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Sunday, Aug. 4

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Pastor at Bethesda, Aberdeen, 2 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's, 9 a.m., and at Zion, 11 a.m.; St. John's voters meeting, 9:45 a.m.; VBS at St. John's, 5:30 p.m.

United Methodist: Worship with communion at Conde, 8:30 a.m., and Groton, 10:30 a.m.; coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.

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

Special Needs Family Fun Night, 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., Groton Pool

Groton Christian & Missionary Alliance: Vacation Bible School, 6:15 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

State Legion Baseball Tournament in Salem, 1 p.m.

Monday, Aug. 5

Senior Menu: Ranch chicken breast, scalloped potatoes, oriental blend vegetables, frosted brownie, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Fall Sports Parent Meeting, 7 p.m., GHS Arena

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Vacation Bible School, 5:30 p.m.

Pantry open, Groton Community Center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

School Supply Drive, Groton Community Center, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Groton Christian & Missionary Alliance: Vacation Bible School, 6:15 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

State Legion Baseball Tournament in Salem

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

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Big letters were put out in front of Avantara-Groton in celebration of Bill Hearnen's 100th birthday party. Bill is pictured with his wife, Patricia. (Photo by Dorene Nelson)

Hearnen celebrates 100th Birthday by Dorene Nelson

William (Bill) Hearnen, formerly from Conde, SD, celebrated his 100th birthday on July 24, 2024. He and his wife Patricia both now live in Avantara Nursing Home in Groton. A special party was held on the 24th in recognition of the century milestone that Bill has been able to achieve!

On July 1, 2024, Bill and his wife Patricia also celebrated their 78th wedding anniversary! Bill and Patsy raised four children, three girls and one boy. They were even blessed with one set of twins. "Our son Bill Jr. still farms the family homestead near Conde," Bill explained, "but all of our daughters live in Minneapolis."

"As a child we lived on a farm near Turton," he said, "but I attended country school near Conde and later Brentford since my parents moved from one farm to another one nearby."

"After I finished school, I joined the United States Army for two years and served during World War II," Bill stated proudly. "After the war, I came home to the farm."

"Actually I came back for Patsy, and she's been with me ever since!" he smiled. "I started farming by myself at the age of twenty-one and didn't stop until I was 87!"

"Patsy and I had five children, four girls and one boy," Bill listed. "Our first child died at birth, but we are fortunate to have our son still on the family farm today!"

"I enjoyed dancing and took Patsy to many barn dances during our courting days," he explained. "We went dancing every Friday and Saturday night!"

"During my retirement, I continued dancing but also started playing golf. It probably kept me going a long time," Bill admitted. "Golfing and trying to keep up with Patsy is what really helped me to live this long."

"I never smoked either, so that might also explain why I've lived so long," he stated, "but mostly it was Patsy. She saved me!"

"One of the biggest and probably hardest jobs on the farm was working with horses," Bill said. "The horses put up a fight every time we harnessed them before starting work in the field. Tractors were a great invention and a big relief to the farmers who struggled with the horses every time we needed to use them!"

"My dad died at a young age, so all of my brothers and I did the farming for Mom, before we went to work on our own land," he explained. "That's the way things were done way back then!"

Bill and Patsy's family gathered at the nursing home on Wednesday for his 100th birthday party. The nursing home promised to provide good food for this big occasion and even put a big sign in Avantara's front yard: "HONK! It's Bill's 100th birthday!"

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Bill Hearnen in service uniform



A birthday cake was made for Bill Hearnen's 100th birthday. He is pictured above with his wife, Patsy. (Photo by Dorene Nelson)



A good crowd showed up for Bill Hearnen's 100th Birthday celebration at Avantara-Groton.

(Photo by Dorene Nelson)

State Legion Tournament

Brevin Flihs's Big Day Propels Groton Post 39 Past Badgers

By GameChanger Media

Brevin Flihs drove in four runs on two hits to lead Groton Post 39 past Badgers 9-0 on Saturday. Flihs singled in the second inning, scoring three runs, and tripled in the first inning, scoring two.

Groton Post 39 won thanks in part to five runs in the second inning. Dillon Abeln singled, scoring one run, Flihs singled, scoring three runs, and Bradin Althoff doubled, scoring one run.

Groton Post 39 got on the board in the bottom of the first inning after Flihs tripled, scoring two runs, and Althoff hit a sacrifice fly, scoring one run.

Groton Post 39 added one run in the third after Teylor Diegel hit a sacrifice fly.

Ryan Groeblichhoff started on the mound for Groton Post 39. They gave up one hit and zero runs over four innings, striking out four and walking two. Isaac Brown began the game for Badgers. They allowed six hits and eight runs over one and one-third innings, striking out none and walking one. Nick Morris and Korbin Kucker each threw shutout innings for Groton Post 39 in relief.

Abeln went 3-for-4 at the plate to lead Groton Post 39 in hits. Groton Post 39 turned one double play in the game.

Braxton Brandriet, Brown, and Isaac Kirchberg each collected one hit for Badgers. Isiah Tandoh stole two bases. Badgers turned one double play in the game.

Groton will play at 1 p.m. on Sunday.

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Name Released in Lawrence County Fatal Crash

What: Single motorcycle fatal crash
Where: US Highway 85, mile marker 3, 13 miles southwest of Cheyenne Crossing
When: 5:15 p.m., Tuesday, July 30, 2024

Vehicle 1: 2023 Harley Davidson Street Glide

Driver 1: Kimberly Lynn Welch, 53-year-old female from Rapid City, SD, fatal injuries

Helmet Use: No

Lawrence County, S.D.- A motorcyclist died Tuesday evening in a single-vehicle crash on US Highway 85, 13 miles southwest of Cheyenne Crossing.

Preliminary crash information indicates Kimberly L. Welch, the driver of a 2023 Harley Davidson Street Glide, was traveling northbound on US 85 near mile marker three. Failing to negotiate a curve, the motorcycle left the roadway and lost control. The motorcycle overturned as it entered the east ditch where it came to final rest. Welch suffered fatal injuries from the crash.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

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Names Released in Lincoln County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash
Where: US Highway 18, mile marker 430 and 466th Ave, five miles south of Lennox, SD
When: 3:27 p.m., Tuesday, July 30, 2024

Vehicle 1: 2019 Chevrolet Silverado
Driver 1: Jerry L. Wallenstein, 68-year-old male from Sioux Falls, SD, no injuries
Seatbelt Use: Yes
Passenger 1: Mary Ann Wallenstein, 64-year-old female from Sioux Falls, SD, no injuries
Seatbelt Use: Yes

Vehicle 2: 2024 Harley Davidson
Driver 2: Jerry A. Shafer, 60-year-old male from Homeworth, OH, fatal injuries
Helmet Use: No

Lincoln County, S.D.- A motorcyclist died Tuesday afternoon in a two-vehicle crash on US Highway 18 near Lennox, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Jerry L. Wallenstein, the driver of a 2019 Chevrolet Silverado, was traveling eastbound on US 18 in the left turning lane to turn northbound onto 466th Avenue. The driver of a Harley Davidson, Jerry A. Shafer, was westbound on US 18. The Silverado collided with the Motorcycle, ejecting Shafer, who was pronounced deceased at the scene. The driver and a passenger in the Silverado were not injured.

Names Released in Custer County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash
Where: Carroll Creek Road and US 385, 5 miles south of Custer, SD
When: 10:30 a.m., Wednesday, July 31, 2024

Vehicle 1: 2017 Freightliner M2 Medium Duty
Driver 1: James Edwin Scragg, 27-year-old male from Rapid City, SD, serious, non-life-threatening injuries
Seatbelt Use: Yes

Vehicle 2: 2013 Chevrolet Express G2500
Driver 2: Seamus Allen Eliason, 24-year-old male from Rapid City, fatal injuries
Seatbelt Use: Under investigation

Custer County, S.D.- A 24-year-old man died and another was seriously injured Wednesday morning in a two-vehicle crash at Carroll Creek Road and US Highway 385 near Custer, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates James E. Scragg, the driver of a 2017 Freightliner, was traveling northbound on US 385 at the intersection of Carroll Creek Road. At the same time, Seamus A. Eliason, the driver of a 2013 Chevrolet Express G2500, was also northbound on US 385, approaching the intersection. Eliason failed to stop and wait for the Freightliner to make the left turn and collided with the rear of the Freightliner.

Eliason was pronounced deceased at the scene. Scragg suffered serious, non-life-threatening injuries.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary. The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

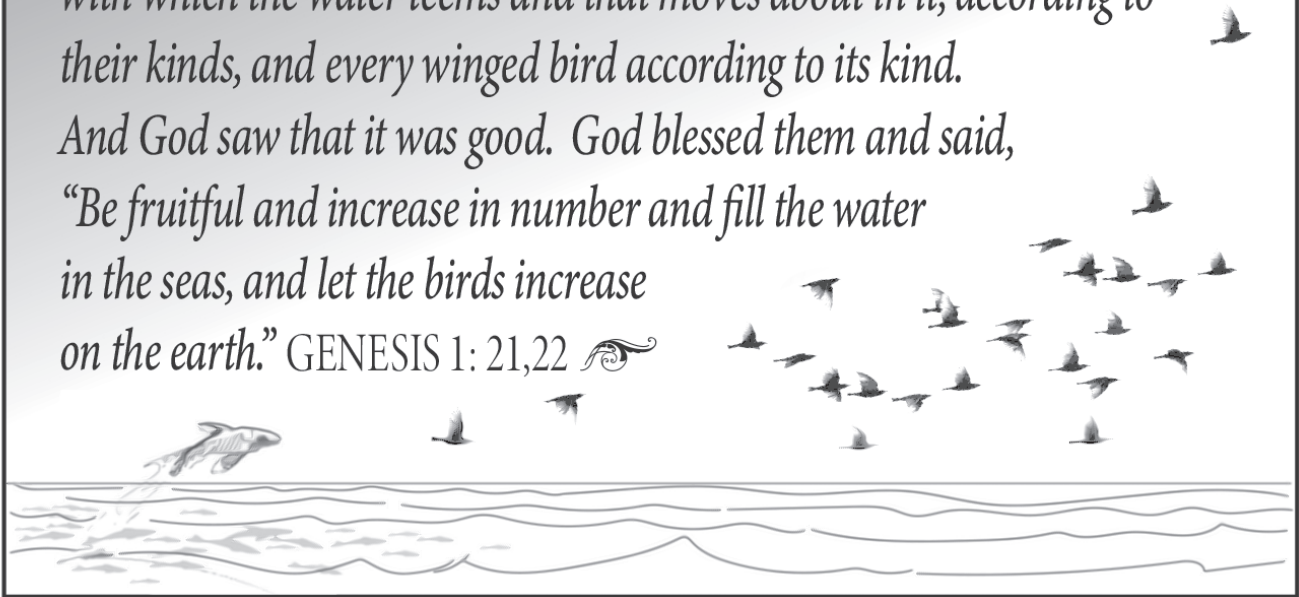
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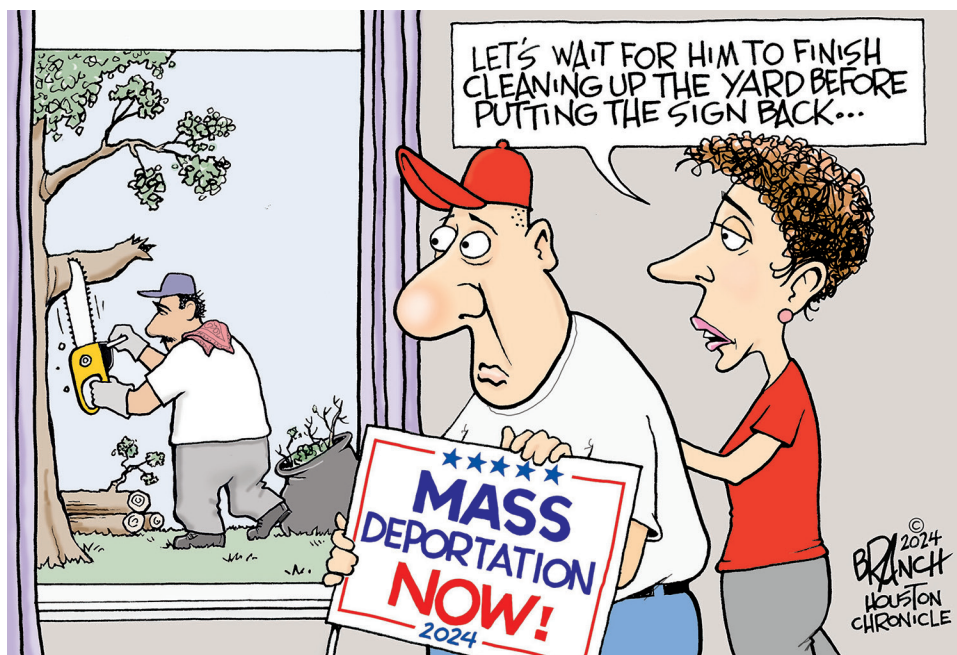


THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." GENESIS 1: 21,22



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BIBLE

TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

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

2. In Luke 22, what “Mount of” did Jesus go to that His disciples also followed? *Carmel, Zion, Olives, Pisgah*

3. What future Israelite leader as a baby was described as “exceedingly fair”? *Solomon, David, Herod, Moses*

4. From Judges 16, how many times did Delilah say Samson mocked her? *2, 3, 7, 10*

5. According to Ecclesiastes 6, what has already been named? *Everything, Stars, Fishes, Great Sea*

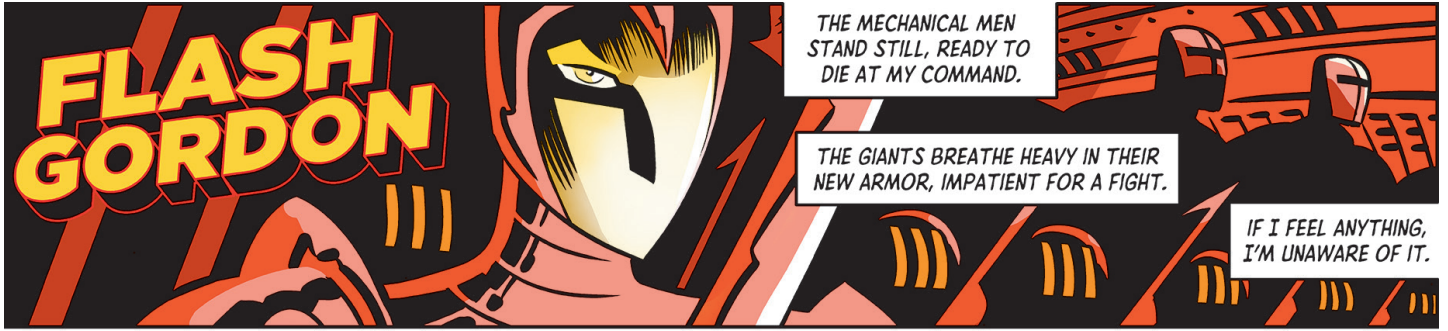
6. The name Lucifer means what kind of “bearer” in Latin? *Gifts, False, Light, Demonic*

ANSWERS: 1) New, 2) Olives, 3) Moses, 4) Three, 5) Everything, 6) Light

Comments? More Trivia? Gift ideas? Visit www.TriviaGuy.com.

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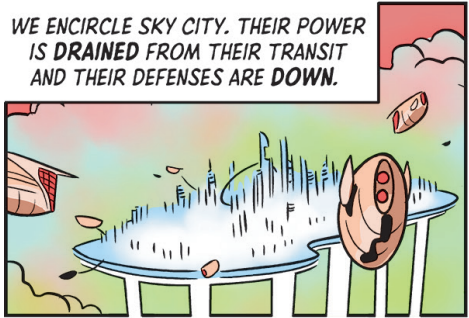


FLASH GORDON

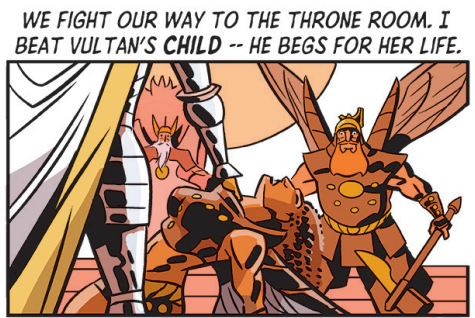
THE MECHANICAL MEN STAND STILL, READY TO DIE AT MY COMMAND.

THE GIANTS BREATHE HEAVY IN THEIR NEW ARMOR, IMPATIENT FOR A FIGHT.

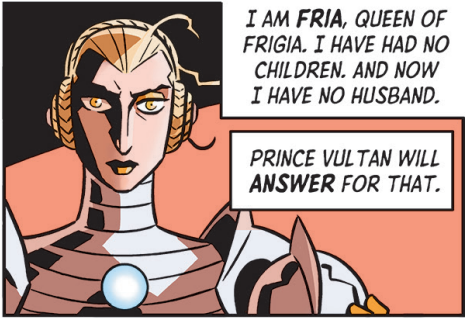
IF I FEEL ANYTHING, I'M UNAWARE OF IT.



WE ENCIRCLE SKY CITY. THEIR POWER IS DRAINED FROM THEIR TRANSIT AND THEIR DEFENSES ARE DOWN.



WE FIGHT OUR WAY TO THE THRONE ROOM. I BEAT VULTAN'S CHILD -- HE BEGS FOR HER LIFE.



I AM FRIA, QUEEN OF FRIGIA. I HAVE HAD NO CHILDREN. AND NOW I HAVE NO HUSBAND.

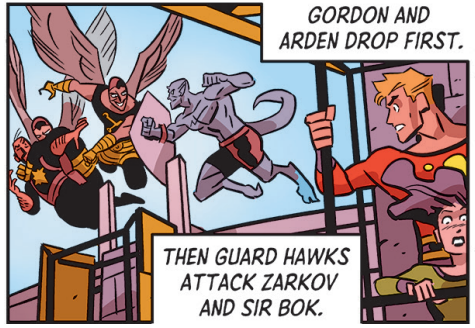
PRINCE VULTAN WILL ANSWER FOR THAT.



BELOW, GORDON AND HIS TEAM ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE.

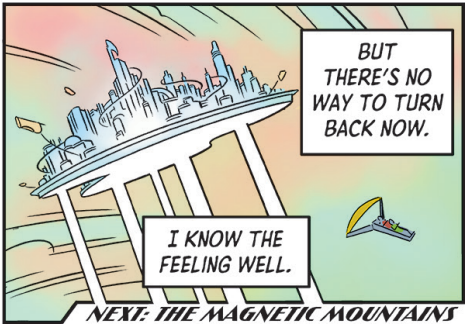
ZARKOV HAS ASSEMBLED TWO SIMPLE DESCENT CRAFT.

DAN SCHKADE 8-4-24



GORDON AND ARDEN DROP FIRST.

THEN GUARD HAWKS ATTACK ZARKOV AND SIR BOK.

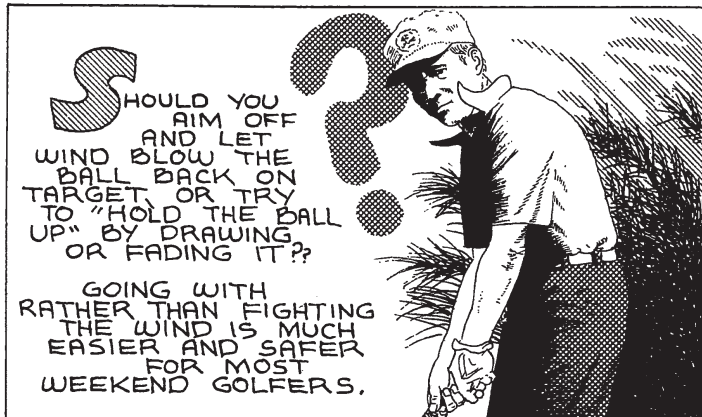


BUT THERE'S NO WAY TO TURN BACK NOW.

I KNOW THE FEELING WELL.

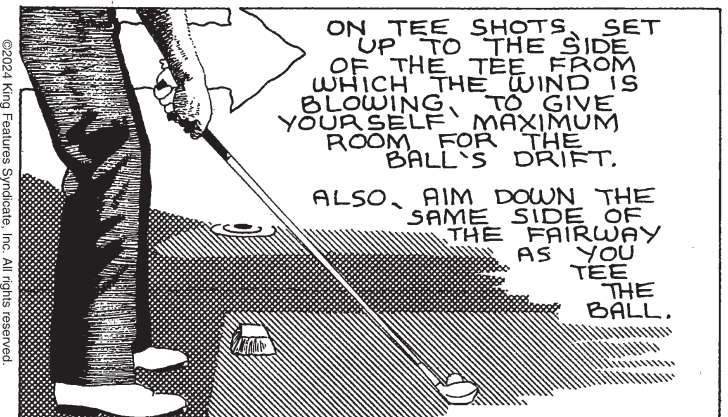
NEXT: THE MAGNETIC MOUNTAINS

Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



SHOULD YOU AIM OFF AND LET WIND BLOW THE BALL BACK ON TARGET, OR TRY TO "HOLD THE BALL UP" BY DRAWING OR FADING IT??

GOING WITH RATHER THAN FIGHTING THE WIND IS MUCH EASIER AND SAFER FOR MOST WEEKEND GOLFERS.



ON TEE SHOTS, SET UP TO THE SIDE OF THE TEE FROM WHICH THE WIND IS BLOWING, TO GIVE YOURSELF MAXIMUM ROOM FOR THE BALL'S DRIFT.

ALSO, AIM DOWN THE SAME SIDE OF THE FAIRWAY AS YOU TEE THE BALL.

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Patient Needs Help Discussing High Blood Calcium With Doctor

DEAR DR. ROACH: A friend has been diagnosed with high blood calcium, and when I googled it, the results concerned me. Can you give information on this and how to discuss it with the doctor? I want to forward the column to my friend, and hopefully, the information encourages/helps with the medical discussions between my friend and their doctor. -- Anon.

ANSWER: There are many causes of high blood calcium levels, and some of them are quite scary to read about. Hopefully, your friend's doctor is already in the process of discovering the underlying cause. Some causes are pretty clear, as some medicines are well-known to cause high calcium, such as thiazide diuretics like HCTZ.

The first step is being sure that there really is high calcium by repeating the blood level. A tourniquet left on for more than a minute can cause acid buildup in the arm, which displaces calcium and causes a false elevation. This problem can also be avoided by being expeditious with blood draws or by measuring the "ionized calcium" for changes in the protein albumin, which also affects the calcium level.

If the calcium level is repeatedly high, the next place to look at is the parathyroid hormone, which is one of the main regulators (along with vitamin D) of blood calcium levels. Most cases of high calcium in otherwise healthy people are caused by excess parathyroid hormone, most often from a benign tumor in the parathyroid gland. In the unusual case that this isn't the issue, less-common causes, including excess vitamin D and some cancers, should also be considered.

As far as an encouraging discussion, if your friend's doctor isn't bringing it up (which they should), being as open-ended as possible is best, with questions such as: "Why is my calcium high? Do I need to do anything about it?"

DEAR DR. ROACH: I had left knee-replacement surgery 10 years ago, and two days after surgery, I developed CRPS (complex regional pain syndrome). My shin, below my incision down in my left foot and toes, was burning and stinging for two years. It then receded to my toes for the past eight years.

Over the past three months, the pain has returned to my entire foot area, wrapping around my foot and ankle. It's very painful. I have taken 20 mg of prednisone to get rid of my CRPS, and it does help somewhat. (I was only given a 14-day supply.) Is there any cure yet, or at least a good pain medicine that won't wring me out? -- G.D.C.

ANSWER: CRPS is a pain disorder that is not well-understood. It usually begins after trauma, including surgery, but this is a complication that can happen even after a surgery that was correctly done. Older women are most likely to get this condition.

Steroids like prednisone are sometimes used early on in CRPS, but they are not usually effective in chronic CRPS. Due to their long-term toxicity, they are not usually continued. It is, by no means, a cure.

The best treatment regimen includes physical and occupational therapy; medications such as anti-inflammatories; psychosocial support; and sometimes management by a pain-management specialist, who may use local injections, nerve blocks or nerve stimulators.

My experience is that CRPS follows a highly variable course, but I have never had a patient with a recurrence after such a long time, as you have had.

