shows "Congress can still work, but only when we come to the negotiating table in good faith and leave politics at the door."

"This is not the package I would have written all on my own," Murray said. "But by working together, we were finally able to hammer out an agreement on funding bills that protect and even strengthen critical investments in our families, in our economy and in our national security."

Maine Republican Sen. Susan Collins, ranking member on the spending panel, said the package "supports America's working families while providing funding to better secure our borders and combat the transnational criminal organizations that are flooding our communities with fentanyl."

"As part of the effort to address the crisis at the border — and it is a crisis — this package includes funding for additional detention beds, and more Border Patrol agents and port of entry officers," Collins said.

"Those are long-standing Republican priorities; priorities that are shared by many Democrats as well," Collins added.

Amendments turned down

The Senate's vote to approve the 1,012-page spending package followed lawmakers rejecting numerous proposals that would have changed it from GOP lawmakers, including from Utah's Mike Lee, Kentucky's

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 39 of 85

Rand Paul and Missouri's Eric Schmitt. Had any been adopted, the huge bill would have had to return to the House for another vote, extending the funding lapse.

The U.S. House of Representatives approved the legislation Friday morning following a 286-134 vote, with South Dakota Republican Dusty Johnson voting yes. Both chambers are now on a two-week recess from Capitol Hill.

The package includes funding for significant federal programs including the departments of Defense, Education, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Labor, State and Treasury.

It also included spending for dozens of smaller entities, including Congress, the Executive Office of the President, the judiciary and the Social Security Administration.

Three of the spending bills include earmarks, commonly called community project funding or congressionally directed spending, by members of Congress.

Winter Storm Warning

URGENT - WINTER WEATHER MESSAGE
National Weather Service Aberdeen SD
410 AM CDT Sun Mar 24 2024

McPherson-Brown-Edmunds-Faulk-Spink-Hyde-Hand-
Including the cities of Eureka, Aberdeen, Ipswich, Faulkton, Redfield, Highmore, and Miller
410 AM CDT Sun Mar 24 2024

...WINTER STORM WARNING REMAINS IN EFFECT UNTIL 7 AM CDT TUESDAY...

* WHAT...Heavy snow expected. Additional snow accumulations of 4 to 10 inches. Winds gusting as high as 50 mph.

* WHERE...Portions of central, north central and northeast South Dakota.

* WHEN...Until 7 AM CDT Tuesday.

* IMPACTS...Travel could be very difficult. Blowing snow could significantly reduce visibility. The hazardous conditions could impact the morning or evening commute.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

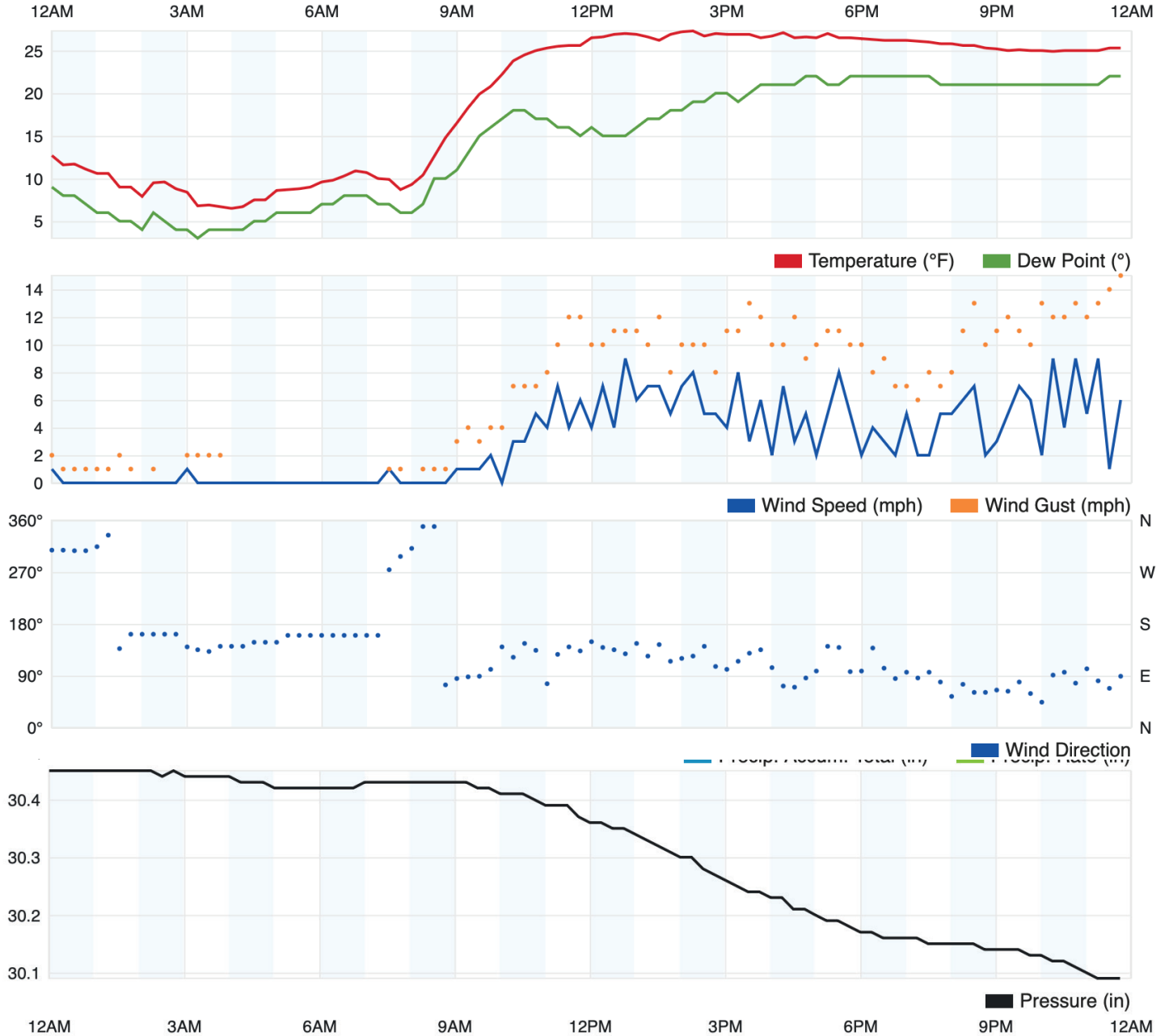
If you must travel, keep an extra flashlight, food, and water in your vehicle in case of an emergency.

The latest road conditions can be obtained by calling 5 1 1.

Groton Daily Independent

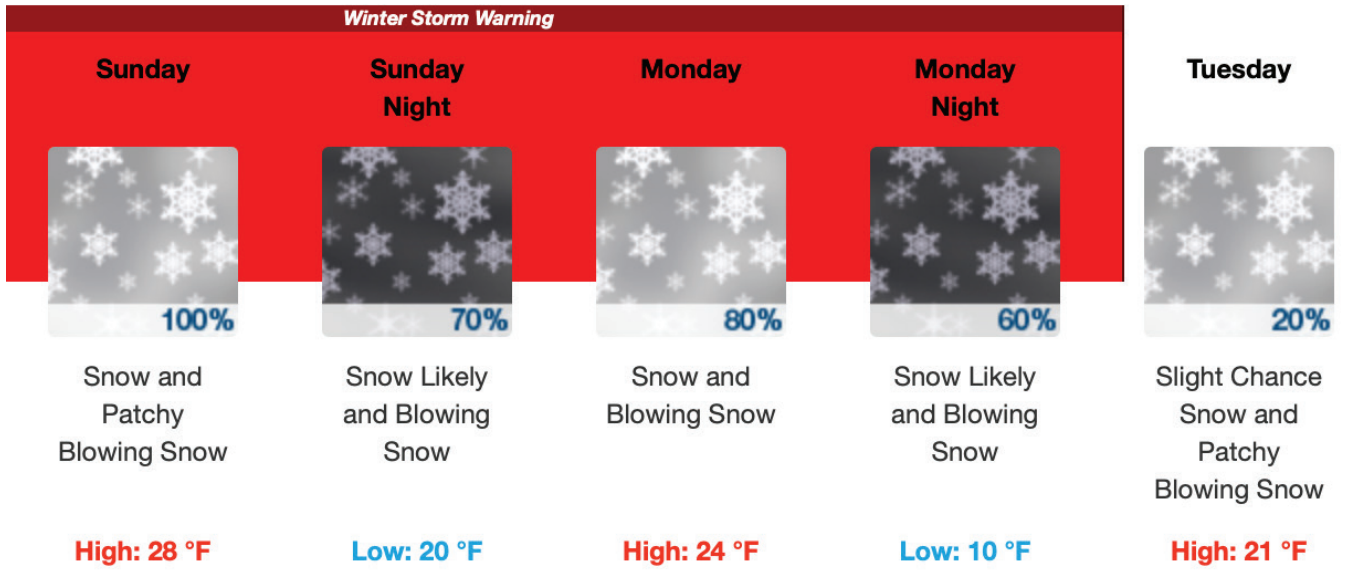
Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 40 of 85

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Broton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 41 of 85



Strong Winter Storm Still on Track

March 23, 2024
3:25 PM

Winter Storm Warning

Key Messages

- Confidence increasing for an impactful winter storm system affecting the Northern Plains.
- **Heavy snow** in excess of **12 to 18+ inches** possible along/east of the James River.
- Strong north to northeast winds may create significant impacts from blowing snow and low visibility **Sunday night through Monday night**.

NEW Important Updates

- Winter Storm Watch upgraded to Winter Storm Warning.

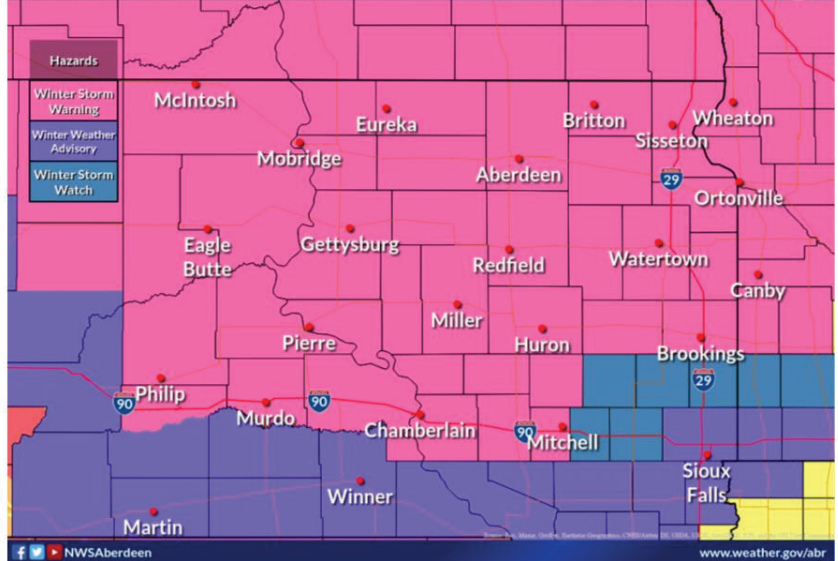
Next Scheduled Weather Update

- Sunday morning.

Current Headlines

In effect tonight through early Tuesday morning

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD
Issued Mar 23, 2024 3:03 PM CDT



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Confidence continues to increase in regards to receiving significant impacts from this next system. The Winter Storm Watch has been upgraded to a Winter Storm Warning across our forecast area.

Broton Daily Independent

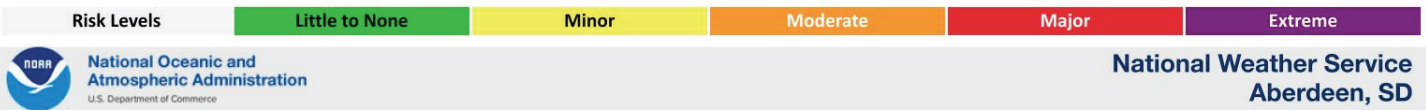
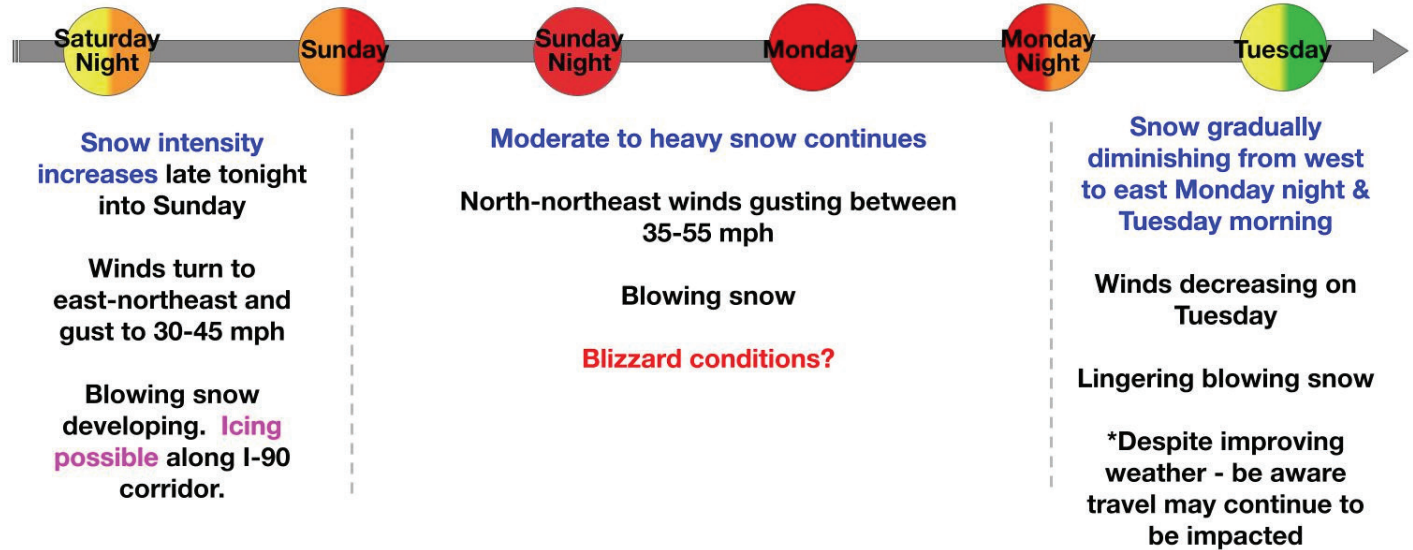
Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 42 of 85



Winter Storm Timeline

March 23, 2024
3:30 PM

Travel will likely become impossible Sunday night into Monday night for parts of the region



The worst conditions are still expected Sunday night into Monday morning.



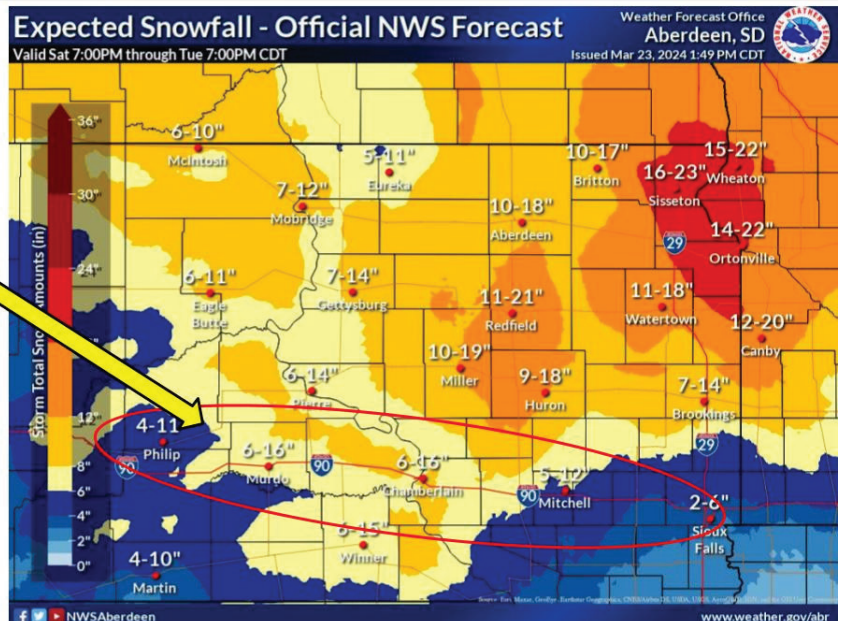
Accumulation Potential Saturday Night-Tuesday Morning

March 23, 2024
3:32 PM

Valid 7PM Saturday through 7AM Tuesday

Key Messages

- Moderate snow is expected to develop overnight into Sunday morning.
- Periods of moderate to heavy snow expected Sunday through Monday.
- Snow mixed with or changing to **freezing rain** along the I-90 corridor late tonight into Sunday morning. **Length of freezing rain could alter snow amounts.**
- Areas of **significant blowing and drifting snow** possible by Sunday night as winds begin to increase out of the north.



Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 43 of 85

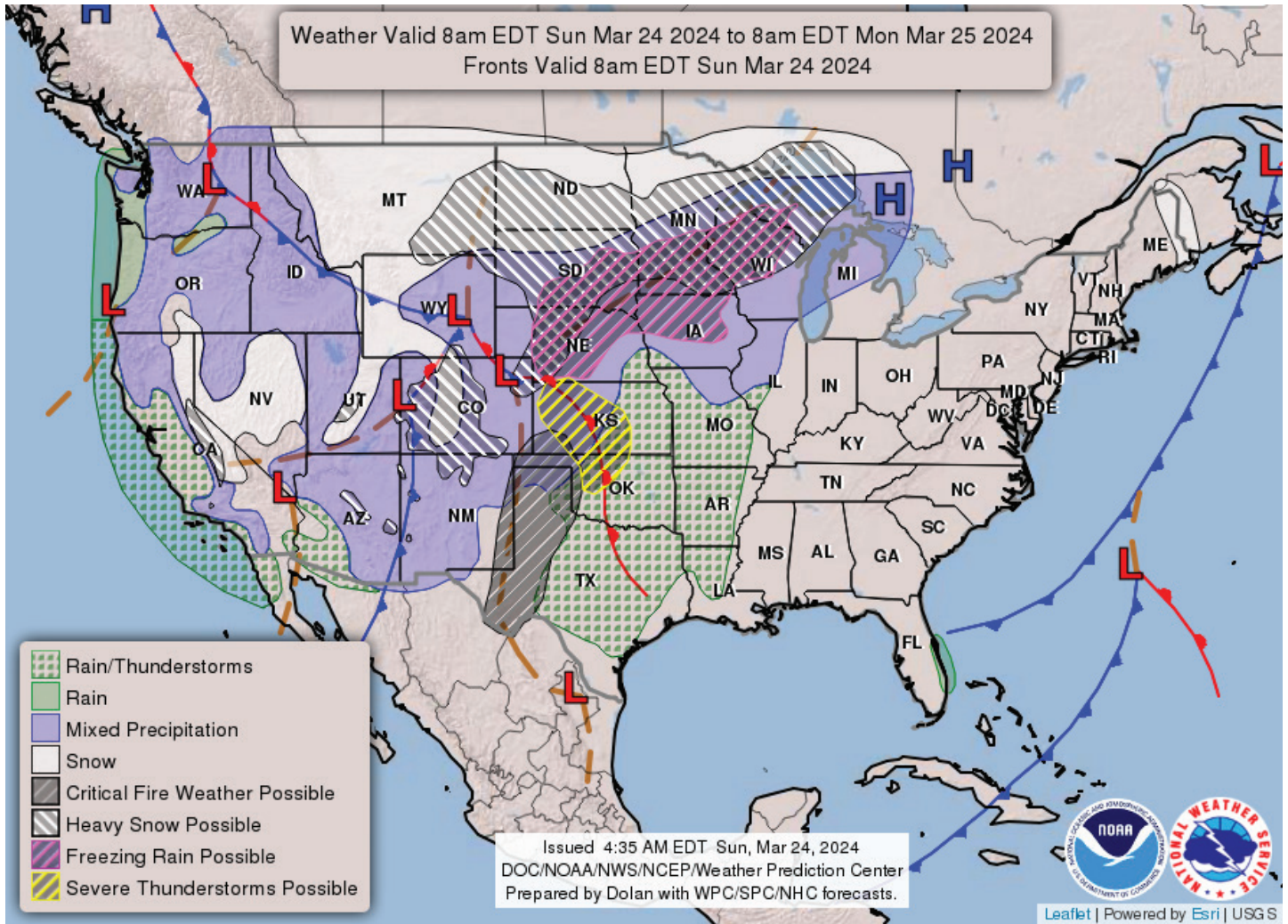
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 27 °F at 2:15 PM
Low Temp: 6 °F at 3:53 AM
Wind: 15 mph at 5:19 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 12 hours, 27 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 80 in 1939
Record Low: -10 in 1893
Average High: 46
Average Low: 23
Average Precip in March.: 0.64
Precip to date in March: 0.42
Average Precip to date: 1.81
Precip Year to Date: 0.49
Sunset Tonight: 7:52:10 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:22:47 am



Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 44 of 85

Today in Weather History

March 24, 1996: North winds of 30 to 40 mph, gusting to 55 mph, combined with the falling snow and the previous day's snowfall to create blizzard conditions. Travel became extremely difficult. Several cars went into ditches, and flights out of Aberdeen were canceled. Schools and activities were either delayed or canceled. Some of the more significant two-day snowfall amounts include 6 inches at Sisseton and Aberdeen, 7 inches at Sand Lake NWR, 8 inches near Veblen, 9 inches at Britton, and 10 inches near Victor.

March 24, 2009: An area of low pressure moved out of the Rockies and into the Northern Plains producing snow and widespread blizzard conditions across central and north central South Dakota. Winds gusting to over 60 mph along with several inches of snow caused hazardous travel conditions. Interstate 90 was closed for a time across much of Jones and part of Lyman County. Power was also out in parts of Pierre and Mobridge for a short period. Some snowfall amounts included; 2 inches at Pierre; 5 inches in Hayes and Timber Lake; 6 inches in Murdo, McLaughlin, and 6 miles southeast of McIntosh; 7 inches 14 miles northeast of Isabel; 8 inches in Eagle Butte; and 12 inches 8 miles southwest of Keldron.

1912: Residents of Kansas City began to dig out from a storm that produced 25 inches of snow in 24 hours. The snowfall total was nearly twice that of any other storm of modern record in Kansas City before or since that time. A record 40 inches of snow fell during March that year, and the total for the winter season of 67 inches was also a record. By late February of that year, Kansas City had received just six inches of snow. Olathe, Kansas received 37 inches of snow in the snowstorm, establishing a single storm record for the state of Kansas. (23rd-24th)

1929: St. Louis, Missouri soared to 92 degrees; their all-time record high for March.

1975: "The Governor's Tornado" hop-scotched a 13-mile path across the western part of Atlanta, GA during the early morning hours, causing considerable damage to the Governor's mansion. Hundreds of expensive homes, businesses and apartment complexes were damaged. Total losses were estimated at \$56 million. Three people lost their lives, and the F3 tornado injured another 152.

1987 - A winter-like storm in the central U.S. produced blizzard conditions from South Dakota to western Kansas. Snowfall totals ranged up to 24 inches at Neligh NE, with 19 inches at Winner SD. Winds gusting to 60 mph created twelve foot snow drifts in Nebraska stranding thousands on the highways. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing along a cold front produced severe weather from Minnesota to north-eastern Texas. The thunderstorms spawned ten tornadoes, including one which injured five persons near Raymondville MO. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Low pressure off the coast of Virginia brought heavy rain to the Middle Atlantic Coast States, and heavy snow to the Northern Appalachians. Cape Hatteras NC was soaked with 5.20 inches of rain in 24 hours, and snowfall totals in Vermont ranged up to 12 inches. Winds gusted to 52 mph at New York City. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - The storm system which produced heavy snow in the Lower Missouri Valley the previous day, spread heavy snow across parts of the Upper Ohio Valley and the Middle Atlantic Coast Region. Snowfall totals of 2.2 inches at Philadelphia PA and 2.4 inches at Atlantic City NJ were records for the date. Up to six inches of snow blanketed southern Ohio. In the Middle Atlantic Coast Region, snow coated the blossoms of cherry trees which had bloomed in 80 degree weather the previous week. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 45 of 85

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

FACING REALITY

Linus approached Charlie Brown in a comic strip and boldly asked, "Charlie Brown, do you want to know what the trouble is with you?"

"No," he answered.

"That's the trouble with you, Charlie Brown," screamed Linus. "You don't want to know what the trouble is with you!"

Charlie Brown is not the only one with that problem.

Few want to hear or accept the fact that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." But, not wanting to listen to that fact, does not change anything.

To refuse to hear something does not mean that it was not said. And, if we deny something does not mean that it is not true. Sin is sin, and it comes in all sizes and shapes, colors and containers, with many options and countless opportunities.

We all seem to have a Charlie Brown attitude. Few want to admit that we have broken God's laws or that we have refused to follow the teachings of Jesus. But, Paul said all have sinned and fallen short of God's plan. That "all" includes every one of us.

Denying the fact of sin will not keep us from sinning nor eliminate the penalty that comes from being disobedient to God. No one is foolish enough to believe that if they deny the reality of death, they will live forever. We must all admit and accept what is: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life!"

Prayer: Open our hearts, Father, to the truths in Your Word and the reality of sin and salvation. May we look to You in faith, believing that You alone can save us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Romans 3:23



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, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 46 of 85

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White \$48.99/year
- Colored \$79.88/year
- Colored \$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly* \$31.95/year

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

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent

www.397news.com

Subscription Form

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

- 1 Month \$15.98
- 3 Months..... \$26.63
- 6 Months..... \$31.95
- 9 Months..... \$42.60
- 12 Months..... \$53.25

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

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

E-mail _____

Password _____

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

paypal.me/paperpaul



Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 47 of 85



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.22.24

3 8 31 35 44 16

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$1,100,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.23.24

5 7 12 41 52 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,400,000

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.23.24

1 3 8 13 29 11

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 57 Mins 19 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.23.24

6 11 16 25 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$33,000

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.23.24

18 24 43 46 47 11

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.23.24

6 23 25 34 51 3

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$800,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

News from the Associated Press

Wintry weather blankets New England and California mountains, storm expected in central regions

By STEVE LeBLANC Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — It may officially be spring, but wintry weather blanketed the U.S. on Saturday with New England and California seeing a mix of rain, heavy snow and gusty winds.

In the West, a winter storm warning was in effect through Sunday morning for parts of the Sierra Nevada, and a 91-mph (147-kph) wind gust was recorded at Mammoth Mountain near the California-Nevada line. About a foot (30 centimeters) of snow had fallen by Saturday morning north of Lake Tahoe.

A winter weather advisory was issued through Sunday night for parts of northern Arizona, the Grand Canyon and Flagstaff to the New Mexico border with up to a half foot (15 centimeters) of snow possible at upper elevations and winds gusting to 40 mph (64 kph).

The National Weather Service also warned of what it called a significant winter storm over central regions of the country through Monday.

"The winter storm will be high-impact and an extensive system producing widespread heavy snow and gusty winds that will persist over parts of the Northern Plains and Upper Midwest," the agency said in an online post.

Heavy snow is expected to spread across central and eastern Montana and expand into the northern Plains and upper Midwest through Sunday and into Monday. There is a greater than 70% chance of at least 8 inches (20 centimeters) of snow moving from central South Dakota to northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin, the weather service reported.

In Maine, the National Weather Service warned of treacherous travel with an increase in ice forming inland from the coast, on top of snow or sleet that had already fallen.

Farther inland forecasters called for anywhere from 1 to 2 feet (30 to 61 centimeters) of snow across the mountains in western Maine and areas north and in New Hampshire's White Mountains, according to Maura Casey, a lead forecaster for the weather service, based out of Gray, Maine.

In the lakes region of New Hampshire up to Maine, totals were expected to be somewhat lower at 6 inches to a foot (15 to 30 centimeters) with sleet and freezing rain mixing in.

Across Connecticut, New York City, Rhode Island and Massachusetts, the storm was expected to remain largely a rain event.

"Overnight dry weather will give way to sunshine," said Frank Nocera, lead forecaster for the National Weather Service in Norton, Massachusetts. Despite the sun, Sunday was expected to be blustery with temperatures chillier than average for late March, he said.

In New York City, a flood watch and wind advisory were in place until 2 a.m. Sunday.

Flooding impacted subway service, shutting down a section of the Staten Island Railway in both directions. Flooding also closed part of the Cross Island Parkway in Queens, and police warned motorists about standing water on roadways throughout the city.

The storm was blamed for hundreds of delayed and canceled flights at New York-area airports, and it also postponed the opening of Coney Island's Luna Park, home to the famous Cyclone and Thunderbolt roller coasters.

Fans of skiing welcomed the snowfall.

At Loon Mountain in New Hampshire's White Mountains, skiers were looking forward to the 12 to 20 inches (30 to 51 centimeters) of new snow the storm was expected to drop on top of a foot (30 centimeters) earlier this week.

"The storm is great. It's brought a lot of skiers out to the mountain today," said Kevin Bell, vice president of marketing for the resort. "This could be the biggest snow we'll see all year. It sets us up for a really good spring. The more snow New England gets, the better for us."

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 49 of 85

The Mount Washington Avalanche Center issued an avalanche warning along the White Mountain's Presidential Range until 7 a.m. Sunday.

"Very dangerous avalanche conditions exist. Natural and human-triggered avalanches large enough to bury people are very likely," the center said. "Some avalanches will be large enough to snap trees or destroy a house and may run far into areas previously considered safe."

The storm should be completely out of the New England region by Sunday morning. It comes at the end of a winter season in some areas of the Northeast, including Boston, that saw little snow and warmer temperatures.

In South Florida, severe thunderstorms Friday night delayed departures at the Miami International Airport during the busy spring break season, suspended a popular electronic music festival and disrupted matches at a high-profile tennis tournament.

And in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, crews battling wildfires this week got an assist from some wet weather. "Without a doubt the rain is helping," said Cory Swift, a spokesperson for the Virginia Department of Forestry.

Alissa Pili sparks big second half as No. 5 seed Utah tops 12th-seeded South Dakota State 68-54

By TIM BOOTH AP Sports Writer

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — With nearly all of a 20-point lead having evaporated, Utah turned yet again to Alissa Pili to spark a big second half.

Pili scored 16 of her 26 points in the second half, Kennady McQueen added 17 points and No. 5 seed Utah pulled away in the second half for a 68-54 win over No. 12 seed South Dakota State in the first round of the NCAA Tournament on Saturday night.

Pili, a third-team AP All-America selection, was terrific again, hitting 11 of 20 shots and grabbing seven rebounds. She banked a 3-pointer with 2:49 left as the shot clock expired that finally put away the Jackrabbits.

"Throughout the season, a lot of teams have guarded me in different ways and I think the main thing for me is just to stay poised and try to just take what the defense gives me. I've just gotten better at that over time," Pili said.

While Pili and the Utes had a strong second half, it was Utah's start that set the tone. The Utes outscored South Dakota State 20-3 in the first quarter and led 27-7 early in the second quarter. Utah gave away most of the lead and led just 27-24 at the half, but outscored South Dakota State 26-17 in the third quarter to regain control.

Utah (23-10) will face No. 4 seed Gonzaga on Monday night in the second round of the Portland 4 Regional.

"That second quarter, I think we got away from what we're good at, so it was just getting that back on track and then that makes things easy for us on offense," McQueen said.

Tori Nelson led South Dakota State (27-6) with 14 points, but the Jackrabbits picked the worst time to have their lowest scoring quarter of the season. South Dakota State was 1-for-12 shooting with seven turnovers in the first quarter and saw leading scorer Brooklyn Meyer pick up two fouls less than three minutes in.

South Dakota State's previous low for points in a quarter was four and it happened twice this season. The building could have been part of the problem, too. The Jackrabbits started slow and had just eight points in the first quarter of an 83-58 loss at Gonzaga in December.

"Brooklyn's two fouls didn't help. To me that was a big part of it. We just run so much through her," South Dakota State coach Aaron Johnston said.

Meyer finished with 13 points and Paige Meyer added 12. But the Jackrabbits were just 3 of 12 on 3-pointers after ranking fifth in the country while hitting 38% of their 3s coming into the NCAAs.

South Dakota State made one surge, holding Utah scoreless over the final 7:18 of the first half and pulled within 27-24 at halftime, scoring the final 17 points of the quarter.

That included a series of free throws in the final 30 seconds after a disputed call led to a technical foul

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 50 of 85

on Utah's bench for expressing displeasure with a foul against the Utes.

Pili scored five of the first seven points of the second half for Utah and the Utes never led by less than eight over the final 12 minutes.

"At halftime, it wasn't like we were screaming or yelling or anything," Utah coach Lynne Roberts said. "It was just like, 'Guys, we have to move the ball.' Our offense is predicated on pace and space and tempo and we just kind of got away from that."

UP NEXT

Utah will face the Zags on their home floor Monday night. The teams last played in 2022 on a neutral court in Hawaii. Gonzaga won 89-71.

Back home for March Madness, No. 4 seed Gonzaga rolls past No. 13 seed UC Irvine 75-56

By JOSH WRIGHT Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — Yvonne Ejim had 25 points and 14 rebounds and No. 4 seed Gonzaga overcame a slow start to roll past UC Irvine 75-56 in the first round of the women's NCAA Tournament on Saturday.

The Bulldogs (31-3) rallied from an 11-point first-half deficit and led by as many as 26 points in the fourth quarter. Kayleigh Truong added 16 points and the Zags shot 62% and scored 45 points in the second half.

Gonzaga will face No. 5 seed Utah or No. 12 seed South Dakota State in the second round on Monday.

"I like that our team struggled and we found a way to overcome a little bit of struggle in the first quarter," Gonzaga coach Lisa Fortier said. "We weren't at our best in that quarter, but when you can be not at your best and go and put consecutively 20 points each quarter (after that), we're just tough."

The Bulldogs started 0-for-10 from the 3-point line and managed just 10 points in the first quarter, their lowest output in any quarter this season.

Brynna Maxwell, the Zags' top outside shooter, shook off a slow start and sank two 3s and a long jumper to fuel a 21-2 run to end the first half and start the third quarter.

Kayleigh Truong and twin sister Kaylynne each had five assists for the Zags, who are in their seventh straight NCAA Tournament and are one win away from their first Sweet Sixteen appearance since 2015.

It was the first time Gonzaga hosted NCAA Tournament games on its home floor since 2013.

"Our Zags fans bring a lot of energy, but today especially with the student section just being filled," Ejim said of the sellout crowd of 6,000. "I think especially when we went on our runs, we felt the energy, especially when we come back on defense. Everyone is cheering, everyone is clapping, not only around us but on our team, too, and I think that really fed into the intensity that we kept up throughout the game."

Nevaeh Parkinson scored 18 points and Moulayna Johnson Sidi Baba added 15 for UC Irvine.

The Anteaters (23-9) were in their first NCAA Tournament since 1995 and raced out to a 17-6 lead. Parkinson hit back-to-back buckets during the stretch, and UC Irvine's physical defense flustered the Zags early.

The Bulldogs mounted a 10-0 run to slow the Anteaters' early momentum and took their first lead midway through the second quarter.

UC Irvine coach Tamara Inoue was proud of her team's start and how the Anteaters hung with Gonzaga more than the last time they played here – a 102-38 loss in 2016, her first season on the job.

"I think we're on a little bit of an improvement from that to this game today," Inoue said.

UP NEXT

The Zags will get either another test from a Pac-12 school in the Utes or face the Jackrabbits for the second time this season. Gonzaga beat SDSU by 25 in December.

