What's Capt. Pete "Maverick" Mitchell been up to the past 32 years since the Navy fighter pilot first expressed his need for speed in 1986's highest-grossing film?

Why, as a rear admiral played by Ed Harris asks Maverick in the "Top Gun: Maverick" trailer released two weeks ago, is he still a captain despite more than 30 years of service and an unparalleled record shooting down enemy planes?

Cmdr. Ron Flanders, spokesman for Naval Air Forces in San Diego, can’t, by contract, say.

"We'll probably have to see the movie to see what he's been doing," Flanders said.

Chances are it won't have been anything awful.

"The Navy did review the script so that A, it was accurate and B, was consistent with the ideals of the Navy," Flanders said.

"Top Gun: Maverick" is Navy-approved, down to the plot details.
Pilot missing after Hornet crash in Calif.

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The pilot of a Navy Super Hornet from Strike Fighter Squadron 151 that crashed during a routine training mission was missing Thursday, according to Naval Air Forces officials. They said an investigation into the cause of the crash was launched Wednesday.

Visitors told local news stations that the jet slammed into the canyon wall at high speed, sending billowing smoke into the air and shrapnel flying into a crowd nearby.

The section of Death Valley National Park where the crash occurred remained closed to visitors Thursday morning, according to the park’s website.

Local resident Aaron Cassell reported the crash from a resort about 10 miles away after seeing the smoke, he told The Associated Press. “I just saw a black mushroom cloud go up,” he told the news agency, comparing the impact to a bomb blast. “Typically, you don’t see a mushroom cloud in the desert.”

Cassell said he saw a second jet trailing the crashed Hornet pull up out of the canyon and circle the area. He told the AP that he did not see a parachute deploy from his vantage point.

While military planes do not typically fly over National Park land, pilots have flown through Star Wars Canyon since World War II. Officially, the chasm is called Rainbow Canyon but has been known by its nickname for decades because of colorful rock walls reminiscent of “Star Wars” hero Luke Skywalker’s native planet of Tatooine, according to NPS.

A 2017 Associated Press profile of military flights through the gorge stated various jets fly 200 to 300 mph through the ravine, sometimes as low as 200 feet off the canyon floor, which is still several hundred feet below its top.

The adjacent China Lake site is the Navy’s largest landholding, according to the service. It includes two ranges that cover some 1.1 million square acres used for research, design and testing of dozens of types of Navy bombs.

Scotched earth marks the spot where a Navy fighter jet crashed Wednesday in Death Valley National Park, Calif., injuring multiple people who were at a scenic overlook dubbed Star Wars Canyon.

The incident on Wednesday appeared to be the first reported crash of an F/A-18 in 2019.

The McDonnell Douglas-built supersonic fighter and attack jet, which can be launched from land or an aircraft carrier, has been plagued in recent years by crashes across the globe.

A Marine Hornet pilot was killed in December when his F/A-18 collided with a KC-130 Hercules aerial tanker off the coast of Japan. The cause of the crash remains under investigation, officials said last month.

Another Hornet crashed in November in the Philippine Sea. Both pilots survived that wreck after ejecting following mechanical issues with the plane, an investigation found.

Marine and Navy officials have long blamed budget cuts and maintenance problems for the rash of Hornets wrecking during training flights.

dickstein.corey@stripes.com
Senators grill Gilday at hearing

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY  Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Air Force Gen. John Hyten's nomination to be the next vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff cleared the Senate Armed Services Committee on Wednesday, a day after his confirmation hearing when he addressed allegations of sexual misconduct.

Hyten's nomination was approved in a 20-7 vote by the committee, with Sens. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa; Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass.; Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y.; Mazie Hirono, D-Hawaii; Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill.; Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn.; and Gary Peters, D-Mich., voting against him, according to a tweet by Frank Thorp with NBC News.

Hyten's nomination now moves to a full Senate vote.

Since Hyten heads U.S. Strategic Command, it was nominated in April to replace Air Force Gen. Paul Selva, who retired Wednesday after 39 years of service. The Associated Press reported Hyten's nomination would likely be before the full Senate for consideration in September.

Hyten's confirmation hearing Tuesday was predominantly focused on sexual misconduct allegations made against him by a former aide. Several members of the Senate Armed Services Committee said they supported his nomination, including Sen. Martha McSally, R-Ariz., a former Air Force officer who earlier this year announced she was raped by a superior officer.

“I am confident the full truth was revealed in the process, and the truth is Gen. Hyten is innocent of these charges,” she said during the hearing. “Sexual assault happens in the military, it just didn’t happen in this case.”

The Air Force inspector general conducted an investigation into the allegations, and top Air Force officials, including former Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson, determined no evidence existed of the wrongful encounters alleged by Army Col. Kathryn Sprietstorfer, who identified herself publicly last week in a New York Times story. Wilson, who left the military drug tests are a joke. "These issues need not to be isolated to one team and are being reported from units stationed in California and Virginia, which certainly raises a level of concern," Peters said.

Sen. Jack Reed, of Rhode Island, the ranking Democrat on the committee, said the core values that include leadership, protecting subordinates, and selfless service are called into question given the accusations against the SEALs.

Gilday said ethics are important and they start with leadership and extend down through the ranks in order to make sure those values bring their values to work.

“It’s especially important in combat that those values be maintained,” he said.

Gilday said he was committed to having the Navy treat people with respect and dignity, and he trial will try to set the best example from the top.

The three-star admiral is the director of the Joint Staff, a position he has held since March. If confirmed as CNO, he would be promoted to a four-star admiral. President Donald Trump nominated him July 18 for the Navy's most senior military leadership position.

Trump's first selection for CNO, Adm. William Moran, had already been confirmed by the Senate for the position when he retired abruptly after reports last month that he had continued a professional relationship with Chris Servello, a former colleague who was removed from his position as a public affairs adviser to current CNO Adm. John Richardson in 2017 following accusations of sexual misconduct, according to The Associated Press. Servello had also worked for Moran as a public affairs officer.

Beyond the recent scandals involving SEALs, Gilday faced questions during Wednesday's hearing about ongoing issues with the new USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier. Senators' questions focused on the ship's weapons elevators, arresting system for landing, aircraft catapult and dorsal radar.

Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., chairman of the committee, pointed out the Navy accepted the Ford before the ship was complete, that it cost more than $2.5 billion over budget and that it has untested equipment technology, and he cited its ongoing delays.

"This ought to be criminal," Inhofe said.

Gilday said he shared Inhofe's concern and assessment of the equipment issues on the Navy's new class of aircraft carrier, adding the service has made progress with the catapult, arresting system and radar. The next big hurdle to get the ship ready for deployment was with the weapons elevators, of which only two of the 11 are rolled.

Inhofe disagreed with Gilday that the elevators were the next biggest hurdle. The senator said there were still serious problems with the catapult system and arresting gear.

"It's not just the problem of the elevators," Inhofe said.

Kentucky's senior senator, Republican Mitch McConnell, also questioned the Navy's handling of the ship, which he said was "perfidious." McConnell asked Gilday if he would consider pulling the ship's crew ashore and transferring to another ship.

"I can't imagine a fissure in our ranks where we can't come together and say this is the right decision on this ship," McConnell said.

Gilday said he shared McConnell's concern, but said the ship would be commissioned and deployed as soon as possible.

"We have enough red flags here to cause the secretary to pause and take a look again," McConnell said.

When the father, 41, opened the door, the four suspects tried to rush into the house, police said.

The father then grabbed a kitchen knife and ran upstairs, where he found the man choking his wife while she was on the floor, according to a court statement. The woman sustained substantial injuries, the statement said.

The father stabbed the suspect twice and the men ran out of the house, fleeing with the three of them out of the door. But one of them ran upstairs and attacked his wife, he said.

The trial began Wednesday in the district court in Zweibruecken, a southwestern German city near the French border. The proceedings of an alleged murder and rape are being held in public.
Kim reportedly guides rocket system test

By Kim Gamel
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un oversaw the test of a newly guided multiple rocket launcher system, state media reported Thursday, a move that could raise the threat to U.S. military bases and other targets in the South.

The report in the state-run Korea Central News Agency contradicted the assessment by South Korea's military, which said the North test-fired two short-range ballistic missiles off its eastern coast on Wednesday.

KCNA said Kim had guided the test-firing of a newly developed “large-caliber multiple launch guided rocket system.”

The test confirmed that the “guaranteed ordnance rocket reached the numerical values of its design, and verified the combat effectiveness of the overall system,” KCNA said, adding that Kim repeatedly expressed satisfaction over the results.

“He said that it is very great and it would be an inescapable distress to the forces becoming a fatal target of the weapon,” it said.

The report didn’t specify any targets, but North Korea is known to have hundreds of thousands of soldiers and massive artillery poised near the border, which is just 35 miles north of Seoul.

Some 28,500 American troops and thousands of family members and civilian employees are stationed in South Korea, which remains technically at war with the North since their 1950-53 conflict ended in an armistice instead of a peace treaty.

The launch also came less than a week after the North fired two short-range ballistic missiles that it said served as a “solemn warning” to the South against joining the United States in joint military exercises and purchasing advanced jet fighters.

Photos released hours after Thursday’s statement showed Kim watching a fiery rocket taking off, although the launcher was blurred out to make it difficult to determine characteristics.

The recent activity raises pressure on the U.S. as it tries to re-start talks aimed at persuading the North to abandon its nuclear weapons.

It also shows that North Korea has continued with weapons development despite diplomatic engagement that began last year with summits between Kim and President Donald Trump as well as inter-Korean meetings.

North Korea is likely angling to increase its leverage in negotiations while expressing anger over ongoing joint U.S.-South Korean military exercises and continued sanctions, experts said.

South Korea’s military, meanwhile, said it maintained its earlier conclusion that a new type of short-range ballistic missile had been fired.

“The final determination of the exact type of missiles will be made after South Korean and U.S. authorities wrap up a comprehensive joint analysis,” Joint Chiefs of Staff spokesman Col. Kim Jun-rak said during a briefing.

South Korean military officials initially said Wednesday that “several unidentified projectiles” had been fired. They later revised that to say that two missiles flew about 155 miles from the town of Wonsan and reached an altitude of less than 20 miles before splashing into the sea.

On July 25, the North fired two short-range ballistic missiles from the same area that South Korean military officials later said were a new type of weapon similar to Russia’s Iskander.

The Joint Chiefs said those missiles flew more than 370 miles and reached an altitude of 30 miles, which experts said was likely designed to evade U.S. and South Korean defense systems on the divided peninsula.

So far, the missile tests have not drawn a strong reaction from the Trump administration. Kim pledged to suspend intercontinental ballistic missile and nuclear tests.

U.S. national security adviser John Bolton said Wednesday that the recent launches didn’t break that moratorium but acknowledged the North has not agreed to set a date for the resumption of nuclear negotiations.

“The firing of these missiles don’t violate the pledge that Kim Jong Un made to the president about intercontinental range ballistic missiles,” Bolton said Wednesday in an interview with the Fox Business Network.