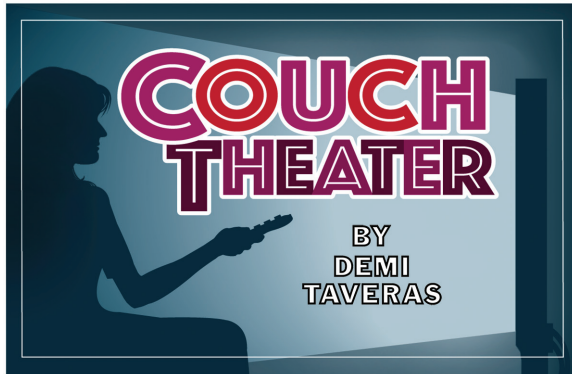
Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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From left, Anya Taylor-Joy, Tom Burke and Chris Hemsworth star in "Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga." (Courtesy of MovieStillsDB)

"Despicable Me 4" (PG) -- Always a killer at the box office, the "Despicable Me" franchise just had its fourth main installment become the third highest-grossing film this year behind "Inside Out 2" and "Dune: Part Two." In this installment out to rent on Aug. 6., Gru's family has grown by one with the arrival of his son, Gru Jr. But when Gru's rival Maxime Le Mal (Will Ferrell) breaks out of prison, he and his family are forced into Witness Protection. As Maxime continues to target Gru during his breakout, their family has no choice but to put this French supervillain back in his place -- with the help of their minions, of course! Steve Carell and Kristen Wiig reprise their roles as Gru and Lucy, respectively, while Joey King ("A Family Affair") and Sofia Vergara ("Griselda") join the franchise. Get ready for a whole new era of Pharell and his "Despicable Me" songs, as his new single "Double Life" from the film is already going viral. (Amazon Prime Video)

"Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga" (R) -- Moving on from a box-office success to a box-office bomb, this spin-off prequel to "Mad Max: Fury Road" (2015) tells the origin story of Charlize Theron's original character, Imperator Furiosa. This time, she's played by Anya Taylor-Joy ("Amsterdam"), as the film is set 15-20 years before the events of "Fury Road." As a child, Furiosa is discovered by raiders and captured to be brought to their unhinged leader, Dementus of the Biker Horde (Chris Hemsworth). Choosing to adopt her, Dementus hopes that she will lead him from the radioactive wasteland to the Green Place, where there is fresh water and food. But if you know Furiosa, you know that Dementus' dreams will be crushed in her mechanical fingers. Out now to rent. (Apple TV+)

"Downtown Owl" -- Lily Rabe ("Presumed Innocent") leads this heartwarming comedy film out on Aug. 7. Set in the fictional town of Owl, North Dakota, in 1983, Rabe's character, Julia, decides to teach English at the local high school while her husband finishes graduate school. While teaching, she meets a variety of different characters in the town, including a hyperactive teen named Eli (Jack Dylan Grazer); a carefree, wild teacher named Naomi (Vanessa Hudgens); and an old man named Horace who loves to reminisce (Ed Harris). But it is former high school football star Vance (Henry Golding) who really piques her interest, leaving Julia to ponder her general direction in life. Is her marriage truly as stable as she advertises? Can this town and its people fix the demons that she harbors deep inside of her? Watch to find out! (Netflix)

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1. What was the name of Mitch Ryder's backup band?
2. Who was the first artist to release "My Way" in 1969?
3. Who was Colonel Tom Parker?
4. What was the name of the Beatles' fourth movie?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Look like nothing's gonna change, Everything still remains the same, I can't do what ten people tell me to do, So I guess I'll remain the same."

Answers

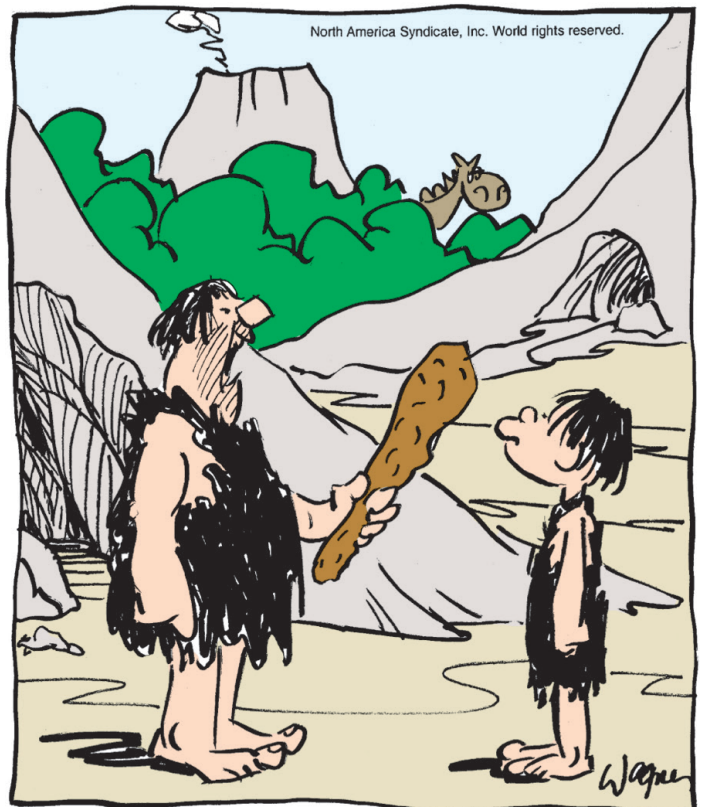
1. The Detroit Wheels. Born William Sherille LeVise Jr., he came up with the stage name Mitch Ryder after seeing the name in a phone book, and added The Detroit Wheels.
 2. Frank Sinatra. The song was written using the melody to the French song "Comme d'Habitude" after songwriter Paul Anka bought the rights to the song.
 3. Parker was Elvis Presley's manager from 1956 until Presley's death in 1977. Parker was actually Andreas Cornelis van Kuijk, who'd been born in the Netherlands. He changed his name when he enlisted in the United States Army.
 4. "Yellow Submarine," released in 1968.
 5. "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay" by Otis Redding, in 1968. Redding recorded the song just before he died in a plane crash and never knew that the song would rise to No. 1 on the charts.
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Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



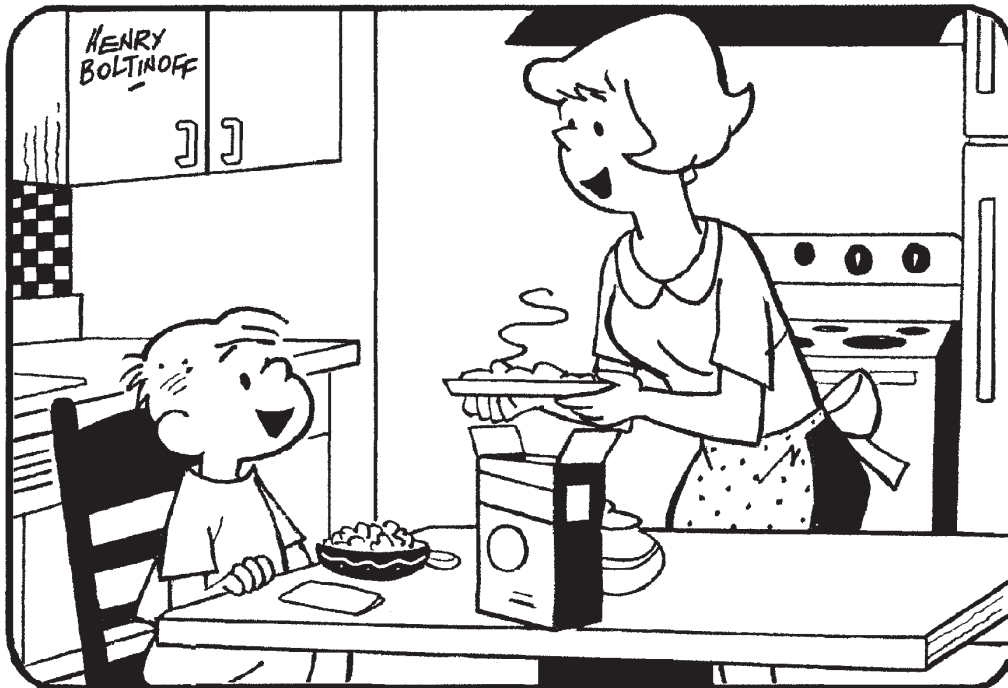
GRIN and BEAR IT



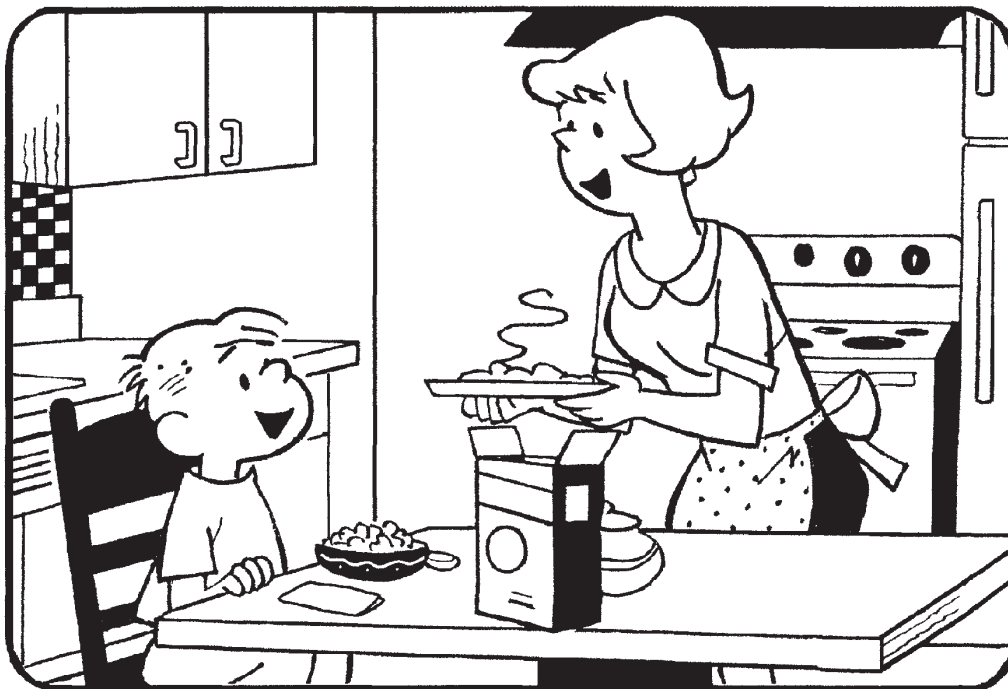
"Here ... it's time for you to fix dinner."

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Tile pattern is different. 2. Arm is not showing.
3. Cabinet is not as wide. 4. Table is not as long. 5. Cuff is added
to sleeve. 6. Plate is longer.

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* When patching up cracks in plaster walls, if the crack is large or it's a small hole, stuff it with wadded-up newspaper or steel wool in order to fill the crack. Apply the plaster over the top.

* Recipe substitution: For each cup of brown sugar needed, use 1 cup of white sugar and 2 tablespoons of molasses.

* If your washer oversuds because you accidentally added too much detergent, just add a half-cup of white vinegar to the wash water. It will dampen the extra bubbles. Then make sure to put the load through an additional rinse, to eliminate any soap residue in your clothes.

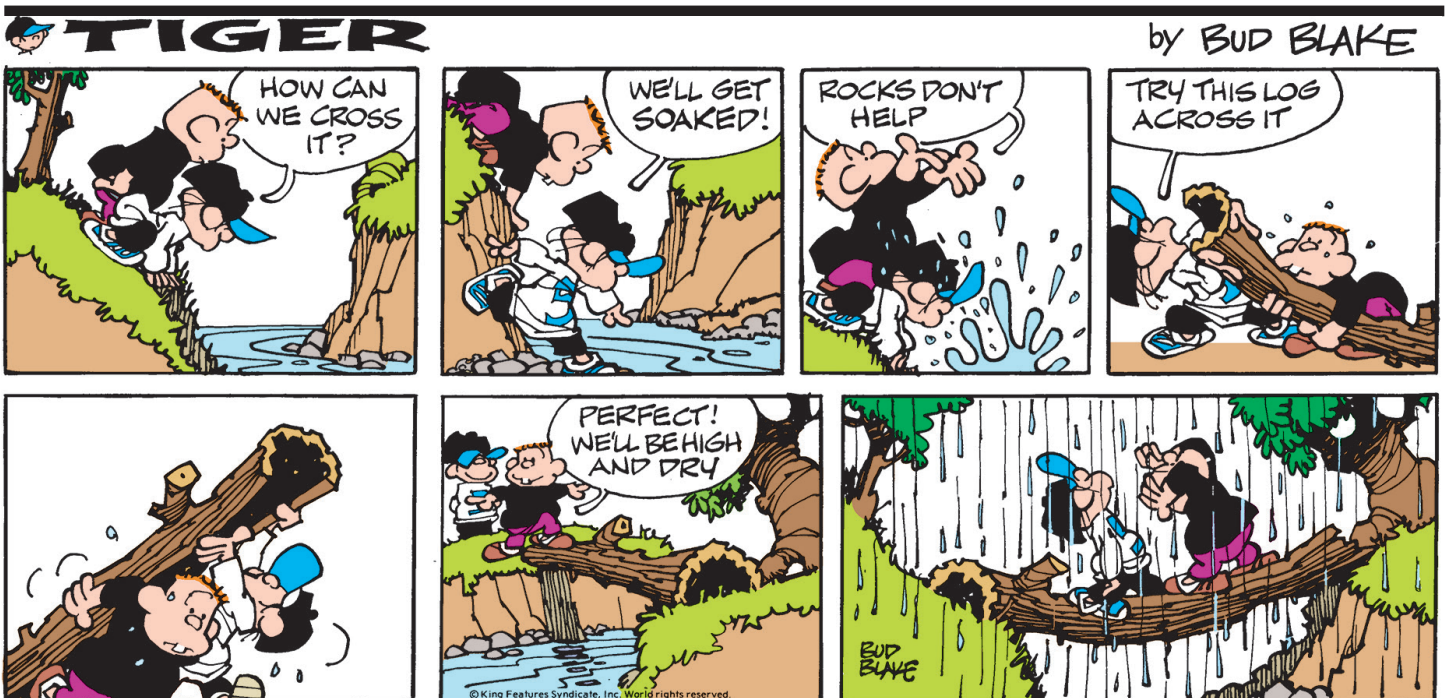
* Ever had to deal with early arrivals at your garage sale? If so, you know it can be annoying and disruptive. When advertising your sale, use the block number instead of your house

number. Still easy to find, but you're less likely to get staked out.

* "It's hard to find a good contractor or company to provide a service sometimes. The best resource I've had is friends. Whenever someone I know has work done at their home or purchases an item I might be interested in, I always find out the details of who worked on it or where it was purchased and whether my friends were satisfied with the outcome. Friends and even acquaintances usually are quite amenable to giving details, especially when they are either very pleased or very displeased with a job." -- R.E. in New York

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

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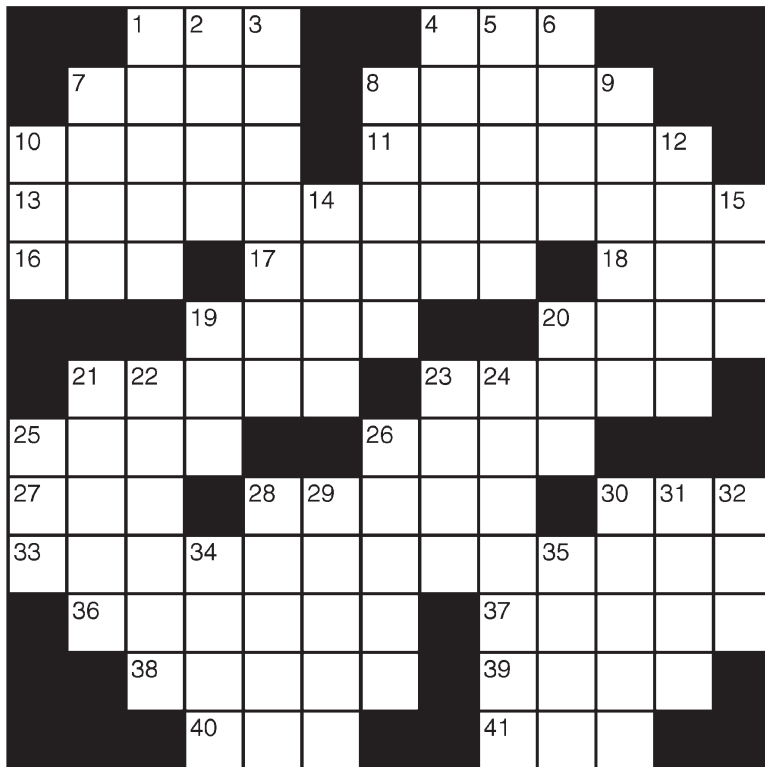
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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 "Bow-wow!"
- 4 Dol. fractions
- 7 Ornamental jug
- 8 Ballet bends
- 10 Resident of Tabriz
- 11 Limber
- 13 Goes on
- 16 Sault — Marie
- 17 Quarterback Tom
- 18 La-la lead-in
- 19 Cat call
- 20 Antelope's playmate
- 21 Map feature
- 23 Goethe play
- 25 Thor's father
- 26 Sax range
- 27 Consumer protection agcy.



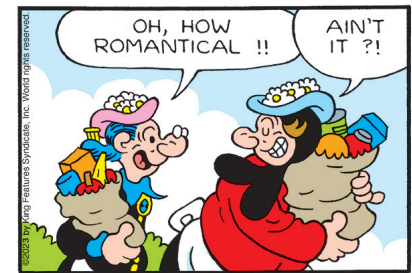
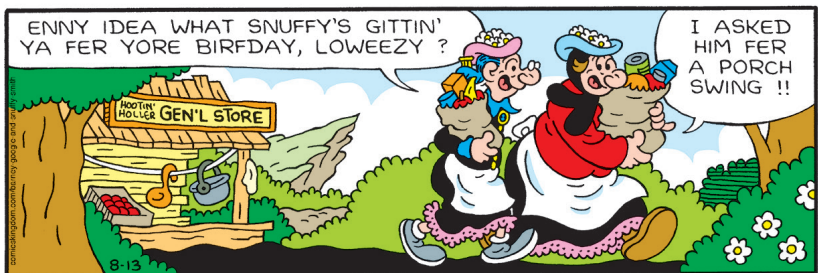
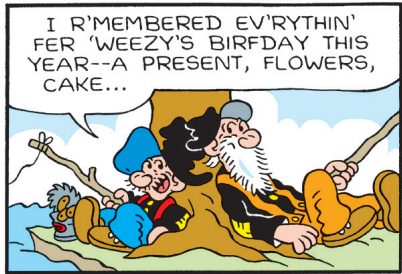
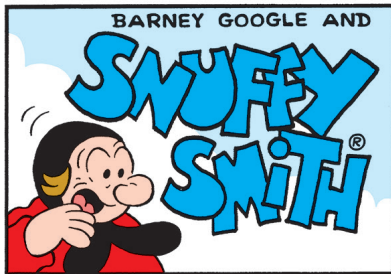
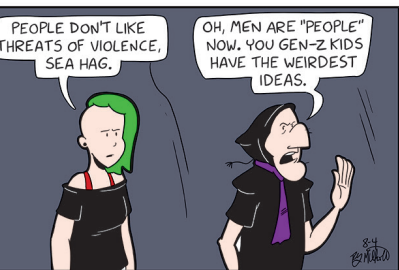
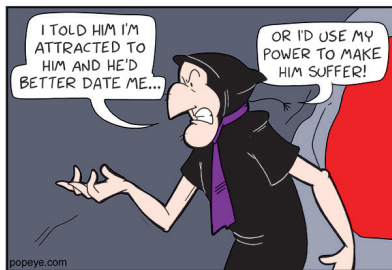
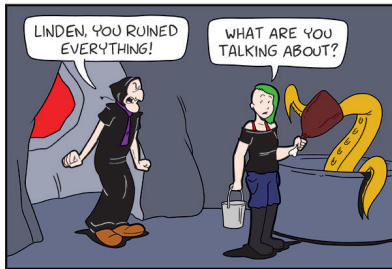
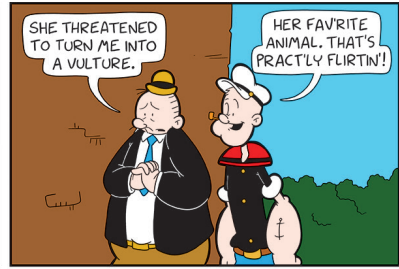
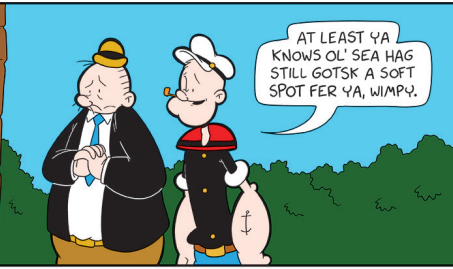
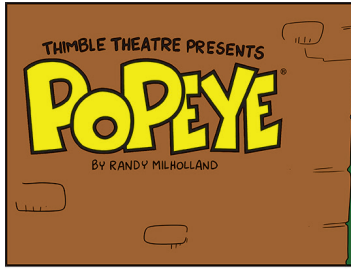
DOWN

- 1 Not dozing
- 2 Actress Russo
- 3 Thrown beach toy
- 4 Tipped off, with "in"
- 5 In one's cups
- 6 Aug. follower
- 7 Part of Q.E.D.
- 8 "Hogwash!"
- 9 Schedules

- 10 " — a deal!"
- 12 Heron's kin
- 14 Jog
- 15 Listener
- 19 ISP choice
- 20 Pair with an air
- 21 Luggage attachment
- 22 Jefferson's coin
- 23 Chimney part
- 24 Withdrawal charges
- 25 Frequently
- 26 A Musketeer
- 28 Despots
- 29 Perfume ingredient
- 30 Earlier, in verse
- 31 Normandy battle site
- 32 "Thar — blows!"
- 34 Yale students
- 35 Hosp. areas

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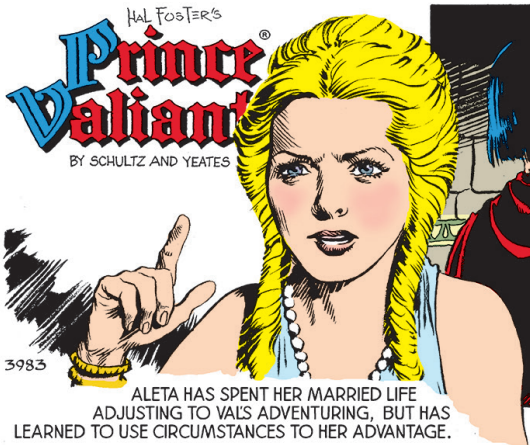


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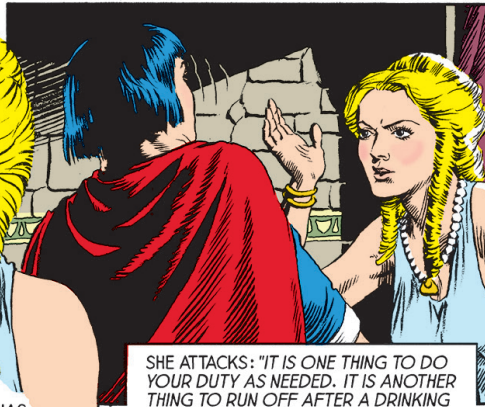
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Hal Foster's
Prince Valiant
BY SCHULTZ AND YEATES

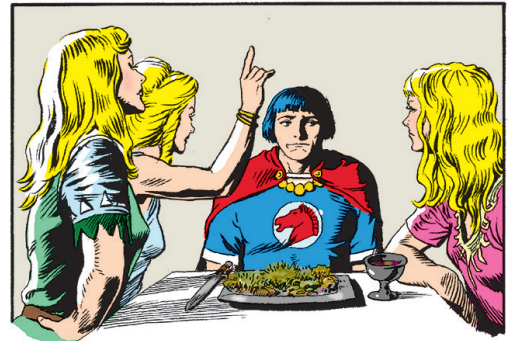
3983



ALETA HAS SPENT HER MARRIED LIFE ADJUSTING TO VAL'S ADVENTURING, BUT HAS LEARNED TO USE CIRCUMSTANCES TO HER ADVANTAGE.



SHE ATTACKS: "IT IS ONE THING TO DO YOUR DUTY AS NEEDED. IT IS ANOTHER THING TO RUN OFF AFTER A DRINKING COMPANION WITHOUT A WORD OF GOODBYE!"

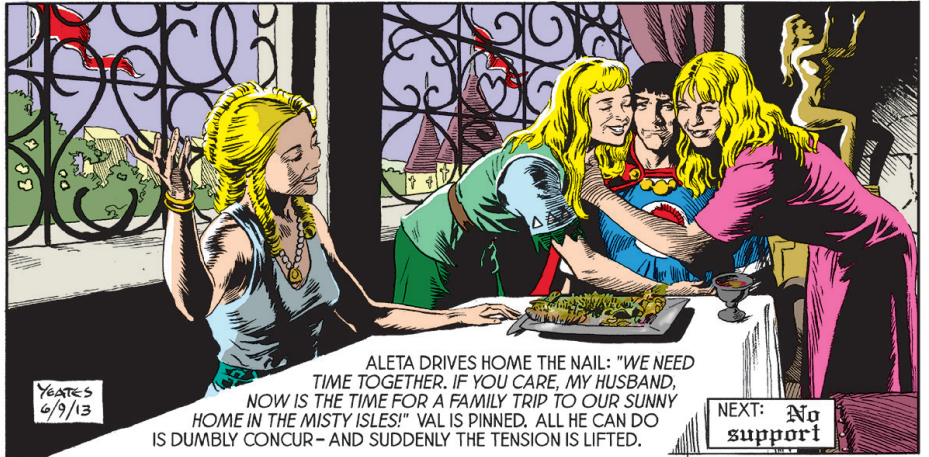


"AND WITH OUR DAUGHTERS - WHO WE SELDOM SEE - VISITING CAMELOT. IT IS ALMOST AS IF YOU WISHED TO BE PARTED FROM YOUR FAMILY!" KAREN AND VALETA NOD IN SOLEMN AGREEMENT...