South Dakota man sentenced to 10 years for manslaughter in 2013 death of girlfriend

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota man has been sentenced to 10 years in prison for manslaughter in the 2013 death of his girlfriend.

Richard Schmitz, 55, took a plea deal in January, one day before he was due to go on trial for the death of Meshell Will, 38, whose badly decomposed body was found along a road in the Black Hills. On Friday, Judge Craig Pfeifle handed down the maximum sentence, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Schmitz and Will lived across the hall from each other in Custer. Law enforcement reports show they checked into a Keystone motel about a week before her body was found. But it took eight years until he was charged with second-degree murder. His arrest followed a 2021 pathology report that ruled her manner of death as either undetermined or homicide. The initial autopsy said her cause of death was undetermined.

"It's difficult to tell how Meshell died," Pennington County prosecutor Roxanne Hammond said in court. But she said circumstantial evidence proved Schmitz killed Will in their motel room and discarded her body.

Investigators interviewed Schmitz several times after Will's death. He long denied any involvement but entered an Alford plea Jan. 30 to second-degree manslaughter. That was an acknowledgement that the state had enough evidence to convict without explicitly admitting guilt.

Defense attorney Martha Rossiter argued the state's case was weak but did not dispute that Schmitz lied to investigators.

"Mr. Schmitz has an issue being honest, particularly with police," said Rossiter, who asked the judge for time served — over 2 1/2 years.

Judge Pfeifle said he based his sentence on the plea deal and Schmitz's prior convictions for violence against women.

"You have a significant challenge dealing with romantic relationships in your life," Pfeifle said. "I think you continue to remain a danger."

As Russia mourns concert hall attack, some families still wonder if their loved ones are alive

MOSCOW (AP) — Family and friends of those still missing after an attack that killed over 130 people at a suburban Moscow concert hall waited for news of their loved ones as Russia observed a day of national mourning on Sunday.

Events at cultural institutions were cancelled, flags were lowered, and TV entertainment and ads were suspended, according to state news agency RIA Novosti. A steady stream of people brought flowers to a makeshift memorial near the burnt-out concert hall.

The attack, which has been claimed by an affiliate of the Islamic State group, is the deadliest on Russian soil in years.

As rescuers continue to search the damaged building, some families still don't know if members who went to the event targeted by gunmen on Friday are alive.

Igor Pogadaev was desperately seeking any details of his wife's whereabouts after she went to the concert and stopped responding to his messages.

He hasn't seen a message from Yana Pogadaeva since she sent her husband two photos from the Crocus City Hall music venue.

After Igor saw the reports of gunmen opening fire on concertgoers, he rushed to the site but couldn't find her in the numerous ambulances or among the hundreds of people who had made their way out of the venue.

"I went around, searched, I asked everyone, I showed photographs. No one saw anything, no one could say anything," Pogadaev told The Associated Press in a video message.

He watched flames bursting out of the building as he made frantic calls to a hotline for relatives of the victims but received no information.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 52 of 85

As the death toll mounted on Saturday, Igor scoured hospitals in Moscow and the Moscow region, looking for information on newly admitted patients.

But his wife wasn't among the 154 reported injured, nor on the list of 50 victims authorities have already identified, he said.

Refusing to believe that his wife could be one of the 133 people who died in the attack, Pogadaev still hasn't gone home.

"I couldn't be alone anymore, it's very difficult, so I drove to my friend's," he said. "Now at least I'll be with someone."

The Moscow Region's Emergency Situations Ministry posted a video Sunday showing equipment dismantling the damaged music venue to give rescuers access.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin appears to be trying to tie Ukraine to the attack, something its government firmly denies.

Russian authorities arrested four suspected attackers on Saturday, Putin said in an nighttime address to the nation, among 11 people detained suspicion of involvement in the attack. He claimed they were captured while fleeing to Ukraine.

Though no court hearing has been officially announced, there was a heavy police presence around Moscow's Basmany District Court on Sunday. Police tried to drive journalists away from the court.

Putin called the attack "a bloody, barbaric terrorist act" and said Russian authorities captured the four suspects as they were trying to escape to Ukraine through a "window" prepared for them on the Ukrainian side of the border.

Russian media broadcast videos that apparently showed the detention and interrogation of the suspects, including one who told the cameras he was approached by an unidentified assistant to an Islamic preacher via a messaging app and paid to take part in the raid.

Kyiv strongly denied any involvement, and the Islamic State group's Afghanistan affiliate claimed responsibility.

The Islamic State group released highly graphic footage from the attack on Saturday, appearing to show one of the gunmen opening fire on people lying on the ground.

Putin did not mention IS in his speech to the nation, and Kyiv accused him and other Russian politicians of falsely linking Ukraine to the assault to stoke fervor for Russia's fight in Ukraine, which recently entered its third year.

U.S. intelligence officials said they had confirmed the IS affiliate's claim.

"ISIS bears sole responsibility for this attack. There was no Ukrainian involvement whatsoever," National Security Council spokeswoman Adrienne Watson said in a statement.

The U.S. shared information with Russia in early March about a planned terrorist attack in Moscow and issued a public warning to Americans in Russia, Watson said.

The raid was a major embarrassment for the Russian leader and happened just days after he cemented his grip on the country for another six years in a vote that followed the harshest crackdown on dissent since the Soviet times.

Some commentators on Russian social media questioned how authorities, who have relentlessly suppressed any opposition activities and muzzled independent media, failed to prevent the attack despite the U.S. warnings.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement that the U.S. condemned the attack and said that the Islamic State group is a "common terrorist enemy that must be defeated everywhere."

IS, which fought against Russia during its intervention in the Syrian civil war, has long targeted Russia. In a statement posted by the group's Aamaq news agency, IS's Afghanistan affiliate said it had attacked a large gathering of "Christians" in Krasnogorsk.

The group issued a new statement Saturday on Aamaq saying the attack was carried out by four men who used automatic rifles, a pistol, knives and firebombs. It said the assailants fired at the crowd and used knives to kill some concertgoers, casting the raid as part of IS's ongoing war with countries that it

says are fighting against Islam.

In October 2015, a bomb planted by IS downed a Russian passenger plane over Sinai, killing all 224 people on board, most of them Russian vacation-goers returning from Egypt.

The group, which operates mainly in Syria and Iraq but also in Afghanistan and Africa, also has claimed several attacks in Russia's volatile Caucasus and other regions in the past years. It recruited fighters from Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union.

Senegal votes in a tightly contested presidential race after months of unrest

By JACK THOMPSON, JESSICA DONATI and BABACAR DIONE Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — Senegalese headed to the polls Sunday in a tightly contested presidential race that followed months of uncertainty and unrest that has tested the West African nation's reputation as a stable democracy in a region that has experienced a wave of coups in recent years.

The election takes place after President Macky Sall's unsuccessfully tried to call off the Feb. 25 vote until the end of the year. Sall is barred from running for a third term due to constitutional term limits. As a result, the vote is taking place during Ramadan, the holy month when observant Muslims fast from dawn until dusk.

The roads were largely deserted early in the morning in the capital Dakar and the nation's elite police force were stationed all over the city in armored vehicles. Outside polling centers, police checked voters cards as men and women in formal dress lined up. Results are expected next week.

The election is set to be the nation's fourth democratic transfer of power since Senegal gained independence from France in 1960. The process has been marred by violence and unrest, and hundreds of opposition protesters have been arrested and jailed.

There are 19 candidates in the race, including one woman, the highest number in the nation's history.

"This is poised to be the most competitive election since the introduction of multiparty politics," Tochi Eni-Kalu, Africa analyst at the Eurasia Group, told The Associated Press.

Analysts say no candidate is expected to win more than 50% of the vote, which means a runoff between leading candidates is widely expected. They include Amadou Ba, a former prime minister, and Bassirou Diomaye Faye, who is backed by popular opposition figure Ousmane Sonko.

Sonko, who came third in the previous election, was barred from running in January because of a prior conviction for defamation. He has faced a slew of legal troubles in recent years that supporters say are part of a government effort to derail his candidacy.

Other potential frontrunners are Khalifa Sall, a former mayor of Dakar unrelated to the president, and Idrissa Seck, a former prime minister from the early 2000s who was the runner up in the 2019 presidential race.

Two candidates dropped out this week to back Faye's candidacy, a sign of the start of coalition-building that could determine the outcome of the race, according to analysts.

At the forefront of concerns for many Senegalese voters is the economy, which has been squeezed by high food and energy prices partly driven by the war in Ukraine. Unemployment among the nation's youth is widespread, driving thousands to risk their lives on dangerous journeys in search of jobs in the West.

"Jobs are really, truly the priority. Everyone can see that unemployment is taking over," said Oumy Sarr, a political activist. "The second priority is the high cost of living in Senegal today. What is to be done to improve people's living conditions? Inflation is rising, everyone is tired."

Nearly 300 abducted schoolchildren in northwest Nigeria freed after over two weeks in captivity

By CHINEDU ASADU Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — Nearly 300 kidnapped Nigerian schoolchildren have been released, local officials said Sunday, more than two weeks after the children were seized from their school in the northwestern state of Kaduna and marched into the forests.

At least 1,400 students have been kidnapped from Nigerian schools since 2014, when Boko Haram militants kidnapped hundreds of schoolgirls from Borno state's Chibok village in 2014. In recent years, abductions have been concentrated in the country's northwestern and central regions, where dozens of armed groups often target villagers and travelers for ransom.

Kaduna state Gov. Uba Sani did not give details of the release of the 287 students abducted from their school in the remote town of Kuriga on March 7, at least 100 of them aged 12 or younger. In a statement, he thanked Nigerian President Bola Tinubu "particularly ensuring that the abducted school children are released unharmed."

Tinubu had vowed to rescue the children "without paying a dime" as ransom. But ransoms are commonly paid for kidnappings, often arranged by families, and it is rare for officials in Nigeria to admit to the payments.

No group has claimed responsibility for the Kaduna kidnapping, which locals have blamed on bandit groups known for mass killings and kidnappings for ransom in the conflict-battered northern region, most of them former herders in conflict with settled communities.

At least two people with extensive knowledge of the security crisis in Nigeria's northwest told The Associated Press that the identity of the abductors is known.

Murtala Ahmed Rufa'i, a professor of peace and conflict studies at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, and Sheikh Ahmad Gumi, a cleric who has negotiated with the bandits, said they are hiding in the region's vast and ungoverned forests.

Arrests are rare in Nigeria's mass kidnappings, as victims are usually released only after desperate families pay ransoms or through deals with government and security officials.

The Kaduna governor thanked Nigerian security forces and officials for the release of the students. "I spent sleepless nights with the National Security Adviser, Mal. Nuhu Ribadu ... fine-tuning strategies and coordinating the operations of the security agencies, which eventually resulted in this successful outcome," he said.

Wintry weather blankets New England and California mountains, storm expected in central regions

By STEVE LeBLANC Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — It may officially be spring, but wintry weather blanketed the U.S. on Saturday with New England and California seeing a mix of rain, heavy snow and gusty winds.

In the West, a winter storm warning was in effect through Sunday morning for parts of the Sierra Nevada, and a 91-mph (147-kph) wind gust was recorded at Mammoth Mountain near the California-Nevada line. About a foot (30 centimeters) of snow had fallen by Saturday morning north of Lake Tahoe.

A winter weather advisory was issued through Sunday night for parts of northern Arizona, the Grand Canyon and Flagstaff to the New Mexico border with up to a half foot (15 centimeters) of snow possible at upper elevations and winds gusting to 40 mph (64 kph).

The National Weather Service also warned of what it called a significant winter storm over central regions of the country through Monday.

"The winter storm will be high-impact and an extensive system producing widespread heavy snow and gusty winds that will persist over parts of the Northern Plains and Upper Midwest," the agency said in an online post.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 55 of 85

Heavy snow is expected to spread across central and eastern Montana and expand into the northern Plains and upper Midwest through Sunday and into Monday. There is a greater than 70% chance of at least 8 inches (20 centimeters) of snow moving from central South Dakota to northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin, the weather service reported.

In Maine, the National Weather Service warned of treacherous travel with an increase in ice forming inland from the coast, on top of snow or sleet that had already fallen.

Farther inland forecasters called for anywhere from 1 to 2 feet (30 to 61 centimeters) of snow across the mountains in western Maine and areas north and in New Hampshire's White Mountains, according to Maura Casey, a lead forecaster for the weather service, based out of Gray, Maine.

In the lakes region of New Hampshire up to Maine, totals were expected to be somewhat lower at 6 inches to a foot (15 to 30 centimeters) with sleet and freezing rain mixing in.

Across Connecticut, New York City, Rhode Island and Massachusetts, the storm was expected to remain largely a rain event.

"Overnight dry weather will give way to sunshine," said Frank Nocera, lead forecaster for the National Weather Service in Norton, Massachusetts. Despite the sun, Sunday was expected to be blustery with temperatures chillier than average for late March, he said.

In New York City, a flood watch and wind advisory were in place until 2 a.m. Sunday.

Flooding impacted subway service, shutting down a section of the Staten Island Railway in both directions. Flooding also closed part of the Cross Island Parkway in Queens, and police warned motorists about standing water on roadways throughout the city.

The storm was blamed for hundreds of delayed and canceled flights at New York-area airports, and it also postponed the opening of Coney Island's Luna Park, home to the famous Cyclone and Thunderbolt roller coasters.

Fans of skiing welcomed the snowfall.

At Loon Mountain in New Hampshire's White Mountains, skiers were looking forward to the 12 to 20 inches (30 to 51 centimeters) of new snow the storm was expected to drop on top of a foot (30 centimeters) earlier this week.

"The storm is great. It's brought a lot of skiers out to the mountain today," said Kevin Bell, vice president of marketing for the resort. "This could be the biggest snow we'll see all year. It sets us up for a really good spring. The more snow New England gets, the better for us."

The Mount Washington Avalanche Center issued an avalanche warning along the White Mountain's Presidential Range until 7 a.m. Sunday.

"Very dangerous avalanche conditions exist. Natural and human-triggered avalanches large enough to bury people are very likely," the center said. "Some avalanches will be large enough to snap trees or destroy a house and may run far into areas previously considered safe."

The storm should be completely out of the New England region by Sunday morning. It comes at the end of a winter season in some areas of the Northeast, including Boston, that saw little snow and warmer temperatures.

In South Florida, severe thunderstorms Friday night delayed departures at the Miami International Airport during the busy spring break season, suspended a popular electronic music festival and disrupted matches at a high-profile tennis tournament.

And in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, crews battling wildfires this week got an assist from some wet weather. "Without a doubt the rain is helping," said Cory Swift, a spokesperson for the Virginia Department of Forestry.

Creighton outlasts Oregon 86-73 in double OT thriller to earn spot in Sweet 16 of March Madness

By TOM WITHERS AP Sports Writer

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Before the second overtime began, Greg McDermott looked over at Dana Altman and the two coaches and close friends shared a smile.

This was madness.

"We were both in disbelief about what was transpiring in front of our eyes," McDermott said.

They weren't alone.

Steven Ashworth and Ryan Kalkbrenner made 3-pointers in the second overtime as Creighton edged past Altman — the Bluejays' former coach — to move into the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Tournament with an 86-73 victory over Oregon on Saturday night.

The 3 by the 6-foot-1 Ashworth and a rare one by the 7-1 Kalkbrenner, a defensive specialist, helped the third-seeded Bluejays (25-9) score the first 15 points of the second OT to finally put away the 11th-seeded Ducks (24-12) and end a game that contained enough mayhem for more than one March.

"Epic game," said McDermott, who took over at Creighton for Altman in 2010 and got his 325th career win, two away from Altman's school record. "Not sure I've been part of one quite like it in 35 years."

Ashworth scored 21 points, Trey Alexander added 20, Kalkbrenner 19 and Baylor Scheierman 18 for Creighton, which will make its third Sweet 16 appearance in four years when it faces No. 2 seed Tennessee on Friday in the Midwest Regional in Detroit.

"It's a great feeling," said Alexander, one of the returnees from Creighton's Elite Eight team from last year. "We love this group of guys. We love rocking and rolling together. We love everything that comes with the road trips and us just being able to have another week with each other.

"We're going to try to stay in the moment and just continue play at a level that we feel like we can play at. From there, we'll just kind of let the dominoes fall where they do."

It took balance, big shots, clutch free throws and poise for the Bluejays to overcome Oregon's devastating 1-2 punch of Jermaine Couisnard and N'Faly Dante.

Couisnard, who had 40 points in the first round against South Carolina — his former school — poured in 32 and Dante dominated inside with 28 points and 20 rebounds.

It was the second OT game of the night in PPG Paints Arena after North Carolina State ended Oakland's Cinderella run with a 79-73 victory in the first game.

This one pitted the two winningest coaches in Creighton history — Altman and McDermott, close friends, occasional golfing buddies and the reason why the Bluejays are a mid-major power and menace inside the brackets.

For two hours, their teams went toe-to-toe with neither giving an inch. It was exhilarating and exhausting as the teams exchanged the lead 14 times. There were nine ties and about as much drama as you can pack into a tournament game.

The Ducks, who rode the Couisnard-Dante tandem to a Pac-12 tourney title, looked cooked in the first overtime, trailing by three after two free throws by Ashworth put Creighton ahead 71-68.

But Couisnard, the silky senior guard from East Chicago, Indiana, came down and calmly drained a long 3-pointer in front of Oregon's bench to tie it.

"They've been playing their tails off all year," said Altman, who lost three players to season-ending injuries. "We've been riding them. So, it was special to watch those two guys. We had our chances. We just made some critical mistakes there in regulation. And that's on me."

Creighton had a last chance in the first OT, but Alexander missed a short baseline jumper just before the horn, extending a Saturday night doubleheader on a chilly night in Pittsburgh into Sunday morning.

The second OT was all Creighton.

Ashworth opened it with his 3, and after Couisnard missed a layup, Kalkbrenner, the three-time Big East Defensive Player of the Year, took a pass behind the line and drained just his 53rd 3-point attempt

all season.