“But you have to ask when the real diplomacy is going to begin, when the working-level discussions on denuclearization will begin,” Bolton said.

He stressed that Kim had agreed to resume talks during his impromptu meeting with Trump on June 30 in the truce village of Panmunjom.

“We’re still waiting to hear from North Korea,” he said.

North Korea is banned from using ballistic technology under U.N. Security Council resolutions, with sanctions aimed at stopping the communist state's efforts to develop nuclear weapons.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervises a rocket launch test in this image made from video of a still image broadcast by North Korea's KRT on Thursday.

Photos by KRT/AP Video

North Korean soldier defects to South in DMZ crossing

By Kim Gamel
and Yoo Kyong Chang
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — A North Korean soldier defected to South Korea in a midnight river crossing in the border area known as the Demilitarized Zone, South Korea’s military said Thursday.

The defection comes at a sensitive time. Efforts by Seoul to improve relations between the two Koreas have been stymied amid stalled U.S.-North Korean nuclear talks.

The soldier was spotted via a thermal observation device in the Imjin River about 11:38 p.m. Wednesday after crossing a central section of the Military Demarcation Line that divides the peninsula, according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The river was swollen from rainy weather, making it difficult for local troops to determine the object in the river was a person until the soldier emerged from the water just before midnight, officials told reporters at a briefing.

The local military unit then sent a team and took the individual safely into custody, they said, adding that no unusual North Korean military movements were detected in the area.

“The man is an active-duty soldier who expressed his desire to defect to the South,” officials said. “Related procedures are underway.”

North Korean soldiers have fled to the South across the border in the past, most recently in December. However, land crossings are relatively rare because the DMZ is heavily guarded with land mines and barbed wire fences.

One soldier was seriously wounded after his former comrades opened fire as he dashed across the border in the truce village of Panmunjom in November 2017.

Most of the more than 30,000 North Koreans who have defected to the South escaped via China and other countries.
**Top Gun: Filmmakers to reimburse Navy for nonoperational costs**

**FROM FRONT PAGE**

The Defense Department has script approval rights, just as the military does over any movie that enlists its support. If the filmmakers decline to make changes desired by the military, its support, such as access, equipment and troops, can be withdrawn.

In the first movie, the script originally called for Goose, Maverick’s sidekick, to die in a midair collision, according to a 1986 story in Time magazine. The Navy said too many pilots were crashing so the script was changed to kill Goose as he tried to eject during a spinout.

According to a production assistance agreement for the upcoming film posted online by the Washington Business Journal, senior military staffers would “review with public affairs the script’s themes and weave in key talking points relevant to the aviation community” and be on set to provide and to “depict action scenes accurately.”

In addition, the DOD was to be provided a rough cut of the movie to address any aspects officials found problematic as well as to provide a screening of the finished film before public premiers, according to the agreement.

Paramount in return got access to naval facilities and troops in three states and a Nimitz-class nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, permission to fly aircraft, put cameras on and in F/A-18 Super Hornets and Navy helicopters, cast training in water survival and aircraft seat ejection; and 20 Marines to appear as an official funeral detail.

Paramount has to reimburse the Navy for all costs “not aligned with current operations,” such as flights not deemed to be providing training.

Flanders said there will be a lot of flying, and that pretty much all of it would be real, including, unlike in the original movie, scenes with actors in the aircraft.

“Whatever you’re going to be seeing in ‘Top Gun: Maverick,’ that is the real deal,” he said.

“Top Gun” producers 32 years ago paid the military $1.8 million for using its naval air stations carriers, planes and pilots, according to Time, including $7,600 an hour for flying time.

Super Hornets cost at least $24,400 an hour to fly, according to a recent estimate by HIS Jane’s, a British publishing company specializing in military, aerospace and transportation topics.

“It may be even more than that,” Flanders said, but whatever it is, Paramount will be on the hook for it.

“There will be no cost to the taxpayer,” he said.

Scott said, no, because he did.

Gallagher murdered the captive, stabbing the wounded ISIS fighter, according to the Associated Press the move represented the “further politicization of our military” and was a “ludicrous” move “in the face of so many more important and pressing personnel issues.”

Nevertheless, The Washington Post reported the achievement awards puzzled some observers because Gallagher’s prosecution was widely seen as an embarrassment to the Navy.

A judge had sanctioned the lawyers for their handling of aspects of the case.

Trump’s reference to “giving immunity in a totally incompetent fashion” was an apparent reference to Navy SEAL Corey Scott.

In a shocking, movie-style ending, the prosecutors called Scott as a witness after granting him testimonial immunity. Scott told the court that Gallagher had stabbed the wounded ISIS fighter. But when the lawyers asked if Gallagher murdered the captive, Scott said, no, because he did.

**Awards: ‘Superb results’ cited after loss in trial of Navy SEAL**

**FROM FRONT PAGE**

“I have directed the Secretary of the Navy Richard Spencer & Chief of Naval Operations John Richardson to immediately withdraw and rescind the awards.”

The Navy Achievement Medal is given for performance.

The four attorneys serving as the prosecution in the Gallagher court-martial were given the medal for “superb results” and “expert litigation,” according to a report by Task and Purpose based on legal documents that the website obtained.

Gallagher was accused of committing several war crimes in 2017, including the killing of a wounded Islamic State combatant, during a deployment to Iraq. He was acquitted earlier this month of all but one charge, with the jury finding him guilty of posing with the body of the dead combatant in photos.

Gallagher was sentenced to a reduction in rank to E-6, docked $8,600 a month in pay for two months and four months in jail, which he had already served while waiting for the trial, according to The San Diego Union-Tribune.

The move appeared to be a highly unusual presidential intervention in a case Trump had personally championed, and the president’s action drew immediate condemnation. Former Pentagon spokesman David Lapan, a retired Marine colonel, told The Associated Press the move represented the “further politicization of our military” and was a “ludicrous” move “in the face of so many more important and pressing personnel issues.”

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Top Gun: Filmmakers to reimburse Navy for nonoperational costs

Awards: ‘Superb results’ cited after loss in trial of Navy SEAL
By Phillips Walter Wellman
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Afghan leaders are aiming to consolidate and strengthen their forces, with the exception of the base salaries of police, which are covered by a United Nations-managed fund.

The Pentagon expects the new Afghan Personnel and Pay System to help protect U.S. forces, the report said. The U.S. pays for Afghan security forces personnel, with the exception of the base salaries of police, which are covered by a United Nations-managed fund.

Congress has appropriated more than $82 billion to support security in Afghanistan, which represents nearly two-thirds of all U.S. reconstruction funding for the country since 2002.

The international community has agreed to fund $425,000 security personnel, but only 272,465 soldiers and police were on the books as of late May, a strength shortfall of around 20%, SIGAR said.

Afghan force strength has declined for four consecutive quarters, according to the report.

Afghan National Security Adviser Hekmatullah Hekmatyar is concerned about the Afghan force's ability to confront the growing threat, as well as the impact of the Afghan government's inability to pay personnel.

The mission is currently facing a funding gap of around $2 billion, according to SIGAR.

The understaffing of Afghan forces is a concern for the international community, and the Afghan government is working to address the issue.

In conclusion, the report highlights the need for continued support and funding for Afghan security forces to ensure their sustainability and effectiveness in the current security environment.

Report: Afghan force strength declining

By Edith M. Lederer
Associated Press

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Data show toxins taint water near Army base in SC

Associated Press
FORT JACKSON, S.C. — More than 16 percent of the drinking water wells tested near Fort Jackson over the past six years have shown contamination from a toxic chemical found in hand grenades used to train soldiers, according to recently released federal data.

In some cases, the pollution levels are high enough to exceed federal safety advisories for RDX — a chemical that can cause seizures and cancer in people from long-term exposure, The State reported. In other cases, RDX in private wells has fallen within safe drinking water limits, Army officials and state regulators reported this week.

RDX is an ingredient in hand grenades that憑爆破scope. Fort Jackson officials estimated that soldiers throw 100,000 hand grenades a year at the base, but they think the contamination along Leesburg Road was caused from training soldiers decades ago.

But the finding of any RDX — a royal-demolition explosive — is a concern.

Matt Torkelson, a former drill sergeant and explosives inspector at Fort Jackson, said current training should not be dismissed as a possible source. The base’s continued use of hand grenades is necessary, but it threatens water supplies, he said.

“It can contribute to the continuation of groundwater contamination,” Torkelson said. “We are talking about chemicals that can seep through the ground and sit there for an extended period before it gets rolled into groundwater.

“Every hand grenade that is thrown there is leaving a little residual RDX on the earth.”

Fort Jackson officials said they’ve taken measures to prevent RDX from flowing toward private wells, including treating soil with lime to neutralize the chemical. In addition, the base has supplied bottled water and installed water filtration systems to keep it out of tap water.

The contaminant was found in groundwater at Fort Jackson six years ago as part of an Army initiative to check military bases for pollution from explosives. At first, the Army reported that it had not found unsafe levels in groundwater wells off the base. But further testing in 2014 found elevated levels of RDX in wells that served five homes across from Fort Jackson.

Since 2013, the Army has conducted more than 800 tests involving 186 wells off the military base, finding 31 wells polluted by RDX. Of those 31 wells, 16 exceeded federal standards for safe drinking water or were over a risk limit established by the federal government, according to data released this week by Fort Jackson and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control.

Susan Hall, who lives on a dirt and gravel road below the base, said the Army isn’t doing enough. She said RDX is found in all drinking water wells in the area, instead of just for selected people. Hall said she worries about a historic flood in 2015 dispersed pollution from the base into her community’s groundwater, which contains RDX.

“I understand the military’s part, but let’s not be like Russia, where we just kill our people and don’t give a crap,” said Hall, who adds Fort Jackson has not tested her well. “This is America. You are supposed to care what you’re doing to other people.”

Fort Jackson said it will test for RDX at the request of those who request it and grant the base permission. The base is now testing about 75 wells annually, starting to a July 22 update from the fort.

Despite concerns about RDX flowing off the base and into people’s backyard wells, Fort Jackson said the most likely reason for the pollution is past military training activities. The Army once used about 18,000 acres south off the base as a training ground for soldiers. The area has developed since that time, with homes dotting the landscape.

“The RDX in off-post wells is not from our current hand grenade training, but is the result of historical training activities, possibly as early as the 1940s,” according to Fort Jackson’s update.

Fort Jackson officials said they are investigating whether people whose wells contain unsafe levels of RDX could be hooked up to the Columbia city water system. That would require construction of about two miles of water line, the base update said.

While the RDX issue has been identified in recent years, pollution on military bases is nothing new in South Carolina or across the country. Most recently, questions have surfaced about how an emerging and lightly regulated group of pollutants, known as perfluoroalkyl substances, are affecting groundwater and drinking water in and around bases.

Fort Jackson is investigating impacts from these pollutants on the base. Some types of these chemicals are contained in firefighting foam military bases have used.