... AND VAL FEELS COILS OF GUILT CONSTRICTING HIS HEART. HE KNOWS FULL WELL THAT HE IS BEING BERATED FOR SOME SPECIFIC REASON, BUT HE FINDS HIMSELF, AS ALWAYS, POWERLESS BEFORE THEM.

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ALETA DRIVES HOME THE NAIL: "WE NEED TIME TOGETHER. IF YOU CARE, MY HUSBAND, NOW IS THE TIME FOR A FAMILY TRIP TO OUR SUNNY HOME IN THE MISTY ISLES!" VAL IS PINNED. ALL HE CAN DO IS DUMBLY CONCUR - AND SUDDENLY THE TENSION IS LIFTED.

NEXT: No support

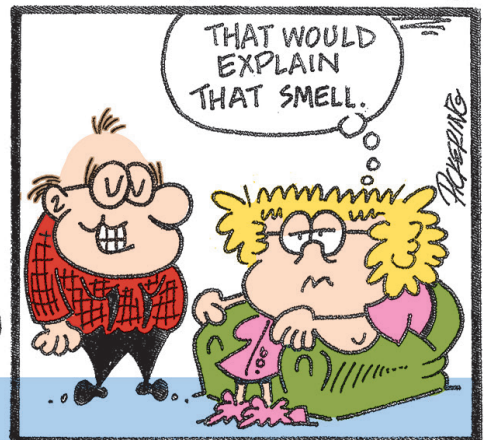
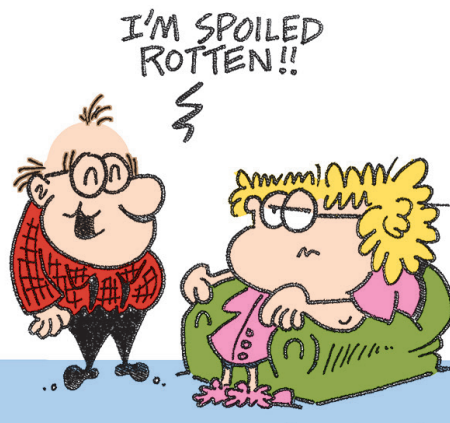
YEATES
6/9/13

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Fighting the heat

When cooling centers are opened up in our town, you know it's brutally hot. It's not something that's usually done around here. But recent temperatures have been shocking for our area.

I made a tour of the cooling stations one afternoon, fully expecting them to be mostly empty as warming stations are in winter when people manage to stay warm at home. But no, this heat was different.

There was the library, with more people than chairs, the grateful patrons sitting on the floor against the walls and most of the electrical outlets connected to phones and laptops.

There was the church with the huge community center facility that cranked their air conditioning down and opened the doors to welcome anyone who needed to cool off. The church ladies went into action and put out trays of cold sandwiches and bottles of water.

At the town hall, the doors to the taxation department where we pay for our car tags were left open long after their normal business hours, and the fire department showed up with pizzas in hand for those who'd taken refuge in the office.

The rec center seemed to be the place where many people brought sleeping pads made of folded blankets, getting the first good rest they'd likely had in a week. The whole of two basketball courts was covered in makeshift beds, and as the hour got later the staff dimmed the lights to coax the children to wind down and fall asleep.

As seniors, we aren't physically equipped to handle the brutal temperatures that have suffocated the country recently. If you're in a hot area and have no air conditioning, seek out a cooling center. If there aren't any, go to the library, the rec center or, better yet, the town offices to insist that they open cooling centers in town.

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1. What Baseball Hall of Famer served in World War II on the attack transport USS Bayfield during the Allied invasion of Normandy in 1944?

2. Alberto Spencer, who has the record of 54 career goals scored in the Copa Libertadores soccer tournament, hailed from what country?

3. Journalist and promoter Harry Glickman was cofounder of what NBA franchise?

4. In 2000, the International Gymnastics Federation named Russia's Vitaly Dubko the 20th century's best coach in what discipline?

5. What player, selected third overall by the Golden State Warriors in the 1986 NBA Draft, received a lifetime ban from the NBA in 1989 for failing three drug tests?

6. Hockey Hall of Famer Bernie Federko has his No. 24 retired by what NHL team?

7. What troubled running back won two national championships (1994-95) with the Nebraska Cornhuskers and was drafted sixth overall by the St. Louis Rams in 1996?



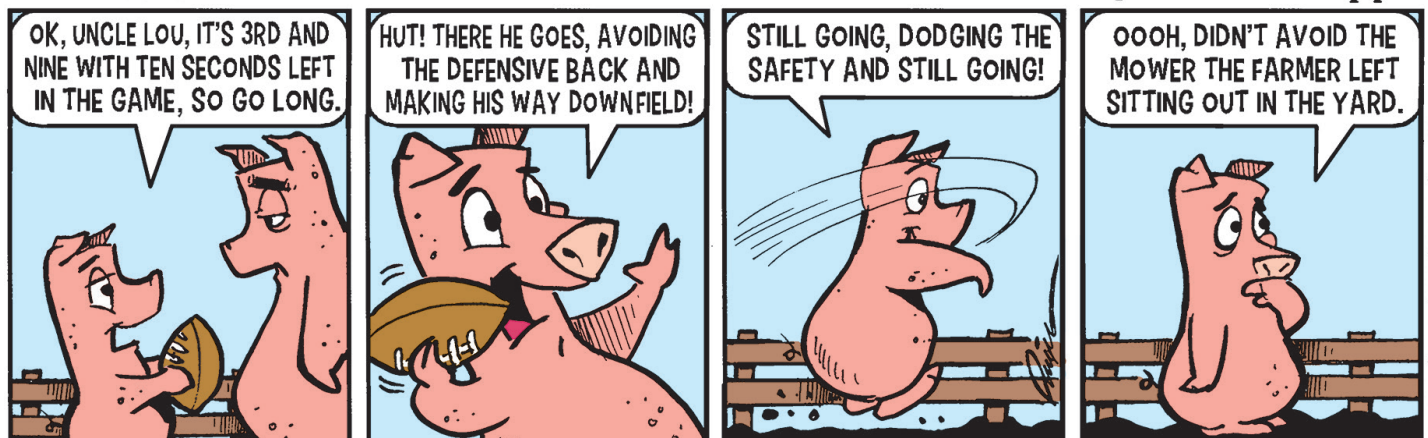
Answers

1. Yogi Berra.
2. Ecuador.
3. The Portland Trail Blazers.
4. Trampoline.
5. Chris Washburn.
6. The St. Louis Blues.
7. Lawrence Phillips.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



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How far can a puppy hike?

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I have a 1-year-old mixed-breed puppy named "Star" who I'd love to take on Saturday hikes with me. I'm an avid hiker who can do up to 20 miles or more per day. Is this too much for a young dog like her to handle? -- Gary in Boulder, Colorado

DEAR GARY: Your instincts are right-on -- that kind of mileage is too much for a puppy. But, depending on the dog, you can build Star's stamina gradually, adding miles as she grows.

For a 1-year-old puppy, start with no more than a mile or two, and keep it light and fun. If Star whines at three-quarters of a mile, take a

break for a few minutes and see if she'll go on. If she shows signs of tiredness, like lagging behind and not being curious about things around her, it's time to head back. Some pet parents will carry their puppy for the remaining miles, but that's up to you -- I think that it's better to just gradually build the miles.

Notice that I also said "depending on the dog." Some dogs just aren't enthusiastic about hiking long miles. Others -- especially small dogs, toy and pocket breeds -- cannot walk very far without tiring. (Fortunately, they can be carried easily.) Don't lament if hiking ultimately isn't Star's thing; just build an outdoor schedule where she can share in the fun on some days with short hikes, and you can still get in lots of mileage while she remains at home or with a friend.

An adult dog can do 5 to 20 miles depending on their fitness and enthusiasm. But you'll need to adjust your lifestyle to gradually bring Star up to that kind of distance.

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

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Strange BUT TRUE

* Medicine cabinets are one of the worst places to store medicine because of the high temperatures and humidity in bathrooms.

* A Hershey's Kiss contains 26 calories that take about four minutes of kissing to burn.

* You say money doesn't grow on trees? Try telling that to a certain dog in Colombia. After seeing students pass money to a food stall attendant, the pooch began a regular practice of "paying" for dog biscuits with tree leaves!

* The main exporter of Brazil nuts is not Brazil, but Bolivia.

* Screenwriter Bob Gale confirmed that Marty McFly's nemesis in the "Back to the Future" trilogy, Biff Tannen, was modeled on Donald Trump.

* A scientific method called toxineering turns venoms into painkillers.

* As novels became more prominent during the 1700s, society and the media became increasingly concerned that young people spent too much time reading books. They even went so far as to call it "reading rage," "reading fever," "reading mania" and "reading lust."

* A regular BIC ballpoint pen can draw a line that's about 2 kilometers long -- more than six times the height of the Eiffel Tower.

* Nazis planned to kill Sir Winston Churchill with a bar of chocolate. A bomb made of thin steel was covered by real chocolate that would explode once a chunk was broken. Luckily, British Allies discovered the plan.

* At his presidential inauguration, Theodore Roosevelt wore a lock of Abraham Lincoln's hair.

* Before Usain Bolt won the 100 meter sprint in the Olympic finals, he ate only McDonald's chicken nuggets, as he didn't want to risk getting an upset stomach from local cuisine.

* Yamaha produces some of the world's most popular motorcycles, but the company started off as a piano manufacturer.

Thought for the Day: "Motion feels like progress. Action is progress." -- James Clear

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The Garden Bug



Source:
frustratedgardener.com

Pots and hanging baskets

If you have plants in pots or in hanging baskets, their regular watering and feeding is critical in hot weather – not only for their health in summer but also for a continuously pleasing display through autumn. By mid- to late summer, all of the nutrients will have been taken up or washed out, so some fertiliser sprinkled on the soil and a weekly liquid feed is needed. Insufficient watering may trigger plants to set seed, then curl up and die. If you are going away on vacation, move pots and baskets into a cool, sheltered position and water them thoroughly before you depart. – Brenda Weaver



by Freddy Groves

New VA login accounts

Veterans who access their benefits and health care info online will begin using a new login method, starting now and extending over the next year.

Account security is the reason behind the changes, per the Executive Order on cybersecurity that was signed in 2021.

Whether you use VA.gov online or the mobile app to access your Login.gov or ID.me account, you'll need to log in and create a new account. It should only take a few minutes.

Make your first stop the instructions at www.va.gov/sign-in-changes. You'll see that the cut-off to keep using your current username and password will be in January 2025 for My HealthVet and September 2025 for the DS Logon. At that point you'll be locked out until you create a new account, either via Login.gov or ID.me. (No, they won't delete your info; you just won't be able to get in.) Both of them will allow you to access all of your benefits and services.

You'll be able to check claim status, refill prescriptions, look at lab results, update contact info and much more.

Be prepared for being required to use two-factor authentication, also known as multifactor authentication. If you're like so many of us, you don't like being forced to do the extra steps to log in somewhere. But so much of what we do online now involves using two-factor authentication, with more switching to that method every day. Whether it's our bank or online accounts, we have to get used to it. Between ID theft, having personal information stolen, having money stolen through fraud (in one year, veterans had \$350 million stolen through fraud) -- the thieves aren't going to stop.

Before you choose your new account, read the privacy policy for both Login.gov and ID.me. They're not the same.

And what if you don't want either of the offered account types? That's fine. You'll just need to contact and interact with the VA by mail, in person or on the phone.

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Wishing Well®

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

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

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1. MUSIC: Which folk-rock group produced many of the songs in the movie "The Graduate"?
2. GEOGRAPHY: Which European capital is known as "The Eternal City"?
3. LANGUAGE: What does the Latin prefix "acri-" mean in English?
4. TELEVISION: Lenny and Squiggy are the annoying neighbors in which TV comedy?
5. MONEY: What is the basic currency in Guatemala?
6. CARS: What animal is found on the Porsche car logo?
7. FOOD & DRINK: Which country is associated with the soup dish pho?
8. LITERATURE: In which U.S. state is the novel "Their Eyes Were Watching God" set?
9. MYTHOLOGY: What is the home of the Greek gods called?
10. AD SLOGANS: What product is advertised with the slogan, "You're not you when you're hungry"?

Answers

1. Simon & Garfunkel.
2. Rome, Italy.
3. "Sharp" (e.g. "acrimonious").
4. "Laverne & Shirley."
5. Quetzal.
6. A horse.
7. Vietnam.
8. Florida.
9. Mount Olympus.
10. Snickers candy bars.

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South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Let Hogs Run Free

All across South Dakota, you've probably heard the roaring "wild hogs" across our highways and through our towns. Their roars and rumbles send a clear message: the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally is back!

In many ways, the rumble of the motorcycles has become synonymous with South Dakota and Freedom. This rally has always been emblematic of free spirits – of Freedom itself. As I said in the past, "Many of the visitors... say they're coming to South Dakota specifically because it reminds them of the America they grew up in. Free. Independent. Unburdened by the constraints and headaches that big cities... forced upon them."

Ever since South Dakota became the only state in America to stay "Open for Business" during the pandemic, that is truer now than ever before.

That same spirit of Freedom will be in full force at this year's rally. American flags will be everywhere! We all expect that, and we welcome it.

Last year, I also wrote that "I didn't think I'd find so much Jesus at the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally." I told the story of the Sons of Light Ministry at the Sturgis Buffalo Chip, and how they host a pancake breakfast to spread the Gospel. I'll be spending some time with the Sons of Light again this year.

Sadly, some in the media weren't interested in that story – they were more interested in mocking me for telling it. But I'm not going to let their naysaying diminish my excitement for the Freedom – and yes, the faith – that will be found at the rally in the coming days.

I understand that Sturgis might not be everyone's cup of tea, but that's no reason to take away from the experiences of anyone else – or to use the rally as an excuse to take political potshots.

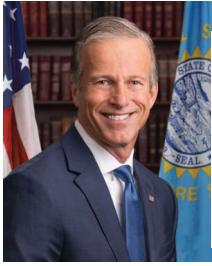
Many people work hard to create a fun, exciting, and safe atmosphere for people to enjoy during the rally, and I'm grateful for all those who do – including law enforcement, EMTs, local leaders, and community members.

For years, the media has tried to use Sturgis to attack our love for Freedom and our way of life here in South Dakota. They lied about the COVID cases tied to the rally and criticized those who chose to celebrate Freedom with us. We understand by now that those criticisms come with the territory.

We are going to enjoy the rally anyway.

I can't wait to see longtime friends and to make new ones. I can't wait to listen to incredible concerts with excited fans. I can't wait to celebrate our veterans, our military, and all the things that make America great.

I can't wait for the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally! And I hope to see you there.



JOHN THUNE
U.S. SENATOR FOR SOUTH DAKOTA

A Laundry List of Bad Ideas

Two years ago, Democrats in Congress passed the so-called Inflation Reduction Act. At that time, they claimed that the bill would bring down inflation and reduce the budget deficit. Two years later, it's clear that those promises haven't come to pass.

To begin with, the bill's title is outright deceptive. Even before it became law, it wasn't expected to do much to combat inflation – inflation that Democrats created in the first place. Economists later agreed it did little, if anything, to combat the inflation crisis. And even President Biden acknowledged that the Inflation Reduction Act had "nothing to do with inflation."

Democrats' claim that it would reduce the deficit also proved to be untrue. The cost of the bill's provisions has grown to such an extent that it's not only not going to reduce the deficit, it's likely to add to it.

The bill did, however, spend more than a trillion dollars on Green New Deal policies and hit conventional energy producers with burdensome tax hikes. It reads like a laundry list of wasteful spending, doling out taxpayer dollars for planting trees, purchasing zero-emission garbage trucks and postal delivery vehicles, and even grants for climate-related political activity.

Then there are the tax credits for well-off Americans to buy an electric vehicle. Perhaps the Biden administration's signature environmental policy is effectively forcing the widespread adoption of electric vehicles (EVs), and the Inflation Reduction Act was a big part of that push. The other part – new regulations from the administration forcing automakers to electrify a huge portion of their fleets in the next few years – is driving up the cost of the law.

Besides the fact that many Americans have legitimate concerns about electric vehicles, or just don't want one, the Biden administration's push for EVs comes at a time when our electric grid is barely keeping up with existing demand. Plugging in millions of cars is sure to further strain our electrical grid and lead to higher prices, and possibly blackouts.

Of course, this was also the bill that funneled \$80 billion in new funding to the Internal Revenue Service, most of which was earmarked for increased audits and enforcement to fund Democrats' Green New Deal vision. And it also included price controls on prescription drugs, which one analysis projects will result in 135 fewer new drugs available to patients. We are already seeing that projection come true as multiple drug companies have halted new research as a result of the new law.

The Inflation Reduction Act not only did not address inflation, it's contributing to a host of bad outcomes for the American people. It's a laundry list of bad ideas, from unrealistic Green New Deal policies to costly taxes and irresponsible spending. And this bill represents only a portion of the reckless taxing and spending Democrats would like to do if they again have the power to do it.



Communities Affected by Floods and Fentanyl

BIG News

The floods that devastated southeastern South Dakota in June and July were a once-in-a-thousand-year event. Communities experienced catastrophic flooding after heavy rainstorms. This flood destroyed homes, businesses, and public infrastructure in the North Sioux City and Dakota Dunes areas. The damage is expected to cost tens of millions of dollars to repair, and spans 25 counties in South Dakota. The lives of about six thousand residents have been affected. This is an issue that deserves national assistance.

Last week, Governor Noem submitted the official request for a Presidential major disaster declaration. Immediately following Governor Noem's request, I joined U.S. Senators John Thune and Mike Rounds to urge President Biden to issue a major disaster declaration. We must do what we can to remedy the destruction and assist those who are faced with repairs.

BIG Idea

Fentanyl is destroying lives and families. We know most of this fentanyl is coming from China and we must put policies into place to stop it from flowing across our border. During the Select Committee on China's Fentanyl Policy Working Group meeting this week, I heard from experts on how the United States has used sanctions to address the fentanyl epidemic in the past, and how Congress can strengthen and use sanctions to target the root cause of the epidemic.

The "Achilles Heel" of the fentanyl epidemic is the legitimate commercial interests of many Chinese fentanyl manufacturers. Unlike the cartels that operate in a solely illegal way to bring fentanyl across the border, the Chinese chemical companies that produce and export fentanyl precursors do so as a "side hustle." Many of these companies have real businesses that sell legal chemicals to customers around the world. These businesses are uniquely vulnerable to sanctions and would suffer from any economic pressure the United States applies. Congress must take action to stop the flow of Chinese fentanyl into our country.

BIG Update

This week, I held another telephone town hall to hear from South Dakotans. I hop on the phone and thousands of people join to ask questions and hear from me. We covered a host of topics like the assassination attempt on President Trump, the Olympics, the border, government spending, and so much more.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries

PO Box 831313 - Ocala, FL 34483

1-352-216-3025

How to Act Your Age

I just celebrated another birthday. Every time I turn around, I have another birthday. I guess I'm going to have to stop turning around.

This year, I turned 73, which is a landmark as far as I'm concerned.

After celebrating my birthday, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage asked, "Do you think you'll be able to act your age this year?"

I just smiled because I didn't know what she was saying. How do you act your age when it changes all the time? It's hard to realize how old I am because my age changes every year. Just when I think I have it all under control, I have another birthday.

I remember my teenage years. It's easy to act your age when you're a teenager because you can do whatever you want.

When I turned 16, I got my driver's license, and I was rather excited to drive.

One evening, I asked my father, "Dad can I borrow your car for tonight?"

With a big smile, he said, "Yes, you can."

He gave me the car keys, and just as I went out the door to get into the car, he said, "Oh, by the way, there's no gas in the car, you'll have to go and get it filled up at the gas station."

He looked at me and smiled and I knew exactly what he was doing.

I can drive the car, but there is a cost to driving a car.

Then, when I was 21, I became a full-fledged adult. I'm not sure what that means, but I had arrived, or so I thought. I was now in charge of my life, and I was so happy about it. Nobody was ever going to tell me what to do.

I carried this attitude around for quite a while until I realized that being an adult has a price tag to it.

All through my life, I have been trying to act my age at every level. It's been hard, but I have been trying as best I can. It seems I'm not a very good actor.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage's birthday is two days after mine. I arranged it that way on purpose so that I would always remember her birthday.

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We were both celebrating our 70th birthday and went out for evening supper. We made our order and then after we finished our order we had a piece of cake brought out.

Looking across the table, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage said, "Well, my dear, how does it feel to be old?"

I reached across the table, grabbed her arm, and began to squeeze it. Looking at her, I said, "It feels rather good."

Her voice had a very sarcastic tone; she said, "Are you ever going to act your age?"

At my age it doesn't matter. I'm wondering if there's some kind of thespian school that teaches acting your age? I should take some of these classes for sure.

My problem is that when I turned 73, it was the first time I had done so. I have no idea how I should act at 73. I went to a bookstore the other day to look through the books, trying to find some book that would help me act 73. I found none.

I was tempted to write a book on that subject, but as I meditated on it for a while, I realized that by the time I finished writing a book called "Acting Your Age at 73," I would have another birthday and be 74. What's a geezer to do?

The other day, somebody asked me how old I was. I told them that I had just turned 73, and they looked at me, smiled, and said, "You sure don't look that old."

I smiled and then walked away. Later, I began thinking about what that person said. If I'm correct, he was insinuating that I was entering my second childhood. Oh boy. My first childhood didn't turn out very well, and I don't know how my second childhood will turn out.

A lot of people are infatuated with birthdays. I don't know how many restaurants I've been at when there were birthday celebrations. Everybody was singing Happy Birthday. And I usually joined in on the celebration because sometimes I've gotten a slice of birthday cake. That's how you act your age.

As I was thinking about my second childhood, I wondered if maybe I could do a lot better this next time. In my first childhood, it went so fast that I really couldn't keep up with anything. By the time I had caught up, I was retired.

Being retired gives you many opportunities to rehearse acting your age. I don't always get it, and I stumbled on the script, but I'm trying. When I stumble on the script, I can blame it on getting old and my memory failing.

It is very difficult to act my age. Now that I'm 73, I have moments when I want to act like I was 37 or even 25. The problem is that I didn't have enough practice being 37 or even 25.

In thinking about this I was reminded of what David said. "Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come" (Psalm 71:18).

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: Why is sea level rising more in some regions—like the U.S. Southeast—than others? Is there a way to reduce sea level rise in certain specific locales? – C.T, Tampa, FL

Sea level rise is a pressing global issue, exacerbated by climate change. And its impacts are not uniform across the globe; some regions experience more significant increases than others. Notably, the U.S. Southeast has seen higher rates compared to other areas. Understanding the factors behind these regional differences is crucial for developing targeted strategies to mitigate and adapt to these changes.

One major factor contributing to regional variations in sea level rise is thermal expansion. As ocean water warms, it expands, leading to higher sea levels. However, this expansion does not occur evenly across the globe due to differences in ocean temperatures and circulation patterns. Warm currents can cause more significant sea level rise in certain areas by bringing heat from one region to another. The melting of ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica contribute to global sea level rise, but its impact is not evenly distributed. Indeed, the gravitational pull from large ice masses affects sea levels regionally. As ice sheets melt, the gravitational attraction decreases, causing water to move away from these areas and leading to higher sea levels elsewhere. This redistribution of water can result in significant regional differences.

Engineering solutions like seawalls, levees and other physical barriers can provide immediate protection against rising sea levels. These are designed to prevent flooding and protect infrastructure. However, they also present challenges, including high costs and potential ecological impacts. Strategic urban planning and land use can significantly mitigate the impacts of sea level rise. Sustainable development practices, including equitably relocating people, structures and infrastructure away from vulnerable coastal areas—as well as the wholesale redesign of coastal communities—are essential. These strategies can help reduce vulnerability and enhance resilience. For example, some coastal cities are redesigning urban spaces to allow for natural water flow and creating buffer zones to absorb floodwaters.

Effective policies at local, state and federal levels are crucial for addressing sea level rise. Governments can implement regulations that promote sustainable practices, fund infrastructure projects and support community adaptation efforts. To effectively combat sea level rise, it is essential for individuals to engage with local governments and advocate for policy changes. By supporting research and development, communities can better prepare for the impacts of rising seas.

.. EarthTalk® is produced by Roddy Scheer & Doug Moss for the 501(c)3 nonprofit EarthTalk. See more at <https://emagazine.com>. To donate, visit <https://earthtalk.org>. Send questions to: question@earthtalk.org.



Does sea level rise really vary much region to region, and if so why?



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

COMMENTARY

Attempts to influence GF&P are a reminder: Wildlife belongs to everyone

by Dana Hess

During retirement, one of my freelance assignments was covering the Legislature for the South Dakota Newspaper Association. I enjoyed the work, though the weekly travel from my home in Brookings was daunting.

One day, having just arrived in Pierre and making my way through the Capitol, I saw some officials from the Game, Fish and Parks Department. I recognized some of them from the two years I spent as an information officer for the Wildlife Division.

One of the officials was Tony Leif, who at the time was the director of the Wildlife Division. I thought I had some news for him. On the way to Pierre, in a field between Highmore and Harrold, I'd seen a small herd of antelope. I was surprised, thinking that the antelope range was in West River.

Tony knew all about the herd. He said the herd ranged from where I saw it up to Potter County. Landowners in the area were trying to nurture the herd, he said, so that it might one day be large enough to hunt.