"Mac (McDermott) told me to make 100 (3s) after practice and 100 before in the two practices we had before we came here," Kalkbrenner said. "That helped prepare me. I got confidence in myself to take that shot, and I know that's probably the No. 1 shot Mac wanted on that possession."

After another Cousinard miss, Creighton's Jasen Green, who had nine rebounds, dunked a putback and the Bluejays were all but flying to the Sweet 16. Ashworth then sealed it by banking in another 3-pointer as Creighton opened an 86-71 lead.

Oregon, which only attempted five free throws, had a chance to put it away in the final minute of regulation, but Dante missed Oregon's first shot from the line with 26.4 seconds left and the Ducks up two.

Scheireman, who played all 50 minutes, then hit a contested 10-footer in the lane to tie it, and the teams went to OT when Cousinard missed an off-balance drive in the final second.

One of the game's main subplots was Altman's on-court reunion with Creighton, where he spent 16 seasons, turned around a program in disarray and helped put the school located in Omaha, Nebraska, on the hoops map.

McDermott has kept it going, and now one of the nation's most consistent winning teams, the Bluejays have outgrown any mid-major label.

In March, they're about as big as it gets.

UP NEXT

Two more wins and the Blue Jays will have the Final Four trip they just missed last season, when they lost by one point to San Diego State in a regional final.

Putin says gunmen who raided Moscow concert hall tried to escape to Ukraine. Kyiv denies involvement

MOSCOW (AP) — The suburban Moscow music hall where gunmen opened fire on concertgoers was a blackened, smoldering ruin Saturday as the death toll in the attack surpassed 130 and Russian authorities arrested four suspects. President Vladimir Putin claimed they were captured while fleeing to Ukraine.

Kyiv strongly denied any involvement in Friday's assault on the Crocus City Hall music venue in Krasnogorsk, and the Islamic State group's Afghanistan affiliate claimed responsibility.

Putin did not mention IS in his speech to the nation, and Kyiv accused him and other Russian politicians of falsely linking Ukraine to the assault to stoke fervor for Russia's war in Ukraine, which recently entered its third year.

U.S. intelligence officials confirmed the claim by the IS affiliate.

"ISIS bears sole responsibility for this attack. There was no Ukrainian involvement whatsoever," National Security Council spokeswoman Adrienne Watson said in a statement.

The U.S. shared information with Russia in early March about a planned terrorist attack in Moscow and issued a public warning to Americans in Russia, Watson said.

Putin said authorities detained a total of 11 people in the attack, which also wounded more than 100. He called it "a bloody, barbaric terrorist act" and said Russian authorities captured the four suspects as they were trying to escape to Ukraine through a "window" prepared for them on the Ukrainian side of the border.

Russian media broadcast videos that apparently showed the detention and interrogation of the suspects, including one who told the cameras he was approached by an unidentified assistant to an Islamic preacher via a messaging app and paid to take part in the raid.

Russian news reports identified the gunmen as citizens of Tajikistan, a former Soviet republic in Central Asia that is predominantly Muslim and borders Afghanistan. Up to 1.5 million Tajiks have worked in Russia and many have Russian citizenship.

Tajikistan's foreign ministry, which denied initial Russian media reports that mentioned several other Tajiks allegedly involved in the raid, did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the arrests.

Many Russian hard-liners called for a crackdown on Tajik migrants, but Putin appeared to reject the idea, saying "no force will be able to sow the poisonous seeds of discord, panic or disunity in our multi-ethnic

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 58 of 85

society.”

He declared Sunday a day of mourning and said additional security measures were imposed throughout Russia.

The number of dead stood at 133, making the attack the deadliest in Russia in years. Authorities said the toll could still rise.

The raid was a major embarrassment for the Russian leader and happened just days after he cemented his grip on the country for another six years in a vote that followed the harshest crackdown on dissent since the Soviet times.

Some commentators on Russian social media questioned how authorities, who have relentlessly suppressed any opposition activities and muzzled independent media, failed to prevent the attack despite the U.S. warnings.

The assault came two weeks after the U.S. Embassy in Moscow issued a notice urging Americans to avoid crowded places in view of “imminent” plans by extremists to target large Moscow gatherings, including concerts. Several other Western embassies repeated the warning. Earlier this week, Putin denounced the warning as an attempt to intimidate Russians.

Investigators on Saturday combed through the charred wreckage of the hall for more victims. Hundreds of people stood in line in Moscow to donate blood and plasma, Russia’s health ministry said.

Putin’s claim that the attackers tried to flee to Ukraine followed comments by Russian lawmakers who pointed the finger at Ukraine immediately after the attack.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy angrily rejected Moscow’s accusations as an attempt by Putin and his lieutenants to shift the blame to Ukraine while treating their own people as “expendables.”

“They are burning our cities — and they are trying to blame Ukraine,” he said in a statement on his messaging app channel. “They torture and rape our people — and they blame them. They drove hundreds of thousands of their terrorists here to fight us on our Ukrainian soil, and they don’t care what happens inside their own country.”

Images shared by Russian state media showed emergency vehicles still gathered outside the ruins of the concert hall, which could hold more than 6,000 people and hosted many big events, including the 2013 Miss Universe beauty pageant that featured Donald Trump.

On Friday, crowds were at the venue for a concert by the Russian rock band Picnic.

Videos posted online showed gunmen in the venue shooting civilians at point-blank range. Russian news reports cited authorities and witnesses as saying the attackers threw explosive devices that started the fire, which eventually consumed the building and caused its roof to collapse.

Dave Primov, who survived the attack, told the AP that the gunmen were “shooting directly into the crowd” in the front rows. He described the chaos in the hall as concertgoers raced to escape: “People began to panic, started to run and collided with each other. Some fell down and others trampled on them.”

After he and others crawled out of the hall into nearby utility rooms, he said he heard pops from small explosives and smelled burning as the attackers set the building ablaze. By the time they got out of the massive building 25 minutes later, it was engulfed in flames.

“Had it been just a little longer, we could simply get stuck there in the fire,” Primov said.

Messages of outrage, shock and support for the victims and their families streamed in from around the world.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement that the U.S. condemned the attack and noted that the Islamic State group is a “common terrorist enemy that must be defeated everywhere.”

IS, which lost much of its ground after Russia’s military action in Syria, has long targeted Russia. In a statement posted by the group’s Amaq news agency, IS’s Afghanistan affiliate said it had attacked a large gathering of “Christians” in Krasnogorsk.

The group issued a new statement Saturday on Amaq saying the attack was carried out by four men who used automatic rifles, a pistol, knives and firebombs. It said the assailants fired at the crowd and used knives to kill some concertgoers, casting the raid as part of IS’s ongoing war with countries that it

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 59 of 85

says are fighting Islam.

In October 2015, a bomb planted by IS downed a Russian passenger plane over Sinai, killing all 224 people on board, most of them Russian vacation-goers returning from Egypt.

The group, which operates mainly in Syria and Iraq but also in Afghanistan and Africa, also has claimed several attacks in Russia's volatile Caucasus and other regions in the past years. It recruited fighters from Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union.

The group's Afghanistan affiliate is known variously as ISIS-K or IS-K, taking its name from Khorasan Province, a region that covered much of Afghanistan, Iran and Central Asia in the Middle Ages.

The affiliate has thousands of fighters who have repeatedly carried out attacks in Afghanistan since the country was seized in 2021 by the Taliban, a group with which they are at bitter odds.

ISIS-K was behind the August 2021 suicide bombing at Kabul airport that left 13 American troops and about 170 Afghans dead during the chaotic U.S. withdrawal. They also claimed responsibility for a bomb attack in Kerman, Iran, in January that killed 95 people at a memorial procession.

On March 7, just hours before the U.S. Embassy warned about imminent attacks, Russia's top security agency said it had thwarted an attack on a synagogue in Moscow by an IS cell and killed several of its members in the Kaluga region near the Russian capital. A few days before that, Russian authorities said six alleged IS members were killed in a shootout in Ingushetia, in Russia's Caucasus region.

Rationed food kept Cubans fed during the Cold War.

Today an economic crisis has them hungry

By ANDREA RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Like millions of other Cubans, María de los Ángeles Pozo thinks back fondly to when a government ration book fed her family everything from hamburgers, fish and milk to chocolate and beer. People would even get cakes for birthdays and weddings.

The "libreta," as Cubans know it, was launched in July 1963 and became one of the pillars of the island's socialist system, helping people through crises including the cutbacks in Soviet aid that led to the 1990s deprivation known as the "Special Period."

That system is undergoing a deep economic crisis that has prompted the exodus of almost half a million Cubans to the U.S. over the last two years, with thousands more heading to Europe. It also has led to a dramatic reduction in the availability of rationed food for those who do not leave.

Many Cubans feel ill-equipped to handle their new, more unequal country, a feeling that has worsened as small private markets have opened, charging prices similar to international ones in a country that hasn't allowed non-state commerce in recent decades and where incomes remain between \$16 and \$23 monthly.

"Everything comes in small portions and delayed," said Pozo, 57, a school worker who retired to care for her disabled sister and father in the apartment they share in Old Havana. They earn \$10 a month between the three.

Basic goods like a kilo (2.2 pounds) of powdered milk can cost as much as \$8.

"We don't have the goods that we were used to anymore," Pozo said. "We're suffering a lot of deprivation."

Protesters took to the streets in the eastern city of Santiago this month decrying power outages lasting up to eight hours and shortages of food. State media confirmed the protests in Santiago and videos showing people chanting "electricity and food" were quickly shared by Cubans on and off the island on platforms like X and Facebook. A nongovernmental human rights group that monitors Cuba said there had been at least three arrests.

Pozo pays only \$2 at the subsidized state stores at current exchange rates. In February she got a few pounds of rice, beans, some sugar and salt, oil, processed meat and soap for her family of three.

Pozo said that she doesn't receive money from relatives overseas, a major marker of class differences in 2024 Cuba, and one that about 70 percent of families do get.

While there are no official figures, many experts estimate that Cubans overseas sent \$3 billion home in 2019.

Cuba has long struggled with a lack of production.

The lack of hard currency and needed equipment is making the situation even worse without agricultural supplies like insecticides and fertilizers, said Ricardo Torres, an economist at American University in Washington.

Without a functioning market economy, Cuban agriculture has long measured itself by socialist production goals that it has rarely been able to meet.

Camaguey, one of Cuba's main ranching hubs, only produced 42.8 million liters (11.3 million gallons) of milk last year, out of 81.3 million liters (21.5 million gallons) that producers had agreed to sell.

Producers, for their part, complain that government prices don't cover expenses.

The Cuban government blames the economic damage wrought by COVID-19, along with U.S. sanctions and macroeconomic changes dating to recent years that have led to severe inflation.

"You can see today private stores that have all the products that you want: milk, bread, sugar — whatever you want — at prices that are not accessible to the majority of the population," Deputy Foreign Minister Carlos Fernández de Cossío said in a interview with The Associated Press. "The government continues to be committed to provide an equal amount to all."

Official figures show Cuba's average annual inflation of nearly 50% a year over the last three years and a 2% contraction in the Gross Domestic Product.

Faced with that scenario, the government has been trying to reduce the number of people who receive subsidized food from an estimated four million libretas.

For most Cubans, the government is failing to take on the most serious issue: low take-home pay as a result of low productivity and inflation.

"Salaries must rise," said maintenance man Hilmer Pagán, 53.

Nevada's first big-game moose hunt will be tiny as unusual southern expansion defies climate change

By SCOTT SONNER Associated Press

RENO, Nev. (AP) — In what will be a tiny big-game hunt for some of the largest animals in North America, Nevada is planning its first-ever moose hunting season this fall.

Wildlife managers say explosive growth in Nevada moose numbers over the past five years, increasing to a population of more than 100, justifies the handful of harvests planned.

Scientists say the experiment of sorts should also provide a real-time peek at how the complexities of climate change affect wildlife, and why these majestic — some say goofy-looking — mammals the size of a horse have unexpectedly expanded their range into warmer territory.

"Moose are newcomers to North America," said Cody McKee, a Nevada Department of Wildlife specialist.

The last deer species to cross the Bering Sea land bridge into Alaska and Canada, McKee said the movement of moose into the Lower 48 has occurred almost exclusively in the past 150 years.

"Their post-glacial range expansion isn't really complete," McKee said. "And that's what we're currently seeing in Nevada right now, is those moose are moving into the state and finding suitable habitat."

Only a few Nevada moose, perhaps just one, will be killed across an area larger than Massachusetts and New Jersey combined. But state officials expect thousands of applications for the handful of hunting tags, and it's already controversial.

"Why a moose hunt at all?" Stephanie Myers of Las Vegas asked at a recent wildlife commission meeting. "We want to see moose, view moose. Not kill moose."

The first moose was spotted in Nevada in the 1950s, not long before the dim-witted cartoon character "Bullwinkle" made his television debut. Only a handful of sightings followed for decades, but started increasing about 10 years ago.

By 2018, officials estimated there were 30 to 50, all in Nevada's northeast corner. But the population has more than doubled and experts believe there's enough habitat to sustain about 200, a level that could be

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 61 of 85

reached in three years.

Bryan Bird, Defenders of Wildlife's Southwest program director, is among the skeptics who suspect it's a short-lived phenomenon.

"I believe the moose story is one of 'ghost' habitat or 'ghost' range expansion. By that I mean, these animals are expanding into habitat that may not be suitable in 50 years due to climate change," Bird said.

Government biologists admit they don't fully understand why the moose have moved so far south, where seasonal conditions are warmer and drier than they traditionally prefer.

"It seems to be opposite of where we would expect to see moose expansion given their ecology," said Marcus Blum, a Texas A&M University researcher hired to help assess future movement. He analyzed aerial surveys, individual sightings and habitat to project growth trends.

Six feet (1.8 meters) tall at the shoulder and up to 1,000 pounds (453.5 kilograms), moose live in riparian areas where they munch on berry bushes and aspen leaves along the edges of mountain forests native to the northern half of Nevada.

They usually avoid places where temperatures regularly exceed 68 degrees Fahrenheit (20 Celsius).

The Nevada study documented moose spending nearly half their time in areas where that "thermal threshold" was exceeded about 150 days a year, while climate change models suggest the threshold will be surpassed by another 14 days annually by 2050, Blum said.

To be clear, the valleys beneath the snow-capped winter mountain ranges with moose are 500 miles (805 kilometers) from the Las Vegas Strip in the desert many people picture as Nevada.

Researchers have more questions than answers about why moose continue to expand their range into Nevada where extended drought has taken a toll on other wildlife, McKee said.

"There's a lot of speculation and questions about why they are here, given concerns about the changing environment and how it's probably getting warmer and dryer," McKee said. "Why is it that our extensive drought cycles haven't seemed to be affecting the moose population?"

Populations along the U.S.-Canada border have oscillated for more than a century. Several states, from Idaho to Minnesota and Maine, have dramatically reduced hunting quotas at times to allow populations to recover.

Alaska is home to the vast majority of U.S. moose, upwards of 200,000, with about 7,000 harvests annually. Maine has nearly 70,000, which is five times more than any other Lower 48 state, and issued 4,100 permits last year. Neighboring New Hampshire offered only 35 for 3,000-plus moose and Idaho issued about 500 for its 10,000 to 12,000.

No moose were observed in Washington state before the 1960s but its growing population now exceeds 5,000. The state issued three hunting permits in 1977 and now tops 100 annually.

Nevada's research suggests its population could sustain more harvests than planned, McKee said, but "conservative is the name of the game here."

Aerial surveys are now backed by radio-tracking collars biologists have fitted on four bull moose and nine cows since 2020. In some spots, males significantly outnumber females. Removing a bull or two might improve herd dynamics, he said.

The exact number of permits will be determined in the coming weeks, but McKee anticipates no more than three. Only Nevadans can apply for the inaugural hunt, which will help guide decisions about future endeavors.

Successful hunters must present the skull and antlers for state inspection within five days. That will give scientists more insight into herd health, body conditions, disease and parasites.

Bill Nolan of Sparks, who first hunted ducks at age 12, says he intends to apply for a chance he describes as "slim and none" to draw a moose tag.

"For hunters, it would be like hitting the lottery," he said.

North Carolina beats Tom Izzo, Michigan State in March Madness again to reach Sweet 16

By AARON BEARD AP Basketball Writer

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Once again, North Carolina is moving on in the NCAA Tournament at the expense of Michigan State and Hall of Fame coach Tom Izzo.

RJ Davis scored 20 points to help UNC beat the Spartans 85-69 on Saturday, pushing the Tar Heels to the Sweet 16 while keeping them unbeaten in March Madness against Izzo's teams in a series going back 26 years.

Harrison Ingram made five 3-pointers and scored 17 points for the West Region's top seed, which continued its NCAA success in its home state. The Tar Heels (29-7) improved to 5-0 in the tournament against Izzo, including victories in the 2005 Final Four and 2009 title game.

And they move on to the regional semifinals in Los Angeles, where they will face either Grand Canyon or Alabama on Thursday night.

It started with answering the Spartans' game-opening punch that put the Tar Heels in a 12-point hole. The response — continuing coach Hubert Davis' season-long message — was a game-defining change. The Tar Heels erased the Spartans' lead and answered every push that followed.

"We came into the huddle and said, 'Look, we can't talk about any basketball stuff until we join the fight,'" Hubert Davis said. "Once that started, the level of play in terms of the energy and effort, the attention to detail rose. Then that's when things started to change."

UNC ran off 17 straight points during a 23-3 run over the last eight minutes of the first half. And that secured the program's largest comeback in March Madness since rallying from 16 down to beat Southern California in the 2007 Sweet 16.

"I think being able to continue to trust each other, our ability to execute, to continually raise the level of energy," said UNC's Cormac Ryan, who had 14 points. "That starts with guys coming in and making individual effort and energy plays, and that happened all across the board all night."