Last week, the Department of Defense said it would establish a task force to study the impacts of chemicals from firefighting foam on military bases.

Japan allows its F-35A fighters to fly again after deadly crash

By HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — The Japan Air Self-Defense Force on Thursday resumed flights of its F-35A Lightning II fighters, which were grounded after one crashed into the Pacific Ocean in April, defense officials said.

“The Ministry of Defense and Self-Defense Forces have conducted thorough training and education on spatial disorientation and conducted special inspections of the aircraft,” Japan’s Defense Minister, Takeshi Iwaya, told reporters Thursday morning.

Two F-35A fighters took off at about 2:40 p.m. Thursday from Misawa Air Base, where all Japanese F-35As are based, a JASDF spokesman said.

A JASDF F-35A and its pilot, Maj. Atkinori Hosomi, went down April 9 about 85 miles east of Misawa in northeastern Japan. Hosomi’s remains were recovered June 5, two days after the Defense Ministry curtailed its search.

The aircraft’s left and right rudders were found two hours after it disappeared, the ministry said at the time. Sometime after May 3, during a deep-water search, more parts of the fighter were found, including its canopy and flight data recorder, Iwaya said May 7.

However, the flight recorder memory and storage medium were not recovered, he said at the time.

Also in June, the JASDF said the pilot most likely experienced spatial disorientation that led to the fatal crash. An official report by the accident investigation committee has not been completed.

The ministry in June said F-35A pilots would be retrained on spatial disorientation, including time in flight simulators. All F-35A pilots also would be retrained on gravity-induced loss of consciousness, or G-LOC, since it was not definitively ruled out as a factor in the crash, although the probability that it occurred is low, according to the statement in June.

Iwaya on Thursday said all F-35 pilots have conducted night flight training on simulators and reviewed their previous training to respond to requests made by local governments.

The ministry and JASDF took measures to ensure flight operations are as safe as they can be, Iwaya said.

He said pilots are reviewing basic maneuvers before moving into more advanced training. However, he said F-35s will not fly at night until pilots complete their daylight training.

“We will resume night flight training after confirming basic maneuvering skills and completing basic combat training during the day and will refrain from conducting flight training at night for the time being,” he said.

Japan Air Self-Defense Force F-35A Lightning II fighters were grounded after a fatal crash in April, but the aircraft are back in use.

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[Image 173x10 to 413x241]
More than 3,300 soldiers from 14 nations began the largest annual exercise in the former Soviet republic of Georgia this week, aimed at strengthening security in the tense Black Sea region.

During the two-week Agile Spirit war games, soldiers will face and use modern military equipment and hybrid warfare tactics such as cyberwarfare to defend against an attack by a “near-peer” adversary, Brig. Gen. Nikoloz Janjgava, deputy chief of staff of the Georgian armed forces, told Stars and Stripes on Thursday.

He said that the opposing forces in the exercise scenario are not modeled on the Russians. However, Russia is using similar tactics in the ongoing conflict with Ukraine and used them in the brief war it fought with Georgia in 2008.

“We are trying not to use the ‘R’ word during the exercise,” Janjgava said.

About 20% of Georgia’s internationally recognized territory is under Russian occupation, including Abkhazia on the Black Sea and South Ossetia, which is about 50 miles away from the Vaziani Training Area where Agile Spirit is taking place.

About 1,500 U.S. troops and a similar number of Georgians are participating in the drills. Twelve other countries, including Ukraine, have sent a total of 300 participants.

U.S. and Georgian troops opened the event with a live-fire attack on enemy-held bunkers. They plan to move into defensive operations later in the exercise.

Agile Spirit gives Georgia and Ukraine more experience working with NATO allies, Janjgava said. Both countries are on track to become part of the alliance in the near future, the Georgian Ministry of Defense said.

The drills also help to prepare Georgian soldiers for upcoming deployments to Afghanistan, where Georgia is one of the top troop contributors to the NATO-led mission, Janjgava added.

U.S. soldiers from the Army’s 2nd Cavalry Regiment, based in Vilseck, Germany, brought Stryker armored vehicles to Georgia for the war games. The wheeled armored vehicles can navigate more easily through Georgia’s hilly terrain than tracked vehicles, Maj. Nathaniel Carter said.

“This exercise shows how maneuverable Strykers are in any given terrain,” Carter said.

When the cavalrymen finish the exercise, they plan on having a “culture day,” sightseeing in Georgia’s nearby capital, Tbilisi, and spending more time with their Georgian comrades, he said.

“It’s been great so far,” Carter said. “I’m impressed with the Georgian soldiers and looking forward to spending the next few weeks with them.”
House Dems split on impeachment

By Lisa Mascaro
and Mary Clare Jalonick
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Nearly half the House Democrats now support an impeachment inquiry of President Donald Trump — a milestone but still probably not enough to push Speaker Nancy Pelosi to launch proceedings.

A tally by The Associated Press on Wednesday showed 114 Democrats in the House, and one Republican-turned-independent, are now publicly backing an inquiry that has dominated the days since special counsel Robert Mueller testified on Capitol Hill. Some two dozen House Democrats, and two top senators, added their names after Mueller’s public appearance last week.

The numbers also show the limits. Even with half the Democrats favoring impeachment, it’s not seen by leadership as a working majority for quick action. Pelosi, who needs at least a 218-vote majority to pass most legislation in the House, has been unwilling to move toward impeachment without a groundswell of support both on and off Capitol Hill.

“The dynamics have shifted,” said Kevin Mack, the lead strategist at Need to Impeach, a group funded by Tom Steyer, who’s now a Democratic presidential contender and has stopped down from the organization. “It’s time to get it started. It’s not enough to keep kicking the can down the road, running out the clock.”

For Democrats who won control of the House, partly on the promise of providing checks-and-balance on the Trump administration, the weeks ahead will be pivotal as lawmakers hear from voters during the August recess and attention turns toward the 2020 election.

What’s striking about the growing list of House Democrats who support some sort of impeachment inquiry is as much the names as the numbers.

This week, Rep. Eliot Engel, of New York, the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, became the ninth to call for an impeachment inquiry — almost half of the House’s committee chairmen are now on record in favor. Also joining the list in the immediate aftermath of Mueller’s testimony was a top party leader, Rep. Katherine Clark, of Massachusetts, vice chairwoman of the Democratic caucus, who said the House has been met with “unprecedented stonewalling and obstruction” by the Trump administration.

“That is why I believe we need to open an impeachment inquiry that will provide us a more formal way to fully uncover the facts,” she said.

Two top Democratic senators, Patty Murray, of Washington, and Debbie Stabenow, of Michigan, the third- and fourth-ranking members of leadership, also announced their support for a House impeachment inquiry.

Republican-turned-independent Rep. Justin Amash, of Michigan, announced his support for impeachment shortly after he said he read Mueller’s findings about Russian interference in the 2016 election and the Trump administration’s response.

Mueller’s testimony was supposed to be a game changer. But Mueller’s halting testimony and one-word answers left a mixed result.

Pelosi swiftly assembled lawmakers behind closed doors the evening after Mueller testified. The speaker has held Democrats behind closed doors the evening after Mueller testified. The speaker has held Democrats in line on her strategy, with many deferring to her leadership.

Pelosi’s only counsel was that if they needed to speak in favor of impeachment, they should not turn it into a moral ultimatum.

“It was a signal that Democrats should not bide their time lawmakers who were still reluctant to call for an inquiry, according to a person familiar with the private session,” she said in a statement.

Texas’ Conaway 4th GOP House member in a week who won’t seek reelection

Associated Press

MIDLAND, Texas — Republican Rep. Michael Conaway announced Wednesday that he won’t seek a ninth term representing a sprawling West Texas congressional district.

Conaway announced his decision at a news conference in Midland. In a statement, he said that while serving in the U.S. House, he had asked his family “to make innumerable sacrifices.” He said the time had come for him to put his family first.

The veteran lawmaker has represented the 11th District since 2005 when he succeeded veteran Democrat Chet Edwards. The district comprises 29 counties stretching from the New Mexico border to the Brazos River valley and south to the Edwards Plateau. It includes the Permian Basin and the Low Rolling Plains of West Texas.

Conaway is the seventh House Republican this year and fourth in the past week to announce that they won’t seek new terms in the 2020 elections. Reps. Martha Roby, of Alabama; Pete Olson, of Texas; and Paul Mitchell, of Michigan, announced last week they wouldn’t run for another term. Other House Republicans who have announced that they won’t seek new terms are Reps. Susan Brooks, of Indiana; Rob Bishop, of Utah; and Rod Woodall, of Georgia.

Three Democratic representatives are not running for reelection. One of them, New Mexico’s Xochitl Torres Small, is running for Senate.

Republicans will need to gain 18 seats to win House control in November 2020. Democrats control the chamber 235-197, with one independent and two vacancies.

Forum set for candidates to talk gun safety

By Michelle L. Price
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Two prominent gun safety organizations said Thursday that they will host a forum for Democratic presidential candidates in Las Vegas on Oct. 2, the day after the city marks the second anniversary of a mass shooting that killed 58 people.

The Giffords group and March For Our Lives said the forum focused on gun violence will be the first of its kind for presidential hopefuls and will be open to all candidates who meet the Democratic National Committee’s polling and fundraising thresholds for the September debate.

The organizations did not yet have details on which candidates would be attending. They have until Aug. 29 to qualify for the September debate.

Guns are a complex issue in Nevada, an early voting state that will be the third to weigh in on the 2020 Democratic field. Firearms and gun culture are popular in the Western swing state, which hosts the gun industry’s biggest annual conference and counts Democrats among local gun owners.

But the state became the home of a grim milestone on Oct. 1, 2017, when a gunman opened fire on a crowd at a country music festival on the Las Vegas Strip. The shooting killed 58 people, injured hundreds of others and spurred state officials to make new calls to toughen gun control measures.

Former Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Ariz., who was shot in the head in a 2011 mass shooting in Arizona and went on to form the Giffords organization, said the forum will give the candidates an important opportunity to talk about how they’re going to make the country safer.

“If we’re serious about tackling the biggest problems facing our country, we need serious conversations about solutions,” she said in a statement.

The Giffords group and March For Our Lives announced Wednesday that they will host a forum for Democratic presidential candidates in Las Vegas.

The forum, which will be held on Oct. 2, the day after the city marks the second anniversary of a mass shooting that killed 58 people, will give the candidates an important opportunity to talk about how they’re going to make the country safer.

“For the first time, there will be a forum on gun violence of presidential candidates in Las Vegas,” said Mark Kelly, husband of former Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Ariz., who was shot in the head in a 2011 mass shooting in Arizona and went on to form the Giffords organization.

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“We are thrilled to host this conversation before the Nevada caucuses to give candidates a chance to discuss gun violence in a meaningful way,” said Mark Kelly, husband of former Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Ariz., who was shot in the head in a 2011 mass shooting in Arizona and went on to form the Giffords organization.