As we prepared to go to our various committee hearings, Tony grinned and said, "It was fun, wasn't it?"

It had been fun to unexpectedly see that herd and it reminded me of one of the first lessons I learned while working for GF&P: wildlife belongs to everyone. Sure, hunters, anglers and landowners have some strong proprietary feelings about wildlife. But it's as much mine — a casual observer from the highway and a noted indoorsman — as it is anyone else's.

Part of what brought on this trip down Memory Lane was a recent South Dakota Searchlight story about a meeting of the Game, Fish and Parks Commission, the citizen panel that oversees the regulation of hunting seasons in the state.



A camouflaged turkey hunter sits along wooded cover as the sun rises over public habitat near Yankton. (Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

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At issue was a complaint from the South Dakota Wildlife Federation that too many nonresident hunting licenses are issued for the spring turkey hunting season in the Black Hills. There were 3,170 nonresident licenses issued last year. The federation wanted that number cut to 661. The commission's compromise was 2,225 nonresident licenses. Now comes a comment period prior to finalization of the season at the commission's September meeting.

The commission hears from sportsmen and landowners all year long as it works its way through a schedule of various hunting seasons. In January and February, however, there's a new group with its eyes on the outdoors as the Legislature convenes.

Lawmakers are often frustrated by their relationship with the Wildlife Division. That division gets the vast majority of its funding from license fees and federal excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment. Consequently, there are no purse strings for lawmakers to tug on when they want the division to bow to their will.

That frustration is apparent in the number of bills that have been filed over the years seeking legislative oversight of GF&P land acquisitions. Rep. Chris Karr, a Republican from Sioux Falls, offered the latest attempt this year, House Bill 1180. Karr asked the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee to table his bill, but not before he told them that he was going to continue studying the issue because he has concerns about the process.

It's hard to know what's so concerning about a process that brings together a willing seller with an interested buyer. That seems like the American way.

Another item on the legislative wish list was figuring out a way to keep conservation officers off private land. That wish came true in 2021 with the passage of a bill offered by the governor's office that said conservation officers had to ask permission to enter private property unless there was a reasonable suspicion of a violation, to dispatch a distressed animal or to respond to an emergency.

No one was complaining about the presence of conservation officers on private land during the recent flooding in the southeastern part of the state. A South Dakota Searchlight story noted that 17 officers conducted more than 30 rescue calls saving about 60 people from the flooding. The conservation officers were lauded for their bravery by Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden. That's ironic since in 2021 Rhoden was the first to testify in favor of the bill making conservation officers ask for permission before they can do their jobs.

Despite all the different interests and entities trying to influence Game, Fish and Parks policies and regulations, the Wildlife Division manages to come through, year after year, with a first-rate walleye fishery, world-class pheasant hunting and a plethora of other hunting and fishing opportunities.

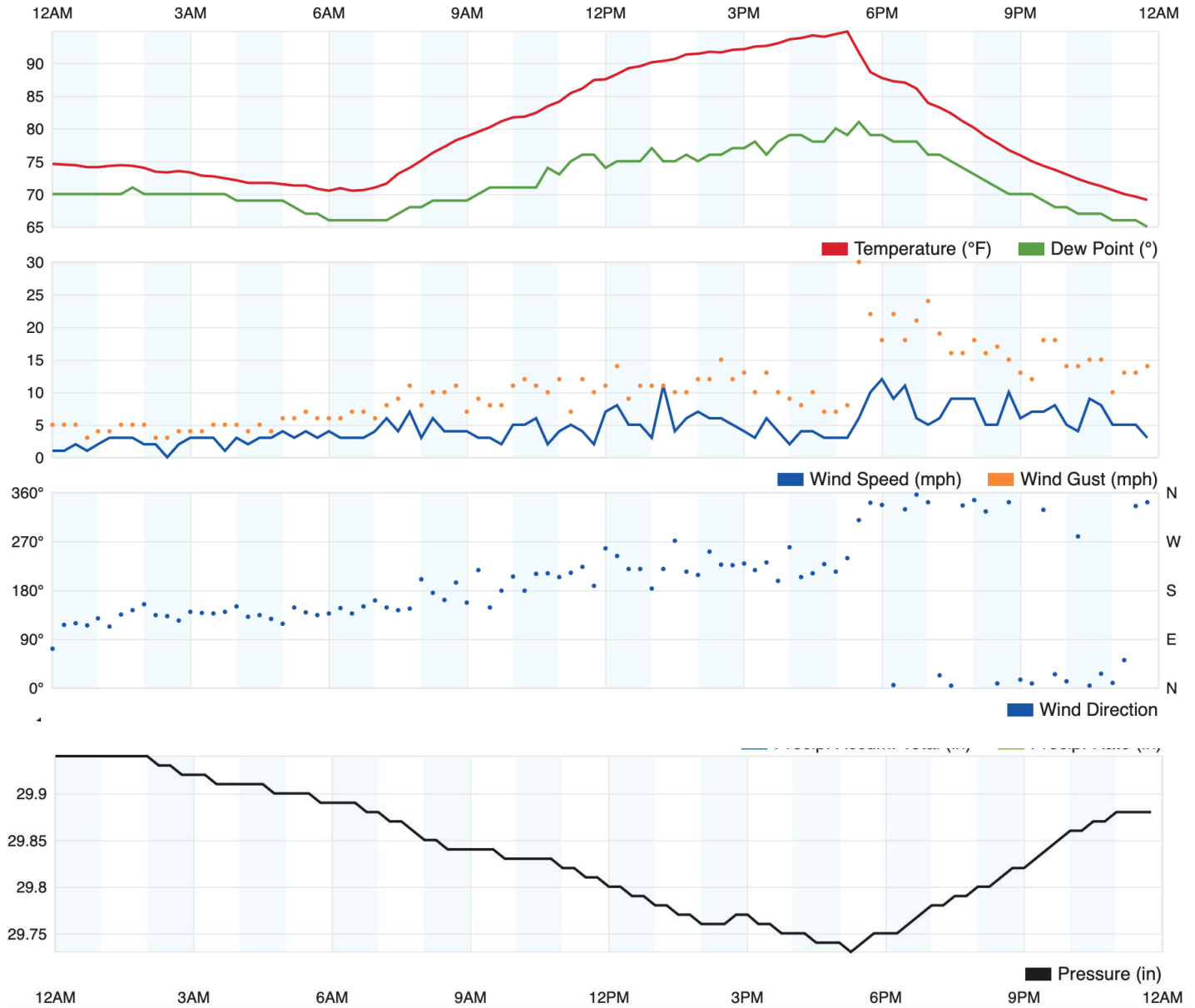
The division's continuing success was brought home recently on a trip from Brookings to White when I saw a flock of wild turkeys in a farmer's field. Tony Leif was right. It was fun.

Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.

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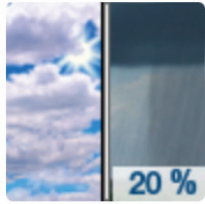
Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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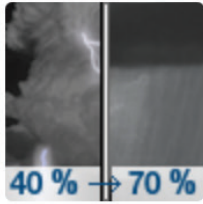
Today



High: 79 °F

Partly Sunny
then Slight
Chance
Showers

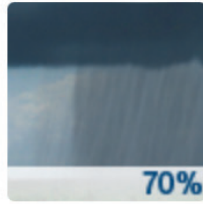
Tonight



Low: 60 °F

Chance
T-storms then
Showers
Likely

Monday



High: 68 °F

Showers
Likely

Monday Night



Low: 53 °F

Partly Cloudy

Tuesday



High: 77 °F

Sunny



Severe Weather Threat Overview

August 4, 2024
4:11 AM

This Afternoon and Evening

Location/Timing

Storms developing this evening, mainly after 6:00 PM. Best chance for strong to severe storms will be across east central South Dakota.

Primary Threats for the **Dark Green** areas.

Tornado Potential

Very Low Low Medium High

Max Hail Size (in inches)

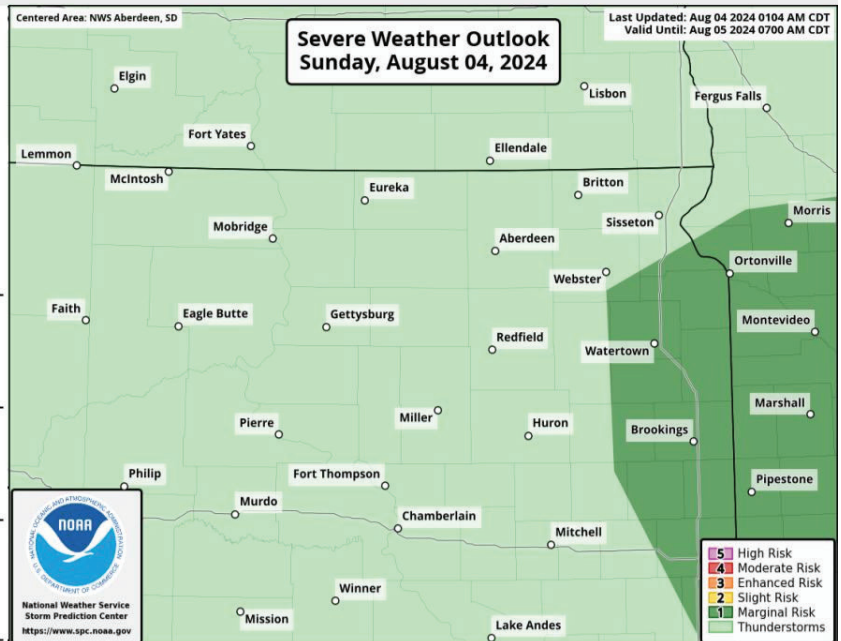
0.75 **1.00** 1.50 2.00

Max Wind Speed

< 60 mph **60-70 mph** 70-80 mph > 80mph

Heavy Rain/Flooding Potential

Very Low Low Medium High



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A weak storm system crossing the region will bring a 20% chance for showers and thunderstorms. Chances will increase mainly after 6 pm, with a marginal risk (1/5) for severe storms in far eastern South Dakota.

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Cooler Air Returns

August 4, 2024
4:15 AM

Maximum Temperature Forecast (°F)

	8/4 Sun			8/5 Mon			8/6 Tue			8/7 Wed			8/8 Thu			8/9 Fri							
	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm				
Aberdeen	73	81	80	65	66	69	69	60	67	78	78	65	70	74	75	62	65	71	72	58	65	72	73
Britton	71	77	76	62	66	65	65	57	67	74	73	62	69	72	69	59	63	69	67	55	64	70	69
Brookings	74	79	78	72	69	70	67	60	65	74	73	62	68	73	72	62	66	71	70	59	65	72	71
Chamberlain	79	88	88	77	76	77	74	64	68	79	80	69	72	79	78	65	66	74	74	61	66	73	73
Clark	72	78	77	68	69	70	67	60	66	74	73	63	67	72	70	61	63	69	67	57	64	71	70
Eagle Butte	72	82	82	68	64	70	68	60	65	77	78	67	69	76	73	61	62	70	68	57	62	71	70
Ellendale	73	79	78	61	65	66	66	57	66	75	76	62	68	72	74	59	63	69	70	56	64	70	71
Eureka	70	79	79	61	59	65	65	56	64	74	75	64	67	74	72	59	61	69	70	55	62	71	70
Gettysburg	69	79	79	64	64	68	66	59	63	75	76	64	68	75	73	59	61	70	68	55	62	72	70
Huron	77	83	83	73	72	73	70	62	67	78	78	66	69	76	76	64	67	74	74	61	67	75	75
Kennebec	75	87	87	74	76	77	73	61	66	78	79	67	72	80	78	63	64	71	72	58	64	72	72
McIntosh	70	80	80	63	60	65	64	58	64	77	77	65	66	73	71	58	61	69	68	55	61	71	70
Milbank	70	79	78	67	67	68	65	59	65	73	74	61	70	74	70	61	64	69	70	57	64	70	71
Miller	71	82	81	68	71	73	70	61	66	76	75	65	69	76	74	61	63	71	69	57	63	72	70
Mobridge	73	83	82	67	63	70	69	61	68	81	79	69	71	79	77	63	65	75	73	60	66	76	75
Murdo	74	90	89	73	72	77	73	61	66	80	81	68	72	80	77	62	63	71	70	58	63	73	71
Pierre	76	89	88	74	73	77	74	63	68	81	82	70	73	82	79	65	65	73	74	61	65	76	74
Redfield	74	82	81	68	71	72	69	61	67	78	77	65	69	75	74	62	65	72	70	58	65	74	73
Sisseton	71	79	78	64	68	67	65	59	67	75	74	62	71	74	69	61	64	70	69	58	65	71	69
Watertown	71	79	78	67	69	70	66	60	67	75	73	61	69	74	71	61	64	70	68	57	65	71	70
Webster	71	77	74	64	66	65	63	58	66	73	72	62	67	71	69	60	62	68	66	57	63	70	68
Wheaton	71	79	78	66	65	68	65	59	67	74	73	62	68	72	70	61	63	68	69	57	64	70	71



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

The upcoming workweek will feature cooler temperatures along with periods of showers and thunderstorms.

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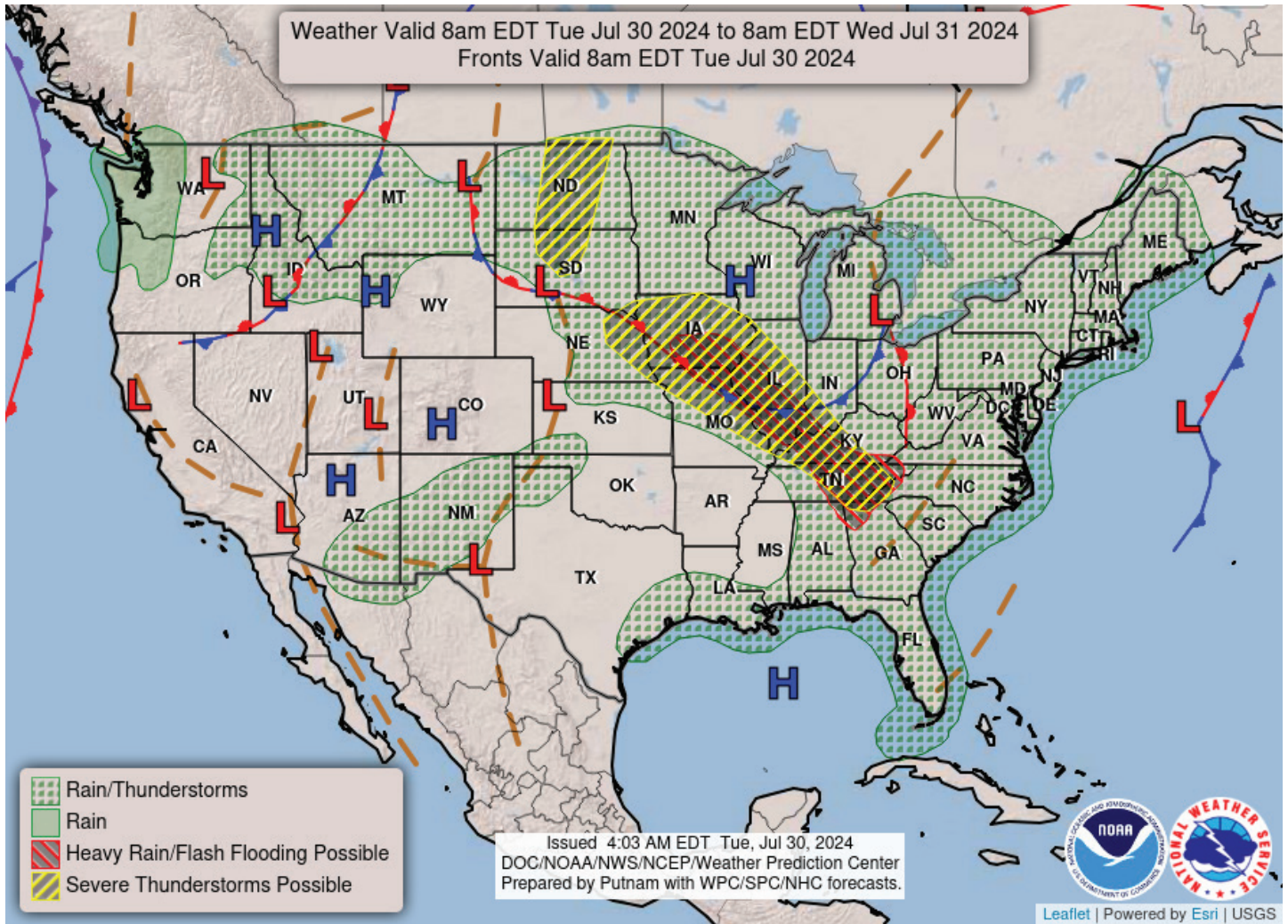
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 95 °F at 5:21 PM
Low Temp: 70 °F at 11:30 PM
Wind: 30 mph at 5:25 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 14 hours, 38 minutes (lost 17 minutes since last Sunday)

Today's Info

Record High: 107 in 1934
Record Low: 42 in 2017
Average High: 85
Average Low: 59
Average Precip in Aug.: .30
Precip to date in Aug.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 14.40
Precip Year to Date: 14.89
Sunset Tonight: 8:57:28 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:20:35 am



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Today in Weather History

August 4, 1960: At Draper in Jones County, three-inch hail caused substantial damage to roofs, building windows and automobiles. Losses estimated at 100,000 dollars. About 1,000 chickens and turkeys killed on nearby farms.

August 4, 2000: Tennis ball size hail along with high winds caused a lot of damage throughout Selby. Many east and north windows were broken along with many vehicle's windshields. Also, many cars were dented, house siding was damaged, gardens were destroyed, and many acres of crops around Selby were destroyed. Softball hail broke windows and caused extensive damage to a few vehicles and homes west of Faulkton. Baseball size hail and high winds had broken out about every window on all of the buildings at the Brentwood Colony in Edmunds County. The large hail and strong winds also damaged many of the buildings.

1882 - A vivid aurora was visible from Oregon to Maine, down the east coast as far as Mayport FL, and inland as far as Wellington KS. Observers at Louisville KY noted merry dancers across the sky, and observers at Saint Vincent, MN, noted it was probably the most brilliant ever seen at that location. (The Weather Channel)

1930 - The temperature at Moorefield, WV, soared to 112 degrees to establish a state record, having reached 110 degrees the previous day. Widespread drought after April of that year caused some towns to haul water for domestic use, and many manufacturing plants were barely operational. (The Weather Channel)

1961 - Spokane, WA, reached an all-time record high of 108 degrees. Kalispell, MT, set an all-time record with a reading of 105 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1980 - A record forty-two consecutive days of 100 degree heat finally came to an end at the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport. July 1980 proved to be the hottest month of record with a mean temperature of 92 degrees. There was just one day of rain in July, and there was no measurable rain in August. There were 18 more days of 100 degree heat in August, and four in September. Hot weather that summer contributed to the deaths of 1200 people nationally, and losses from the heat across the country were estimated at twenty billion dollars. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A cold front brought relief from the heat to a large part of the Midwest, while hot weather continued in the south central and eastern U.S. Morning thunderstorms in Nebraska deluged the town of Dalton with 8.71 inches of rain, along with hail three inches in diameter, which accumulated up to four feet deep near the town of Dix. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from eastern Iowa to Lower Michigan during the afternoon and evening hours, producing golf ball size hail and spawning several tornadoes. A thunderstorm at Maquoketa, IA, produced wind gusts to 75 mph. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from eastern Nebraska and northeastern Kansas to the Great Lakes Region, with 150 reports of large hail or damaging winds during the afternoon, evening, and nighttime hours. Thunderstorms produced tennis ball size hail at Claremont, MN, and wind gusts to 75 mph at Milwaukee, WI. Thunderstorms representing what once was Hurricane Chantal produced five inches of rain at Grant, MI, and deluged Chicago, IL, with more than three inches of rain in three hours. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2008: Severe storms moved across northern Illinois and Indiana with tornadoes and stiff winds reported. With tornado sirens blaring, the game at Wrigley Field between Cubs and Astros was stopped as fans were told to evacuate to the lower concourse. Passengers at O'Hare International Airport were evacuated to lower levels of buildings as well. An estimated 350 flights were canceled.

2009: The strongest tornado to hit Quebec since the same date in 1994 ripped through Mont-Laurier. The F2 tornado tore through the small western Quebec town severely damaging about 40 homes. Two men were taken to the hospital with minor injuries.



BECOMING CHRIST-LIKE

A sculptor was beginning a new project, and a reporter came to interview him about his work. He had never talked to a sculptor before so he asked, "What are you going to create?"

"A horse standing on its hind legs," he answered.

"How will you do such a thing?" he wondered.

"By knocking off everything that doesn't look like a horse," he replied.

Paul in writing to the Corinthians said, "Through suffering, these bodies of ours constantly share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies." God, we are reminded by Paul, is in deed and in fact, shaping us in the likeness of Christ.

As Christians, we need to know and accept the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We may at times think that we are at the end of our rope but as followers of Christ we are never at the end of our hope!

As the sculptor with his block of marble, our loving Lord is "knocking off" everything in our lives that is not Christ-like. We sing our songs and say our prayers and tell others that "we want to be like Him." And someday we will be.

But until that day arrives we must be patient and willing to submit to His will, allow Him to work in us and on us so that He may work through us.

Prayer: We know, Heavenly Father, that You have a plan for each of us to become like Your Son. Give us the desire to work with You while You complete your plan. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies. 2 Corinthians 4:1-10

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.02.24

6 7 24 44 54 13

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$374,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.03.24

5 10 21 42 43 10

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$6,390,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.03.24

8 10 15 17 21 18

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 50 Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.03.24

1 14 23 27 31

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$58,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.03.24

13 18 29 43 56 8

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.03.24

13 33 40 60 61 20

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$174,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

- 07/04/2024 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/09/2024 FREE SNAP Application Assistance 1-6pm at the Community Center
- 07/14/2024 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
- 07/17/2024 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm
- 07/17/2024 Pro Am Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/25/2024 Dairy Queen Miracle Treat Day
- 07/25/2024 Summer Downtown Sip & Shop 5-8pm
- 07/25/2024 Treasures Amidst The Trials 6pm at Emmanuel Lutheran Church
- 07/26/2024 Ferney Open Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start
- 07/27/2024 1st Annual Celebration in the Park 1-9:30pm
- 08/05/2024 School Supply Drive 4-7pm at the Community Center
- Cancelled:** Wine on 9 at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm
- 08/08/2024 Family Fun Fest 5:30-7:30pm
- 08/9-11/2024 Jr. Legion State Baseball Tournament
- 08/12/2024 Vitalant Blood Drive at the Community Center 1:15-7pm
- 09/07/2024 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 09/07-08/2024 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
- 09/08/2024 Sunflower Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
- 10/05/2024 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/11/2024 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
- 10/31/2024 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 10/31/2024 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/16/2024 Groton American Legion "Turkey Raffle" 6:30-11:30pm
- 11/28/2024 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm
- 12/01/2024 Groton Snow Queen Contest, 4:30 p.m.
- 12/07/2024 Olive Grove 8th Annual Holiday Party & Tour of Homes with Live & Silent Auctions 6pm-close
- 04/12/2025 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt at the City Park 10am Sharp
- 05/03/2025 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 05/26/2025 Memorial Day Services Groton Union Cemetery with lunch at Legion Post #39, 12pm
- 07/04/2025 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/13/2025 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
- 09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Lin Yu-ting of Taiwan clinches first Olympic medal amid outcry tied to gender misconceptions

By ALANIS THAMES AP Sports Writer

VILLEPINTE, France (AP) — Boxer Lin Yu-ting of Taiwan clinched her first Olympic medal Sunday in front of a crowd that chanted her name at the Paris Games, one day after fellow boxer Imane Khelif of Algeria secured one as well following days of online abuse and intense scrutiny about their participation.

Lin defeated Svetlana Kamenova Staneva of Bulgaria in a women's 57-kilogram quarterfinal, earning her second straight unanimous decision and advancing to the division's semifinal round to ensure she will win at least a bronze medal.

Lin and Khelif have been at the center of a clash over gender identity and regulations in sports, as critics have brought up their disqualification from the world championships last year after the banned International Boxing Association claimed they failed unspecified eligibility tests for women's competition.

Lin beat Sitora Turdibekova of Uzbekistan 5:0 in her opening fight.

There were two more quarterfinal bouts in the women's 57-kg division scheduled Sunday before the semifinal matchups are set.

Strikes on Gaza kill 12 and stabbing in Israel kills 2 as fears of wider war spike

By NATALIE MELZER and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israeli strikes early Sunday killed 12 people in Gaza, including four who were sheltering in a tent camp for displaced people inside a hospital complex, while a stabbing attack carried out by a Palestinian killed two people in a Tel Aviv suburb.

Tensions have soared following nearly 10 months of war in Gaza and the killing of two senior militants in separate strikes in Lebanon and Iran last week. Those killings brought threats of revenge from Iran and its allies and raised fears of an even more destructive regional war.

A woman in her 70s and an 80-year-old man were killed in the stabbing attack, according to Israel's Magen David Adom rescue service and a nearby hospital, and two other men were wounded. The police said the attack was carried out by a Palestinian militant, who was "neutralized," and that a search was underway for other suspects.