UNC fifth-year post Armando Bacot (18 points) was critical, getting inside to score, draw fouls or kick out against oncoming double teams. Ingram was on the receiving end of some of those, hitting 5 of 7 3-pointers to go with seven rebounds.

Tyson Walker scored 24 points for the ninth-seeded Spartans (20-15), who were playing in front of a blue-clad crowd about a 2 1/2-hour drive from UNC's Chapel Hill campus.

Izzo had no explanation when asked Friday about the lack of postseason success against UNC, a blip on a resume featuring 26 straight trips to March Madness, eight Final Fours and the 2000 national title. This one ended the same as the previous matchups and was the third in the Tar Heels' home state.

"I'll just say hats off to Carolina and Hubert and their team, but I'm not going to hang my head because I don't believe it was a 16-point loss," Izzo said. "So many ebbs and flows that were monstrous in that game."

To Izzo's point, one of Ingram's 3s seemed destined to miss when it caught iron, only to somehow take a soft lap all the way around the rim and drop through the net — sending Ingram screaming toward the bench and giving UNC a 69-57 lead with 6:18 left.

"I thought it was going in because I felt the rim was huge," Ingram said. "I was jumping up and down, praying to God it went in."

That came minutes after RJ Davis had banked in a straightaway 3 while trying to lose a defender, a moment that had the first-team AP All-American looking to the rafters in disbelief.

By then, the Spartans were already chasing.

Michigan State carried the action early behind a heater of a start with Walker scoring 11 points in the first 10 1/2 minutes. And when Malik Hall scored on a pivot spin against Jae'Lyn Withers inside, the Spartans led 28-17 at the 8:08 mark. That's when the Tar Heels matched the Spartans' edge.

Ingram hit a 3 to start the 17-0 burst that included multiple baskets and free throws from Bacot. Ryan nailed another 3 from the corner in a side-reversing sequence that started inside with Bacot, while Ingram

hit another that pushed the Tar Heels to a 40-31 lead at the break.

BIG PICTURE

Michigan State: It was a bumpy season for a team that opened the season ranked No. 4 in the AP Top 25 but was unranked before the end of November and remained that way the rest of the year. The Spartans had wins against NCAA 3-seeds Illinois and Baylor, but they didn't have better than a three-game winning streak after the start of 2024 and had lost five of seven entering March Madness. They beat eighth-seeded Mississippi State on Thursday, but — in a repeat of their season-long inconsistency — couldn't sustain their edge for 40 minutes.

"It made it frustrating because I kept saying to myself I know this team has enough," Izzo said. "You know what, I'll leave today believing I'm right. I really think we have enough that we could have made a little run. Yeah, we would have had to get them past a mountain, but we had them down. ... We just couldn't get over the hump."

UNC: The Tar Heels advanced by beating 16th-seeded Wagner with an easy dominance in the paint against an undersized team. They had a tougher fight in this one but improved to 36-2 in NCAA games in North Carolina, including 14-1 in Charlotte, the state's largest city.

UP NEXT

The Tar Heels learn their opponent Sunday. UNC owns an 8-5 record against the fourth-seeded Crimson Tide and has never met the 12th-seeded Antelopes.

Biden and Trump win Louisiana's presidential primary having already clinched nominations

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump won Louisiana's primary on Saturday, collecting more delegates after they already clinched their party nominations.

Biden also appeared in Missouri's Democratic primary, with results not expected to be reported until next week.

None of the races were in suspense. Biden and Trump have already beaten their major competitors. But the primary races are still closely watched by insiders for turnout and signs of protest voters.

For Biden, some liberals are registering their anger with Israel's war against Hamas following the militant group's Oct. 7 attack. More than 30,000 people, two-thirds of them women and children, have been reported killed by Gaza authorities since Israel launched its offensive. A protest movement launched by Arab American communities in Michigan has spread to several other states.

Trump is his party's dominant figure and has locked up a third straight Republican nomination. But he faces dissent from people worried about the immense legal jeopardy he faces or critical of his White House term, which ended shortly after the Jan. 6 insurrection mounted by his supporters and fueled by his false theories of election fraud.

Saturday's primary was the Missouri Democratic Party's first party-run presidential contest since a new law took effect in August 2022. Louisiana's primaries, meanwhile, come almost four years after the state was the first to postpone its primaries due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

'Frozen in time.' Kamala Harris tours bloodstained building where 2018 Parkland massacre happened

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

PARKLAND, Fla. (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris toured on Saturday the bloodstained classroom building where the 2018 Parkland high school massacre happened, then announced a program to assist states that have laws allowing police to temporarily seize guns from people judges have found to be dangerous.

Harris saw bullet-pocked walls and floors still covered in dried blood and broken glass left behind from the Feb. 14, 2018, attack at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School that killed 14 students and three staff members and wounded 17.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 64 of 85

The halls and classrooms inside the three-story structure remain strewn with shoes left behind by fleeing students and wilted Valentine's Day flowers and balloons. Textbooks, laptop computers, snacks and papers remain on desks. She was told about each victim who died.

"Frozen in time," Harris said repeatedly about what she saw. She was accompanied on the tour by victims' family members, some of them pushing for more spending on school safety and others for stronger gun laws.

Harris, who leads the new White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention, said there are lessons to be learned from Parkland, both for stopping school shootings before they happen and mitigating them with measures such as making sure classroom doors don't lock from the outside as they did at Stoneman Douglas. She pointed out that shootings are a leading cause of death for children and teenagers.

"We must be willing to have the courage to say that on every level, whether you talk about changing laws or changing practices and protocols, that we must do better," Harris said.

At Stoneman Douglas, former student Nikolas Cruz, then 19, fired about 140 shots from his AR-15-style semiautomatic rifle during his six-minute attack, moving methodically from the first floor, through the second and onto the third.

He pleaded guilty in 2021. He was sentenced to life in prison in 2022 after his jury couldn't unanimously agree he deserved a death sentence, angering the victims' families.

The building was preserved so his jury could tour it. It has loomed over the 3,600-student school from behind a temporary fence since the school reopened two weeks after the shooting. It is scheduled to be demolished this summer. No replacement plan has been announced.

Following Harris' tour, she announced a \$750 million grant program to provide technical assistance and training to Florida and the other 20 states that have similar "red flag laws."

Florida's law allows police officers, with a judge's permission, to temporarily seize guns belonging to anyone shown to be a danger to others or themselves. The statute has been used more than 12,000 times since it was enacted six years ago in response to the Parkland shooting.

Harris also called on both Congress and states without red flag laws to adopt them. The Biden administration has called for a national red flag law.

Cruz had a long history of troubling and bizarre behavior before the shooting, including animal torture. In the weeks before the shooting, he had been reported to local law enforcement and the FBI by people fearing he was planning a mass shooting, but no action was taken. He legally purchased 10 guns in the 17 months between his 18th birthday and the massacre.

"Red flag laws are simply designed to give communities a vehicle through which they can share ... information about the concern of potential danger or the crying out for help," Harris said.

Sen. Rick Scott, a Republican who signed Florida's red flag law as governor, issued a statement Saturday calling the Biden administration's proposed national red flag law "radical," saying it would be modeled on California's statute and strip gun owners of their rights. California's law is broader than Florida's as it allows family members, employers and others to initiate the process, but the removal also has to be approved by a judge.

California's law "abandons due process to more quickly and easily take constitutional rights away from law-abiding Americans. That is unacceptable," Scott said.

Harris' tour was the latest by elected officials and law enforcement and education leaders in recent months. Education Secretary Miguel Cardona toured it in January, and several members of Congress, mostly Democrats, have gone through since law enforcement returned custody of the building to the school district last summer. FBI Director Christopher Wray and Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle visited the building in recent days.

"It is important to bring these people through the building so they can see not only the horror that still exists there, but so that we can point to the exact things that failed," said Tony Montalto, president of Stand With Parkland, the group that represents most of the victims' families. His 14-year-old daughter Gina died in the shooting.

Some Stoneman Douglas families who participate in the tours, along with Harris and President Joe Biden, want the sale of AR-15s and similar guns banned, as they were from 1994 to 2004, but there isn't sufficient support in Congress. Opponents, which include other victims' families, argue that such a ban would violate the Second Amendment and do little to stem gun violence.

Linda Beigel Schulman said the tour showed Harris the carnage a mass shooting creates — it no longer will be an abstract concept for her. Beigel Schulman's 35-year-old son, geography teacher Scott Beigel, was killed as he ushered students to safety in his classroom. The papers he was grading when the shooting began remain on his desk.

"She understands how important gun violence prevention is for us," Beigel Schulman said of the vice president. "But when you go into the actual building and see what actually happened, it doesn't matter that it is six years later. It really does something to you."

Max Schachter, whose son Alex died in the shooting, uses the tours to persuade officials to enact school safety measures such as making doors and windows bullet-resistant. Alex, 14, died from shots fired through the window of his classroom's door.

Schachter said while there is disagreement over gun laws, school safety brings the sides together. He pointed particularly to a fall visit by Utah officials, leading to that state enacting a \$100 million plan to harden its schools.

"I couldn't save Alex. But every time I have officials come through that building, lives are saved," Schachter said.

UN chief says it's time to 'truly flood' Gaza with aid and calls starvation there an outrage

By SAMY MAGDY, AMR NABIL and SAM METZ Associated Press

RAFAH CROSSING, Egypt (AP) — U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres stood near a long line of waiting trucks Saturday and declared it was time to "truly flood Gaza with lifesaving aid," calling the starvation inside the enclave a "moral outrage." He urged an immediate cease-fire between Israel and Hamas.

Guterres spoke on the Egyptian side of the border not far from the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where Israel plans to launch a ground assault despite widespread warnings of a potential catastrophe. More than half of Gaza's population has taken refuge there.

"Any further onslaught will make things even worse — worse for Palestinian civilians, worse for hostages and worse for all people in the region," Guterres said.

He spoke a day after the U.N. Security Council failed to reach consensus on the wording of a U.S.-sponsored resolution supporting "an immediate and sustained cease-fire."

Guterres repeatedly noted the difficulties of getting aid into Gaza, for which international aid agencies have largely blamed Israel.

"Here from this crossing, we see the heartbreak and heartlessness ... a long line of blocked relief trucks on one side of the gates, the long shadow of starvation on the other," he said.

About 7,000 aid trucks are waiting in Egypt's North Sinai province to enter Gaza, Gov. Mohammed Abdel-Fadeil Shousha said in a statement.

Guterres added: "It is time for an ironclad commitment by Israel for total ... access for humanitarian goods to Gaza, and in the Ramadan spirit of compassion, it is also time for the immediate release of all hostages." He later told journalists that a humanitarian cease-fire and hostage release should occur at the same time.

Hamas is believed to be holding around 100 hostages as well as the remains of 30 others taken in its Oct. 7 attack that killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and sparked the war.

When asked about Guterres' comments, the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu referred to a social media post by Foreign Minister Israel Katz accusing the U.N. chief of allowing the world body to become "antisemitic and anti-Israeli."

An estimated 1.5 million Palestinians now shelter in Rafah after fleeing Israel's offensive elsewhere.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 66 of 85

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Thursday said an Israeli ground assault on Rafah would be "a mistake" and unnecessary in defeating Hamas. That marked a shift in the position for the United States, whose officials have concluded there is no credible way for getting civilians out of harm's way.

Netanyahu has vowed to press forward with military-approved plans for the offensive, which he has said is crucial to achieving the stated aim of destroying Hamas. The military has said Rafah is Hamas' last major stronghold and ground forces must target four battalions remaining there.

Again on Saturday night, Israelis protested in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem against Netanyahu and the government amid fears that surviving hostages held in Gaza are in ever-worsening conditions months into the war.

Israel's invasion has killed more than 32,000 people, according to Gaza health officials, while leaving much of the enclave in ruins and displacing some 80% of the enclave's 2.3 million people. Gaza's Health Ministry said Saturday that the bodies of 72 people killed had been brought to hospitals in the past 24 hours.

The Health Ministry doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants, but has said women and children make up the majority of the dead. Israel blames Hamas for civilian deaths and accuses it of operating within residential areas.

Fighting raged Saturday around Gaza's largest hospital. Israel's military says it has killed more than 170 militants in Shifa hospital since its raid began Monday, and the commanding officer of the Southern Command, Yaron Finkelman, on Friday said "we will finish this operation only when the last terrorist is in our hands."

Nearby Gaza City residents told The Associated Press that Israeli troops had blown up several residential buildings.

"They are emptying the whole area," said Abdel-Hay Saad, who lives on the western edge of Gaza City's Rimal neighborhood. Another resident, Mohammed al-Sheikh, said that intense Israeli bombardment was "hitting anything moving."

Associated Press footage showed columns of smoke billowing over the hospital area.

The Health Ministry said five wounded Palestinians trapped at Shifa had died without food, water, medical services. It previously said Israel's military had detained health workers, patients and relatives inside the complex. The military claimed it wasn't harming civilians, patients or workers.

"These conditions are utterly inhumane," the World Health Organization's director-general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said on social media late Friday,

Elsewhere, an older woman and five children were killed overnight in an Israeli airstrike on an area between Rafah and Khan Younis, health authorities said.

Hunger has become deadly, too. The U.N. and Israel's government again traded allegations over the lack of aid delivery to northern Gaza, the first target of Israel's offensive in the war and where anguished parents have reported watching children scavenge for bread in the rubble.

The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees — "the backbone of assistance in Gaza," Guterres said — said Israel had again denied permission for an aid convoy to deliver to northern Gaza. The agency, known as UNRWA, said that two months have passed since a convoy could reach there.

Israel's government replied by contending again that hundreds of aid trucks are waiting for the U.N. and partners to distribute it.

"No time for misinformation. Enough," UNRWA's communications director, Juliette Touma, told AP in response.

Fulton County DA Fani Willis says despite efforts to slow down Trump case, 'the train is coming'

ATLANTA (AP) — Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis said Saturday that the election interference prosecution against Donald Trump hasn't been delayed by proceedings over her romantic relationship with a special prosecutor she hired for the case.

"I don't feel like we have been slowed down at all," Willis told CNN in an interview. "I think there are efforts to slow down the train, but the train is coming."

Her latest comments come as defense attorneys continue to press claims about her handling of a sprawling prosecution against the former president and current GOP presumptive nominee. Trump faces four felony indictments — including separate federal and state cases for his efforts to overturn the 2020 election that he lost to President Joe Biden — but has fought to delay and dismiss the cases, arguing that political opponents are wrongly targeting him.

Willis spoke days after a Georgia judge allowed attorneys for Trump's codefendants to appeal his ruling that she could stay on the case after the withdrawal of the special prosecutor, Nathan Wade. That may allow defense attorneys to amplify allegations of impropriety between Wade and Willis.

Defense attorneys have alleged Willis hired Wade to profit from the Trump prosecution through their romantic relationship. Superior Court Judge Scott McAfee said there wasn't sufficient evidence to prove those claims but rebuked Willis for what he called a "tremendous lapse in judgment."

Willis told CNN that she didn't think her reputation needed to be reclaimed and that she hadn't done anything embarrassing.

"I'm not embarrassed by anything I've done," Willis said. "I guess my greatest crime is that I had a relationship with a man, but that's not something I find embarrassing in any way."

Anthony Michael Kreis, a Georgia State University law professor who's been following the case, criticized her comments in a post on X.

"If I were Fani Willis, I would simply not talk to the media at all at this point just out of an abundance of caution," Kreis said.

Heavy rains kill at least 7 in Rio de Janeiro state, 4-year-old rescued after 16 hours under mud

PETROPOLIS, Brazil (AP) — Heavy rains in Rio de Janeiro state have killed at least seven people, authorities said Saturday, while a 4-year-old girl was rescued after more than 16 hours under mud.

The girl was pulled out alive in the city of Petropolis, 69 kilometers (43 miles) north of Rio. Rescue teams had to stop their work Friday night because of risks of new landslides in the region.

The girl's father died as a house was knocked to the ground. She survived because he protected her with his body, members of rescue teams said. Three more people died in the same place.

"My son was a warrior, he spent all that time there and saved his little daughter," Roberto Napoleão, the grandfather of the girl, told journalists. "You can't imagine what it is like to lose a son. It hurts so much."

Mayors in the state and Gov. Claudio Castro had alarmed residents of potential problems for the weekend since Thursday.

Firefighters have struggled to reach those hit by heavy rains, many of them residents of long endangered areas. Sniffing dogs were also part of the rescue efforts. Almost 100 people had been saved, authorities said.

Local authorities in Teresopolis, close to Petropolis, said that one person was still missing after the heavy rains.

Meteorologists say the heavy rains that hit Rio state are moving towards the neighboring state of Espirito Santo.

Drag story hour at library canceled after suspicious package and threats, authorities say

LANCASTER, Pa. (AP) —

A scheduled "Drag Queen Story Hour" at a Pennsylvania library that had drawn opposition was canceled Saturday after a suspicious package was found in the building and two blocks were evacuated after threats were reported, authorities said.

Police evacuated the Lancaster Public Library after the package was found. A state police bomb squad

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 68 of 85

later cleared the library, but police said "additional reported threats" were still being investigated. Residents of the block and another block nearby were told to evacuate, an order lifted several hours later.

A city spokesperson later told LancasterOnline that a dog had alerted on the package and that the contents were later found to be "benign" but "subsequently, we received additional written threats via email."

Lancaster Pride, a nonprofit that celebrates the town's LGBTQ+ community, posted a notice on social media that the "Drag Story Hour with Miss Amie" had been canceled, saying "the safety and well-being of our community are of utmost importance to us."

The planned story hour drew impassioned opposition from some residents during a marathon county commissioners meeting Wednesday, the second meeting in a row marked by resident protests after Republican commissioners denounced the event as inappropriate, LancasterOnline reported.

Commissioner Josh Parsons wrote that libraries "should be places for kids to safely read and learn, not politicized social laboratories for woke ideology." Commissioner Ray D'Agostino said he thought there was a link between children being more "confused, anxious and stressed" than ever and people "trying to push adult themed issues at such an early age." Scores of people attended a prayer vigil in the plaza adjacent to the library Friday night opposing the event.