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Debate tests Biden’s front-runner strength

BY STEVE PEOPLES AND SARA BURNETT
Associated Press

DETROIT — The ideological divisions gripping the Democratic Party intensified on Wednesday as presidential candidates waged an acrimonious battle over health care, immigration and race that tested the strength of early front-runner Joe Biden’s candidacy.

Biden’s tenure as mayor of Newark and as New Jersey senator, she said. But it was the discussion of race and policy that dominated the second Democratic debate of the 2020 campaign.

The attacks on Biden in the second presidential debate were most vivid coming from California Sen. Kamala Harris, who declared that his willingness to work with segregationists in the U.S. Senate during the 1970s could have had dramatic consequences on the surge of minority candidates in political office. And, she said, it could have prevented her and fellow presidential candidate Cory Booker, both of whom are black, from becoming senators.

Harris’ rising profile

For Democrats, the internal challenge of 2020 candidates in jeopardy of not having enough donors or support in polling to qualify for the Sept. 12 debate.

Divisions among Dems intensify

Associated Press

DETROIT — From the beginning, Joe Biden knew he would be hard at Wednesday’s presidential debate. He was right — but he was not alone.

The evening marked some of the toughest attacks California Sen. Kamala Harris has faced as a candidate. The exchanges were part of a broader ideological fight for the future of the Democratic Party.

Here are some takeaways from the debate:

Biden (Obama) 2020. Most candidates claimed to be Democrats of the future. Biden found himself defending Democrats of the past.

The former vice president repeatedly found himself defending Barack Obama’s policies on immigration and health care when they came under withering attack, a continuation of his own attacks.

Harris faced criticism from all sides this week after releasing a competing plan that envisions a role for private insurance with strong rules, but she wants to transition to a single-payer government-backed system within 10 years.

There were also tense exchanges on immigration that pit Biden against former Obama housing secretary Julian Castro, the only Latino candidate in the race.

Biden suggested that some of his rivals favor immigration laws that are far too forgiving. Castro, for example, would delegalize illegal border crossings.

“People should have to get in line. That’s the problem,” Biden said.

Castro shot back, “It looks like one of us has learned the lessons of the past and one hasn’t.”

Biden did have a defender of sorts in Sen. Michael Bennet, of Colorado, who derided the cost estimates of Castro’s plan.

“Castro’s record on criminal justice from his time as a member of the United States Senate, Cory Booker would not be a member of the United States Senate, and Barack Obama would not have been in a position to nominate” Biden to become vice president.

When pressed, Biden repeatedly leaned on his relationship with Obama.

“We’re talking about things that occurred a long, long time ago,” Biden said. “Everybody’s talking about things that happened years ago, and I am on these issues, Barack Obama knew who I was.”

The dynamic showcased the challenge for Biden and his party as Democrats seek to rebuild the young and multiracial coalition that helped Obama win two presidential elections.

Those differences were debated on a broad menu of issues including health care, immigration and women’s reproductive rights.

But it was the discussion of race that marked the escalating rift shaping the Democratic primary. At the same time, polls show that Biden has far more support from minority voters than his challengers, especially in the crucial early voting state of South Carolina.

Biden, who at times adopted the position of peacemaker, also took Biden to task over criminal justice issues and his role in passing crime bills. And while Booker is the junior senator in the 1990s. When Biden fought back by criticizing Booker’s tenure as mayor of Newark, N.J., before becoming a New Jersey senator, Booker shot back, “You’re dipping into the Kool-Aid and you don’t even know the flavor.”

In Detroit, a city where Democrats desperately need strong minority turnout to beat President Donald Trump next year, Biden, 76, repeatedly clashed with the two black candidates in the race, as well as the only candidate of Mexican heritage, all of whom are more than two decades his junior. Biden emphasized his work as vice president to help the auto industry and the city repair its bankruptcy finances.

For Democrats, the internal fight, while common to almost every primary cycle, is one many would rather avoid, favoring instead a focus on defeating Trump. Several candidates said they thought Trump should be impeached and others called him a racist.

The former vice president repeatedly found himself defending Barack Obama’s policies on immigration and health care when they came under withering attack, a continuation of his own attacks.

As in Tuesday night’s debate, health care and climate change took a backseat. Inslee has pushed the issue Wednesday in the starkest terms: “The time is up. Our house is on fire.”

As in Tuesday night’s debate, health care and immigration were the first topics to get lengthy attention back to her criticism of Biden.

She did not — and he often responded in kind.

Biden charged that Harris’ health care plan would cost taxpayers $3 trillion even after two terms in office and would force middle-class taxes to go up, not down. He said that would put Democrats at a disadvantage against Trump.

You can’t beat President Trump with double talk on this plan,” he said.

Harris shot back that Biden was inaccurate.

“The cost of doing nothing is far too expensive,” Harris said. “Your plan does not cover everyone in America.”

For the first time in the month-long presidential race, one candidate faced pointed attacks on her plan to provide universal health care.

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But it was the discussion of race that...
Puerto Rico unsure who will lead

BY DANIJA COTO
Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Puerto Rico's governing party was in full-blown crisis Thursday as the nominee to succeed departing Gov. Ricardo Rossello headed to a disputed and uncertain confirmation vote in the U.S. territory's legislature.

Rossello is leaving Friday in the face of massive public protest and has nominated veteran politician and attorney Pedro Pierluisi to succeed him. Pierluisi is a former representative to the U.S. Congress and considered a frontrunner among fellow Puerto Ricans as a conciliatory, relatively uncontroversial figure, unlikely to be met by confrontations and street demonstrations over poor governance and corruption.

Pierluisi would succeed Rossello if he's confirmed by the territorial House and Senate as secretary of state, the next in line to become governor under the Puerto Rican constitution.

The post is currently vacant and Rossello's New Progressive Party holds majorities in both chambers of the legislature, meaning a united party could easily name their own candidate.

Pierluisi's main obstacle appeared to be Senate President Thomas Rivera Schatz, who has said he won't vote for Rossello's nominee and wants to be governor himself. Rivera Schatz is a one-time mainstay of the party and has been estranged with Puerto Rico's political and business elite, and his elevation to governor would likely re-ignite popular outrage.

House and Senate sessions on Pierluisi had started and was expected to last until at least 1 a.m. Thursday even as ruling party lawmakers met in closed door sessions to seek a solution.

Many Puerto Rican legislators were predicting that Pierluisi would have the votes to be confirmed.

Sen. Luis Vega Ramos, of the opposition Popular Democratic Party, said he was upset that lawmakers from Rossello's party were meeting behind closed doors.

He called it "a political party squabble over who is going to lead the New Progressive Party and become the gubernatorial candidate for 2020."

It wasn't even clear if a vote would be taken on Thursday.

Rep. Gabriel Rodríguez Aguilo of the NPP said he supports holding public hearings before voting on Pierluisi, adding that an overwhelming number of constituents had called to ask for his confirmation.

"We ran out of paper," he said in reference to secretaries taking notes on the calls.

Several lawmakers have already pushed to declare candidate for the 2020 governor's election, as their choice to replace Rossello.

After judication of the success of their uprising against Rossello, Puerto Rican protesters have been frustrated at the political infighting and paralysis that's followed.

If a secretary of state is not named by Friday, Justice Secretary Wanda Vazquez would be next in line. She has said she doesn't want the job, but her further down the line of succession are either too young for the job or from the city council cases seen as unqualified for the position.

Some lawmakers complained about Pierluisi's work for a law firm that represents the federal control board that was created to oversee Puerto Rico's finances before the territory, saddled with more than $70 billion in public debt, declared a sort of bankruptcy.

Pierluisi's brother-in-law, also heads the board, which has clashed repeatedly with Rossello and has rejected any demands for austerity measures.


House of Representatives President Jonathan Mendez, a member of the governing party, has said Pierluisi doesn't have the votes needed in the house.

"The situation could not be more complicated," said Sen. Jose Antonio Vargas Vidot, who ran for Senate as an independent.

"This is absurd, what we're going through. We never thought something like this could happen. In an extraordinary crisis, we have to take extraordinary measures."

Puerto Rico's 3 million people are U.S. citizens who can vote for president and don't have a voting representative in Congress. While politicians are members of the Democratic or Republican parties, the island's main political dividing line is between the NPP, which favors statehood, and the PDQ, which favors a looser association with the federal government. Those parties' membership both contain a mix of Democrats and Republicans.

Rossello is leaving after two weeks of massive street protests by Puerto Ricans outraged at corruption, mismanagement and an obscenity-laced chat that was leaked in which Rossello and 11 other men made fun of women, gay people and victims of Hurricane Maria.

More than a dozen officials have resigned in the wake of the chat, including former Secretary of State Luis Rivera Marin. Rivera Schatz, whose spokeswoman said he was not granting interviews, said in a Facebook post on Wednesday that all problems have solutions and that Puerto Rico should be focused on finding them.

Epstein's trial likely more than year away

NEW YORK — A subbed Jef- frey Epstein, an unarmed police officer, was found unresponsive in court Wednesday as a judge said he won't face trial on sex trafficking charges before June 2020, and more likely a few months afterward.

There was no mention at the Manhattan federal court appearance or any visible sign of injuries after the 66-year-old financier was found on the floor of his cell sat next week with neck bruising.

Epstein's lawyer, Martin Weinberg, refused to say what might have caused the bruising of the writes, or whether the judge has taken any action over the bruising.

Weinberg said the case is far from "ordinary," adding that the defense team won't be ready before Labor Day 2020. He said prosecutors delayed bringing charges next week that alleged crimes that occurred in the early 2000s at Epstein's residences in Manhattan and Florida.

A U.S. District Judge Richard M. Berman said a trial projected to last four to six weeks could tentatively begin by June 8, but he declined to defer to defense lawyers' needs if they are not ready.

Epstein, in court Wednesday sat quietly, his hands folded in front of his face, even as much of the 20-minute proceeding. Occasionally, he looked toward courtroom artists and reporters seated in a jury box.

Epstein has remained at the Metropolitan Correction Center, which is adjacent to the downtown Manhattan courthouse.

He has pleaded not guilty to sex trafficking charges that carry the potential for up to 45 years in prison.

Berman refused bail after concluding he is a danger to the community and a flight risk.

Prosecutors have said they fear he might try to influence a growing number of witnesses when he is released Thursday in the sex trafficking case.

Many witnesses have already agreed to testify in the case and have been granted permission to do so.

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**Skin experts offer tattoo removal advice**

**By Linda A. Johnson**
Associated Press

TRENTON, N.J. — Does your tattoo sport your old flame's name? Or the one you got on a whim no longer fits your image? You're not alone. Many people have “tattoo regret” and are opting to get the ink removed.