The rescuers said the wounded were found in three different locations, each about 500 meters (yards) apart, adding to concerns that more than one assailant was involved.

Israel has been bracing for retaliation after the killing of a senior Hezbollah commander in a strike in Lebanon and Hamas' top political leader in an attack in Iran's capital last week. Both were linked to the ongoing war in Gaza, which was triggered by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack into Israel.

In Gaza, an Israeli strike earlier on Sunday hit a tent camp housing displaced people in the courtyard of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, killing four people, including one woman, and injuring others, Gaza's Health Ministry said.

An Associated Press journalist filmed men rushing to the scene to help the wounded and retrieve bodies, while trying to extinguish the fire.

The hospital in Deir al-Balah is the main medical facility operating in central Gaza, and thousands of people have taken shelter there after fleeing their homes in the war-ravaged territory.

A separate strike flattened a house in northern Gaza, killing at least eight people, including three children, their parents and their grandmother, according to the ministry.

An Israeli strike on a school-turned-shelter in Gaza City on Saturday killed at least 16 people and wounded another 21, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which announced the toll on Sunday. Israel's military, which

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regularly accuses Palestinian militants of sheltering in civilian areas, said it struck a Hamas command center.

Israel says it tries to avoid harming civilians, but the military rarely comments on individual strikes, which often kill women and children. Gaza's Health Ministry does not differentiate between civilians and militants in its tallies.

Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took around 250 people hostage in their surprise attack into southern Israel last October.

Israel's massive offensive launched in Gaza has killed at least 39,550 Palestinians, according to the territory's Health Ministry, which does not say how many were militants. Heavy airstrikes and ground operations have caused widespread destruction and displaced the vast majority of Gaza's 2.3 million people, often multiple times.

Hezbollah has regularly traded fire with Israel along the Lebanon border since the start of the war, in what the militant group says is aimed at relieving pressure on its fellow Iran-backed ally, Hamas. The continuous strikes and counterstrikes have grown in severity in recent months, raising fears of an even more destructive regional war.

Over 590 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire in the occupied West Bank since the start of the war in Gaza, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. Most have been killed during Israeli raids and violent protests. Israel captured the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war, and the Palestinians want all three territories for their future state.

Spanish journalist or Russian spy? The mystery around Pablo González's double life

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — When Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, reporters from around the world rushed to the Polish-Ukrainian border to cover an exodus of refugees fleeing Russian bombs.

Among them was Pablo González, a freelance journalist from Spain who had been based in Poland since 2019, working for Spanish news agency EFE, Voice of America and other outlets. Warsaw-based reporters knew him as an outgoing colleague who liked to drink beer and sing karaoke into the wee hours of the morning.

Two and a half years later, he was sent to Moscow as part of a prisoner swap, leaving behind both mysteries about who he really was and concerns about how Poland handled a case in which he was accused of being a Russian agent.

In the first days of the war, González provided stand-up reports to TV viewers in Spain against a backdrop of refugees arriving at the train station in the Polish border town of Przemysl.

But less than week into the war, Polish security agents entered the room he was staying in and arrested him. They accused him of "participating in foreign intelligence activities against Poland" and said he was an agent of the GRU, Russian military intelligence.

Friends were astonished — and, as Poland held González without trial for months that turned into years, some grew skeptical and organized protests in Spain demanding his release. Authorities have never detailed the accusations.

But on Thursday evening, the burly 42-year-old with a shaved head and beard was welcomed home by President Vladimir Putin after being freed in the largest prisoner swap since the Soviet era.

His inclusion in the deal appears to confirm suspicions that González was a Russian operative using his cover as a journalist.

Born Pavel Rubtsov in 1982 in then-Soviet Moscow, González went to Spain with his Spanish mother at age 9, where he became a citizen and received the Spanish name of Pablo González Yagüe. He went into journalism, working for outlets Público, La Sexta and Gara, a Basque nationalist newspaper.

It's not clear what led Poland to arrest him. The investigation remains classified and the spokesman for the secret services told The Associated Press that he could not say anything beyond what was in a brief statement. Poland is on high alert after a string of arrests of espionage suspects and sabotage, part of

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what the authorities view as hybrid warfare by Russia and Belarus against the West.

Polish security services said Poland included him in the deal due to the close Polish-American alliance and "common security interests." In their statement, they said that "Pavel Rubtsov, a GRU officer arrested in Poland in 2022, (had been) carrying out intelligence tasks in Europe."

The head of Britain's foreign intelligence agency MI6, Sir Richard Moore, said at the Aspen Security Forum in 2022 that González was an "illegal" who was arrested in Poland after "masquerading as a Spanish journalist."

The term "illegal" refers to spies who operate under non-official cover, meaning that they don't benefit from diplomatic immunity.

"He was trying to go into Ukraine to be part of their destabilizing efforts there," Moore said.

Another hint at his activities came from independent Russian outlet Agentstvo, which reported that in 2016 Rubtsov befriended and spied on Zhanna Nemtsova, the daughter of Russian opposition leader Boris Nemtsov, who was murdered in Moscow in 2015.

Poland-based journalists who knew González said he used his base in Poland to travel to former Soviet countries including Ukraine and Georgia. He had a license to operate a drone and used it to film Auschwitz-Birkenau from the air for coverage on the 75th anniversary of the death camp's liberation in 2020.

Voice of America, a U.S.-government funded organization, confirmed that he worked briefly for them, but they have since removed any of his work from their website.

"Pablo González contributed to a few VOA stories as a freelancer over a relatively short period of time starting in late 2020," spokesperson Emily Webb said in reply to an emailed query. "As a freelancer who provided content to a number of media outlets, his services were arranged through a third-party company used by news organizations around the world."

"At no time did he have any access to any VOA systems or VOA credentials," Webb said. "As soon as VOA learned of the allegations, we removed his material."

Because Poland's justice system was politicized under a populist government that ruled from 2015-23, some activists worried about whether his rights were respected. Reporters Without Borders was among the groups that called for him to be put on trial or released.

The group stands by its position that he should not have been held that long without trial. "You are innocent until a trial proves you guilty," Alfonso Bauluz, the head of the group's office in Spain told AP on Friday. He expressed frustration at the silence around the case, and the fact that there will apparently not be a trial at all, saying Poland has not presented the evidence it has against him.

But the group also says it expects González to provide an explanation now that he is free.

Jaap Arriens, a Dutch video journalist based in Warsaw, hung out with the man he knew as Pablo in Warsaw and Kyiv, as well as in Przemysl shortly before his arrest.

Arriens described him as a friendly, funny man with a macho demeanor and a chest covered in tattoos that he once showed off in a bar.

González mostly fit in, but seemed better-off than the average freelance journalist. He always seemed to have the newest and most expensive phones and computers, working at the Poland-Ukraine border with the latest 14-inch MacBook Pro. He had plenty of money to spend in bars.

He recalled González once saying: "Life is good, life is almost too good."

"And I thought: 'Man, freelance life is never too good. What are you talking about?' I don't know any freelancer who talks like this."

González, whose grandfather emigrated from Spain to the Soviet Union as a child during the Spanish Civil War, was known as a Basque nationalist with ties to the region's independence movement.

Russia is suspected of supporting separatist movements in Spain and elsewhere in an effort to destabilize Europe.

González's wife in Spain had been advocating on his behalf during his detention in Poland, even though they were not living together at the time of his arrest.

Over the past years, supporters ran an account on Twitter, now X, to advocate for his release.

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When the Russian government announced that Pavel Rubtsov had arrived in Moscow on Thursday, the @FreePabloGonzález account tweeted: "This is our last tweet: Pablo is finally free. Endless thanks to all."

Those who have followed the case are now awaiting his next moves.

He has Spanish citizenship — and the right to return to the European Union. His wife was quoted in Spanish media saying she hopes he can return to Spain.

'We're going to survive and it's going to come back':

A year after Maui wildfire, survivors press on

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER and AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

LAHAINA, Hawaii (AP) — They have combed the ashes for mementos, worried about where they would sleep, questioned their faith and tried to find a way to grieve amid the great, unsettling devastation. Residents have faced a year of challenges, practical and emotional, since the deadliest U.S. wildfire in a century decimated the historic town of Lahaina, on Maui, on Aug. 8, 2023.

To mark the anniversary, The Associated Press interviewed seven survivors its journalists first encountered in the days, weeks or months after the fire, as well as a first responder who helped fight the flames. Among their difficulties, they also have found hope, resilience and determination: the Vietnam veteran who has helped others deal with post-traumatic stress; the Buddhist minister with a new appreciation for the sunsets from Lahaina; the college-bound teen aspiring to become a Maui firefighter himself.

Here is a series of vignettes examining some of their experiences over the past year.

Coping and staying

Even as he hid behind a seawall from the flames, Thomas Leonard knew Lahaina's wildfire was going to give him flashbacks to his service as a U.S. Marine in Vietnam 55 years ago. The exploding cars and propane tanks sounded just like mortars.

"Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom — one car after another," he said.

The nightmares started a few months later. His Veterans Administration doctor prescribed new sleeping medication.

"Thank God for the VA," he said.

The 75-year-old retired mailman learned to identify signs of post-traumatic stress disorder at a VA clinic in 2001, helping him spot and cope with new triggers. He's also helped fellow fire survivors.

"I've learned to be a really good listener on that with other people, what they're going through," he said.

His condo building is still a pile of ash and rubble. Leonard suspects it might take years to rebuild, but he's determined to see it through. He's been living in hotels and a rented condo.

"We all got to stay together here on Maui," Leonard said. "We're going to survive and it's going to come back."

Memories of gold

After Elsie Rosales arrived on Maui from the Philippines in 1999, she scrimped on a hotel housekeeper's salary. As she saved up enough to buy a five-bedroom house in Lahaina in 2014, she did allow herself a few luxuries: gold bracelets, delicate hoop earrings, things she could never have afforded if she remained in the Philippines.

Like the home — her pride, her American dream — the jewelry was a reminder of what's possible in the U.S.

It all was wiped out in the wildfire that destroyed Lahaina. When she finally was allowed back on the property, she dug through the debris for anything that survived. All she found was a broken bangle.

She used insurance money to pay off the mortgage on the house. She's now renting a two-bedroom apartment with her husband, their son and their son's girlfriend in Kahului, an hourlong bus ride from Lahaina.

On those long commutes, she reflects on how she amassed her jewelry collection, only for it to vanish.

"When I'm not working, I keep thinking about everything that burned," she said. "Especially my jewelry. Everything that I worked hard for."

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Missing the mana

Surfing off his Lahaina home always gave Ekolu Lindsey "mana," spiritual energy. The house was in his family for five generations.

He's so familiar with the area he notices when more crabs are around or fish are undersized. He has brought school groups there to teach them about the coral, seaweed and the ocean.

"My reset button is to jump in the water at home," he said.

That has been impossible since the wildfire turned his house to rubble. His property is now clear of debris but has no electricity or other utilities. Reconstruction is well off.

He's living at a friend's place on Oahu, another island, a plane ride away. He couldn't find anything in Lahaina for less than \$4,000 a month.

He returns regularly to Maui to help restore native forests, a focus of the nonprofit his father founded, Maui Cultural Lands. Sadness weighs on him as he drives the winding coastal highway to Lahaina.

State conservation officials won't allow people to enter the ocean from the burn zone. He surfs on Oahu, but it's not the same.

"You get the physical exercise," he said, but not the "rejuvenation of that mana."

The right track

As he was dying of colon cancer, Mike Vierra spent sleepless nights fretting about where his wife, Leola, and their daughter would live when he was gone. The wildfire had reduced their home of more than half a century to hardened pools of melted metal, burned wood and broken glass.

By the time he passed away in April, the answer still wasn't clear.

Leola Vierra and her daughter moved multiple times after the fire, switching hotel rooms and vacation rentals whenever the unit's owners would return.

"Everything was so unsettled," she said.

The Vierras, married 57 years, also couldn't find their beloved cat, Kitty Kai. But in February, they learned Kitty Kai had found her way to Kahului, 30 miles (48 kilometers) across the West Maui Mountains.

The reunion, while joyful, complicated their housing search. Landlords are less likely to rent to families with pets.

Not until last month did Vierra find some stability, securing a six-month lease while they wait to someday rebuild on their own property. Their new place has a yard, a sundeck and an ocean view.

"I have been so depressed ever since my husband passed, and I can feel my mind and my memory all going downhill," she said. "With this new home, I think I will be able to accept more things now, because it seems like I'm on the right track."

Cherishing sunsets

As the flames approached, Ai Hironaka and his family — wife, four children, French bulldog — crammed into his Honda Civic and drove off, leaving behind their home and the Japanese Buddhist temple where he was resident minister and caretaker.

Losing those buildings and being uprooted amid the greater devastation has tested him as a Buddhist. How should he behave as a disaster victim? What is the appropriate response when someone gives him donated clothing he doesn't want? If he feels ungrateful, he turns to the teachings of his religion.

"We all have an evil nature, self-centeredness," he said.

After moving three times in the months after the fire, he now lives across the island, nearly an hour away, at another temple, Kahului Hongwanji Mission, where he also serves as resident minister. He performs much of the same work he did at the Hongwanji Mission in Lahaina: leading ceremonies and counseling members, including fire survivors.

He returns to the site of the Lahaina temple occasionally to check the columbarium, an area for storing funeral urns, which survived. He misses the town, the beach parks, the parents on his son's high school football team.

And he misses the sunsets from Lahainaluna High School, overlooking the ocean. When he goes back now, he does not take that view for granted.

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"I have to capture that," he said, "because I cannot see this tomorrow."

From football to firefighting

Before the fire, Morgan "Bula" Montgomery was a kid who loved playing football and paddling in the ocean. College wasn't on his radar.

But the University of Hawaii offered full-ride scholarships for Lahainaluna High School graduates at any school in its system following the disaster. Montgomery thought, "Why not?"

He plans to leave Maui this fall to study fire science at Hawaii Community College on the Big Island, inspired by the devastation and the firefighters who tried to save the community.

"I want to come back to Lahaina and come back to Maui and try to be a firefighter," he said.

Montgomery's family lost their two-bedroom apartment to the fire, but also found opportunity. Montgomery and fellow Lahainaluna football captains were invited to the Super Bowl in Las Vegas this year. It was one of just a handful of times he has left Maui.

After spending time in a hotel, the family secured a rental house about an hour drive across the island. It's not convenient for his canoe paddling practices in Lahaina. But it's the biggest house they've lived in, with five bedrooms, enough for his mom and her five children.

He's a little nervous about leaving Maui but grateful for the scholarship.

"An opportunity for school or free tuition is something you've got to take advantage of," Montgomery said. 'That's what we do'

Ikaika Blackburn, an 18-year veteran of the Maui Fire Department, talks often with his crewmates about the blaze that consumed Lahaina: at the fire house kitchen table, over cups of coffee while waiting for calls or during family gatherings on days off.

His five-person crew was one of the first on the scene. There was no time to think, "no time to have these sentimental feelings," as he fought through the night. He spent a lot of time growing up with his grandparents in Lahaina. His wife is from the town. His mother-in-law lost her home.

At daybreak, it set in: "We lost Lahaina."

Blackburn and his crew spent days talking about it, "just releasing it and not holding it all in," he said. Recalling how they rushed from one part of town to the next, trying to find a way to stop it.

"For the most part, we're able to always win," he said. "We're always able to get ahead of it."

But this fire was different, uncontrollable. Firefighters and investigators from outside Maui helped him understand that his crew did all they could.

Blackburn followed his father's footsteps as a Maui fire captain. Firefighting feels like something he was born to do.

And he has kept doing it. This year's busy brushfire season hasn't triggered memories of last August, he said, because nothing compares to that fire.

"We respond to fires all the time," he said. "That's what we do."

Lahaina Strong

When wildfire struck, Jordan Ruidas couldn't sleep. Eager to help families in the 21 homes that burned, she started a Facebook fundraiser titled, "Lahaina Strong," which raised more than \$150,000.

That was in 2018.

Five years later, Ruidas and Lahaina Strong again emerged as leaders, pushing officials to control tourism and try to find enough housing for local residents after the 2023 fire destroyed thousands of buildings.

Ruidas was seven months pregnant when last year's fire destroyed Lahaina. She sometimes missed prenatal checkups. Traveling nurses at community hubs for fire survivors would check her blood pressure.

The fire spared her neighborhood and two months later she gave birth at home to a daughter, Aulia.

"I don't think I've dealt with all the emotions that came with losing Lahaina and being postpartum," she said. "I feel like I cope by staying busy with work, with Lahaina Strong."

Ruidas brought the baby along, strapped to her chest, when she helped organize a "fish-in" protest at a popular beach resort demanding more short-term rental housing be made available for survivors.

She still hasn't been able to bring herself to visit the burn zone.

"My kids will never grow up seeing or knowing the Lahaina that I grew up seeing and knowing," she said. "The Lahaina that we lost was a very special and beautiful place."

Tropical Storm Debby moving through Gulf toward Florida with hurricane warnings

MIAMI (AP) — A tropical depression strengthened into Tropical Storm Debby north of Cuba on Saturday and was predicted to become a hurricane as it moves through the Gulf of Mexico on a collision course with the Florida coast.

The National Hurricane Center said in an update posted at 2 a.m. Sunday that Debby was located about 65 miles (105 kilometers) west-northwest of Dry Tortugas National Park in Florida and about 230 miles (370 kilometers) south-southwest of Tampa. The storm was moving northwest at 14 mph (22 kph) with maximum sustained winds of 45 mph (75 kph).

Wind and thunderstorms have spread over a broad area including southern Florida, the Florida Keys and the Bahamas. A hurricane warning was in effect for sections of the state's coast with tropical storm warnings for the Florida Keys.

Debby is likely to bring drenching rain and coastal flooding to much of Florida's Gulf Coast by Sunday night and predictions show the system could come ashore as a hurricane Monday and cross over northern Florida into the Atlantic Ocean.

Forecasters warn it also could drop heavy rains over north Florida and the Atlantic coasts of Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina early next week.

Debby is the fourth named storm of the 2024 Atlantic hurricane season after Tropical Storm Alberto, Hurricane Beryl and Tropical Storm Chris, all of which formed in June.

The National Hurricane Center in Miami predicted the system will strengthen as it curves off the southwest Florida coast, where the water has been extremely warm. Intensification was expected to proceed more quickly later on Sunday.

A hurricane warning was issued for parts of the Big Bend and the Florida Panhandle, while tropical storm warnings were posted for Florida's West Coast, the southern Florida Keys and Dry Tortugas. A tropical storm watch extended farther west into the Panhandle. A warning means storm conditions are expected within 36 hours, while a watch means they are possible within 48 hours.

Tropical storms and hurricanes can trigger river flooding and overwhelm drainage systems and canals. Forecasters warned of 6 to 12 inches (150mm to 300 mm) of rain and up to 18 inches (450 mm) in isolated areas, which could create "locally considerable" flash and urban flooding. Forecasters also warned of moderate flooding for some rivers along Florida's West Coast.

Heaviest rain could be in Georgia, South Carolina

Some of the heaviest rains could actually come next week along the Atlantic Coast from Jacksonville, Florida, through coastal regions of Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. The storm is expected to slow down after making landfall.

"We could see a stall or a meandering motion around coastal portions of the southeastern United States," National Hurricane Center Director Michael Brennan said in a Saturday briefing. "So that's going to exacerbate not just the rainfall risk, but also the potential for storm surge and some strong winds."

Flat Florida is prone to flooding even on sunny days, and the storm was predicted to bring a surge of 2 to 4 feet (0.6 to 1.2 meters) along most of the Gulf Coast, including Tampa Bay, with a storm tide of up to 7 feet (2.1 meters) north of there in the sparsely populated Big Bend region.

Forecasters warned of "a danger of life-threatening storm surge inundation" in a region that includes Hernando Beach, Crystal River, Steinhatchee and Cedar Key. Officials in Citrus and Levy counties ordered a mandatory evacuation of coastal areas, while those in Hernando, Manatee, Pasco and Taylor counties called for voluntary evacuations. Shelters opened in those and some other counties.

Citrus County Sheriff Mike Prendergast estimated 21,000 people live in his county's evacuation zone. Officials rescued 73 people from storm surge flooding during last year's Hurricane Idalia. Prendergast said by phone that he hopes not to have a repeat with Debbie.

"After the storm surge does come in, we simply don't have enough first responders in our agency and among the other first responders in the county to go in and rescue everybody that might need to be

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rescued," he said.

Flood preparations underway

Gov. Ron DeSantis declared a state of emergency for 61 of Florida's 67 counties, with the National Guard activating 3,000 guard members. Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp made his own emergency proclamation on Saturday.

The White House said federal and Florida officials were in touch and FEMA "pre-positioned" resources including water and food.

In Tampa alone, officials gave out more than 30,000 sandbags to barricade against flooding.

"We've got our stormwater drains cleared out. We've got our generators all checked and full. We're doing everything that we need to be prepared to face a tropical storm," Tampa Mayor Jane Castor said.

Christina Lothrop is the general manager at Blue Pelican Marina in Hernando Beach, a barrier island about 50 miles (80 kilometers) north of St. Petersburg. She said the public ramp was jammed Saturday with people launching boats.

"Today it's kind of normal, which is kind of weird," Lothrop told The Associated Press by telephone.

Workers at her marina have been preparing since Tuesday, however, securing boats stored on racks, stowing tool boxes and tying everything down.

"Right now what we're doing is mostly tying up boats," Lothrop said.

Before closing Saturday, Lothrop planned to raise computers off the floor and sandbag and tape doors. Idalia pushed about a foot of water (30 centimeters) into the store.

Betti Silverman, whose home in Crystal River was under an evacuation order, said on Saturday afternoon that she doubted her family would leave. Silverman's waterfront home flooded during Idalia just as her family was moving in, ruining boxes and furniture in the garage. But she said the forecast for Debby didn't seem as severe.

"We've been in Florida our whole lives, in South Florida, so hurricanes are not really a big, big thing," Silverman said.

On Friday, crews pulled floating cranes away from a bridge construction project across Tampa Bay, lashing together 74 barges and 24 floating cranes and anchoring them, project engineer Marianne Brinson told the Tampa Bay Times. Crews also laid down cranes on land on their sides.

Pinellas County paused a \$5 million beach renourishment project necessitated in part by erosion from past storms.

For some, the name Debby summons bad memories of a 2012 tropical storm of the same name that caused \$250 million in losses and eight deaths, including seven in the Sunshine State. That storm dumped torrential rains, including an astronomical 29 inches (730 mm) south of Tallahassee.

More storms in the Pacific, but no threat to land

More than 750 miles (1,200 kilometers) off Mexico in the Pacific Ocean, Hurricane Carlotta continued moving westward with top sustained winds of 85 mph (140 kph). Carlotta began losing strength Saturday and is likely to dissipate into a remnant of thunderstorms.

Farther west, Tropical Storm Daniel formed in the Pacific. It was more than 1,500 miles (2,400 kilometers) from the southern tip of Baja California and was also expected to dissipate without striking land.

A year after Maui wildfire, chronic housing shortage and pricey vacation rentals complicate recovery

By GABRIELA AOUN ANGUIERA and AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

LAHAINA, Hawaii (AP) — Josephine Fraser worried her young family's next home would be a tent.

Fraser and her partner, their two sons and their dog had moved nine times in as many months, from one hotel room to another, since the deadliest U.S. wildfire in a century razed her hometown of Lahaina, on Maui. They would sometimes get just 24 hours to relocate, with no immediate word where they were headed.

Now, the Red Cross was warning that the hotel shelter program would soon end and Fraser was having

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trouble explaining to her 3-year-old why they couldn't just go home.

"He just kept asking, 'Why?'" she said. "It really broke me."

Like Fraser, thousands on Maui have faced a year of anxious uncertainty since the Aug. 8, 2023, wildfire brought apocalyptic scenes of destruction to Lahaina, the historic former capital of the Hawaiian kingdom, forcing some survivors to flee into the ocean. The fire killed at least 102 people and displaced 12,000.

Government and nonprofit groups have offered temporary solutions for displaced residents, including providing hotel rooms, leasing apartments, assembling prefabricated homes and paying people to take in loved ones.

Disaster housing experts say the effort, expected to cost more than \$500 million over two years, has been unprecedented in its cooperation among federal, state, county and philanthropic organizations toward keeping the community together.

But on a tourism-dependent island where affordable homes were in short supply even before the fire, a housing market squeezed by vacation rentals is undermining attempts to find long-term shelter for survivors even a year later.

Just about all of the 8,000 survivors put up in hotels have been moved into other accommodations, but many of those are pricey condos once rented to visitors, and they aren't near residents' jobs or their children's schools.

Work to finish developments of temporary homes has been slowed by the difficulty of clearing toxic debris, obtaining materials from thousands of miles away, blasting and grading volcanic rock and installing water, sewer and electricity lines.

Members of at least 1,500 households have already left for other islands or states, some estimates say. Locals fear more will depart if they can't find stable, affordable, convenient housing.

That's particularly painful for Hawaii, where leaders have long worried the islands are losing their culture as housing costs fuel an exodus of Native Hawaiian and other local-born residents.

"You start to change the fabric of Hawaii," said Kuhio Lewis, chief executive of the nonprofit Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement, which is involved in housing survivors. "That's what's at stake, is the future of who Hawaii is."