Both Parsons and D'Agostino issued statements Saturday afternoon condemning the reported threats and calling for the prosecution of those responsible regardless of their motives, LancasterOnline reported. "Threats of violence have no place in our debates," Parsons said.

Lissa Holland, the library's executive director, told LancasterOnline that she was "really sad, very disappointed and angry" about the cancellation.

"The library should be a place of safety. ... And as I've told people numerous times this week, like every book in the library is not for every person, every program is maybe not for every person. But we don't censor," she said.

The listing for the "Drag Queen Story Hour" on the library's events page called on attendees to "Join Miss Amie Vanité as she spreads awareness and acceptance by celebrating diversity, inclusiveness, kindness and love through LGBTQ+ literature for young readers."

The Lancaster LGBTQ+ Coalition noted "backlash" in a Facebook post earlier this month and decried what it called "hateful comments about the LGBTQ+ community" from public officials.

"We want to be clear that drag story hours for children are NOT the same as adult drag performances," the group said. The performer, the group said, "is a professional who has done other story hours for children. She dresses up in fun, whimsical costumes, sings age-appropriate songs, and reads age-appropriate books."

Christopher Paolini, who was to read in drag as Miss Amie Vanité, said he had just arrived and was getting ready "when the alarms went off." He called the turn of events "insane," LancasterOnline reported.

"It just hurts my heart that it came to this," he said. "I'm not going to stop what I'm doing. This program is too important for too many people."

Longtime Baltimore Orioles owner Peter Angelos dies at 94

BALTIMORE (AP) — Peter Angelos, owner of a Baltimore Orioles team that endured long losing stretches and shrewd proprietor of a law firm that won high-profile cases against industry titans, died Saturday. He was 94.

Angelos had been ill for several years. His family announced his death in a statement released by the Orioles that thanked the caregivers "who brought comfort to him in his final years."

Angelos' death comes as his son, John, is in the process of selling the Orioles to a group headed by Carlyle Group Inc. co-founder David Rubenstein. Peter Angelos' public role diminished significantly in his final years. According to a lawsuit involving his sons in 2022, he had surgery after his aortic valve failed in 2017.

"I offer my deepest condolences to the Angelos family on the passing of Peter Angelos," Rubenstein said in a statement. "Peter made an indelible mark first in business and then in baseball. The city of Baltimore owes him a debt of gratitude for his stewardship of the Orioles across three decades and for positioning

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 69 of 85

the team for great success.”

Born on the Fourth of July in 1929 and raised in Maryland by Greek immigrants, Peter Angelos rose from a blue-collar background to launch a firm in his own name after receiving his law degree from the University of Baltimore in 1961.

In August 1993, Angelos led a group of investors that bought the Orioles. The group included writer Tom Clancy, filmmaker Barry Levinson and tennis star Pam Shriver. The price tag of \$173 million — at the time the highest for a sports franchise — came in a sale forced by the bankruptcy of then-owner Eli Jacobs.

While remaining active in a law firm specializing in personal injury cases, Angelos assumed a hands-on approach to running his hometown team. Few player acquisitions were carried out without his approval, and his reputation for not spending millions on high-priced free agents belied his net worth, which in 2017 was estimated at \$2.1 billion.

In 1996, his firm brought a lawsuit on behalf of the state of Maryland against tobacco giant Philip Morris, securing a \$4.5 billion settlement. The Law Offices of Peter Angelos also earned millions of dollars through the settlement of asbestos cases, including a class-action suit on behalf of steel, shipyard and manufacturing facility workers.

Angelos made headlines as well in baseball. In 1995, he was the only one of 28 owners who refused to adhere to a plan to use replacement players during a union strike that began during the 1994 season.

“We’re duty bound to provide major league baseball to our fans, and that can’t be done with replacement players,” he insisted.

At the time, Orioles shortstop Cal Ripken Jr. was only 122 games from breaking Lou Gehrig’s record of 2,130 consecutive games played. The streak would have ended if the season started with replacement players and Ripken remained on strike, but the owners and players reached an agreement before opening day and Ripken ultimately ended up extending his record run to 2,632.

Angelos also fought for years to create an exhibition series between the Orioles and Cuba’s national team, a quest that reached fruition in 1999. On March 28, the Orioles played in Havana while Angelos sat alongside Cuban leader Fidel Castro. The teams met again on May 3 at Oriole Park at Camden Yards.

The series marked the first time the Cuban national team had faced a squad composed solely of major league players, and the first time since 1959 a big league club played in Cuba.

“He’s always had an interest in politics, especially foreign policy. That, and his involvement with baseball, made it a natural thing,” said John Angelos, a son and the Orioles’ current chairman and CEO.

The Orioles never won a World Series with Angelos as their owner. The team finally ended a run of 14 consecutive losing seasons in 2012, reaching the postseason under manager Buck Showalter. Baltimore made it to the American League Championship Series in 2014. But in 2018 the bottom fell out when the Orioles finished 47-115, the worst record in the majors and the franchise’s worst since it relocated from St. Louis in 1954.

Showalter was fired, and a major rebuild began the following season under rookie manager Brandon Hyde. The Orioles capped a swift rise from their rebuild by winning 101 games and a division title in 2023.

Though the team was rarely sensational, its home base certainly stood out. Sellout crowds were the norm after Oriole Park at Camden Yards opened in 1992. The iconic structure was built predominantly with brick, mortar and steel — much in the same fashion as old-time ballparks — and was the blueprint for other stadiums to follow.

In an era when owners often sell the name of their team’s stadium or arena to advertisers with the highest bid, Angelos never succumbed to such a transaction.

As he neared his 90th birthday, Angelos finally settled into the background and entrusted the operation of the team to his two sons, John and Louis.

John Angelos also is president of the Mid-Atlantic Sports Network, a regional network that televises Orioles and Washington Nationals games. Though both teams share ownership of MASN, the Orioles hold a large majority interest.

Though known as the owner of a baseball team and successful law firm, Peter Angelos’ reach in Maryland

went far deeper. He had a political career that began with an unsuccessful run for state Senate in 1958, but after that he held a seat on the Baltimore City Council from 1959 to 1963.

In 1967, his bid to become Baltimore's mayor ended in the Democratic primary.

Angelos also was a player in the horse racing industry. He bought several horses and named one after his manager at the time — Showalter, who won his debut race as a 2-year-old at Laurel Race Course in 2015.

What we know after the Islamic State group claims responsibility for Moscow massacre

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for an attack on a suburban Moscow concert hall that killed at least 133 people, the most deadly attack in Russia in years. Though the U.S. says it has evidence backing up the jihadists' claim, that didn't stop Moscow and Kyiv from pointing the finger at each other Saturday as the war in Ukraine rages on.

Much remains unknown about the Friday night attack, including whether it related to a security alert the U.S. Embassy in Moscow issued two weeks earlier and whether it signals a resurgence of the group in the West.

Russia continues to investigate after detaining 11 suspects but it wasn't possible to confirm the authenticity of statements issued by Russian investigators.

Here is a look at some of what is known so far.

WHO CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility, first Friday and then again Saturday, on the social media channels that they typically use to issue statements. In their Saturday statement they said the attack had come in the "the natural framework" of the ongoing war between the extremist group and countries they accuse of fighting Islam.

IS is an offshoot of al-Qaida that took over much of Iraq and Syria in 2014. It launched a genocidal campaign against the Yazidis, a religious minority that lives in northern Iraq, as well as other groups. By 2018, it had been largely defeated on the battlefield by a U.S.-led coalition, but it continues to operate in desert hideouts in both countries. Its regional affiliates are also present in Afghanistan, West Africa and the Far East.

A Pakistani security analyst, Syed Muhammad Ali, said that if it is confirmed that the group carried out the grisly concert hall massacre, it could be seen as revenge for Russian airstrikes against IS hideouts in Syria. He noted that the group has been badly damaged by Russian airstrikes in Syria in recent years.

U.S. CONFIRMATION

A U.S. official told The Associated Press that U.S. agencies said that IS-K, a Central Asian affiliate of the Islamic State group, was responsible for the attack. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, noted that IS-K has long targeted Russia.

Russia's FSB, the Federal Security Service, said that it disrupted an attack by the same group that was aimed at a Moscow synagogue just a few weeks ago.

WHO IS IS-K?

The group takes its name from Khorasan Province, a region that covered much of Afghanistan, Iran and Central Asia in the Middle Ages. The branch started with several hundred Pakistani Taliban fighters who took refuge across the border in Afghanistan after Pakistani military operations drove them out of their home country. Its fighters have repeatedly carried out attacks in Afghanistan since the Taliban seized power in 2021.

IS-K has thousands of members and is the Taliban's most bitter enemy and top military threat. The group has continued to carry out attacks in Afghanistan and beyond since the Taliban takeover. They were behind the August 2021 suicide bombing at the Kabul airport that left 13 U.S. troops and about 170 Afghans dead during the chaotic U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. IS-K also claimed responsibility for the bomb attack in Kerman, Iran, in January that killed 95 people at a memorial procession for Gen. Qassem

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 71 of 85

Soleimani, an Iranian general who was killed in a U.S. drone strike in 2020.

HALLMARKS OF AN ISLAMIC STATE ATTACK

A security expert, Olivier Guitta, argues that there is much to back up the Islamic State's claim, including the fact that the group had specifically threatened Russia.

He noted that it took place on a Friday during the holy month of Ramadan, a time favored by jihadis. And once again the target was a concert hall, just as in the 2015 attack on the Bataclan theater in Paris and the Manchester Arena attack in 2017.

"The modus operandi of the attack is classic ISIS," said Guitta, using an acronym referring to the Islamic State group. He is the managing director of GlobalStrat, an international security and risk consultancy firm in London.

A U.S. WARNING

The U.S. Embassy in Moscow issued a security alert to U.S. citizens on March 7 saying it was monitoring reports that extremists had "imminent plans to target large gatherings" in Moscow, including concerts.

Putin denounced the U.S. warning as an attempt to scare Russians.

The March 7 warning advised U.S. citizens to avoid large gatherings for the coming 48 hours. The bloody attack came just over two weeks later.

ACCUSATIONS AMID THE BACKDROP OF WAR

In an address to the nation on Saturday, Putin said authorities have detained a total of 11 people in the attack, including four suspected gunmen in what he called "a bloody, barbaric terrorist act."

He said Russian authorities captured the four suspected gunmen as they were trying to escape to Ukraine through a "window" prepared for them on the Ukrainian side of the border. He didn't mention IS at all.

Ukraine's Foreign Ministry said it "categorically rejects" accusations by Russia that it was involved and considers them an attempt "to further fuel anti-Ukrainian hysteria in Russian society."

In the same statement, the ministry in Kyiv suggested that the Russian government itself might be involved. It said: "The Russian regime has a long history of bloody provocations by its special services ... There are no red lines for Putin's dictatorship. It is ready to kill its own citizens for political purposes."

Laurent de Brunhoff, 'Babar' heir and author, dies at age 98

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — "Babar" author Laurent de Brunhoff, who revived his father's popular picture book series about an elephant-king and presided over its rise to a global, multimedia franchise, has died. He was 98.

De Brunhoff, a Paris native who moved to the U.S. in the 1980s, died Friday at his home in Key West, Florida, after being in hospice care for two weeks, according to his widow, Phyllis Rose.

Just 12 years old when his father, Jean de Brunhoff, died of tuberculosis, Laurent was an adult when he drew upon his own gifts as a painter and storyteller and released dozens of books about the elephant who reigns over Celesteville, among them "Babar at the Circus" and "Babar's Yoga for Elephants." He preferred using fewer words than his father did, but his illustrations faithfully mimicked Jean's gentle, understated style.

"Together, father and son have woven a fictive world so seamless that it is nearly impossible to detect where one stopped and the other started," author Ann S. Haskell wrote in The New York Times in 1981.

The series has sold millions of copies worldwide and was adapted for a television program and such animated features as "Babar: The Movie" and "Babar: King of the Elephants." Fans ranged from Charles de Gaulle to Maurice Sendak, who once wrote, "If he had come my way, how I would have welcomed that little elephant and smothered him with affection."

De Brunhoff would say of his creation, "Babar, c'est moi" ("that's me"), telling National Geographic in 2014 that "he's been my whole life, for years and years, drawing the elephant."

The books' appeal was far from universal. Some parents shied from the passage in the debut, "The Story of Babar, the Little Elephant," about Babar's mother being shot and killed by hunters. Numerous critics

called the series racist and colonialist, citing Babar's education in Paris and its influence on his (presumed) Africa-based regime. In 1983, Chilean author Ariel Dorfman would call the books an "implicit history that justifies and rationalizes the motives behind an international situation in which some countries have everything and other countries almost nothing."

"Babar's history," Dorfman wrote, "is none other than the fulfillment of the dominant countries' colonial dream."

Adam Gopnik, a Paris-based correspondent for *The New Yorker*, defended "Babar," writing in 2008 that it "is not an unconscious expression of the French colonial imagination; it is a self-conscious comedy about the French colonial imagination and its close relation to the French domestic imagination."

De Brunhoff himself acknowledged finding it "a little embarrassing to see Babar fighting with Black people in Africa. He especially regretted "Babar's Picnic," a 1949 publication that included crude caricatures of Blacks and American Indians, and asked his publisher to withdraw it.

De Brunhoff was the eldest of three sons born to Jean de Brunhoff and Cecile de Brunhoff, a painter. Babar was created when Cecile de Brunhoff, the namesake for the elephant's kingdom and Babar's wife, improvised a story for her kids.

"My mother started to tell us a story to distract us," de Brunhoff told *National Geographic* in 2014. "We loved it, and the next day we ran to our father's study, which was in the corner of the garden, to tell him about it. He was very amused and started to draw. And that was how the story of Babar was born. My mother called him Bebe elephant (French for baby). It was my father who changed the name to Babar. But the first pages of the first book, with the elephant killed by a hunter and the escape to the city, was her story."

The debut was released in 1931 through the family-run publisher *Le Jardin Des Modes*. Babar was immediately well received and Jean de Brunhoff completed four more Babar books before dying six years later, at age 37. Laurent's uncle, Michael, helped publish two additional works, but no one else added to the series until after World War II, when Laurent, a painter by then, decided to bring it back.

"Gradually I began to feel strongly that a Babar tradition existed and that it ought to be perpetuated," he wrote in *The New York Times* in 1952.

De Brunhoff was married twice, most recently to the critic and biographer Phyllis Rose, who wrote the text to many of the recent "Babar" publications, including the 2017 release billed as the finale, "Babar's Guide to Paris." He had two children, Anne and Antoine, but the author did not consciously write for young people.

"I never really think of children when I do my books," he told the *Wall Street Journal* in 2017. "Babar was my friend and I invented stories with him, but not with kids in a corner of my mind. I write it for myself."

Worldwide support pours in for Kate, the Princess of Wales, after shocking cancer reveal

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Support poured in from around the world Saturday for Kate, the Princess of Wales, after she revealed in a candid video message that she is undergoing chemotherapy for cancer following major abdominal surgery.

The princess's poignant video, in which she spoke about the "huge shock" and "incredibly tough couple of months" for her family after her diagnosis, came after weeks of frenzied speculation on social media about her health and well-being.

"This of, course, came as a huge shock, and William and I have been doing everything we can to process and manage this privately for the sake of our young family," Kate said in the video, which was recorded Wednesday in Windsor.

"It has taken us time to explain everything to George, Charlotte and Louis in a way that is appropriate for them, and to reassure them that I am going to be OK," she added, referring to her three young children.

Kate, 42, did not say what type of cancer was discovered after her surgery. She said she is now in the

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 73 of 85

early stages of preventative chemotherapy, and is "getting stronger every day."

Her condition was initially thought to be noncancerous, until post-surgery tests revealed the diagnosis, she said.

The announcement will at least partly tamp down the intense and sometimes fantastical speculation and conspiracy theories about Kate's condition that have multiplied on social media since Kensington Palace announced in mid-January that she had been hospitalized for unspecified abdominal surgery.

Hashtags including "WeLoveYouCatherine" and "GetWellSoonCatherine" were trending Friday on X, formerly Twitter, while political leaders, celebrities and cancer survivors sent messages of support.

"She has been subjected to intense scrutiny and has been unfairly treated by certain sections of the media around the world and on social media," Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said. "She has shown tremendous bravery with her statement."

U.S. President Joe Biden posted on social media, saying he and first lady Jill Biden "join millions around the world in praying for your full recovery, Princess Kate."

King Charles III, who is also undergoing treatment for an unspecified type of cancer, said in a statement that he was "so proud of Catherine for her courage in speaking as she did." Prince Harry and his wife Meghan, who have been estranged from the royal family since their move to California in 2020, said they wished "health and healing for Kate and the family."

Until Friday, there had been little information about Kate's condition, and her monthslong disappearance from public view fueled a flurry of rumor-mongering about the "missing" future queen.

Officials had said only that Kate's surgery in January was successful and recuperation would keep the princess away from public duties until April.

Feelings of distrust about the royals gained ground earlier this month after Kate acknowledged that she altered an official photo released to mark Mother's Day in the U.K.

The photo, which was meant to calm and reassure the public, triggered a backlash after The Associated Press and other news agencies retracted the image over concerns it was manipulated.

Even a video published last week by The Sun and TMZ that appeared to show Kate and William shopping near their home did not dispel the negative coverage, with some armchair detectives refusing to believe the video showed Kate at all.

In contrast, many of Saturday's newspaper front pages featured sympathetic headlines, with The Sun proclaiming: "Kate, you are not alone." The Daily Telegraph featured an opinion piece that read: "Sicken-ing online trolls reveling in Princess's misery ought to be ashamed." The news also featured prominently in international newspapers from Italy to France.