Tattoos can be removed three ways:
- **Laser removal,** generally the preferred method. The laser sends light pulses of different wavelengths for each color for fractions of a second. The pulses break apart skin cells and rupture the ink inside them into tiny particles, which the lymph system picks up and the body gradually excretes. Local anesthetic is given to prevent pain.
- **Dermabrasion,** or scraping away the skin's top layers. It can leave big scars and not remove all the ink, said Dr. Eric F. Bernstein, director of the Mainline Center for Laser Surgery in Ardmore, Pa., near Philadelphia.
- **Surgical removal,** or cutting out top layers of skin. This can also leave scars, but can be a good option for small tattoos or if the tattoo inks have caused an allergic reaction and need to be removed quickly, Bernstein said.

“Wait till you can do it the right way,” recommended Bernstein, past president of the American Society for Laser Medicine & Surgery. “If you try to do something on the cheap, you take a fixable problem and turn it into an unfixable problem with a big scar.”

Ryan Tucker, a firefighter who lives in the Houston suburb of Pearland, Texas, spent about $6,000 over 10 laser treatments to have Friedman remove a tattoo across the back of his neck that said “Natalie,” his ex-wife’s name.

“I was young and stupid and thought it was a good way to show affection, which it’s not,” Tucker, 39, said.

He started to get it removed six months before he remarried in 2017 and finished up late last year, with a couple of faint blue spots left.

Tucker says he occasionally felt a poking sensation but otherwise the brief treatments didn’t hurt — unlike the “super painful” process of getting the tattoo. Tucker said the area felt like it was lightly sunburned for a few days after each treatment.

Here are some tips from the medical groups:
- **Find a dermatologist,** preferably-certified, with tattoo removal expertise and advanced laser surgery training.
- **Make sure the doctor has lasers that cover multiple light wavelengths, matching the colors of your tattoo.** Ask if they have the new lasers — Q-switched or picosecond lasers, Bernstein said.
- **Ask to see before-and-after photos of patients with a similar skin tone.**
- **Follow your doctor’s instructions.** The area will be red and irritated, as skin is right after getting a tattoo.
- **Don’t rush the job.** It’s best to wait a couple of laser treatment sessions.

“That’ll cut down on the number of sessions,” produce the best result and reduce the cost, Friedman said.

**Dillinger relatives doubt that body in grave is gangster**

**By Rick Callahan**
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Relatives of notorious 1930s gangster John Dillinger who plan to have his remains exhumed say they have “evidence” the body buried in an Indianapolis cemetery beneath a gravestone bearing his name may not be him and FBI agents possibly killed someone else in 1934.

The Indiana State Department of Health released affidavits signed by Mike Thompson and Carol Thompson Griffith, who say Dillinger was their uncle. In the documents, they say they’re seeking to have “a body purported to be John H. Dillinger” exhumed from Crown Hill Cemetery for a forensic analysis and possible DNA testing.

Both say in the affidavits supporting an exhumation request that the state agency approved in July that they have received “evidence that demonstrates that the individual who was shot and killed at the Biograph Theater in Chicago on July 22, 1934 may not in fact have been my uncle, John H. Dillinger.”

In their affidavits, both say that “evidence” including that the eye color of the man killed outside that theater didn’t match Dillinger’s eye color, that his ears were shaped differently, that the fingerprints weren’t a match and that he had a heart condition. They say they want the body exhumed and subjected to a forensic analysis and possibly DNA testing “in order to make a positive identification.”

“It is my belief and opinion that it is critical to learn whether Dillinger lived beyond his reported date of death of July 22, 1934. If he was not killed on that date, I am interested in discovering what happened to him, where he lived, whether he had children and whether any such children or grandchildren are living today,” both say in the documents.

The Chicago Sun-Times and WLS-TV in Chicago first reported on the affidavits supporting the exhumation permit.

Dan Silberman of A&E Networks said Tuesday that the planned exhumation will be covered as part of a documentary on Dillinger for The History Channel.

The Indianapolis-born Dillinger was one of America’s most notorious criminals.

**Utah’s plans for medical marijuana face scrutiny**

**Associated Press**

SALT LAKE CITY — Utah officials preparing to launch the state’s medical marijuana program next year face mounting pressure from county attorneys to scrap plans for a state-run dispensary system and lingering scrutiny from companies rejected for growers’ licenses.

The state announced Wednesdays it has dismissed appeals from six companies that were denied licenses to grow medical marijuana for Utah’s program, shutting down allegations that the selection process was hasty and biased.

The companies still have one more avenue for appealing to the state, and at least one — North Star Holdings LLC — vowed to keep protesting a process it considers unfair.

“We’re going to take it to court. We’re not going to stop until we do what’s right for Utah cannabis patients,” said Welby Evangelista, the company’s president.

News of the dismissals came as county attorneys expressed concern that a planned state-run dispensary system would put public employees at risk of being prosecuted under federal drug laws.

That has led state officials to acknowledge they need to consider new ways to distribute medical marijuana.

On Tuesday, Salt Lake County District Attorney Sim Gill and Davis County District Attorney Troy Rawlings said current plans for the state’s medical marijuana orders are being questioned by the plan outlined in the ballot initiative for a network of private dispensaries.

That was scrapped when Utah lawmakers made sweeping changes to the ballot measure, and built in the distribution system that uses local health departments.

More than 30 other states allow medical marijuana in some form. But none have state-run dispensaries because they fear the potential legal fallout, said Chris Lindsey, senior legislative counsel with the Marijuana Policy Project, a Washington-based pro-legislation advocacy group.

Utah’s proposal, as it stands, is unique and could set a precedent for other states if successful, he said.

The plan allows for seven private “cannabis pharmacies,” with a state-run “central fill pharmacy” distributing the remainder of medical marijuana orders through each of the state’s 13 local health departments.
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Stay connected and hey, welcome to the neighborhood.
Limits on face-covering clothing take effect in the Netherlands

Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — A new Dutch law took effect Thursday banning face-covering clothing — including the burqa and niqab worn by conservative Muslim women — on public transportation, in government buildings and at health and education institutions.

The Netherlands, long seen as a bastion of tolerance and religious freedom, is the latest European country to introduce such a ban, following the likes of France, Germany, Belgium, Austria and Denmark.

Muslim and rights groups have voiced opposition to the law — formally called the “partial ban on face-covering clothing” — and an Islamic political party in Rotterdam has said it will pay the $167 fines for anybody caught breaking it.

There were no immediate reports Thursday morning of anybody being fined under the new law, which was passed despite the fact that very few women in the Netherlands wear a burqa or niqab — estimates put the number at a few hundred in this nation of 17 million.

Anti-Islam lawmaker Geert Wilders, whose calls for a total burqa ban ignited more than a decade of debate before parliament approved the law last year, welcomed the introduction of the limited ban as “a historic day” and called for it to be expanded to include Islamic headscarves.

“I believe we should now try to take it to the next step,” Wilders said. “The next step to make it sure that the headscarf could be banned in the Netherlands as well.”

The Dutch government has insisted that its partial ban doesn’t target any religion and that people are free to dress how they want.

A government site explaining the new ban says, however, that “this freedom is limited at locations where communication is vital for good quality service or for security in society.”

Orthopedic plate found in crocodile

Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia — An Australian crocodile farmer who found an orthopedic plate inside a croc’s stomach said Thursday that he had been told the surgical device was from a person’s body and he had been contacted by relatives of missing people anxious for clues.

Koorana Crocodile Farm owner John Lever found the plate inside a 15-foot-5-inch croc called M.J. during a necropsy in June at his business near Rockhampton in Queensland state.

He initially wasn’t sure if the unusual find had been part of an animal or human. But he said since making photos of the plate public, he had been told it was a type used in human surgery.

Lever estimated that M.J. was 50 to 70 years old when he died. M.J. could have eaten the bone that the plate had been attached to by six screws 50 years ago, he said.

All remnants of human tissue attached to the plate had been long digested before M.J. died several months after losing a fight with another croc.

Lever later said that Queensland police had told him they had opened a missing person investigation and asked him to bring the plate to the Rockhampton station on Friday.

Lever is continuing to make inquiries in the hope of discovering what decade the type of plate was used and perhaps who it had belonged to.

“I wouldn’t call it an investigation; we’re making inquiries because we’re fascinated by this whole thing,” Lever said. “Obviously, this crocodile has chomped on something and that plate has been left in its stomach complete with screws.”

A U.S. soldier pays homage Thursday to the victims of the Warsaw Uprising, a failed revolt by Poles against the occupying Nazi German forces in Warsaw, Poland. Thursday was the 75th anniversary of the start of the two-month battle.
ADEN, Yemen — Rebels in Yemen fired a ballistic missile Thursday at a military parade in the southern port city of Aden and coordinated suicide bombings targeted a police station in another part of the city. The attacks killed at least 51 people and wounded dozens, officials said.

The missile hit in the city’s neighborhood of Breiqa where a military parade was underway by forces loyal to the United Arab Emirates, a member of the Saudi-led coalition that has been fighting the Iran-backed Houthi rebels since 2015 in support of Yemen’s internationally recognized government. The missile attack killed at least 40, a health official said.

The parade was taking place at the pro-coalition al-Galaa camp in Aden, said a security official, without giving a breakdown for the casualties. Since the rebels seized the country’s capital, Sanaa, in 2014, Aden has served as the temporary seat of the government.

The website of the Houthi rebels, Al-Masirah, quoted spokesman Brig. Gen. Yehia Sarea as saying the rebels had fired a medium-range ballistic missile at the parade, leaving scores of casualties, including military commanders.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the police station bombings but both Yemen’s al-Qaida branch and an Islamic State affiliate have exploited the chaos of the country’s war between the Houthis and the government forces, backed by the Saudi-led coalition.

Associated Press

KINSHASA, Congo — The 1-year-old daughter of the man who died of Ebola in Congo’s major city of Goma this week has the disease, the Health Ministry said Thursday, while Rwanda closed its border with Goma over the virus outbreak that now enters its second year.

The man died Wednesday after spending several days at home with his large family while showing symptoms.

This is the first transmission of Ebola inside Goma, a city of more than 2 million people on the Rwandan border, a scenario that health experts have long feared. The painstaking work of finding, tracking and vaccinating people who had contact with the man — and the contacts of those contacts — has begun.

“Were seeing the first active transmission chain in Goma and expect more to come,” the International Rescue Committee’s Ebola response director, Andre Hellier, warned in a statement.

This outbreak has killed more than 1,800 people, nearly a third of them children. It is now the second-deadliest Ebola outbreak in history, and last month the World Health Organization declared it a rare global emergency.

Rwanda’s state minister for foreign affairs, Olivier Nduhungirehe, confirmed the border closure a day after WHO officials praised African nations for keeping their borders open.

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Johnson faces electoral test in Parliament vote

By Jill Lawless

LONDON — After a first week in office that saw him booted in Scotland and berated in Belfast, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was facing his first electoral test on Thursday — a special test in Parliament vote Johnson faces a crucial vote on Thursday that could reduce his majority in Parliament.

Johnson became prime minister last week after winning a Conservative leadership race by a landslide, leading to the departure of Theresa May. He is facing his first election that could see the Conservative party other than Conservatives win support surge because of their stance on Brexit is complicated. Opposition Labour Party, whose 20% of U.K. votes, trouncing both of the EU's rules-heavy Common Agricultural Policy, saying priority should be given to Brexit out of frustration with the bloc against their will.