Gov. Josh Green told The Associated Press in an interview that the state is building transitional and long-term housing, changing laws to convert 7,000 vacation rentals to long-term rentals and swiftly settling lawsuits by fire survivors so plaintiffs can get the money they need to start rebuilding.

"Will some people leave? Of course," Green said. "But most will stay, and they'll really be able to stay if they get their settlements and can invest in their new houses."

Plaintiffs and the state reached a \$4 billion global settlement on Friday, according to court filings.

The Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement is building 16 modular units in Lahaina and 50 in Kahului, about an hour away, which kept Fraser and her family from winding up in a tent. In May, they moved into the first unit completed in Kahului, a small, white structure with two bedrooms and one bathroom.

The neighborhood remains a dusty construction site. The location is not convenient for her job as a manager at a hotel restaurant in Lahaina, but Fraser, 22, is grateful. She can cook for her kids and they can play outside.

"Everyone's choice is to move out of Lahaina, to move off-island, to move to the mainland, and that's not something that we want to do," she said. "Lahaina is our home."

Lahaina's plight highlights an important question as human-caused climate change increases the severity and frequency of natural disasters: How far should governments go to try to keep communities together after such calamities?

Shannon Van Zandt, with the Hazard Reduction and Recovery Center at Texas A&M University, said it's a worthy goal. Being a part of a community that supports its members is important not only to their livelihoods but their mental health, she said.

Jennifer Gray Thompson, the CEO of nonprofit fire-recovery initiative After The Fire, said she has worked in 18 counties that have suffered massive wildfires since 2017, when she herself lived through blazes that

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ripped through Northern California's wine country.

Thompson has never before seen the Federal Emergency Management Agency invest so heavily in keeping a community together, she said.

"Maui is the first one I've ever seen the federal government fully listen to the community ... and actually really try to do what they were asking, which was to keep people on the island," she said.

FEMA has focused on providing rentals for survivors who did not have insurance coverage for fire losses. The agency is directly leasing homes for more than 1,200 households and giving subsidies to 500 others to use on their own. Many of the rentals are in Kihei, 25 miles (40 kilometers) from Lahaina.

Still, the approach has proved tricky partly because vacation rentals and timeshares are one-quarter of the housing supply.

In October, FEMA raised its rates by 75% to entice landlords to rent to locals. The agency is now paying \$3,000 per month for a one-bedroom and more than \$5,100 for a three-bedroom. People seeking housing on their own say that has inflated the rental market more.

Frustration over the prevalence of vacation rentals after the fire prompted Maui's mayor to propose eliminating them in areas zoned for apartments. The measure is still under consideration.

FEMA also is constructing 169 modular homes next to a similar site being built in Lahaina by the state and the Hawaii Community Foundation. Residents begin moving into FEMA's development in October. The \$115 million project next to it will provide 450 homes for people who aren't eligible for FEMA; the first families arrive in the coming weeks. Residents begin moving into FEMA's development in October.

Bob Fenton, FEMA's regional administrator, told the AP the agency is even paying for survivors to fly elsewhere to live temporarily and to return when housing is ready.

"Our goal is the community's goal," Fenton said. "We've tried to do everything we can to support that."

Lucy Reardon lost the home her grandfather passed down to her and her brother. When July came, she was still living in a hotel with her partner and two children. She twice declined offers from FEMA to move off the island temporarily and provide her a car, she said, because her grandfather would have wanted her to stay.

Finally, the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement moved her and her family into a two-bedroom apartment in West Maui, in the same building as her brother and his family.

"To get that phone call was like somebody reaching out with light," Reardon said. Her daughter will be able to start kindergarten with her cousins at the school she would have attended before the fire.

The council also is paying people who take in displaced loved ones, providing \$500 a month per guest. That has been helpful for Tamara Akiona, who bought a small condo in central Maui with her husband after she lost the multigenerational home where she lived with 10 family members in Lahaina. The money has covered food and other costs since they took in her uncle, Ron Sambrano.

"Without my family, I'd probably be living on the beach or under a bridge or something," Sambrano said.

With stable housing, Fraser's family can begin finding a routine once again. She works during the day while her partner watches their sons. She returns to do dinner and baths before he leaves for his night shift as a restaurant server.

"It's awesome to have a roof, somewhere to call home," Fraser said. "At least for now, until we go back into Lahaina."

Israel kills militants in the West Bank as a nervous region watches latest on cease-fire talks

By AREF TUFAHA and JACK JEFFERY Associated Press

ZEITA, West Bank (AP) — Two Israeli airstrikes in the West Bank killed nine Palestinian militants on Saturday, Israel's army said, as violence flared again in the Israeli-occupied territory with tensions high over the war in Gaza and a potential regional escalation.

Cease-fire discussions on Gaza continued, with an Israel delegation led by the Mossad chief briefly visiting Cairo, an Egyptian official said. The U.S. has urged Israel to seize the chance for a cease-fire after the

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shock killing of Hamas' political leader in Iran, which Tehran blames on Israel.

That killing and Israel's assassination of a Hezbollah commander in Lebanon have the region holding its breath for retaliation against Israel on either front, or both, after Iran and its proxies vowed to act. Hamas said its command had begun discussions on choosing a new leader.

In the northern West Bank, the Israeli army said its forces first struck a vehicle in a rural area outside the city of Tulkarem early Saturday, killing the five occupants. The army said they were on their way to carry out an attack. Hamas identified all five as militants with the group, including a local commander.

According to an Associated Press journalist and witnesses, the blast took place along a road connecting the Palestinian villages of Zeita and Qaffin.

"We came to the site and found a young man martyred here on the street and half of his face was missing," said Taiser Abdullah, a Zeita resident. The official Palestinian news agency Wafa said four bodies were "burned and charred beyond recognition."

Later on Saturday, Israel's military said it killed four other Palestinian militants in the Tulkarem area shortly after they opened fire on Israeli troops. No further information was immediately available.

Over 590 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire in the West Bank since the Israel-Hamas war began in Gaza in October, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. Most have been killed during Israeli raids and violent protests. Tulkarem is regularly raided by Israeli forces, and Palestinian militant groups, including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, are active there.

A strike in central Gaza early Sunday hit a tent area in the courtyard of Al Aqsa Martyrs hospital, killing four people, including a woman, and injuring others, health officials said.

An Associated Press journalist filmed men rushing to the scene to help the injured and retrieve bodies, while trying to extinguish the fire. The hospital in Deir al Balah is the main medical facility operating in central Gaza, and thousands of people have taken shelter there after fleeing their homes in the war-ravaged territory.

Concerns about a full-fledged regional war are high after the assassinations of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran early Wednesday and top Hezbollah commander Fouad Shukur in Beirut the evening before.

Iran and its proxies, including Hezbollah in Lebanon, vowed to retaliate against Israel, which said it killed Shukur but has not confirmed or denied its role in Haniyeh's death. Iran's Revolutionary Guard said a short-range projectile was behind the killing and accused the United States of supporting the attack.

The Pentagon said late Friday the U.S. military will move a fighter jet squadron to the Middle East and maintain an aircraft carrier in the region. The U.S. Embassy in Lebanon encouraged citizens who wish to leave to "book any ticket available," noting that several airlines have suspended or canceled flights. The British government called on its citizens in Lebanon to "leave now." Jordan did the same.

President Joe Biden on Thursday said he had urged Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to seize the chance for a cease-fire with Hamas, adding that Haniyeh's killing had "not helped" efforts to negotiate an end to the war. Netanyahu has vowed to destroy Hamas' military and governing capabilities.

Saturday midday, an Israeli delegation led by Mossad chief David Barnea arrived in Cairo, an Egyptian official said. The delegation, which also included Ronan Bar, chief of Israel's internal security agency Shin Bet, was to meet with Abbas Kamel, head of Egypt's General Intelligence Service, for talks on the Philadelphi corridor along the border with Egypt and the Rafah crossing point, the official said.

The delegation left Cairo hours later and there was nothing new, said the Egyptian official, who has direct knowledge of the Gaza cease-fire negotiations and spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to brief reporters.

There was no immediate comment from Israeli officials. Netanyahu's office late Friday said he ordered the negotiation delegation to leave for Cairo on Saturday or Sunday.

Egypt's foreign minister had calls with counterparts in Iran and Lebanon about the "dangerous" escalation in the region.

As protesters in various countries marked 300 days of the war in Gaza and expressed support for Palestinians, the death toll inside the territory is nearing 40,000. At least 39,550 have been killed in the nearly

10 months since Hamas' brutal Oct. 7 attack on Israel. That's according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count. Israel has accused Hamas of embedding in the civilian population and putting it at risk.

In the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood in Gaza City on Saturday, witnesses told the AP an Israeli strike targeting a school killed an unspecified number of people. Israel's military said it struck a Hamas command center.

Most of Gaza's population of about 2.3 million is displaced, many people multiple times, as Israel's military returns to areas where it says Hamas militants have regrouped. Health services and sanitation have largely collapsed across the territory as hunger grows.

Families of hostages taken on Oct. 7 and others again held protests Saturday night in Israel seeking a deal to end the war. "Most of the military targets were achieved, there is no reason to continue this war," said one protester, Naama Weinberg.

Trump again tears into Georgia's Republican governor on the same day he campaigns in the state

By BILL BARROW and MEG KINNARD Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Donald Trump picked a new fight Saturday with Georgia's Republican governor as he campaigned in the key swing state where he's looking to avenge his narrow 2020 loss — a defeat he continues to blame on GOP officials for not giving into his false theories of election fraud.

Trump attacked Gov. Brian Kemp on his social media site before his rally and said Kemp should be "fighting Crime, not fighting Unity and the Republican Party." He also criticized Kemp's wife, Marty, for saying she would write in her husband's name for president this fall instead of voting for the Republican nominee.

At Saturday's rally, Trump assailed Kemp in a roughly 10-minute tirade, blaming him for his loss to Democratic President Joe Biden and for not stopping a local district attorney from prosecuting him and several associates for his efforts to overturn the results.

"He's a bad guy. He's a disloyal guy. And he's a very average governor," Trump said. "Little Brian, little Brian Kemp. Bad guy."

On X, Kemp told Trump to "leave my family out of it" and urged him to stop "engaging in petty personal insults, attacking fellow Republicans, or dwelling on the past."

Georgia is likely to see another closely contested election as both campaigns push hard in the state, with Democrats riding a new wave of enthusiasm after Biden dropped his reelection bid and endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris. To win this time, Trump will likely need the support both of Kemp's political operation and from moderate and conservative voters who aren't as committed to him as members of his base.

Going to Atlanta put Trump in the state's largest media market, including suburbs and exurbs that were traditional Republican strongholds but have become more competitive as they've diversified and grown in population. Thousands of supporters packed the same arena for a Harris rally days earlier.

Draic Coakley, a 23-year-old who works in the trucking industry and drove from Heflin, Alabama, just across the western Georgia border to attend his third Trump rally, said he believes Trump "sees people like me," while "Biden and Harris, well, are part of what I think of as the elite."

"President Trump may be a billionaire, but it's OK to be rich," Coakley said. "He gets us. He just gets us, and he gets the country."

Biden beat Trump in the state by 11,779 votes in 2020. Trump pressured Georgia's Republican Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger to "find" enough votes to change the outcome and his allies tried to present slates of so-called "fake electors" that could replace the Democratic voters Biden won.

Trump was later indicted in Georgia for his efforts to overturn the election, but the case remains on hold while courts decide whether the Fulton County district attorney can continue to prosecute it.

Kemp certified the electors that Biden won four years ago and repeatedly rejected efforts by Trump allies to replace them. He's since proven to be the rare Republican nationally who could hold his ground against Trump without sacrificing his power or popularity, with 63% of Georgians approving of his job

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performance in a June poll conducted for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Kemp won the governor's office narrowly in 2018 after garnering Trump's endorsement. But Trump backed a primary rival against Kemp in 2022 — former Sen. David Perdue, who spoke at Saturday's rally. Kemp trounced Perdue on his way to defeating Democrat Stacey Abrams, a national star in her party, by 7.5 percentage points, a veritable blowout in a battleground state.

Kemp will chair the Republican Governors Association for the 2026 election cycle, when he is leaving office. And he's widely known to be national Republicans' top choice to take on Democratic U.S. Sen. Jon Ossoff in that midterm cycle.

Kemp has said he didn't vote for anyone in this year's primary but will vote for the Republican ticket in November.

Erick Erickson, a prominent conservative host in Georgia, said of Trump, "He can't help himself."

"Donald Trump is really trying to build unity in Georgia by attacking the sitting Republican Governor whose ground game he will need to win and also that Governor's wife," Erickson wrote on X. "And if he loses, it'll be because of this stuff, not a stolen election."

Both parties are focusing on Georgia, a Sun Belt battleground that just two weeks ago, Democrats had signaled they would sideline in favor of a heavier focus on the Midwestern "blue wall" states. Biden's decision to end his campaign and endorse Harris fueled Democratic hopes of an expanded electoral map.

Trump's Republican allies have urged him to focus on issues where they see an advantage over Harris, notably the economy and immigration. Trump attacked the likely Democratic nominee on both issues — also at times swinging from policy critiques to portraying Harris as "a dumb version of Bernie Sanders," the progressive independent senator from Vermont.

Taking the stage first, Trump's running mate, Ohio Sen. JD Vance, credited Trump with "exposing a massive coverup of the president's mental incapacity" during the fateful June debate that ultimately led to Biden's exit from the 2024 campaign, before lighting into Harris as "a San Francisco liberal who is so far out of the mainstream."

The Harris campaign called out Trump before the rally for what it predicted would be a speech in which he would "deny the 2020 election results." It also criticized Trump for his announcement earlier that he would not attend a September debate that he set up with Biden's campaign before the president dropped out. Trump says he wants to debate Harris on Fox News instead.

After the rally, the Harris campaign issued a statement from former Georgia Lt. Gov. Geoff Duncan, who served alongside Kemp during the 2020 election and has since repudiated Trump.

"If you were able to see through Donald Trump's incoherence and vindictiveness tonight, you saw a Donald Trump who does not care about uniting this country or speaking to the voters who will decide this election," Duncan said in the statement. "Millions of Americans are fed up with his grievance-filled campaign focused only on himself."

Katie Ledecky swims into history with 800 freestyle victory at the Paris Olympics

By PAUL NEWBERRY AP National Writer

NANTERRE, France (AP) — Every year on Aug. 3, Katie Ledecky is reminded of her first Olympic gold medal.

She was just 15 years old, a reserved high schooler who had surprisingly made the U.S. swim team for the London Games. Then she went out and shocked the world, beating everyone in the 800-meter freestyle.

Twelve years to the day, Ledecky did it again.

Not a stunner, but one for the ages.

Gold medal No. 9.

Ledecky capped another stellar Olympics by becoming only the second swimmer to win an event at four straight Summer Games, holding off Ariarne Titmus, the "Terminator," to win the 800 free Saturday night.

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It was Ledecky's second gold medal in Paris and the ninth of her remarkable career, which marked another milestone.

She became only the sixth Olympian to reach that figure, joining swimmer Mark Spitz, track star Carl Lewis, Soviet gymnast Larisa Latynina and Finnish runner Paavo Nurmi in a tie for second place.

The only athlete to win more golds: swimmer Michael Phelps with 23.

Ledecky was very aware of the significance of the date.

"Every Aug. 3, the video (of her first Olympic gold) gets posted somewhere and you kind of reminisce," she said. "So, when I saw it was Aug. 3, I was like, 'Oh boy, I've got to get the job done.'"

That she did, going faster than her winning time in Tokyo to finish in 8 minutes, 11.04 seconds. Titmus was right on her shoulder nearly the entire race, but Ledecky pulled away in the final 100.

Titmus, who beat Ledecky in the 400 freestyle, settled for silver at 8:12.29. The bronze went to another American, Paige Madden at 8:13.00.

Phelps had been the only swimmer to win the same event at four straight Olympics, taking gold in the 200 individual medley at Athens, Beijing, London and Rio de Janeiro.

Now he's got company.

Titmus added some perspective to Ledecky's consistency over the last dozen years, noting where she was when the American won that first gold in London.

"I was in grade six in primary school," Titmus said. "That's how remarkable she is."

Their friendly rivalry has driven both to greater heights. They each won two golds and four medals at these games, which pushed Ledecky to 14 overall and left the 23-year-old Aussie with four golds and eight medals in her career.

"To think that ... I challenged her into her fourth consecutive in the 800 is pretty cool," Titmus said. "I feel very honored and privileged to be her rival, and I hope I've made her a better athlete. She has certainly made me become the athlete I am. I felt so privileged to race alongside her."

Ledecky has dominated the distance freestyle events over the last dozen years — and isn't done yet. She's made it clear she plans to keep swimming at least through the 2028 Los Angeles Games.

"It's not easy," Ledecky said. "I'll take it year by year, and we'll see if I can keep giving everything I've got for as long as I have left in me."

Another gold for Canadian teenager Summer McIntosh

Summer McIntosh stamped herself as one of the swimming stars of the Paris Olympics with her third individual gold medal, winning the 200 individual medley.

The 17-year-old Canadian chased down American Alex Walsh and held off another U.S. swimmer, Kate Douglass, to finish in an Olympic record of 2:06.56.

Douglass grabbed the silver in the star-studded final at 2:06.92, but the Americans lost the bronze when Walsh, the silver medalist in this event at Tokyo who recorded a time of 2:07.06, was disqualified because she did not finish the backstroke segment on her back.

Kaylee McKeown, who touched fourth, was bumped up to the bronze at 2:08.08.

It was a bitter blow for Walsh, whose younger sister, Gretchen, has won a gold medal and two silvers in Paris.

McIntosh set several world records ahead of the Paris Olympics, and she backed up the enormous expectations by claiming a starring role at La Defense Arena along with Léon Marchand and Ledecky.

McIntosh also won gold medals in the 200 butterfly and 400 IM, plus a silver in the 400 freestyle. She fell just 0.88 seconds — the margin of her loss to Titmus — shy of matching Marchand's four individual golds.

"It's pretty surreal," said McIntosh, who became the first Canadian athlete to win three golds in a single Olympics. "I'm just so proud of myself and how I've been able to recover and manage events."

U.S. sets world record in mixed relay

The United States made up for a disappointing showing in Tokyo by setting a world record in the 4x100 mixed medley relay.

Ryan Murphy, Nic Fink, Gretchen Walsh and Torri Huske held off China for a winning time of 3:37.43,

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breaking the mark of 3:37.58 set by Britain when it won gold in the wild and woolly event's Olympic debut three years ago.

With each team picking two men and two women, the U.S. and China both went with their male swimmers in the first two legs.

Murphy put the U.S. in front on the backstroke, China's Qin Haiyang slipped past Nic Fink on the breaststroke, but Walsh stormed back in front for the Americans on the butterfly before Huske held off Yang Junxuan to secure the gold.

For Huske, it was her second gold to go with two silvers in Paris.

The Chinese team, which also included Xu Jiayu and Zhang Yufei, took silver in 3:37.55. The bronze went to Australia in 3:38.76.

Marchand swam the breaststroke leg for France but couldn't add to his already impressive haul. The French finished fourth, more than two seconds behind the Aussies.

When the British won gold in 2021, the Americans finished fifth. Britain was seventh this time.

The U.S. bumped its total to six golds, one behind leading Australia with four events remaining Sunday. The Americans are assured of winning the overall medal count with 25.

Hungarian claims butterfly gold

Kristóf Milák of Hungary won the men's 100 butterfly, chasing down three swimmers on the return lap.

Milák was only fourth at the turn, but he rallied to touch in 49.90. Canada grabbed the silver and bronze, with Josh Liendo finishing in 49.99 and Ilya Kharun next at 50.45.

Milák had failed to defend his Olympic title in the 200 butterfly, settling for a silver behind French star Marchand.

Milák claimed silver in the 100 fly three years ago, but he didn't have to worry about the guy who beat him in that race. American Caeleb Dressel stunningly failed to qualify for the final.

Kharun added another bronze to the one he garnered in the 200 butterfly.

After smooth campaign start, Kamala Harris faces a crucial week ahead

By SEUNG MIN KIM and JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The crowds are psyched. The campaign donations are flooding in. Volunteers are showing up at field offices in droves.

After a mostly smooth two-week campaign startup, Vice President Kamala Harris is headed into a crucial week that includes her most critical decision yet — choosing a running mate — while grappling with how to keep that early political momentum alive.

Harris, a former prosecutor known for being deliberative, effectively has a deadline of Tuesday to select who will be her No. 2 from a list that has been whittled down to four governors, a senator and a Cabinet official who was also one of her 2020 foes. It's a high-pressure decision that usually spans several months, but in this case is compressed into a matter of just weeks.

From there, Harris and her running mate will launch into an aggressive, seven-state battleground tour that begins in Philadelphia on Tuesday and winds through Wisconsin, Michigan, North Carolina, Georgia, Arizona and Nevada. Her early rallies have attracted enthusiastic thousands.

Campaign officials are aware that momentum can be fleeting and are working to capitalize on the energy now, while managing expectations by continuing to emphasize the race with Republican nominee Donald Trump is tight. But the strong rollout has allowed the Harris campaign to put a number of states back in play that had been feared out of reach when President Joe Biden remained at the top of the ticket.

Harris faces new tests in the coming days as she works through key decisions — including her vice presidential pick, with the potential to disappoint elements of the coalition.

She has not faced the level of scrutiny that presidential candidates typically face. While she has kept up a busy schedule of public appearances, she has rarely taken questions from the press and has not sat for an in-depth interview. After four years advocating for Biden's positions, she'll have to stake out positions of her own on the political controversies that divide Democrats.

Harris' message is coming into clearer focus with each day. Her first television ad last week portrayed

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her as “fearless” and emphasized what has emerged as a rallying cry for her campaign: “We are not going back.”

She is also repeatedly emphasizing the concept of freedom, focusing not just on Trump as a threat to democracy but also the freedom to have an abortion and be safe from gun violence.

Meanwhile, her prosecutorial background is emerging as a central dividing line with Trump. In rallies and ads, she contrasts her record going after hardened criminals and corporate wrongdoers against Trump’s indictments, convictions and civil judgments.

Trump, for his part, is racing to define her as a soft-on-crime San Francisco liberal who was tasked with securing the border as vice president but failed. He blames her and Biden alike for inflation during their tenure. He’s also gone after her personally, questioning her intelligence and her biracial identity.

As she and her TBD running mate hit the battleground states this coming week, the vice president is planning a renewed offensive in Arizona, Nevada, North Carolina and Georgia. The Biden campaign had long named them among its key targets but had started to abandon hope there in favor of shoring up the so-called “blue wall” states of Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. Campaign manager Julie Chavez Rodriguez is now focusing more on Arizona and Nevada because of what officials say is Harris’ increased competitiveness against Trump in the two states, both of which Biden won four years ago.

“We are the underdogs in this race,” the campaign’s battleground states director, Dan Kanninen, told reporters this past week, repeating a phrase that Harris herself has stressed. “But the groundswell of support around the vice president is real, and it’s meaningful. Our task now is to translate that enthusiasm into action.”

The Harris campaign says volunteers placed 2.3 million phone calls, knocked on 172,000 doors and sent nearly 2.9 million text messages to voters in battleground states over 12 days. More than 130,000 people logged into an online organizing event with Harris and 750,000 people signed up for a campaign event for the first time, according to a memo from Kanninen.

Harris herself is remaining quiet in Washington this weekend, with interviews underway for about a half-dozen potential running mates who have effectively been auditioning publicly through media interviews. The contenders on her interview list, all white men, are Govs. Andy Beshear of Kentucky, J.B. Pritzker of Illinois, Josh Shapiro of Pennsylvania and Tim Walz of Minnesota, as well as Sen. Mark Kelly of Arizona and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, according to people with knowledge of Harris’ selection process.

Harris has revealed little about her deliberations, but she will undoubtedly lean on her own experience of being vetted and eventually chosen as Biden’s running mate four years ago. Various Democratic constituencies are fervently lobbying in favor of — or in some cases, against — some of the names on the vice presidential shortlist, based on geographic considerations, past policy stances and voter sentiment.

On Monday, Harris will formally become the Democratic nominee, when online balloting among delegates concludes. There’s no suspense there: Democratic National Committee Chairman Jaime Harrison said in a virtual meeting with supporters Friday that Harris had already secured enough delegates to become the nominee.

That hastily announced Friday online gathering at times had the feel of a telethon and was plagued with technical hiccups including audio issues — a reminder that in some ways, Harris’ campaign remains a start-up operation.

Another big moment yet to come will be a debate between Harris and Trump — or not.

The two sparred over the weekend about when and where to debate. Trump pulled out of a Sept. 10 debate on ABC in favor of a Sept. 4 debate on Fox News. Harris’ campaign says it’s sticking with the original date, and Trump posted on social media, “I’ll see her on September 4th or, I won’t see her at all.”

Firefighters continue battling massive wildfire in California ahead of thunderstorms, lightning

CHICO, Calif. (AP) — Firefighters made progress Saturday against California's largest wildfire of the year ahead of expected thunderstorms that could unleash fire-starting lightning and erratic winds and erode progress made over the past week. Dry, hot conditions posed similar threats across the fire-stricken West. "We're not completely out of the woods yet, but we're looking very, very good," CalFire official Mark Brunton said in a video update Saturday. "This is moving at a very fast pace."