"I understand why she was keeping it a secret, but I am glad everyone knows now so they can not make assumptions," said Madeleine Pulitzer, an American student in Paris.

Well-wishers left flowers Saturday outside Windsor Castle, and many royal fans visiting Windsor and Kensington Palace said they were touched by Kate's personal message about her health struggles.

"Your heart just goes out for her and her family, you know? I guess we all feel for her," said Natalie Richardson, who was visiting from New Zealand. It's "such a big thing to face for anyone."

Like Charles before her, Kate's decision to disclose her health condition was also praised for encouraging the public to think more about their own health and get worrying symptoms checked.

Kate directly addressed all those affected by cancer in her video, saying: "Please do not lose faith or hope."

"This announcement is a stark and shocking reminder that cancer is no respecter of age or social status," said oncologist and cancer awareness campaigner Pat Price. "A cancer diagnosis is always deeply concerning, but the fact that the princess is so young and very much in the prime of her life makes this news all the more upsetting and unsettling."

It was not immediately clear when Kate would return to public life.

Kate and William were not expected to join other royals for the traditional Easter Sunday service in Windsor.

"The Princess will return to official duties when she is cleared to do so by her medical team," a Kensington Palace spokesperson said. "She is in good spirits and is focused on making a full recovery."

The double cancer blow to Kate and King Charles leaves Britain's royal family depleted and strained

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The Princess of Wales' disclosure that she has cancer and will take time off to recover leaves the ranks of working royals depleted and strains a monarchy that King Charles III has sought to slim down.

Kate's announcement on Friday prompted an outpouring of goodwill toward her and for a royal family that's now facing two serious health crises. Some of the social media frenzy that has swirled in the princess' absence from public view may now seep away.

But with the king also being treated for an undisclosed form of cancer, and Prince William helping to care for Kate and their children over the Easter school break, the ranks of working royals have been thinned, making the monarchy's future suddenly look fragile.

"This is a smaller and frailer royal family than Britain is used to," veteran journalist Andrew Marr wrote in the *New Statesman* magazine. "It scarcely seems believable that only a decade ago, people were complaining about there being far too many members of it."

Prince Harry is in California, estranged from his brother. Prince Andrew is in disgrace over his friendship with the late financier Jeffrey Epstein and faced allegations of sexual abuse. So it falls to Queen Camilla and a few others to be the public face of a monarchy that now has increased public sympathy but reduced visibility.

"It's a remarkable situation and a significant moment for the monarchy and the institution so early in the king's reign that two senior figures should be out of action," said Joe Little, managing editor of *Majesty* magazine. "The pressure is on a much smaller team."

Partly in response to gripes that taxpayers were funding a small army of royals, Charles resolved to run a tighter ship when he took the throne in 2022, with a core group of senior family members carrying out most of the work.

The nature of that work may not be apparent, especially to people outside the U.K., but it is plentiful. The monarch has no political power but plays a constitutional role that includes signing bills into law and meeting regularly with government ministers.

The king and his children are patrons of many charities, professional bodies and sporting organizations, as well as ceremonial colonels-in-chief of military regiments and dispensers of medals for valor and public achievements.

The most visible royal is now 76-year-old Camilla, who has kept working while her husband is treated for cancer. In recent days she has stood in for Charles on visits to the Isle of Man and Northern Ireland.

The king's sister, 73-year-old Princess Anne, has attended award ceremonies, receptions and visits as patron of organizations including Save the Children. Prince Edward, at 60 the king's youngest brother, has been in Uganda on royal duties that stretch across the 56-nation Commonwealth of Britain's former colonies.

The engagements help fulfill the maxim of the late Queen Elizabeth II that the royal family must be "seen to be believed."

"This is a historic monarchy that thrives on interacting with people," royal historian Robert Hardman told Sky News. "It has to be visible."

But striking a balance between visibility and privacy has always been tricky. During the late queen's 70-year reign, the British media evolved from showing deference toward the royals to having a hunger for scoops that saw some tabloids resort to phone hacking and other illegal activity in search of stories.

Press behavior changed to an extent after the death of Princess Diana in a 1997 car crash while being pursued by photographers. That curbed the use of paparazzi photos, but the relationship between the monarchy and the media remains uneasy. It's openly hostile in the case of Prince Harry, who is suing several newspaper publishers for invasion of privacy.

The palace initially stumbled in its attempt to sate the public desire for information about Kate while maintaining her privacy. A photo of Kate and her children George, Charlotte and Louis released on March

10 to coincide with Mother's Day in the U.K. backfired when The Associated Press and other news agencies retracted the picture because it appeared to have been manipulated.

There was no suggestion the image was fake, but the slip-up set off even more conjecture.

Claudia Joseph, author of "Kate: The Making of a Princess," said the Prince and Princess of Wales are social media-savvy, but that dealing with the online world is "a learning curve."

Joseph said the royal family is still dealing with the "big shock" of Harry and Meghan's departure. Their retreat from royal duties in 2020 — spurred, they said, by relentless press intrusion and a lack of support from the palace — "depleted the younger ranks."

Despite that, she said public sympathy and the royals' sense of duty would see the monarchy through its latest crisis.

"Families do get ill, and they do struggle, and sometimes people have to take a step back from work," she said. "I'm sure in six months' time when they have recovered, hopefully, people will forget that they weren't around for a few months."

In her video message, Kate said that her work "has always brought me a deep sense of joy, and I look forward to being back when I am able."

"But for now, I must focus on making a full recovery," she said.

Deadly attack on Moscow concert hall shakes Russian capital and sows doubts about security

By EMMA BURROWS Associated Press

Shocked Russians brought flowers and teddy bears Saturday to the Crocus City concert hall on the outskirts of Moscow to pay their respects to more than 100 people who died in a grisly attack claimed by the Islamic State group.

Mourners hung flowers on fences and piled them on the ground a short distance from the concert hall where gunmen opened fire on a crowd and set off explosives that started a huge fire. Amid the grief, firefighters pulled bodies from the rubble and worked to put out the flames.

Videos shared on social media showed candles and flowers being laid in memory of the dead and wounded at monuments across Russia and at Russian embassies abroad.

The attack happened just days after Russian President Vladimir Putin cemented his grip on power by securing a record-breaking fifth term after harshly suppressing opposition voices during a highly choreographed election. The attack was the deadliest in Russia in years and left the concert hall a ruin.

The assault shattered nerves in Moscow and recalled memories of similar attacks that happened in the early years of Putin's presidency. Although Islamic State claimed responsibility, Putin pointed the finger of blame at Ukraine, where Russia is waging a war that has dragged into its third year. He cited no evidence for his claims.

As the death toll climbed and Putin ordered stepped-up security measures across the country, some Russians had questions.

"There are cameras everywhere that can trace opposition people going to a rally, and they are also stopped in the metro. But basic security did not work in a public event," said Ekaterina in Moscow, referring to the crackdown ahead of the election. She, like several other Russians who spoke to The Associated Press, declined to give her surname because of security concerns.

"Does it mean that cameras are targeted on people who carry a book ... but you can carry a bomb or a Kalashnikov, and that will be OK?" she asked referring to social media footage that showed the assailants in the concert hall with automatic weapons.

Russian state television focused on condolences from foreign leaders and the outpouring of grief across Russia. It shared images of the suspects and pictured officials visiting hospitals and directing the cleanup operation.

"I woke up this morning and decided I definitely have to come here," a man named Mikhail told the AP near the concert hall. "There is no word for such scum ... what they did is a terrible thing."

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 76 of 85

"I couldn't stop crying," said Elvira, adding that she awoke Saturday and was "so depressed" by the rapidly increasing death toll.

Russian news agencies showed people lining up to donate blood. They said more than 3,000 people had already donated for victims of the attack.

Despite blanket coverage, state television lacked key information on the attack, which sent some pro-Western Russians looking elsewhere for details.

"It's ridiculous because it happened in my city, and I was asking friends who live abroad," Ekaterina said. Russia is no stranger to mass attacks with high death tolls.

During the early 2000s and 2010s, a series of suicide bombings and attacks unfolded across Moscow, including the 2002 Nord Ost theater siege, where 132 hostages and 40 Chechen hostage takers died after a mishandled Russian rescue response.

Most of the attacks were carried out by Islamist separatists from the North Caucasus, but in recent years, they have largely stopped. The relative absence of such violence has lulled Russians into a sense of security, even while the country's army fights in Ukraine.

"I am afraid that we may return to the times of the Chechen wars," Mikhail Batsyn in central Moscow said, referring to apartment bombings that happened at that time. "I would really want for that to not happen and for this act of terror to remain a rare event."

The fact that authorities were not able to stop the gunmen from rampaging through the concert hall, which reportedly had security measures in place, spooked many Russians.

On a social media chat group for a neighborhood south of the concert hall and shopping center, Russians discussed what precautions they would be taking in the coming days. Several suggested they would temporarily stop visiting shopping centers and busy places.

"I don't want to go anywhere with a lot of people anymore," Ekaterina said, adding that she had canceled plans to go to the theater Saturday.

Putin called the attack "a bloody, barbaric terrorist act" and urged "our comrades at the front and all citizens in the country" to come together in its aftermath.

In a nationwide address, he alleged that Ukrainian authorities tried to create a "window" for the suspects to escape across the border.

"Some of my friends believe in the idea of Ukrainian interference, but I can't imagine that it could be the truth," said Elvira and several other Russians who spoke to AP.

Instead, they questioned why the attack had not been thwarted by Russian security services.

"Why is it that they say that there were warnings from foreign security services, but our services were completely indifferent?" asked a woman in Moscow named Olga, referring to reports that Western governments had warned Russian officials that an attack was being planned. "How can this happen in 2024?"

Arizona expects to be back at the center of election attacks. Its top officials are going on offense

By ALI SWENSON Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — The room sits behind a chain-link fence, then black iron gates. Guards block the entrance, which requires a security badge to access. The glass surrounding it is shatterproof.

What merits all these layers of protection is somewhat surprising: tabulating machines that count the votes during elections in Arizona's Maricopa County. The security measures are a necessary expense, said the county recorder, Stephen Richer, as Arizona and its largest county have become hotbeds of election misinformation and conspiracy theories that have led to near continuous threats and harassment against election workers.

"What would be even more of a shame is if we couldn't look the workers in the eye and say, 'We're doing everything possible to make sure that you're safe,'" he said.

Richer's job is to oversee voter registration and early voting, but ever since he took office in 2021, much of his time has been diverted to preparing for disinformation and its consequences. The state's razor-thin

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 77 of 85

presidential outcome in 2020 made it a national epicenter for misinformation about voter fraud, voting machine problems and phony results.

The false claims, promoted by prominent Republicans such as presumptive presidential nominee Donald Trump and Arizona Senate candidate Kari Lake, have driven protesters to rally outside vote-counting centers and to patrol drop boxes. The claims have fueled death threats against election workers and their families and prompted top election officials to quit across Arizona.

The battleground state also has become a target for attacks from election meddlers and other bad actors who repeatedly attempt to hack or disable the state's electronic systems, Secretary of State Adrian Fontes said.

The challenges come as election offices nationwide have dealt with mounting concerns, including persistent misinformation and harassment of election workers, artificial intelligence deepfakes used to disenfranchise voters, potential cyberattacks from foreign governments and criminal ransomware attacks against computer systems. Many of these offices are understaffed and underfunded, even as the federal government has raised alarm about foreign election interference attempts this year.

In Arizona, with a looming presidential rematch and high-profile U.S. Senate race, Republican Richer and Democrat Fontes are taking more aggressive steps than ever to rebuild trust with voters, knock down disinformation and immediately address attacks.

In recent interviews and tours of their operations, they said they are hoping their efforts are enough to counter an onslaught they know is coming as the November general election draws closer.

PROTECTING DEMOCRACY

Fontes, a Marine Corps veteran, has brought his military mindset to the office since he started last year. He has deployed "tiger teams" to troubleshoot problems and hosted simulations to prepare workers for AI-generated disinformation.

He has created a four-person information security team that bolsters defenses against cyberattacks and gathers intelligence on election-related threats, which descend on Arizona from near and far.

The team includes a position that's so far been unusual in statewide election offices: a full-time analyst solely devoted to monitoring the internet for disinformation and threats.

Conservatives in other states have balked at their election offices partnering with companies to track online postings, arguing it enables government surveillance and censorship. Arizonans voting before last Tuesday's presidential primary at an early-voting site in the Phoenix suburb of Tempe also weren't convinced.

"You're monitoring it for threats? Sure. You need to ensure safety," said 40-year-old Thomas Abia. But he said monitoring for falsehoods is a "gray area" that makes him concerned about privacy.

Fontes defends the need for the dedicated staffer, whose name he declined to share to protect that person's safety.

"Yeah, we are surveilling a certain group," he said. "We're surveilling people that want to destroy our democracy. And that's not political."

The team's leader, chief information security officer Michael Moore, said the team doesn't compel social media platforms to remove posts and only reports especially egregious posts, as any platform user can.

RUN AND HIDE

Moore came to his job after doing similar work for Maricopa County, which includes Phoenix.

He said that after seeing the hundreds of threats that disrupted the lives of election workers during the 2022 midterm elections, he believes those who spread misinformation are directly responsible.

In one case, the day after Richer spoke at a chaotic public meeting during which county officials certified the November 2022 election results, Richer received two voicemails on his cellphone telling him to "run" and "hide."

The caller, a California man whose expletive-laden voicemails claimed Richer wanted to "cheat our elections" and "screw Americans out of true votes," was arrested last month, according to the Justice Department.

"Sophisticated snake oil salesmen are telling people what they want to hear in the election conspiracy vein — and that emboldens people to take action," Moore said. "If someone you trusted told you that

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 78 of 85

elections were being stolen, democracy being stolen, wouldn't you want to act on that?"

Fontes and Richer hope to steer Arizonans back to disagreeing on the issues, rather than about trust in elections.

"We're not talking about American transportation infrastructure or education infrastructure, all the other things that we really want to see develop," Fontes said. "That loss of civic faith is the real problem that we have."

They also agree that rebuilding public confidence will require transparency. They are practicing that already.

Fontes is testing a statewide system for voters to receive text messages when their ballot is mailed, delivered, returned and counted. Such a system exists in the state's two largest counties.

Richer recently hosted his first "Ask Me Anything" live video session on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter. He frequently engages directly with voters, and his team has hosted more than 30 tours of the tabulation center in the past year, inviting anyone to sign up.

LACK OF CONFIDENCE

Fontes and Richer say one of the toughest challenges of misinformation is the doubt created among large swaths of voters.

Jane Carter, a 62-year-old property manager, is one of them. A Republican, she said she doesn't have faith in election officials.

"I don't have a lot of confidence in anybody that's doing anything, really," she said after dropping off her ballot on a sunny afternoon in early March.

Carter said her concerns grew when a 101-year-old she looks after received multiple ballots in the mail. But Carter said she will track her ballot and she appreciates that resource.

Other voters said they had no such concerns and were angered by false information in their state.

"I'm really disturbed at what seems to be a high level of ignorance," said 76-year-old Democratic voter Loretta Greene. "I trust the leadership in the highest positions in the state of Arizona."

Signature verification and other security measures make the chances of fraud by mail ballot exceedingly low. But Richer said he has been aggressively culling voter lists to minimize the number of ballot packets sent to the wrong place, in hopes that can boost voter confidence.

He has taken other steps to address public concerns, such as removing excess wiring around tabulators so observers can see there is no internet connection. His office posts 24-hour live feeds of the tabulation center, even when some activists have at times revealed personal information and spread misinformation about the workers shown on camera.

"We continue to default on the side of transparency and then try to address the consequences when they're negative," Richer said.

Republican state Sen. Ken Bennett argues that even more transparency is needed. Last year, he sponsored a bipartisan bill that would have required detailed voter data and images of cast ballots to be put online for the public to see.

"Way too many of the public still have doubts about the integrity of our elections," Bennett said. "It's still building and will continue to build until we do reasonable, commonsense things that allow people to verify elections."

The legislation, which Fontes supported, passed but was vetoed last May by Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs, in part because she said it threatened the anonymity of voters and unnecessarily burdened election workers.

UPHILL BATTLE

Turning around public perception is proving to be an uphill battle in the county where election lies have proliferated even after a Republican-led audit and other post-election reviews found no evidence of widespread fraud or inaccurate results in the 2020 vote.

In the recent presidential primary, Richer noticed a conservative activist complaining on X about receiving two mailed ballots. He suspected she had changed addresses too close to the election, resulting in a second ballot delivered to her new home.

That would be no cause for concern: As soon as the new ballot went out, the county's system would void the initial ballot and it would never be counted.

Richer responded to the post to explain. But people on the internet still used the activist's viral post to claim the elections weren't reliable.

"HERE WE GO: Maricopa County is Sending Phony Mail-In Ballots AGAIN," a conservative website's headline read.

"Early voting equals early cheating," an X user replied. "Now you get to witness one of the many ways it happens."

Richer said he has had to accept that no matter how hard he tries, some people won't change their minds.

"I was a romantic who believed in sort of the marketplace of ideas — that, you know, gosh, the best ideas and the truth will bubble to the top, because man is a rational creature," he said. "I'm not sure if I feel that way anymore after the last few years in this office."

So when a voter responded to his X post during the presidential primary to say "I don't trust you," Richer responded the best way he knew how.

"OK," he wrote. "Let me know if there's anything I can do to help you think otherwise."

With all the recent headlines about panels and tires falling off planes, is flying safe?

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

DALLAS (AP) — It has been 15 years since the last fatal crash of a U.S. airliner, but you would never know that by reading about a torrent of flight problems in the last three months.

There was a time when things like cracked windshields and minor engine problems didn't turn up very often in the news.

That changed in January, when a panel plugging the space reserved for an unused emergency door blew off an Alaska Airlines jetliner 16,000 feet above Oregon. Pilots landed the Boeing 737 Max safely, but in the United States, media coverage of the flight quickly overshadowed a deadly runway crash in Tokyo three days earlier.