In Britain's 2016 European Union membership referendum the Conservative-backed Vote Leave campaign — a hilly, largely rural area about 175 miles west of London — voted by 52-48% to leave the EU, an outcome that exactly matched the national result.

As in the rest of the U.K., the area's voters remain deeply divided over the decision — and over the fact that, three years later, Britain is still a member of the bloc.

Johnson became prime minister last week after winning a Conservative leadership race by vowing to take Britain out of the EU by Oct. 31, with or without a divorce deal. The Conservatives hope Johnson, who visited the area Tuesday, said “a vote for any party other than Conservatives pushes the Liberal Democrats one step closer to canceling the referendum result.”

While many farmers back Brexit out of frustration with the EU's rules-heavy Common Agricultural Policy, saying priority should be given to Brexit out of frustration with the bloc against their will.

Johnson was criticized by Scottish independence protesters in Edinburgh and censure from politicians in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Both areas voted to remain in the EU, and many there resent being forced to leave the bloc against their will.

Voters are electing a lawmaker in a by-election for the seat of Brecon and Radnorshire in Wales after Conservative incumbent Chris Davies was ousted. He was dumped by a petition of local electors after being convicted of an £847 expenses fraud.

Davies is running to regain the seat but faces a strong challenge from the Liberal Democrats' Jane Dodds in a vote overshadowed by Brexit. Polls close at 10 p.m., with results expected early Friday.

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Trash dumper leaves nod to Guthrie song

MA GREAT BARRINGTON — Whoever dumped trash at the building made famous in Arlo Guthrie’s 1967 Thanksgiving protest anthem “Alice’s Restaurant Massacree” has a sense of humor.

The director of what’s now the Guthrie Center in Great Barrington discovered that someone had filled the dumpster with garbage and left a grubby sofa nearby.

They also left a sign that read: “Officer Obie told me to do it.”

The sign was a reference to former Stockbridge Police Chief William Obanhein, the Officer Obie of the song who arrested Guthrie for illegally dumping trash.

Driver cited for painted registration stickers

NE LINCOLN — A Nebraska state trooper cited a driver after pulling over a vehicle that had registration stickers painted onto its license plates.

Nebraska State Patrol spokesman Cody Thomas said the vehicle was stopped in north Lincoln. Trooper Adam Strode spotted the problem, and he ticketed the driver for having fictitious plates and not having valid registration.

It’s unclear whether the driver also was the artist whose unsteady hand fashioned two rough red rectangles in the upper right-hand corner of the plates.

Police say drunken man shot his dog

FL CAPE CORAL — Police in Florida said a man shot his dog while he was intoxicated.

News outlets reported Corey James Potts, 23, was arrested Monday and faces several charges including aggravated animal cruelty.

Cape Coral Police Department Master Sgt. Patrick O’Grady said officers responding to a shots-fired call found a large, light brown mixed-breed dog dead in a vacant lot next to the home.

He said Potts came out crying and told police he shot his dog, Gordo.

Witnesses said they saw the dog running around outside before hearing gunshots and seeing Potts lying near the dog.

Boy, 9, who saved child honored as a hero

NC ASHEVILLE — Firefighters in North Carolina honored a 9-year-old boy for saving another child from drowning in a pool.

The Asheville Citizen-Times reported Jayden Castillo was presented a Civilian Life-Saving in a pool.

Ritting Award by the Asheville Fire Department for rescuing Marlee Segula by a city magistrate was widely criticized.

Final stretch

Bert, a black-capped Capuchin monkey, leans into the coming turn as he rides Luna, a German shepherd, in the Banana Derby during the McHenry County Fair in Woodstock, Ill., on Tuesday.

2 ducks rescued from grate by police

The number of tarantulas in a package a porch pirate is suspected of stealing. News outlets reported a South Carolina woman said she received a notification that the FedEx shipment had been delivered. When she went to get the package, it wasn’t there. A report from the Spartanburg County Sheriff’s Office said the tarantulas are valued at $1,000.

noticed the ducks and were following beside them, trying to provide a safe escort when the mother duck was spooked by a dog.

That’s when three of the little ones dropped through the grate outside a hospital.

A crowd including animal rescuer Sean Casey gathered to help.

The ducks were taken to a shelter.

Man sets record with 72.8-pound mahi mahi

MD ANNAPOLIS — A Maryland man who said he had to outlast a mahi mahi to land it now has a place in the state record book.

The state Department of Natural Resources said Jeff Wright, of Cambridge, broke a 34-year-old fishing record when he caught the 72.8-pound fish off the coast of Ocean City. Wright’s catch beat the record held by Kim Lawren, who reeled in a 67.8-pound common dolphinfish in July 1985.

Wright says in a news release that he fought the fish for 25 minutes and had to stay with it until it finally gave up.

Man accused of stealing from woman again

IA CRESCO — A northeast Iowa man was accused of stealing from a woman for a second time.

A McHenry County trial is scheduled to begin Oct. 30 for Justin Hoehn, of Lawler. He pleaded not guilty to theft and identity theft.

He’s accused of making unauthorized charges to a Cresco woman’s checking account, getting more than $3,000.

Station KIMT reported that Hoehn was convicted of making unauthorized charges to the same woman’s credit card and got two years of probation in 2016.

Yellowstone sets lottery for snowmobile permits

WY YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK — People can now apply for permits to snowmobile in Yellowstone National Park without a commercial guide during the next winter season.

Under a special lottery program, the park allows one group of up to five snowmobilers to enter Yellowstone from each of its four winter entrances per day.

Applications will be notified in mid-September.

Trips can be a maximum of three days in length, and permits cost $40 per day with a $6 application fee.

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Federal Reserve cut of key short-term rate is the first since December 2008

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Federal Reserve cut its key short-term rate Wednesday for the first time in a decade to try to counter the impact of President Donald Trump’s trade war, stubbornly low inflation and global weakness.

It left open the possibility of future rate cuts — but perhaps not as many as Wall Street had been hoping for. During a news conference, Chairman Jerome Powell struggled to find just the right words to articulate the Fed’s strategy and what might prompt future rate cuts at a time when the risk of a recession in the United States seems relatively low.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average tumbled to finish down 333 points, or 1.2%. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note fell to 2.01% from 2.06% late Tuesday, a sharp drop.

The central bank reduced its benchmark rate — which affects many loans for households and businesses — by a quarter-point to a range of 2% to 2.25%.

It’s the first rate cut since December 2008 during the depths of the Great Recession, when the Fed slashed its rate to a record low near zero and kept it there until 2015. The economy is far healthier now despite risks to what’s become the longest expansion on record.

But Powell stressed that the Fed is worried about the consequences of Trump’s trade war and sluggish economies overseas. “Weak global growth and trade tensions are having an effect on the U.S. economy,” he said.

He also said that sluggishness in some sectors of the U.S. economy, like manufacturing, along with inflation chronically below the Fed’s target level justify the “insurance of a rate cut now.”

Yet Powell struggled to explain clearly whether, and why, and how much the Fed might further reduce rates.

“It’s not the beginning of a long series of rate cuts,” he said. “I didn’t say it’s just one or anything like that. When you think about rate-cutting cycles, they go on for a long time, and the committee is not seeing that — not seeing in that place. You do that if you saw real economic weakness.”

Trump, who has repeatedly attacked the Fed for failing to cut rates aggressively, expressed irritation Wednesday with its message.

The Fed also announced that it would stop shrinking its enormous bond portfolio in August, two months earlier than planned.

That step is intended to avoid putting upward pressure on long-term borrowing rates. The Fed had aggressively bought Treasury and mortgage bonds after the financial crisis to drive down long-term rates but had been gradually shrinking its balance sheet as the economy strengthened.

The Fed’s action Wednesday was approved 8-2. It was the first time there have been as many as two dissents since December 2017 and suggested that Powell may face opposition if he seeks further rate cuts this year.

EXCHANGE RATES

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INTEREST RATES

- Prime rate: 5.25%
- Discount rate: 2.75%
- Federal funds market rate: 2.45%
- 3-month bill: 2.67%
- 10-year bond: 3.32%

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OVERDRIVE
The Fast & Furious franchise reloads for another ride with ‘Hobbs & Shaw’

Pages 24-25
Immersive TV and movie ‘activations’ are reshaping fandom. But is audience participation going too far?

BY TODD MARTENS

Los Angeles Times

Imagine what might be the world’s largest escape room: Several blocks of a major American city have been taken over by a few monolithic corporations that not only control the space but also dominate the culture. Currency is handed out as a reward for pledging allegiance. And everyone you meet is a potential friend or maybe simply a brand extension.

Welcome to San Diego Comic-Con International, where our stories and myths have been gamified. And you, the fan, are the protagonist.

Step into a transporter and be zipped and zapped to different Star Trek locales in about 30 seconds. Apply to be a cop on “Brooklyn Nine-Nine.” Venture into an underground hangout for gamblers and worse as reflected in the world of Epix’s “Pennyworth.”

You might take a stroll through a Victorian-era speakeasy where fairy-tale creatures mingle with burlesque performers, a full-scale representation of Amazon’s metaphorical take on race and immigration that is “Carnival Row.” Or, if you’re slightly braver, sneak through a detailed forest influenced less by any real-world locale than by the slasher movies of the 1980s in FX’s “American Horror Story”-themed walk-through.

These so-called activations — no longer unique to Comic-Con but popping up in cities around the country ahead of TV and movie openings — are one way elements of game design are reshaping fandom. But when rules are dictated by marketing plans, play comes with strings attached and potentially for the creators as well.

Exploring Comic-Con in 2019 is akin to delving into an open-world video game, where each minor accomplishment is broadcast with a digital achievement, a stamp-like figure affixed to one’s online profile.

Those who wait in multihour lines to, say, stand briefly in that makeshift Star Trek transporter, receive not just a mini video but a pin themed to “Picard.” A travel mug is your reward for waiting an afternoon to simulate going to space via a transporter ship from “The Expanse” only to arrive on what appears to be a hostile alien planet where actors impressively reenact torture scenes and mini-fights.

And, of course, each achievement unlocks something to brag about on social media.

But watch out. All sense of reality is obscured inside this world. Personalities and personality traits no longer have definable lines.

Fact or fiction?

In the midst of one pop-up immersive experience for a much-hyped new show, it appears that a lurid mystery is about to unfold.

A woman at the door stops me and points to another woman seated between two others on a couch. She suggests I talk to her, noting she’s the significant other of someone important.

A moment later I encounter a different woman, who tells me she is in fact the girlfriend of said important person.

Ah! The game, I think, is afoot!

Only it’s not.

“I was told the woman over there is his girlfriend?” I say to the second girlfriend, pretending to act slightly puzzled. “Oh, no,” says the now visibly confused actor in front of me. “I mean, maybe in real life? But here, and on the show, I’m his girlfriend.”