Containment of the Park Fire, now California's fourth-largest wildfire on record, was at 27% as of Saturday afternoon. Brunton said the relatively milder weather the last few days allowed firefighters to build containment lines.

But hotter weather, fuels and terrain will continue posing challenges for the estimated 6,500 firefighters battling the fire, which has spread over 626 square miles (1,621 square kilometers) since allegedly being started by arson in a park in the Sierra Nevada foothills east of the Sacramento Valley city of Chico. For comparison, the city of Los Angeles covers about 503 square miles (1,302 square kilometers).

Suppression crews will also start removing damaged infrastructure in some areas Saturday. People living in the rural communities of Cohasset and Forest Ranch were told they could start returning home Saturday afternoon.

The fire originated at low elevations, where it quickly burned through thick grass and oaks, destroying at least 567 structures and damaging 51 so far. As it has climbed higher, the vegetation has changed to a greater concentration of trees and brush, Cal Fire said.

The fire's push northward has brought it toward the rugged lava rock landscape surrounding Lassen Volcanic National Park, which has been closed because of the threat. The area remains one of the biggest challenges for firefighters, Cal Fire officials said Saturday afternoon. The smoke has also prevented firefighters from deploying helicopters and other aircrafts the last few days.

"There's a lot of really steep drainages in that area," CalFire spokesperson Devin Terrill said. "It takes a lot more time to access those areas."

After a brief respite, firefighters are now bracing for treacherous conditions of hot and dry weather, along with expected thunderstorms with potential thunder strikes and gusty winds.

The collapse of thunderstorm clouds can blow wind in any and all directions, said Jonathan Pangburn, a fire behavior analyst with Cal Fire. "Even if there's not lightning per se, it is very much a safety-watch-out environment for our firefighters out there," Pangburn said.

The Park Fire is among almost 90 large fires burning across the western U.S. Evacuation orders were in effect for 22 of the fires, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

Crews made progress Saturday against three major fires burning in Colorado near heavily populated areas north and south of Denver, with containment figures improving and some evacuation orders lifted. One of the fires was being investigated as arson. About 50 structures had been damaged or destroyed, about half of them homes, and one person was found dead in a burned home earlier in the week.

The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office is investigating a blaze threatening hundreds of homes near the Colorado city of Littleton as arson.

Karlyn Tilley, a spokesperson for Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, said the investigation is ongoing, and investigators are using a dog specially trained to sniff out sources and causes of fires. Tilley said just because they suspect the fire was human-caused doesn't mean it was intentional.

Firefighters were making good progress on the fire despite the steep, rocky terrain and blistering heat, and no houses had been burned, officials said.

The cause and origin of a fatal blaze west of the town of Lyons was being probed by the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, with specially trained fire investigators from the agency helping local authorities, agency spokesperson Crystal McCoy said. The area blackened by that fire remained relatively unchanged after it burned five houses.

The largest of the Colorado fires, west of Loveland, grew to 14.9 square miles (38.5 square kilometers)

after previously burning 49 homes and other structures. Its cause is under investigation.

Scientists say extreme wildfires are becoming more common and destructive in the U.S. West and other parts of the world as climate change warms the planet and droughts become more severe.

Opposition leader joins rally calling for Venezuela presidential election results to be overturned

By FABIOLA SÁNCHEZ Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Thousands of people rallied in the streets of Venezuela's capital Saturday, waving the national flag and singing the national anthem in support of an opposition candidate they believe won the presidential election by a landslide.

Authorities have declared President Nicolás Maduro the winner of last Sunday's election but have yet to produce voting tallies to prove he won. Maduro also urged his backers to attend his own "mother of all marches" later Saturday in Caracas.

The government arrested hundreds of opposition supporters who took to the streets in the days after the disputed poll, and the president and his cadres have threatened to also lock up opposition leader, María Corina Machado, and her hand-picked presidential candidate, Edmundo González.

On Saturday, supporters chanted and sang as Machado arrived at the rally in Caracas. Ecstatic, they crushed around her as she climbed onto a raised platform on a truck to address the crowd.

"After six days of brutal repression, they thought they were going to silence us, intimidate or paralyze us," she told them. "The presence of every one of you here today represents the best of Venezuela."

Machado, who has been barred by Maduro's government from running for office for 15 years, had been in hiding since Tuesday, saying her life and freedom are at risk. Masked assailants ransacked the opposition's headquarters on Friday, taking documents and vandalizing the space.

On Saturday, she held aloft a Venezuelan flag and promised that the government whose policies forced millions of Venezuelans to leave was finally coming to an end.

"We have overcome all the barriers! We have knocked them all down," Machado said. "Never has the regime been so weak."

González, who remains in hiding, was not seen at the event, and when the rally ended, Machado was given a non-descript shirt and whisked away on the back of a motorcycle.

Carmen Elena García, a 57-year-old street vendor was at the rally even though she feared a government crackdown.

"They have to respect me and they have to respect all the Venezuelans who voted against this government," García said. "We will not accept them stealing our votes. They have to respect our votes."

A column of pro-government motorcycle riders, who have served as militia for Maduro in the past, rode near the opposition rally, but there were no confrontations. There was only a light police presence.

The Organization of American States on Saturday called for "reconciliation and justice" in Venezuela, saying "let all Venezuelans who express themselves in the streets find only an echo of peace, a peace that reflects the spirit of democracy."

Later Saturday, thousands of government supporters gathered before Maduro's office at the Miraflores national palace. Wearing red caps and shirts — the color of Maduro's party — they danced and listened to folk songs. There were fewer national flags, and a lot of umbrellas against the burning Caracas sun.

In a long, rambling speech fueled by many cups of coffee, Maduro shouted, whistled, sang and cracked jokes, weaving from pop culture to religious references. He repeated his threat to arrest and jail more opponents, including González, but also called for reconciliation and peace.

"There is room in Venezuela for everyone," he said, calling it "the blessed land of opportunity."

Machado and González, a 74-year-old former diplomat, said tally sheets they obtained from voting machines in polling centers nationwide show Maduro clearly lost his bid for a third six-year term.

An Associated Press analysis Friday of vote tally sheets released by the opposition coalition indicates that Gonzalez won significantly more votes in the election than the government has claimed, casting serious

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doubt on the official declaration that Maduro won.

Late Friday, Venezuela's high court, the Supreme Justice Tribunal, ordered the Maduro-controlled National Electoral Council to hand over the precinct vote count sheets in three days. There have been calls from multiple governments, including Maduro's close regional allies, for Venezuela's electoral authorities to release the precinct-level tallies, as it has after previous elections.

The AP processed almost 24,000 images of tally sheets, representing the results from 79% of voting machines. Each sheet encoded vote counts in QR codes, which the AP programmatically decoded and analyzed, resulting in tabulations of 10.26 million votes.

According to the calculations, the González received 6.89 million votes, nearly half a million more than the government says Maduro won. The tabulations also show Maduro received 3.13 million votes from the tally sheets released.

By comparison, the National Electoral Council said Friday that based on 96.87% of tally sheets, Maduro had won 6.4 million votes and Gonzalez had 5.3 million. National Electoral Council President Elvis Amoroso attributed the delay in filing complete results to attacks on the "technological infrastructure."

The tally sheets, known in Spanish as "actas," are lengthy printouts that resemble shopping receipts. They have long been considered the ultimate proof of election results in Venezuela.

The AP could not independently verify the authenticity of the 24,532 tally sheets provided by the opposition. The AP successfully extracted data from 96% of the provided vote tallies, with the remaining 4% of images too poor to parse.

The Biden administration has thrown its support firmly behind the opposition. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken released a statement Thursday citing "overwhelming evidence that González was the victor and discrediting the National Electoral Council's official results."

González posted a message on X thanking the U.S. "for recognizing the will of the Venezuelan people."

Maduro said Friday that the U.S. should stay out of Venezuela's politics.

Venezuela sits atop the world's largest proven crude reserves and once boasted Latin America's most advanced economy, but it entered into a free fall marked by 130,000% hyperinflation and widespread shortages after Maduro took the helm in 2013. More than 7.7 million Venezuelans have fled the country since 2014, the largest exodus in Latin America's recent history.

U.S. oil sanctions have only deepened the misery, and the Biden administration — which had been easing those restrictions — is now likely to ramp them up again unless Maduro agrees to some sort of transition.

There has been a flurry of diplomatic efforts by Brazil, Colombia and Mexico to convince Maduro to allow an impartial audit of the vote. On Thursday, the governments of the three countries issued a joint statement calling on Venezuela's electoral authorities "to move forward expeditiously and publicly release" detailed voting data.

Some activists step up criticism of Shapiro and Kelly as Harris closes in on naming a running mate

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats have unified with remarkable speed behind Vice President Kamala Harris as she has taken over the top of the party's ticket heading into the November presidential election.

It may be another story when it comes to a running mate.

As Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro and Arizona Sen. Mark Kelly have emerged as among the possible finalists, both have faced criticism from some organizations and activists who might otherwise be supportive of Democratic causes, potentially undermining the party's newfound unity barely two weeks after Harris entered the race.

The vice president's team says she is interviewing six possible choices over the weekend before an announcement expected Monday. The next day, she and her running mate will appear together at a rally in Philadelphia, then visit six more swing states.

In addition to Shapiro and Kelly, Harris is said to be considering Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, Illinois Gov.

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J.B. Pritzker and Gov. Andy Beshear of Kentucky and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg.

Walz changed his weekend travel plans, but his office didn't answer a question Saturday about whether it was for an interview with Harris. "The governor's schedule has changed, and he is no longer traveling to New Hampshire this weekend," Walz spokesman Teddy Tschann said.

Some congressional Democrats have promoted Kelly, a former Navy pilot and astronaut whose state has more than 370 miles of border with Mexico. They say his selection could help defuse attacks by the Republican nominee, former President Donald Trump, who argues that Biden administration's immigration policies are too relaxed.

Shapiro has high-profile supporters, too, including Philadelphia Mayor Cherelle Parker. She caused a stir by posting a video Friday depicting several Philadelphia-area officials and Democrats promoting Harris, but also playing up Shapiro as her running mate — appearing to suggest that the mayor had inside knowledge about Harris' decision.

But a person with knowledge of the mayor's thinking said the video was simply a case of Parker showing support for both Harris and the potential that Shapiro, Parker's friend, would be the vice presidential pick. The person was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Both Kelly and Shapiro have also seen their detractors become more vocal as Harris' closes in on a decision.

While that may not ultimately sway Harris, it is an indication that the honeymoon period for the vice president, where the distinct wings of the Democratic Party coalesced behind her, may be ending in the less than two weeks since President Joe Biden abandoned his reelection bid and endorsed her.

Some labor groups have criticized Kelly, saying he opposes proposed legislation they argue would boost union organizing. The senator's office counters that while he did not co-sponsor the proposed legislation, he has said he would vote for it on the floor.

Still, Shawn Fain, president of the United Auto Workers, said that despite backing Harris for president, his 370,000-member union is not supporting Kelly as a potential running mate. Fain also said the union does not favor Shapiro, who has previously proved willing to join with Republicans in calls to expand voucher programs that allow public tax dollars to flow to private schools.

Fain did single out Beshear, Walz and Pritzker for praise.

"She's probably got a thousand people telling her the same thing, you know, of what they think," Fain said in an interview. "And so she's got to make the decision based off of what she feels is, you know, is best for her."

The nonprofit Institute for Middle East Understanding has been publicly vocal, saying in a statement that Shapiro "is not the right candidate for the job, and selecting him would be a step in the wrong direction."

Shapiro, who says he plans to be at Harris' rally Tuesday in Philadelphia, has aggressively confronted what he views as antisemitism cropping up from pro-Palestinian demonstrations and he has professed solidarity with Israel in its drive to eliminate Hamas as it Israel battles the militants in Gaza.

Shapiro called out universities for not acting quickly to tackle antisemitism and he became a prominent critic of the University of Pennsylvania's president, Liz Magill. She resigned after testifying at a congressional hearing where she was unable to say under repeated questioning that calls on campus for the genocide of Jews would violate the school's conduct policy.

Shapiro has also criticized Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, while suggesting that any end to the Israel-Hamas war requires the removal of Hamas from power.

The governor has been criticized by the Council on American-Islamic Relations for not condemning Israel for the killing of civilians in Gaza or for not calling for Israel to stop the fighting in the territory. Shapiro has countered that he has met with Muslim Americans and understands their pain.

The progressive activist organization RootsAction.org opposes Shapiro's views on Israel, school vouchers and the environment, among other issues. It says that in considering Shapiro, Harris "has set off alarm bells among young people, racial justice organizers, Arab Americans, Muslims and others whose votes and campaign activism were crucial to defeating Trump four years ago."

Meanwhile, The Philadelphia Inquirer resurfaced an opinion article Shapiro wrote in 1993 as a 20-year-old college student at the University of Rochester where he said peace “will never come” to the Middle East and that Palestinians were “too battle-minded” to coexist with Israel.

Asked about it, Shapiro responded, “I was 20” adding that he long has supported a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

“It is my hope that we can see a day where peace will reign in the Middle East,” he said.

Also opposing Shapiro are some environmental leaders and residents of the rural town of Dimock, Pennsylvania. They have drafted a letter to Harris urging her not to choose Shapiro and charging that the governor failed to keep his promises to clean up area groundwater contaminated by natural gas production via hydraulic fracturing.

Warren Buffett surprises by slashing Berkshire Hathaway’s longtime Apple stake in second quarter

By JOSH FUNK AP Business Writer

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Billionaire Warren Buffett slashed Berkshire Hathaway’s massive Apple stake in a move that could prove unsettling for the broader stock market — both because the investor is so revered and because there had been little positive financial news lately.

Just two years ago Buffett called the stock one of the four giants of his conglomerate’s business alongside Berkshire insurance, utility and BNSF railroad businesses that it owns outright. That gave investors the impression that Buffett might hold onto Apple indefinitely as he has with the Coca-Cola and American Express shares he bought decades ago.

However, he has trimmed the Apple stake over the past year and has recently also sold off some of his stock in Bank of America and Chinese EV maker BYD while doing very little buying.

As a result, Buffett is now sitting on nearly \$277 billion in cash, up from what was already a record \$189 billion just three months earlier.

“This could alarm the markets especially given the news from last week” with weak tech earnings, a disappointing jobs report and uncertainty about the future of interest rates, Edward Jones analyst Jim Shanahan said.

Buffett has consistently lavished praise on Apple CEO Tim Cook, who attended Berkshire’s annual meeting in Omaha in May, and talked about the way consumers are feverishly devoted to their iPhones and don’t like to switch. He did trim more than 10% of Berkshire’s Apple stake in the first three months of this year when he sold off more than 116 million shares, but the sale disclosed Saturday was a much bigger move.

Wedbush tech analyst Dan Ives said in a research note that he thinks “Buffett is a core believer in Apple and we do not view this as a smoke signal for bad news ahead.” Apple remains the largest investment in Berkshire’s portfolio by far — more than double its Bank of America stake.

Ives said he thinks the recent tech sell-off is only a temporary distraction from the industry’s long-term boom.

Berkshire didn’t give an exact count of its Apple shares in Saturday’s report, but it estimated the investment was worth \$84.2 billion at the end of the second quarter even though shares soared over the summer as high as \$237.23. At the end of the first quarter, Berkshire’s Apple stake was worth \$135.4 billion.

Shanahan estimates that Berkshire still holds about 400 million Apple shares.

Still, while CFRA Research analyst Cathy Seifert said she looks at the Apple sale more as responsible portfolio management because the tech giant had become such a large portion of Berkshire’s holdings, it does look like Buffett may be preparing for a downturn.

“This is a company girding itself for a weaker economic climate,” Seifert said.

Berkshire reported a small drop in its bottom-line earnings because of a drop in the paper value of its investments. The company said it earned \$30.348 billion, or \$21,122 per Class A share, during the second quarter. That’s down from \$35.912 billion, or \$24,775 per A share, a year ago.

Buffett has long cautioned investors that it’s better to look at Berkshire’s operating earnings when judg-

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ing its performance because those figures exclude investment gains and losses which can vary widely from quarter to quarter.

By that measure, Berkshire's operating earnings grew more than 15% to \$11.598 billion, or \$8,072.16 per Class A share, from \$10.043 billion, or \$6,928.40 per Class A share, a year ago. Geico led the improvement of Berkshire's businesses while many of its other companies that are more sensitive to the economy reported lackluster results.

The results easily topped the \$6,530.25 earnings per share that four analysts surveyed by FactSet Research predicted.

Berkshire owns an assortment of insurance businesses along with BNSF railroad, several major utilities and a varied collection of retail and manufacturing businesses, including brands like Dairy Queen and See's Candy.

Trump says he'll skip an ABC debate with Harris in September and wants them to face off on Fox News

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

CHAPIN, S.C. (AP) — Donald Trump says he is pulling out of a scheduled September debate with Vice President Kamala Harris on ABC and wants them to face off on Fox News, making it increasingly unlikely that the candidates will confront each other on stage before the November election.

In a series of Truth Social posts late Friday, the Republican nominee and former president said his agreement to a Sept. 10 debate on ABC "has been terminated" because he will no longer face Democratic President Joe Biden, who ended his campaign last month after a disastrous performance in their first debate.

Trump now says he will appear on Fox News on Sept. 4 in Pennsylvania with rules that he called "similar" to his debate with Biden, but with a full audience instead of a mostly empty studio. Trump said that if Harris, the likely Democratic nominee, does not agree to the new network and date, he will do a "major Town Hall" with Fox News.

Michael Tyler, a Harris spokesperson, said Trump "is running scared and trying to back out of the debate he already agreed to and running straight to Fox News to bail him out."

It was not immediately clear whether ABC would turn its Sept. 10 event into a Harris town hall in Trump's absence. Tyler said Harris is committed to the time slot and would appear "one way or the other to take the opportunity to speak to a prime time national audience."

In a subsequent Truth Social post on Saturday afternoon, Trump said of Harris, "I'll see her on September 4th or, I won't see her at all."

Trump has gone back and forth on debating with Harris since she entered the presidential race. He had told reporters he felt an obligation to debate but also said in a recent Fox News interview that he thought Americans "already know everything" about both candidates Harris has pressed Trump to keep the commitment he made when Biden was in the race. Noting Trump's criticisms of her, Harris dared him recently to "say it to my face."

In his Truth Social posts, Trump also cited his litigation against ABC News as "a conflict of interest" in his participation in the network's debate. Trump sued the network in March following an assertion by anchor George Stephanopoulos that Trump had been found "liable for rape." A New York jury found Trump liable for sexually abusing advice columnist E. Jean Carroll but rejected her claim that she was raped.

But Trump agreed, two months after filing his lawsuit, to the Sept. 10 debate on ABC, as well as the June 27 debate on CNN that helped knock Biden out of the race. David Muir and Linsey Davis, not Stephanopoulos, are set to be ABC's debate moderators.

Trump has skipped debates before, including all the 2024 Republican presidential primary debates.

Algerian boxer Imane Khelif clinches medal at Olympics after outcry fueled by gender misconceptions

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

VILLEPINTE, France (AP) — Boxer Imane Khelif of Algeria clinched a medal at the Paris Olympics in an emotional fight Saturday that followed days of sharp scrutiny and online abuse as misconceptions about her gender exploded into a larger clash about identity in sports.

Khelif defeated Anna Luca Hamori of Hungary 5:0 in the quarterfinals of the women's 66-kilogram division. Khelif will win at least a bronze medal after she comfortably earned the second victory of her tumultuous second trip to the Olympics.

Khelif faced outcry fueled by claims from the International Boxing Association, which has been banned from the Olympics since 2019, that she failed an unspecified eligibility test to compete last year over elevated levels of testosterone. She won her opening bout at the Paris Games on Thursday when opponent Angela Carini of Italy tearfully abandoned the fight after just 46 seconds.

That unusual ending became a sharp wedge to drive into an already prominent divide over gender identity and regulations in sports, drawing comments from the likes of former U.S. President Donald Trump, "Harry Potter" writer J.K. Rowling and others falsely claiming Khelif was a man or transgender.

At a Paris Games that has championed inclusion and seen other outcry over an opening ceremony performance featuring drag queens, LGBTQ+ groups say the hateful comments could pose dangers to their community and female athletes.

Khelif's second win in Paris appeared to be an emotional catharsis for the 25-year-old boxer from a village in northwest Algeria. After her hand was raised in victory, Khelif went to the center of the ring, waved to her fans, knelt and then slammed her palm on the canvas, her smile turning to tears.

She left the ring to hug her coaches while her fans roared, weeping during their embrace and as she walked out. Back home in Algeria, her family and fans watched with pride as she won her second bout.

"I am happy for my daughter. She is courageous despite racist and sexist attacks to break her," her mother, Irene, said on Algerian television.

Hungary's boxing association said Friday that it planned to contest the matchup with the International Olympic Committee but still let the fight go ahead. After the bout, Hungarian IOC member Balazs Furjes said alongside Hamori that she was adamant that it was "never an option ... not to fight."

"I'm so proud of myself, because I had to fight, and I like to fight," said Hamori, who won two fights earlier in Paris. "This was a hard fight, but I think I got to do everything I wanted for the fight, and I think in this fight, I'm so proud of myself, and I'm so grateful to be here. This was really a childhood dream."

Furjes read an equivocal statement in which he praised both Hamori and the IOC while indicating Hungary wasn't completely content.

"We, Hungarians, are always ready to fight bravely, and fiercely, and that's what Luca has just done and showed us," Furjes said. "Of course, the Paris box competitions have their consequences. These consequences must be carefully evaluated after the Games."

Khelif stopped briefly to speak to an Algerian television crew, then walked straight to the dressing room without stopping for dozens of waiting reporters.

IOC President Thomas Bach earlier Saturday defended Khelif and fellow boxer Lin Yu-ting of Taiwan. Khelif and Lin were disqualified in the middle of last year's world championships by the IBA, the former governing body of Olympic boxing, after what it claimed were failed eligibility tests.

Both had competed in IBA events for several years without problems, and the Russian-dominated body — which has faced years of clashes with the IOC — has refused to provide any information about the tests, underscoring its lack of transparency in nearly every aspect of its dealings, particularly in recent years.

"Let's be very clear here: We are talking about women's boxing," Bach said Saturday. "We have two boxers who are born as a woman, who have been raised a woman, who have a passport as a woman, and who have competed for many years as women. And this is the clear definition of a woman. There was never any doubt about them being a woman."

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The IBA, which is led by an acquaintance of Russian President Vladimir Putin, disqualified Khelif last year and called information about the tests confidential.

"What we see now is that some want to own the definition of who is a woman," Bach said. "And there I can only invite them to come up with a scientific-based new definition of who is a woman; and how can somebody being born, raised, competed and having a passport as a woman cannot be considered a woman?" "We will not take part in a sometimes politically motivated cultural war," he added.

Against Hamori on Saturday, Khelif fought aggressively from the opening bell, snapping a crisp left jab while the fighters circled. Her fans chanted her first name repeatedly midway through the opening round, and she won on all five judges' cards.

She showed her sharp skill while stalking Hamori in the second round, working behind the jab and catching Hamori repeatedly with short right hands along with an occasional combination to win the second round unanimously. Hamori landed several significant shots of her own and never appeared shaken by Khelif's power, which wasn't really considered remarkable in her weight division before this week.

The referee deducted a point from Khelif midway through the third round when both fighters fell to the canvas from a clinch with Khelif on top. Hamori then received a warning for punches to the back of the head, and she fell again from a clinch 10 seconds before the bell.

The exhausted fighters had a halfhearted hug after the bell, but they touched fists and exchanged warm smiles right before the verdict was announced. They touched hands again when Khelif held down the ropes to allow Hamori to leave the ring in a traditional boxing gesture of sportsmanship.

Khelif, who failed to medal at the Tokyo Games three years ago, will face Janjaem Suwannapheng of Thailand in the 66-kg semifinals Tuesday at Roland Garros. A silver medalist at last year's world championships, Suwannapheng upset defending Olympic champion Busenaz Surmeneli of Turkey a few minutes before Khelif's victory.

As for Lin, also a two-time Olympian, she would clinch her first medal Sunday if she beats Svetlana Staneva of Bulgaria. Lin won her opening bout Friday comfortably over Sitora Turdibekova of Uzbekistan.

The reduced field at the Paris Olympics boxing tournament — which has the fewest number of total boxers since 1956 — means that many fighters can clinch medals with just two victories. Boxing awards two bronze medals in each weight class, which means every semifinalist wins a medal.

The Olympic sport reached gender parity for the first time in Paris, inviting 124 men and 124 women just 12 years after women's boxing made its Olympic debut.

Simone Biles doesn't rule out the 2028 Olympics after winning the gold in vault. 'Never say never'

By WILL GRAVES AP National Writer

PARIS (AP) — Simone Biles is getting kind of old for this. Just maybe not too old to keep going. Maybe.

Minutes after the American gymnastics star won the seventh Olympic gold of her career on Saturday in a vault final that left little doubt that even at 27 she remains in a class by herself, she played coy when asked if the event marked the final time she would ever explode off the springboard in competition.

While Biles allowed she was officially retiring her eponymous Yurchenko double pike vault because "I kind of nailed that one" at the Paris Olympics, she didn't rule out a return to the Games when they move to Los Angeles in 2028.

"Never say never," Biles said. "Next Olympics are at home. So you just never know. I am getting really old."

At times, it's hard to tell.