And concern about air safety — especially with Boeing planes — has not let up.

IS FLYING GETTING MORE DANGEROUS?

By the simplest measurement, the answer is no. The last deadly crash involving a U.S. airliner occurred in February 2009, an unprecedented streak of safety. There were 9.6 million flights last year.

The lack of fatal crashes does not fully capture the state of safety, however. In the past 15 months, a spate of close calls caught the attention of regulators and travelers.

Another measure is the number of times pilots broadcast an emergency call to air traffic controllers. Flightradar24, a popular tracking site, just compiled the numbers. The site's data show such calls rising since mid-January but remaining below levels seen during much of 2023.

Emergency calls also are an imperfect gauge: the plane might not have been in immediate danger, and sometimes planes in trouble never alert controllers.

SAFER THAN DRIVING

The National Safety Council estimates that Americans have a 1-in-93 chance of dying in a motor-vehicle crash, while deaths on airplanes are too rare to calculate the odds. Figures from the U.S. Department of Transportation tell a similar story.

"This is the safest form of transportation ever created, whereas every day on the nation's roads about a 737 full of people dies," Richard Aboulafia, a longtime aerospace analyst and consultant, said. The safety council estimates that more than 44,000 people died in U.S. vehicle crashes in 2023.

BUT A SHRINKING SAFETY MARGIN

A panel of experts reported in November that a shortage of air traffic controllers, outdated plane-tracking technology and other problems presented a growing threat to safety in the sky.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 80 of 85

"The current erosion in the margin of safety in the (national airspace system) caused by the confluence of these challenges is rendering the current level of safety unsustainable," the group said in a 52-page report.

WHAT IS GOING ON AT BOEING?

Many but not all of the recent incidents have involved Boeing planes.

Boeing is a \$78 billion company, a leading U.S. exporter and a century-old, iconic name in aircraft manufacturing. It is one-half of the duopoly, along with Europe's Airbus, that dominates the production of large passenger jets.

The company's reputation, however, was greatly damaged by the crashes of two 737 Max jets — one in Indonesia in 2018, the other in Ethiopia the following year — that killed 346 people. Boeing has lost nearly \$24 billion in the last five years. It has struggled with manufacturing flaws that at times delayed deliveries of 737s and long-haul 787 Dreamliners.

Boeing finally was beginning to regain its stride until the Alaska Airlines Max blowout. Investigators have focused on bolts that help secure the door-plug panel, but which were missing after a repair job at the Boeing factory.

The FBI is notifying passengers about a criminal investigation. The Federal Aviation Administration is stepping up oversight of the company.

"What is going on with the production at Boeing? There have been issues in the past. They don't seem to be getting resolved," FAA Administrator Mike Whitaker said last month.

CEO David Calhoun says no matter what conclusions investigators reach about the Alaska Airlines blowout, "Boeing is accountable for what happened" on the Alaska plane. "We caused the problem and we understand that."

WHERE DO DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING FIT IN?

Problems attributed to an airplane manufacturer can differ greatly.

Some are design errors. On the original Boeing Max, the failure of a single sensor caused a flight-control system to point the nose of the plane down with great force — that happened before the deadly 2018 and 2019 Max crashes. It is a maxim in aviation that the failure of a single part should never be enough to bring down a plane.

In other cases, such as the door-plug panel that flew off the Alaska Airlines jet, it appears a mistake was made on the factory floor.

"Anything that results in death is worse, but design is a lot harder to deal with because you have to locate the problem and fix it," said Aboulafia, the aerospace analyst. "In the manufacturing process, the fix is incredibly easy — don't do" whatever caused the flaw in the first place.

Manufacturing quality appears to be an issue in other incidents too.

Earlier this month, the FAA proposed ordering airlines to inspect wiring bundles around the spoilers on Max jets. The order was prompted by a report that chafing of electrical wires due to faulty installation caused an airliner to roll 30 degrees in less than a second on a 2021 flight.

Even little things matter. After a LATAM Airlines Boeing 787 flying from Australia to New Zealand this month went into a nosedive — it recovered — Boeing reminded airlines to inspect switches to motors that move pilot seats. Published reports said a flight attendant accidentally hitting the switch likely caused the plunge.

NOT EVERYTHING IS BOEING'S FAULT

Investigations into some incidents point to likely lapses in maintenance, and many close calls are due to errors by pilots or air traffic controllers.

This week, investigators disclosed that an American Airlines jet that overshot a runway in Texas had undergone a brake-replacement job four days earlier, and some hydraulic lines to the brakes were not properly reattached.

Earlier this month, a tire fell off a United Airlines Boeing 777 leaving San Francisco, and an American Airlines 777 made an emergency landing in Los Angeles with a flat tire.

A piece of the aluminum skin was discovered missing when a United Boeing 737 landed in Oregon last

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 81 of 85

week. Unlike the brand-new Alaska jet that suffered the panel blowout, the United plane was 26 years old. Maintenance is up to the airline.

When a FedEx cargo plane landing last year in Austin, Texas, flew close over the top of a departing Southwest Airlines jet, it turned out that an air traffic controller had cleared both planes to use the same runway.

SEPARATING SERIOUS FROM ROUTINE

Aviation-industry officials say the most concerning events involve issues with flight controls, engines and structural integrity.

Other things such as cracked windshields and planes clipping each other at the airport rarely pose a safety threat. Warning lights might indicate a serious problem or a false alarm.

"We take every event seriously," former NTSB member John Goglia said, citing such vigilance as a contributor to the current crash-free streak. "The challenge we have in aviation is trying to keep it there."

What is Palm Sunday? Why is the donkey important to the story? And how is it celebrated worldwide?

By LUIS ANDRES HENAO Associated Press

Palm Sunday commemorates the Christian belief in the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, when he was greeted by cheering crowds waving palm branches that they set out on the ground along his path, according to the Bible.

This year, Palm Sunday falls on March 24. Also known as Passion Sunday, it marks the start of Holy Week. The most sacred week of the Christian year includes the Good Friday re-enactment of Jesus' crucifixion story and death, and their belief in his resurrection on Easter.

Here is a quick look at Palm Sunday's significance.

IS THERE A DONKEY IN THIS STORY?

Yes.

The procession of Jesus into Jerusalem is described by the four Gospel writers in the Bible.

The Gospels differ, but based on one expert they agree on this: Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey — or a colt. So, which one is it?

Colt is defined as "a young male horse that is usually not castrated." But in the Bible, the word meaning "colt" is used almost exclusively for young donkeys, not horses, writes Joanne M. Pierce, professor emerita of religious studies at the College of the Holy Cross.

Pierce writes that this brings to mind a reference from the Book of Zechariah in Jewish scriptures, where the prophet describes a victorious king who enters Jerusalem riding on a donkey.

In Judaism, she says, the passage from Zechariah refers to the Messiah, a spiritual king who would peacefully redeem Israel, and the donkey is interpreted as a sign of humility.

"In Christianity, this animal becomes almost a symbol of Christ himself, given how it patiently suffers and bears others' burdens," Pierce writes in a piece published by The Conversation. "Horses, on the other hand, tend to be associated with royalty, power and war."

WHAT ABOUT THE PALMS?

In the biblical Palm Sunday story, a cheering crowd greeted Jesus along the road. Some spread their garments on the ground; others threw down leafy branches they had cut from the fields. In the Gospel of John, they are branches from palms, a tree that symbolized victory and triumph.

In the Gospel of Matthew, people began to shout: "Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" The word "Hosanna" was a plea for salvation and an exclamation of adoration.

After the procession, the Bible says Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple.

HOW IS PALM SUNDAY CELEBRATED?

The ritual or liturgy typically starts with a blessing of the palms by clergy. It's followed by a reading of the Passion of Christ, meaning an account of the final events of Jesus' life.

Some ceremonies in German-speaking countries used to include a figure of Jesus riding a donkey, Encyclopedia Britannica says. The figure is called a "Palmesel," or German for "palm donkey," according to New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, which on its site recounts how worshippers would lay palms on the ground before the Palmesel during lively processions.

Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land mark Palm Sunday by holding Masses and processions retracing Jesus' triumphal entry. Worshippers carry palm fronds and olive branches and march from the top of the neighboring Mount of Olives to Jerusalem's historic Old City, home to holy sites of the three Abrahamic monotheistic faiths.

In churches around the world, the palms are often taken home by congregants, and some will become ashes.

HOW DO THE PALMS TURN INTO ASHES?

Ashes can be purchased, but some churches make their own by burning the palms from prior years.

They're used to make the ashes for Ash Wednesday, the solemn day of fasting and reflection that signals the start of Christianity's most penitent season.

AI chatbots are here to help with your mental health, despite limited evidence they work

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Download the mental health chatbot Earkick and you're greeted by a bandana-wearing panda who could easily fit into a kids' cartoon.

Start talking or typing about anxiety and the app generates the kind of comforting, sympathetic statements therapists are trained to deliver. The panda might then suggest a guided breathing exercise, ways to reframe negative thoughts or stress-management tips.

It's all part of a well-established approach used by therapists, but please don't call it therapy, says Earkick co-founder Karin Andrea Stephan.

"When people call us a form of therapy, that's OK, but we don't want to go out there and tout it," says Stephan, a former professional musician and self-described serial entrepreneur. "We just don't feel comfortable with that."

The question of whether these artificial intelligence-based chatbots are delivering a mental health service or are simply a new form of self-help is critical to the emerging digital health industry — and its survival.

Earkick is one of hundreds of free apps that are being pitched to address a crisis in mental health among teens and young adults. Because they don't explicitly claim to diagnose or treat medical conditions, the apps aren't regulated by the Food and Drug Administration. This hands-off approach is coming under new scrutiny with the startling advances of chatbots powered by generative AI, technology that uses vast amounts of data to mimic human language.

The industry argument is simple: Chatbots are free, available 24/7 and don't come with the stigma that keeps some people away from therapy.

But there's limited data that they actually improve mental health. And none of the leading companies have gone through the FDA approval process to show they effectively treat conditions like depression, though a few have started the process voluntarily.

"There's no regulatory body overseeing them, so consumers have no way to know whether they're actually effective," said Vaile Wright, a psychologist and technology director with the American Psychological Association.

Chatbots aren't equivalent to the give-and-take of traditional therapy, but Wright thinks they could help with less severe mental and emotional problems.

Earkick's website states that the app does not "provide any form of medical care, medical opinion, diagnosis or treatment."

Some health lawyers say such disclaimers aren't enough.

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 83 of 85

"If you're really worried about people using your app for mental health services, you want a disclaimer that's more direct: This is just for fun," said Glenn Cohen of Harvard Law School.

Still, chatbots are already playing a role due to an ongoing shortage of mental health professionals.

The U.K.'s National Health Service has begun offering a chatbot called Wysa to help with stress, anxiety and depression among adults and teens, including those waiting to see a therapist. Some U.S. insurers, universities and hospital chains are offering similar programs.

Dr. Angela Skrzynski, a family physician in New Jersey, says patients are usually very open to trying a chatbot after she describes the months-long waiting list to see a therapist.

Skrzynski's employer, Virtua Health, started offering a password-protected app, Woebot, to select adult patients after realizing it would be impossible to hire or train enough therapists to meet demand.

"It's not only helpful for patients, but also for the clinician who's scrambling to give something to these folks who are struggling," Skrzynski said.

Virtua data shows patients tend to use Woebot about seven minutes per day, usually between 3 a.m. and 5 a.m.

Founded in 2017 by a Stanford-trained psychologist, Woebot is one of the older companies in the field.

Unlike Earkick and many other chatbots, Woebot's current app doesn't use so-called large language models, the generative AI that allows programs like ChatGPT to quickly produce original text and conversations. Instead Woebot uses thousands of structured scripts written by company staffers and researchers.

Founder Alison Darcy says this rules-based approach is safer for health care use, given the tendency of generative AI chatbots to "hallucinate," or make up information. Woebot is testing generative AI models, but Darcy says there have been problems with the technology.

"We couldn't stop the large language models from just butting in and telling someone how they should be thinking, instead of facilitating the person's process," Darcy said.

Woebot offers apps for adolescents, adults, people with substance use disorders and women experiencing postpartum depression. None are FDA approved, though the company did submit its postpartum app for the agency's review. The company says it has "paused" that effort to focus on other areas.

Woebot's research was included in a sweeping review of AI chatbots published last year. Among thousands of papers reviewed, the authors found just 15 that met the gold-standard for medical research: rigorously controlled trials in which patients were randomly assigned to receive chatbot therapy or a comparative treatment.

The authors concluded that chatbots could "significantly reduce" symptoms of depression and distress in the short term. But most studies lasted just a few weeks and the authors said there was no way to assess their long-term effects or overall impact on mental health.

Other papers have raised concerns about the ability of Woebot and other apps to recognize suicidal thinking and emergency situations.

When one researcher told Woebot she wanted to climb a cliff and jump off it, the chatbot responded: "It's so wonderful that you are taking care of both your mental and physical health." The company says it "does not provide crisis counseling" or "suicide prevention" services — and makes that clear to customers.

When it does recognize a potential emergency, Woebot, like other apps, provides contact information for crisis hotlines and other resources.

Ross Koppel of the University of Pennsylvania worries these apps, even when used appropriately, could be displacing proven therapies for depression and other serious disorders.

"There's a diversion effect of people who could be getting help either through counseling or medication who are instead diddling with a chatbot," said Koppel, who studies health information technology.

Koppel is among those who would like to see the FDA step in and regulate chatbots, perhaps using a sliding scale based on potential risks. While the FDA does regulate AI in medical devices and software, its current system mainly focuses on products used by doctors, not consumers.

For now, many medical systems are focused on expanding mental health services by incorporating them into general checkups and care, rather than offering chatbots.

"There's a whole host of questions we need to understand about this technology so we can ultimately

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 84 of 85

do what we're all here to do: improve kids' mental and physical health," said Dr. Doug Opel, a bioethicist at Seattle Children's Hospital.

Today in History: March 24

Exxon Valdez crashes in Alaska, creates massive oil spill

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, March 24, the 84th day of 2024. There are 282 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 24, 1989, the supertanker Exxon Valdez (vahl-DEEZ') ran aground on a reef in Alaska's Prince William Sound and began leaking an estimated 11 million gallons of crude oil.

On this date:

In 1765, Britain enacted the Quartering Act, requiring American colonists to provide temporary housing to British soldiers.

In 1832, a mob in Hiram, Ohio, attacked, tarred and feathered Mormon leaders Joseph Smith Jr. and Sidney Rigdon.

In 1882, German scientist Robert Koch announced in Berlin that he had discovered the bacillus responsible for tuberculosis.

In 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a bill granting future independence to the Philippines.

In 1976, the president of Argentina, Isabel Peron, was deposed by her country's military.

In 1980, one of El Salvador's most respected Roman Catholic Church leaders, Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, was shot to death by a sniper as he celebrated Mass in San Salvador.

In 1995, after 20 years, British soldiers stopped routine patrols in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

In 1999, NATO launched airstrikes against Yugoslavia, marking the first time in its 50-year existence that it had ever attacked a sovereign country.

In 2010, keeping a promise he'd made to anti-abortion Democratic lawmakers to assure passage of his historic health care legislation, President Barack Obama signed an executive order against using federal funds to pay for elective abortions covered by private insurance.

In 2013, hundreds of thousands marched in Paris protesting the imminent legalization of same-sex marriage. (It would be signed into law just over two months later).

In 2015, Germanwings Flight 9525, an Airbus A320, crashed into the French Alps, killing all 150 people on board; investigators said the jetliner was deliberately downed by the 27-year-old co-pilot, Andreas Lubitz.

In 2016, a U.N. war crimes court convicted former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic of genocide and nine other charges for orchestrating a campaign of terror that left 100,000 people dead during the 1992-95 war in Bosnia; Karadzic was sentenced to 40 years in prison. (The sentence was later increased to life in prison.)

In 2018, in the streets of the nation's capital and in cities across the country, hundreds of thousands of teenagers and their supporters rallied against gun violence, spurred by a call to action from student survivors of the school shooting in Parkland, Florida, that left 17 people dead.

In 2020, the International Olympic Committee announced that the Summer Olympics in Tokyo would be postponed until 2021 because of the coronavirus.

In 2021, Jessica Walter, whose roles included a scheming matriarch on TV's "Arrested Development" and a stalker in the film "Play Misty for Me," died at 80.

Today's Birthdays: Fashion and costume designer Bob Mackie is 85. Former Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire is 77. Rock musician Lee Oskar is 76. Singer Nick Lowe is 75. Rock musician Dougie Thomson (Supertramp) is 73. Fashion designer Tommy Hilfiger is 73. Actor Donna Pescow is 70. Actor Robert Caradine is 70. Sen. Mike Braun, R-Indiana, is 70. Los Angeles Clippers owner Steve Ballmer is 68. Actor Kelly LeBrock is 64. TV personality Star Jones is 62. Country-rock musician Patterson Hood (Drive-By Truckers) is 60. Actor Peter Jacobson is 59. Rock singer-musician Sharon Corr (The Corrs) is 54. Actor Lauren Bowles

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, March 24, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 272 ~ 85 of 85

is 54. Actor Lara Flynn Boyle is 54. Actor Megyn Price is 53. Actor Jim Parsons is 51. Christian rock musician Chad Butler (Switchfoot) is 50. Actor Alyson Hannigan is 50. Former NFL quarterback Peyton Manning is 48. Actor Amanda Brugel (TV: "The Handmaid's Tale") is 47. Actor Olivia Burnette is 47. Actor Jessica Chastain is 47. Actor Amir Arison is 46. Actor Lake Bell is 45. Rock musician Benj Gershman (O.A.R.) is 44. Neo-soul musician Jesse Phillips (St. Paul & the Broken Bones) is 44. Actor Philip Winchester (TV: "Strike Back") is 43. Dancer Val Chmerkovskiy is 38. Actor Keisha Castle-Hughes is 34.