This “game” is clearly broken.

But in the larger Comic-Con narrative, the character break makes sense. Fact and fiction, after all, are blurred regularly in the world of activations.

Activations have thrived for years at Comic-Con and elsewhere, even allowing non-registered guests to partake in the fan-focused festivities. Their goal is to give fans the illusion of participating in a narrative — or, failing that, to at least create a photo opportunity. At their best, they create a sense of lore, building out a world for those in the know. But even the best of these are advertisements that create a false sense of fan wish fulfillment.

Yet the more entertainment conglomerates explore game-like activities, which give fans a greater sense of agency, the more they may have to come to grips with fans demanding a sense of participation.

Each new walk-in experience brings us closer to a world where fan fiction is no longer relegated to the most passionate fringes but increasingly surrounds and may someday lead us. In a pop-culture landscape obsessed with franchises and proven intellectual property, some may wonder if we’re already there.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23
experience during Comic-Con in San Diego.

Amazon's hidden speakeasy of superheroes and bold singers for its upcoming "Carnival Row" succeeded in not just creating a sense of place but also in hinting at the moment, with authorities treating anyone who looked different as out of place and worthy of being detained. The Rentelle cabaret was outfitted with hidden peepholes and nooks to have one-on-one conversations with those acting. It was built from the ground up as a place for hiding, and I'll be curious to see if the show succeeds in its sense of world-building.

For another show, "The Boys," Amazon went more of an escape-room route with a crime scene cover-up, but here too there were surprises, including allusions to class warfare since the show is set in a world where superheroes are seen as privileged brats. Only some, if any, will uncover a password that led to a secret comic book shop next door, a place where attendees could get more swag.

Epic's bar takeover for "Pen- nyworth" resulted in a lush environment where you could play cards or get a photo of being fake-tortured, but there was no underlying story to the experience, at least not one I uncovered. When I asked a member of the cast what kind of an establishment would allow for an electric chair in the backroom, she said I had to tune in to the show Sunday evening, essentially putting up a "game over" screen.

Fans raved about FX's scary installation for its summer season of "American Horror Story," a parody of 1980s horror films set on an escape room, which today is going mainstream thanks to practitioners such as the New Mexico-based Moew Wolf art collective, building out spaces in Las Vegas and Denver, and role-playing theme park Evermore outside Salt Lake City, not to mention the participatory nature of Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge at Disneyland.

Story," a parody of 1980s horror stories, put up a "game over" screen. When I asked a member of the cast what kind of an establishment would allow for an electric chair in the backroom, she said I had to tune in to the show Sunday evening, essentially putting up a "game over" screen.

FROM PAGE 22

Andrew Perez stamps a poem he wrote July 18 at the Pennyworth experience during Comic-Con in San Diego.

New GADGET WATCH

Moshi's SnapTo magnetic car mount for Qi wireless charging is a great, easy system for charging and hands-free smartphone use.

It's easy to set up, unbox it and decide where you want to install it. Accessories are included for vent and dash/window mounting. The vent mount can be tricky, but after you get the right angle, it's simple. I love the vent mount system for traveling; it fit every rental car I tried. Mounting on a flat surface depends on your vehicle, whether it's a flat area or the windshield. Once you decide where to install it, peel back the 3M adhesive and lock it in place.

The key feature of the SnapTo system is the Moshi case; it's built with slots to accommodate the SnapTo magnetic system tabs and is available in many colors, styles and fashions. I tried it with the Moshi iGlaze case (iPhone XS) and it worked perfectly. The slots inside the case keep the tabs flush with the inside of the case, assuring nothing intrudes on your smartphone.

A four-foot USB power cord is included for connecting the charging mount to your car for power. The real test, after the 30-second installation, was whether my phone charged and how it worked while driving. During a weekend of errands, everything stayed connected and continued to charge except when I manually pulled the phone off.

Moshi also has a SnapTo wall mount ($18.95). If you're already using the system in your car, the wall mount works with the same case to mount your phone on any flat surface in landscape or portrait modes. This includes desks, walls, nightstands, and yes, even your car door. While using the wall mount, it doesn't supply power but you can have a charging cable connected directly to the smartphone's charging port for power.

Online: moshi.com; SnapTo Magnetic Car Mount with wireless charging, $59.95

New and more powerful portable electronic gadgets often translate to the need for more portable power with different connectivity options.

The new myCharge PowerLumens ($59.99) from the Adventure series of batteries is designed to act as rugged, durable power for charging in the most extreme conditions. It's available in 10,000mAh or 20,000mAh sizes, which are good for about 5 times or 10 times extra battery power respectively.

Both models come charged, ready to work. A pair of USB-A power ports are built into the side for a total of 2.4A output. While the battery power is the key element, there are a few other features to make it a great, versatile device for everyday use, camping or in emergencies.

One side panel has a built-in LED light with features including 500 lumens light levels, SOS setting and four brightness levels. Working off the internal battery, the light can shine continuously for up to 41 hours. An LED battery indicator to display remaining battery power is on the side. An anti-corrosive metal kickstand unfolds out from the side, making it simple to stabilize and angle the light for perfect viewing. I also liked the handle for attaching it to my backpack's carabiner clip for easy access.

The power is the key; charging is done with a safe-cell to ensure safe charging and smart-sense to ensure the battery's compatibility with your device.

Another great battery from myCharge is the HubMax Universal ($99.99). The battery has both Apple Lightning and USB-C cables built into the battery. If your device doesn’t fit one of those, no problem. Use your charging cable in the built-in standard USB port. All three ports can be used simultaneously to pull power from the 10050mAh battery, good for up to six times the battery power.

To recharge the HubMax, fold out the built-in wall prongs and plug directly into any standard AC outlet. The device is 2.8-by-0.9-by-4.6 inches. The $99.99 battery is built with an aluminum body and both safe-cell and smart-sense technology are included. Pressing the power button on the side will display the battery level.

Online: mycharge.com

The HubMax Universal has both Apple Lightning and USB-C cables built in for maximum convenience.

BY GREGG ELLMAN

Tribune News Service

MAGNETIC car mount charger a snap to set up

Andrew Perez stamps a poem he wrote July 18 at the Pennyworth experience during Comic-Con in San Diego.

WEEKEND: GADGETS

GADGET WATCH

MAGNETIC car mount charger a snap to set up

Andrew Perez stamps a poem he wrote July 18 at the Pennyworth experience during Comic-Con in San Diego.
BY JEN YAMATO
Los Angeles Times

The day Dwayne Johnson’s mother came to visit the Kauai set of “Fast & Furious Presents: Hobbs & Shaw,” emotions were already high. But not even the WWE superstar known in the ring as The Rock was steelied for what he saw after director David Leitch called “Cut!” on one of the most pivotal scenes in the Fast & Furious spinoff.

Johnson, in character as Luke Hobbs, the brawny American lawman he’s played since “Fast Five,” had just led an ensemble of fellow Polynesian actors, including Cliff Curtis and WWE’s Roman Reigns, in a siva tau, or Samoan war dance.

“This siva tau under wraps from sacred ground to begin with,” Johnson said. “We’re in the islands, we’re surrounded by mana — which is spirit and soul and power — and the mana was so real on set,” he added. “‘Oh, Mama, are you OK?’ and give her hugs.”

The mana, Johnson’s mother’s personal in many ways. He kept the siva tau under wraps from his mother, Ata Johnson, until filming. It was the most she had ever heard him speak in Samoan.

“There is a word in Polynesian language, mana — which is spirit and soul and power — and the mana was so real on set,” he said. “We’re in the islands, we’re on sacred ground to begin with.”

In the first of several potential additional spinoffs, Johnson has helped write his own heritage into one of the biggest action series on the planet. Introducing the film at its Los Angeles premiere, Johnson shared a startling fact: “Hobbs & Shaw” is the first film of its scale, and one of only a handful of films period, to showcase the Samoan culture and setting in this way.

“It was our way of paying homage and honoring a culture that I’m very proud of and that has been responsible for teaching me defining values throughout the years,” he told The Times a few days later ahead of a whirlwind press tour.

“We always want the films to be reflective of the world, culturally,” said producer, screenwriter and Fast & Furious architect Chris Morgan, noting that inclusivity has been both organic and essential to the multicultural Universal franchise. “You get the sense that if the audience were transported into that world, that crew would accept them. All of them. For me, the greatest thing about the Fast films is that they represent global culture, positivity, family, heroism and that sense of inclusion and belonging. It’s what makes it special, and if you didn’t have that, it wouldn’t be Fast.”

**Spinnoff chemistry**

Johnson and Jason Statham reprise the characters they’ve played in several installments of the Fast cinematic universe. But while the never-mentioned Dominic Toretto is presumably living his life a quarter mile at a time elsewhere in the world — Justin Lin is currently directing “Fast 9,” with an ensemble anchored by original “Fast & Furious” stars Vin Diesel and Michelle Rodriguez — “Hobbs & Shaw” takes the audience on a two-hander adventure from Shaw’s hometown of London to Hobbs’ childhood home in Samoa, with a stop for intrigue and over-the-top action in a secretive Chernobyl bunker.

Directed by stunt pro-turned-helmer Leitch (“Atomic Blonde,” “Deadpool 2”) and written by Morgan and Drew Pearce, the story tracks Johnson’s Hobbs and Statham’s British former black ops baddie Deckard Shaw as they reluctantly team to take on Idris Elba’s Brixton Lorr, a cybernetically enhanced super soldier trailing Shaw’s MI6 spy sister Hattie (Vanessa Kirby), who is in possession of a dangerously powerful biological weapon.

In addition to new characters and deeper backstories, the spinoff moves into action-comedy territory, punctuated by zippy exchanges and surprise cameos. Johnson extended an arm wide as he does in one of the film’s most heightened action scenes, reaching for an invisible tether. “If I’m going to hold a helicopter by a chain and pull it back in,” he said, “as a fan of movies and a fan of heroic characters … I need Hobbs to have winking absurdity.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25
In ‘Hobbs & Shaw,’ a spinoff spins its wheels

BY JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

A
dd an “e,” and “Hobbs & Shaw” might have been a triumphant thriller about playwright George Bernard Shaw and 20th-century philosopher Thomas Hobbes. Tantalizing as such a pairing may have been to the makers of Fast & Furious, they have instead opted to, in the franchise’s first spinoff, combine two of the series’ most prominent figures.

Dwayne Johnson’s U.S. government agent Luke Hobbs and Jason Statham’s former British agent Deckard Shaw, for another ballet of Buicks and bullets. Probably a wise choice. It’s difficult to imagine the writer of “Pygmalion” caring less about the side of a skyscraper in hot pursuit of Idi Amin.

And when it comes to high-octane action sequences, few are as well suited to the nursery than the Rock and Statham, who both make up with brown and charisma what they lack in hair.