Her sequined red leotard a blur in the air, Biles averaged 15.300 on her two vaults to claim a second gold in the event eight years after she triumphed in Rio de Janeiro.

Three years ago in the run-up to Tokyo she tinkered with the Yurchenko double pike, the hardest vault ever done by a woman, but she didn't get a chance to throw it in the Olympics. She opted instead for an

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Amanar, which requires 2 1/2 twists.

That changed in the team final, when the “twisties” she’d been experiencing forced her to bail out of an Amanar and multiple event finals, forever altering the course of her career.

The experience left both Biles and co-coach Laurent Landi a little “traumatized,” as Biles put it. They both agreed there was no need to revisit the Amanar while preparing for Paris.

Yet rather than opt for something easier, they chose something even more difficult. Fitting for an athlete who needs to be challenged to stay engaged.

The Yurchenko double pike requires Biles to race down the runway before doing a roundoff/back hand-spring onto the table followed by two backward flips with her arms clasped behind her knees.

Over the last year, she has mastered it. It became the fifth element named after her in the sport’s Code of Points when she did it at the 2023 world championships.

On the surface, she makes it look easy. Underneath, it actually makes her anxious. Power isn’t the only thing the YDP requires. Control is important, too. Go in too hard and you might land on your back. Too little, and you come up short and crunch your ankles and just about everything else.

Landi pantomimed “calm down” before Biles saluted the judges, then watched her do what the woman who describes herself as “Simone Biles from Spring, Texas, who flips” does as well as any gymnast — male or female — has ever done.

She flew. She soared off the table and landed with a big bounce — a nod to the energy she generates — with her right foot on the out-of-bounds line.

The judges dinged her a tenth of a point for that. It hardly mattered.

Her score of 15.700 meant she merely needed to avoid disaster on her second vault to win. Instead, she almost stuck her Cheng, which requires a roundoff onto the springboard, and a half twist onto the block followed by 1 1/2 twists while doing a forward somersault. The 14.9 she received meant the fight for gold was over.

Rebeca Andrade of Brazil, who finished runner-up to Biles in the all-around final on Thursday, edged American Jade Carey for silver. Not that Carey was complaining. Three years after tripping during the vault final and finishing last, Carey achieved the “redemption” she was looking for when she pointed to an Olympic return.

“I wanted to prove to myself that I can do two vaults in the final,” Carey said. “(To) walk away with the medal is really special for me.”

Carey’s Olympics are over. Biles’ are not. She will have two more chances to boost her medal haul in Paris in the balance beam and floor exercise finals on Monday.

Biles has 10 career medals, tied for the third most by a female gymnast in Olympic history. Two more before she heads back to Texas and she would find herself all alone in second behind Larisa Latynina, who piled up 18 while competing for the Soviet Union in the 1950s and ’60s.

Catching Latynina seems unlikely. Not that it matters much to the “Greatest of All Time.” She’s gained something far more valuable anyway: silence.

Funny how the critics who pounced on her after Tokyo suddenly find themselves speechless after watching her win her third gold medal in Paris.

“They’re really quiet now,” she said with a touch of sarcasm, “so that’s strange.”

A first for Ireland

Rhys McClenaghan delivered Ireland’s first medal in Olympic gymnastics by edging Nariman Kurbanov of Kazakhstan and American star Stephen Nedoroscik in a taut pommel horse final.

The two-time world champion knew he drilled his set, fighting back tears as he dismounted. He couldn’t stop them from falling after his massive score of 15.533 points flashed.

“I always felt like it was going to happen, I just wasn’t sure when,” McClenaghan said. “It feels like a dream.”

Nedoroscik — now known almost universally back home as “Pommel Horse Guy” after going viral while helping the U.S. earn bronze in the team final — was excellent but couldn’t quite match McClenaghan.

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Instead, he'll have to settle for heading home with two Olympic medals and newfound fame.

A first for the Philippines, too

Carlos Yulo won the second Olympic gold medal ever for the Philippines, edging defending champion Artem Dolgopyat of Israel in the men's floor exercise finals.

The 24-year-old Yulo scored 15.000, just ahead of Dolgopyat, the defending champion at 14.966. Jake Jarman of Britain claimed the bronze with a 14.933.

Yulo stuck his triple-twisting dismount during his final tumbling pass. He stuck his arms out and roared inside a packed Bercy Arena before walking off the podium.

US rolls into Olympic quarterfinals as No. 1 seed, top Puerto Rico 104-83 in group finale

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

VILLENEUVE-D'ASCQ, France (AP) — Halfway to its goal of gold, the U.S. has the No. 1 seed going into the medal round at the Paris Olympics.

And now the real games start.

Anthony Edwards scored 26 points, six players reached double figures for the U.S. and the Americans wrapped up the top spot coming out of group play by rolling past Puerto Rico 104-83 on Saturday. A huge second-quarter run was the difference for the U.S., which is trying to medal for the 20th time in 20 Olympic appearances.

"I think we got done what we wanted to accomplish, winning all three games and securing the top seed," U.S. coach Steve Kerr said. "We know we have to play better. Part of this tournament is it gets harder as you go. Our goal is just to try to get better each game."

The Americans — 3-0 in these Olympics, 8-0 so far this summer — will see Brazil in the win-or-go-home quarterfinals in Paris on Tuesday.

"We better be ready to go," U.S. forward LeBron James said.

Joel Embiid scored 15 points for the U.S. Kevin Durant scored 11 points for the U.S. to get within five of matching Lisa Leslie for the all-time Olympic scoring record for the U.S.; he's at 483, and Leslie finished her career with 488 in Olympic play.

James finished with 10 points, eight assists and six rebounds in 18 minutes. Jayson Tatum had 10 points and 10 rebounds while Anthony Davis scored 10 for the U.S., which sat Jrue Holiday for precautionary reasons because of an ankle that he rolled in the Americans' win over South Sudan on Wednesday. Holiday will play in Tuesday's quarterfinals, Kerr said.

Jose Alvarado led Puerto Rico (0-3) with 18 points. Ismael Romero scored 12 and Aleem Ford finished with 10.

It was the first Olympic matchup between the nations since the Athens Games in 2004, when Puerto Rico ran away in the second quarter and went on to embarrass the U.S. 92-73 in what was James' debut in the tournament.

Little different story this time.

That day in Athens, Puerto Rico won the second quarter 28-7. This time, the U.S. won the second quarter 39-16. Give Puerto Rico credit; a team that came into Saturday knowing it was eliminated from contention took an eight-point lead late in the first quarter and still led 37-36 with 5:45 left in the half.

The rest of the half: U.S. 28, Puerto Rico 8. The run was quick and decisive.

"I think our talent took over in the second quarter and we started to wear them down," Kerr said. "Our defense kicked in and we had a great quarter, which opened up the game."

James had all six of his first-half assists during that burst and the Americans took a 64-45 lead into the break. He finished the flurry with a dunk in the final seconds, ran by his 2004 Athens teammate Dwyane Wade — now commentating for NBC, sitting courtside — while yelling something with a big smile and from there the countdown to wrapping up the No. 1 seed was officially on.

As would be expected, really.

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It's been three games, three easy wins for the Americans so far in France: a 26-point opening victory over Serbia, a 17-point win over South Sudan to clinch the top spot in Group C, and then Saturday's game against Puerto Rico that once it got one-sided it stayed that way.

And in every game so far in France, it has been someone new leading the way, at least on the scoring front. Against Serbia, Durant had 23 and James had 21. Against South Sudan, Bam Adebayo scored 18. On Saturday, it was Edwards getting 26.

That's by design.

"It's weird because Ant goes off tonight, Bam went off the other night, KD the night before that, Bron's been consistent the whole time," U.S. guard Stephen Curry said. "Everybody else, you find your place with where shots are coming from. It's not like anybody is taking over every possession. So it's just a matter of staying locked in. You might touch the ball once or twice in a quarter, but you've got to be ready to take advantage of it."

Horror at deaths of 12 children unites Druze across borders. But Mideast's wars tear at their bonds

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB and MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

FARDIS, Lebanon (AP) — Alma Ayman Fakhr al-Din, a lively 11-year-old who loved basketball and learning languages, was playing on a soccer field a week ago in Majdal Shams, a Druze town in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, when the rocket hit.

Running to the site, her father Ayman pleaded with emergency workers for information about his daughter. "Suddenly I went to the corner, I saw such a tiny girl in a bag," he said. He recognized her shoes, her hand. "I understood that that's it, nothing is left, she's gone." She was among 12 children and teens killed.

The shocking bloodshed unified the Druze across the region in grief — and laid bare the complex identity of the small, insular religious minority, whose members are spread across Israel, the Golan Heights, Lebanon and Syria.

Who are the Druze?

The Druze religious sect began as a 10th-century offshoot of Ismailism, a branch of Shiite Islam. Outsiders are not allowed to convert, and most religious practices are shrouded in secrecy. There are just one million Druze — more than half of them in Syria, around 250,000 in Lebanon, 115,000 in Israel and 25,000 in the Golan Heights, which Israel captured from Syria in the 1967 Mideast War and annexed in 1981.

Separated by borders, each part of the Druze community has taken different paths, always with an eye on preserving their existence among larger powers. Druze in Lebanon and Syria adopted Arab nationalism, including support for the Palestinian cause. In Israel, Druze are highly regarded for their loyalty to the state and their military service, with many entering elite combat units, including fighting in Gaza. In the Golan, the Druze navigate their historically Syrian identity while living under Israeli occupation.

The communities have always kept up connections and tried to maintain civility over their differences. That, however, has been strained by 10 months of war in Gaza. Now after the Majdal Shams strike, many Druze fear even worse divisions if the region tips into all-out regional war.

"Our children"

After the attack, a string of Israeli politicians rushed to Majdal Shams to show solidarity with the grieving families and emphasize the strong connection between Israel and the Druze.

"These children are our children, they are the children of all of us," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, visiting the soccer field.

Netanyahu's presence also sparked angry protests by some residents who accused officials of exploiting the tragedy for political purposes.

Many Druze in the Israeli-held part of the Golan have kept their allegiance to Syria. About 20% have taken Israeli citizenship, said Yusri Hazran of Jerusalem's Hebrew University, who is Druze and researches minorities in the Middle East.

In the past 15 years, that trend has increased, said Hazran, as Israel has more strongly integrated the

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Golan, whose 1981 annexation is not widely recognized.

Meanwhile, Israel's Druze community, centered in the north of the country, tends to tout with pride their Israeli identity. Around 80% of the male Druze population enlists in the military, higher than the around 70% of Israeli Jews, according to official statistics. Ten Druze soldiers have been killed in the war in the Gaza Strip, a large proportion given their community's size.

Sheikh Moafaq Tarif, the spiritual leader of the Druze in Israel, said he wasn't surprised by the wave of national compassion. "During the time of mourning, everyone is talking about support," he said.

He hoped support would continue after the tragedy has faded from headlines.

"There's so much that's needed to fix here." He pointed to the significant discrimination Druze faced in Israel. A third of Druze homes are not connected to electricity, he said. The community was furious over a 2018 Israeli law that defined the country as a Jewish state and made no mention of its minorities.

In the Golan, some still see their bond lying with neighboring Arab countries.

Hail Abu Jabal, an 84-year-old Druze activist in Majdal Shams, was detained by Israel in the past over his opposition to its rule.

Before European powers divided up the Mideast in the early 20th century, "this region was one region. The Druze were spread out in one country," he said. "There is a kinship relationship, there is a marriage relationship, and there is a relationship of belonging."

Divided by borders

In the southern Lebanese village of Fardis, near the Israeli border, rocket fire echoed, part of the nearly daily exchanges between Israel and Hezbollah going on for months. From the home of Wissam Sliqa, charred trees were visible on the otherwise verdant mountains, signs of recent Israeli strikes.

Israel is "once again trying to plant the seeds of discord," said Sliqa, the religious affairs adviser for Lebanon's top Druze religious leader.

He urged Israeli Druze not to join the war in Gaza or the increasingly volatile confrontation across the Lebanese-Israeli border.

Druze of Syria and Lebanon tend to avoid criticizing their brethren in Israel. Though more are publicly encouraging Druze to refuse to serve in the Israeli military, they withhold judgment on those who do.

"They are behaving how they see is suitable to them," Sliqa acknowledged. "We don't dictate to them, and they don't dictate to us."

While most of Lebanon's Druze live in the country's central mountains, Druze-majority villages are also scattered around the south next to Muslim and Christian neighbors.

Lebanese and Syrian Druze have historically been drawn to Arab nationalist movements. Many point to their role in Arab resistance to European colonial rule a century ago and their strong support for Palestinians today.

"The Druze never considered themselves an ethnic minority at all, but a part of the Arab and Islamic majority in the region," said Lebanese Druze legislator Wael Abou Faour.

Walid Jumblatt, arguably the region's most powerful Druze figure, once led forces fighting alongside Palestinian factions against Israeli troops and their allies in Lebanon. He now leads the Druze in Lebanon's volatile sectarian power-sharing politics, where his community's power goes well beyond its size.

Last month, he and Tarif, Israel's Druze leader, engaged in a startlingly scathing exchange of open letters, airing differences over the Israel-Hamas war.

Jumblatt criticized Druze soldiers fighting in Gaza. Tarif in turn said his community was happy having the rights and duties of "citizens of a democratic state." Jumblatt shot back denouncing Tarif for meeting with Netanyahu, calling the Israeli military offensive in Gaza "an aggression against humanity."

"He lives in Lebanon, and he's saying his opinion," Tarif told The Associated Press. "We are Israelis, and we are proud."

Despite differences, the various Druze communities maintain close ties and support each other on humanitarian issues, he said.

In the southern Lebanese town of Hasbaya, Sheikh Amin Khair, a Druze farmer, pointed to a cluster of trees and shrubs by his pear and pomegranate groves. In 1982, Druze fighters fired rockets at Israel from

there, he said proudly. That year was the start of Israel's 18-year occupation of south Lebanon.

But rather than criticizing Druze in the Israeli army, Khair said he would rather speak positively of voices among Israeli Druze that have backed the Palestinian cause.

He recited a verse by writer Samih al-Qassam, an Israeli Druze and an Arab nationalist: "And until my last heartbeat ... I will resist."

Small white coffins

After the Majdal Shams strike, the Druze community's tensions risk being pulled even more tightly if a full-fledged war erupts.

Israel accused Hezbollah of being behind the strike, saying the rocket type and trajectory point clearly to the Iranian-backed group. The Lebanese militant group offered a rare denial.

Lebanon's Jumblatt is often politically at odds with Hezbollah, but this week he echoed its denial and accused Israel of fueling divisions by accusing the group.

On Tuesday, an Israeli airstrike killed a top Hezbollah commander in Beirut in retaliation. The next day, a blast in the Iranian capital killed Hamas' political chief Ismail Haniyeh. Iran has accused Israel of being behind the attack and vowed retaliation.

As the region awaits Hezbollah and Iran's response, many Druze are pleading to stop the bloodshed.

"We reject shedding even a single drop of blood under the pretext of avenging our children," the Golan Heights Druze religious committee said in a statement on Monday.

Hundreds of Syrian Druze who gathered in the nearby Syrian town of Quneitra to hold a memorial service for the children blamed Israel for the deaths.

Across Majdal Shams, there was raw pain as the community buried 12 small white coffins in the span of 24 hours.

"No one wins in war, there's only losing," said Majdal Shams resident Bhaa Brik.

Somali police say 32 people died in an attack on a beach hotel. Al-Shabab claimed responsibility.

By OMAR FARUK Associated Press

MOGADISHU, Somalia (AP) — Police in Somalia said Saturday that 32 people died and 63 others were wounded in an attack on a beach hotel in the capital, Mogadishu, the previous evening.

Al-Qaida's East Africa affiliate, al-Shabab, said through its radio station that its fighters carried out the attack.

Police spokesperson Maj. Abdifatah Adan Hassan told journalists that one soldier was killed and another wounded, while the rest of the dead were civilians. Witnesses reported an explosion followed by gunfire.

Lido Beach, a popular area in Mogadishu, is bustling on Friday nights as Somalis enjoy their weekend.

A witness, Mohamud Moalim, told The Associated Press that he saw an attacker wearing an explosive vest moments before the man "blew himself up next to the beach-view hotel."

Moalim said some of his friends who were with him at the hotel were killed and others were wounded.

Another witness, Abdisalam Adam, told the AP that he "saw many people lying on the ground" and had helped take some wounded people to the hospital.

The Lido Beach area has in the past been targeted by militants allied to al-Shabab. The most recent attack last year killed nine people.

In a separate attack on Saturday, state media reported that seven people died after a passenger vehicle hit a roadside bomb some 40 kilometers (25 miles) from the capital.

Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud last year declared a "total war" on the militants as the country started taking charge of its own security.

Al-Shabab still controls parts of southern and central Somalia and continues to carry out attacks in Mogadishu and other areas while extorting millions of dollars a year from residents and businesses in its quest to impose an Islamic state.

Friday's attack came a month after Somalia started the third phase of the drawdown of peacekeeping

troops under the African Union Transition Mission.

The U.N Secretary-General's Acting Special Representative for Somalia, James Swan, on Saturday expressed support and solidarity for Somalia "in its efforts to ensure peace, security, and stability."

He said Lido Beach is frequented by families and that "targeting this location is an abhorrent act that warrants the firmest condemnation."

IBS and digestive trouble are in the spotlight on social media. Here's what you should know

By DEVNA BOSE AP Health Writer

Are you spending more time in the bathroom than you'd like? Loads of TikTok posts show you're not alone. Young people, especially women, are increasingly talking on social media about gastrointestinal distress, such as irritable bowel syndrome or chronic bloating. Some experts say that's mostly a good thing, because it may help others seek help for a topic that has been taboo.

But they stress it's important to realize that many people are being paid to promote sometimes unproven products and there is rampant misinformation. Here's what else medical professionals suggest you do if you're experiencing digestive discomfort.

Why are more young people talking about digestive problems online?

It's not clear whether there's a rise in digestive troubles overall. Some experts attribute the trend to an uptick in anxiety after the pandemic in an already-anxious generation.

Ample research and science shows that our brain and gut are connected through nervous systems. That means when your brain is anxious or you're feeling depressed, it can relay those signals to your gut, which can make it harder for your gastrointestinal tract to function properly.

The causes of irritable bowel syndrome are unknown, but experts say the nervous system has a big effect on the condition and stress can make symptoms worse.

Dr. Nina Gupta, a gastroenterologist based in Chicago, said managing her patients' conditions often includes managing their mental health.

When should you go to the doctor?

That depends on the level of your discomfort, said Dr. Uma Naidoo, Massachusetts General Hospital's director of nutritional and lifestyle psychiatry. She studies the connection between food and the brain.

Abrupt changes in bowel habits are concerning, she said, and may require further evaluation.

"For example, someone that didn't really have digestive issues as a child or throughout their life and then all of a sudden is finding a very severe and significant change in their bowel habits," she said. "These are all things that we would want someone to talk to their doctor about."

And if you see blood in your stool — no matter the quantity or degree of frequency — or have ongoing diarrhea for more than a couple of weeks, seek care immediately.

What can I do to relieve digestive pain?

Naidoo said some mindfulness practices like stress management, meditation and breathwork can help. Food sensitivities can trigger IBS symptoms, so adjusting your diet and exercising more also may make a difference.

"Simply doing something like finding a good probiotic that they take, or adding probiotics and fermented foods to their diet slowly and steadily can be good," she said. "Stress management is a huge part of this. In combination with dietary adjustment, it can be very powerful."

However, if symptoms worsen or are unmanageable at home, that should be a sign to seek professional help.

Younger adults are going public with their digestive problems. Experts say it's mostly a good thing

By DEVNA BOSE AP Health Writer

Lauren Bell was stressed out and just starting her first job post-college in New York City when she realized a bout of food poisoning wasn't going away after weeks.

A doctor's appointment revealed she had irritable bowel syndrome, a surprising diagnosis — until she learned more about the connection between mental health and gut health, as well as the prevalence of digestive problems among women.

"Working in a pretty intense environment, living in the city and being an adult for the first time was doing a number on my body," the 27-year-old said of her diagnosis five years ago.

Every few months, a new TikTok about digestive problems goes viral — the taboo topic often being brought up by women who suggest tips to reduce bloat or ease pain. Experts say it's not clear whether there is an uptick in the number of people having digestive problems or if the online conversation is leading to more appointments and diagnoses.

But doctors are seeing a pattern of more and younger people wanting to deal with their gastrointestinal distress, and they suspect anxiety related to increased isolation during the pandemic is playing a big role in the increase in visits.

"I definitely have a lot of young women in my practice," Chicago-based gastroenterologist Dr. Nina Gupta said, "but in the last few years, I am also seeing more younger men."

Making connections and sharing tips online can help, experts say, but they also want people to be careful because what might look like advice could be more like advertising if influencers are being paid to convince people to buy a product.

How your brain can affect your gut

It's not clear what causes irritable bowel syndrome. Food sensitivities and gut microbes can play a role, and research indicates that issues with the nervous system can cause distress in the digestive process. Research indicates it can also be a two-way street: When your stomach is upset, that could affect your mental health.

And mental health, especially for Gen Z and younger millennials, is a major concern. While the pandemic took its toll on people of all ages, surveys have found those age groups reported higher stress and anxiety levels than other generations during and after the pandemic.

A 2023 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that surveyed U.S. high school students during the pandemic showed teen girls' mental health was severely impacted, with nearly a third reporting that they seriously considered attempting suicide in the previous year.

Anxiety in college-age adults, especially young women, has gone "through the roof" since the early 2010s, said Jean Twenge, a Gen Z mental health expert at San Diego State University. For high schoolers, experts say the anxiety is likely a result of two things: increased isolation during a formative time and a reliance on social media to feel connected.

While changes in diet can improve IBS symptoms, Gupta said a big part of managing her patients' conditions is for them to "recognize that there's a connection between their stress or their mental health or their anxiety and their symptoms."

The scoop on poop

Nadya Okamoto hadn't pooped in four days.

"I'm very bloated," she said as she joined a Zoom interview from her home in New York City.

Okamoto, who has more than 4 million followers on TikTok, has built her platform around publicly addressing sensitive subjects. The 26-year-old is the founder of August, a period-product company, and frequently posts about her own menstrual cycle.

Some of her most popular posts over the last three years, though, are about her experiences with irritable bowel syndrome, or IBS. Okamoto seems to share her experiences with everything — collecting fecal samples for colon cancer, constipation and bloating.

"It wasn't until I started dating and being in close relationships and talking about it with my family that I realized ... it was not normal pooping three times a month," Okamoto told The Associated Press.

Seeing the hashtag "IBS" on TikTok led her to the doctor and to a diagnosis. She's been on three different medications to treat her IBS. None worked.

"From a young age, potty talk is not something that is appropriate, especially for girls," she said. "We're not incentivized to be open about it, which means that we know less about our bodies."

Misinformation on social media

The downside of more people talking about gut health online is an uptick in misinformation. Some of the most popular TikTok posts on IBS are from people who claim they've cured it or found a home remedy that miraculously stopped some symptoms. Others recommend unproven supplements.

A quick scroll of these influencers' accounts reveal a litany of sponsorships from probiotic or other health food companies. Gupta said viewers should be skeptical when people who aren't professionals start offering medical advice.

Okamoto and Bell, who has a master's of public health in nutrition, stick to talking about their own experiences.

Both stressed that one of the best things about the online conversation is making information more accessible. That said, in December 2023, Bell posted a TikTok video in response to someone asking if they can self-diagnose their IBS with this advice: "I'm always going to recommend you see a medical professional."

'Making people feel seen'

Bell, who is Black, fills a specific gap on social media.

"I felt like there weren't a lot of people who looked like me doing that type of content," she said. "It's not only white women who are hot girls with IBS."

Bell, who takes over-the-counter medications occasionally to treat her symptoms, first started posting on Instagram about her struggle with IBS – how isolating it was and how she felt like she was having to rearrange her life and diet around her food sensitivities – and sharing her diagnosis with her friends.

"It felt kind of like a secret topic that like suddenly everybody in my life had struggled with this, and once you see it, you can't unsee it," she said.

Bell sees her role as helping women of color figure out how to start having these uncomfortable conversations about their gut health.

"Gut health spans gender, age, race and ethnicity," she said. "We all poop."

As recruiting rebounds, the Army will expand basic training to rebuild the force for modern warfare

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Buoyed by an increase in recruiting, the Army will expand its basic combat training in what its leaders hope reflects a turning point as it prepares to meet the challenges of future wars.

The added training will begin in October and comes as the Army tries to reverse years of dismal recruiting when it failed to meet its enlistment goals. New units in Oklahoma and Missouri will train as many as 4,000 recruits every year.

Army leaders are optimistic they will hit their target of 55,000 recruits this year and say the influx of new soldiers forced them to increase the number of training sites.

"I am happy to say last year's recruiting transformation efforts have us on track to make this year's recruiting mission, with thousands awaiting basic training" in the next year, Army Secretary Christine Wormuth said. Adding the two new locations, she said, is a way to get the soldiers trained and into units quickly, "with further expansion likely next spring if our recruiting numbers keep improving."

The expanded training is part of a broader effort to restructure the Army so it is better able to fight against a sophisticated adversary such as Russia or China. The U.S. military spent much of the past two decades battling insurgent groups in Iraq and Afghanistan rather than fighting a broader war with another