If Fast & Furious has taught us anything, “Hobbs & Shaw” has a hard road to travel, it’s because the franchise has consistently packed up its stunt game. One of the real pleasures of the last decade’s blockbuster parade has been to watch the Fast & Furious movies morph from a more simple L.A. street-racing tale into an increasingly absurd and over-the-top action extravaganza as muscle cars and muscle, where hot rods don’t just go fast but occasionally leap between buildings and parachute from the sky.

As Hobbs seeks to answer that age-old question: What do you do for work next after you’ve blown up a submarine with a Dodge? “Hobbs & Shaw” has some nifty moves (in one scene, a Chevy flies like a helicopter into a kite), but it’s slightly disappointingly in terms of sheer ridiculousness. It earns some points for a centerpiece showdown, seemingly designed for “Cherno biol” fans, set among reactors at a Russian nuclear power plant. But at this point, we expect — no, demand — to see Lamborghinis on the moon.

Instead, the entertainment of “Hobbs & Shaw,” directed by stunt coordinator-turned-director David Leitch, rests more with its cast, including its two leads. But just as significant are two movie additions: Elba’s villain, a cyber-borg mercenary named Brixton, and Shaw’s sister Hattie (Vanessa Kirby), an MI6 agent whose theft of a super virus from Brixton sets the globe-trotting plot in motion.

Hobbs and Shaw are called in to save the world, a job they are both eager for. But it’s a partnership that boggles. If “Hobbs & Shaw” lacks in memorable stunt work, it tries to make it up with bickering and put-downs between the two, a strick that vacillates between funny and tiresome. But it’s the kind of stuff Johnson excels at.

They also have reinforcements. Elba’s character, who boasts digital eyes and a self-driving motorcycle, takes the franchise in a more sci-fi direction that doesn’t fits the street-level nature of Fast & Furious. But Elba is never an imposing presence; the movie straightens up when he’s out.

With such titans as Elba and Johnson in the movie, it’s a wonder how smoothly and completely the film’s new adventures and new characters you should splinter off and you should create new adventures and new characters that will inevitably lead to a nice in-road at that point.

Early ideas had Hobbs leading a team of Diplomatic Security Service agents across the world, nabbing bad guys. It wasn’t until he was filming on the set of “Fate of the Furious” with Statham, who had already been introduced in a cameo two films earlier in “Fast & Furious 6” as the figure responsible for the death of “Tokyo Drift” star favorite Han (Sung Kang), that the lightbulb went off.

While filming their “Fast 8” prison sequence — and going off script to rob imprisoned bars at Detroit — Johnson and Statham discovered a spark that could carry their joint shtick. “I come from a world of professional wrestling, where I have a bag for two hours,” said Johnson. “I said whatever line and he cranked up, and in that moment, I think it just crystallized, this trust and chemistry that we had.”

Both stars are now producers on “Hobbs & Shaw” alongside Morgan and Johnson’s Seven Bucks Productions partner Hiram Garcia. With those roles came greater responsibilities for the two actors, but the grey elements were a must, like requisite fast cars and furious action, nods to the DNA of the films that came before it and certain inescapable Fast & Furious mantra.

“The famous f-word,” said Johnson. “And we like to say it like ... family.” He whispered dramatically, flashing a showman’s smile. “There’s a gravitas to that. That’s where Johnson saw an opportunity to honor his own roots.

Samoa usos

The son of black Canadian wrestler Rocky Johnson and Ata Johnson, whose father was Samoa wrestler Peter Maivia, Johnson leapt at the chance to bring his Samoan heritage into the Fast universe. With Garcia and Morgan, he envisioned a backstory for Hobbs that would not only bring him home to Samoa to the family he left 25 years ago amid bad blood and deeply held grudges, but celebrate his connection to his culture.

“I remember Chris Morgan saying, ‘What if we take the audience back home to Samoa, where Hobbs is from, and all his brothers hate him and they’re all bigger than him and mama is still the ruler of the house?’” said Johnson, emphasizing the importance of casting that extended family with purpose. “Authenticity was important when it came to casting, and we knew we wanted to cast all Polynesian actors.”

New Zealand actor Curtis (“Once Were Warriors,” “Whale Rider”), who starred opposite Statham in last year’s shark tale “The Meg,” joined the cast as Jonah, the brother with whom Hobbs shares a painful history. Also cast were Eliana Su’a as his precocious daughter, Samantha; Lori Pelenise Tuisano as his mother, Selina; and Josh Mauga, John Tui and Reigns as his uses, or brothers.

The Samoan team is deeply poignant to Johnson, one way the filmmakers effortlessly weave Samoa culture into the fabric of their world. It carries even greater significance when he speaks of bringing Anoa’i into the Fast family.

Hailing from different generations of the WWE, both men are members of the Anoa’i family, Samoa wrestling royalty. Joe Anoa’i, 34, one of wrestling’s biggest stars, was excited to hear that Johnson’s Fast spinoff would showcase Samoa culture. He submitted an audition tape not knowing if his WWE schedule would allow him enough time off to film, should he even get the part.

Then, last October, Anoa’i announced he was taking a break from the ring to undergo treatment for leukemia. “Once everything got turned upside down on me I had no aspirations to do anything — I just wanted to be home with my family and take on the healing process,” he said.

Months later, he was still undergoing treatment and, he says, his condition improving when Johnson called. “At that point, I was totally out of physicality — I couldn’t be touched, I couldn’t be hit,” said Anoa’i. “I’ve always been a very physical athlete. I’ve always been about contact. And it really threw me for a loop, not being able to do that.”

With Johnson’s support, Anoa’i accepted the role of Mateo, who fights alongside Hobbs in the story of Les Brown, a Polynesian boxer who fought on the island. “I felt comfortable, and I also felt like if I turned down an opportunity, I turned down a blessing, what kind of message am I sending to others who are in a similar struggle, who want to continue to live their life ... who want to continue to live their life?”

Johnson beamed as he described Anoa’i coming into the project. “He’s supposed to do no physical activity, and it’s all war-time when he gets to set,” he said. “I was like, ‘Are you OK with this?’” “He said, ‘I think so, brother. Let’s give it a shot and I’ll let you know.’ And he just shined, and I was so proud of him.”

For Anoa’i, family was more than a storyline in the script. “The Samoan culture (is) a very family-oriented culture, all the way down to the foundation of it,” he said. “I think how we show our passion, the way we show our trust in each other. The way we embraced each other — as a Polynesian man, to be embraced by Polynesian girls at first, then to completely connect with them and become usos, brothers, it was something I’ve always been a part of.”

“I think Dwayne is a perfect example of that,” he added. “Anybody who works with him ... their family. He reveals them, he takes care of them. That’s what we take from this film, from putting our culture on the big screen all the way down to the word ‘usos.’ I say this often: it’s not who you know, how you know them. That’s kind of what we try to do.”

FROM PAGE 24

Like the genre twists and turns the Fast & Furious movies have taken over the course of 18 years, “Hobbs & Shaw” aims to differentiate itself from the central films that have themselves evolved from A-list hunk to action star to Cast member, and the franchise’s first spinoff has arrived at a similar struggle, who want to continue to live their life ... who want to continue to live their life.”
The Sinking City is quick to set a mood, but struggles to deepen it. Its supernatural elements aren’t unnerving, its nourish elements rest on characters who are simply shady as opposed to morally complex, and its technical shortcomings don’t do it any favors.

On the Xbox One X, I noticed screen-tearing, texture pop-in and clunky NPC movements. Yet this open-world game isn’t without its merits. Its designers clearly wish to appeal to the intelligence of the player, but despite some interesting mechanics and design choices, The Sinking City fails to be compelling over the long haul.

Set in the 1920s in the fictional Massachusetts city of Oakmont, the game follows Charles Reed, a veteran of the Great War who survived a shipwreck. Since his discharge from the Navy, Reed has become a private investigator. Assailed by troubling dreams of an enormous tentacled creature and a city submerged in water, Reed establishes a correspondence with Johannes Van der Berg, a man of questionable character who agrees to look into what’s befallen his son. This case introduces you to the basics. Investigation sites should be explored until a notice appears on the screen saying that all key evidence has been found.

Although Reed can walk around and interact with things that are tagged with a hand icon, his most important insights come from his special ability to see traces of past events using his Mind’s Eye, which can be activated by pressing down on the d-pad. According to the game’s backstory, Reed developed his extrasensory power after he survived a shipwreck that briefly left him seemingly deranged to his rescuers. Using the Mind’s Eye ability slowly drains Reed’s sanity, which appears as a blue bar on the screen. As Reed’s sanity goes down, the environment begins to warp and eventually grow dark around him.

The monster encounters are one of The Sinking City’s weakest aspects. I found the action sequences stiff and the monsters uninspiring. The combat is certainly emboldened. Doing so made me feel silly rather than empowered.

Thankfully there are other design choices that make one feel closer to the world. To progress, in later cases Reed will have to visit the archives of a police station, a hospital, and a newspaper. The game’s presentation of archival research is clever. After approaching the appropriate desk, you must select a text to be researched. Then you choose three parameters of research from different categories which may include city area, time period, population class — prisoner, official, etc. — and so on. I’m a sucker for such shows of good old-fashioned knowledge retrieval in a video game.

Once you’ve gathered enough evidence from different sources, you may visit your mind palace in the menus. There you can combine notecards with clues on them to draw different conclusions. Sometimes clues can be interpreted in ways that will lead Reed to pursue different courses of action.

I enjoyed the game’s sleuthing mechanics, but wished they had been served by a more engaging plotline than The Sinking City’s revisionary approach to the fancies of H.P. Lovecraft. I found the game’s yarns about head-aches, madness and monsters fairly tame. But for those who might harbor reservations about Lovecraft (whose writings have inspired many video games) because of his anti-Semitic and anti-integrationist leanings, it should be said that The Sinking City puts the racism of 1920s America on display.

I wanted more from the The Sinking City’s open world, more diversions so I didn’t always feel on task, and more conversations that weren’t so nakedly transactional, so that I could believe that the NPCs had reasons for being other than dispensing quests and information. Oh well, one thing that noir teaches is that there is no end to wanting.

Platforms: PC, PlayStation 4, Xbox One
Website: thesinkingcity.com

The Sinking City takes place in a fictional open world inspired by the works of H.P. Lovecraft.
本国是几个石结构紧挨着一个公园。

这就是当年数以十万计的纳粹党支持者在1933年到1938年间聚集的地方。

纳粹党每年在纽伦堡举办集会来庆祝他们获得权力以及在1933年到1935年间取代民主魏玛共和国。

这是邪恶找到最大观众的地方，而希特勒反复违反了结束第一次世界大战的条约，而西方国家则在名义上阻止希特勒入侵其他一些国家。

如果你曾经看到过希特勒在飘扬着纳粹旗帜的人群之下观察的图片，那么这些图片可能就是在这里拍摄的。

纽伦堡的文献中心和纳粹党集会场地博物馆让人们了解这些结构以及其举办过的事件。

博物馆由未完工的纳粹党集会厅的一部分组成。

博物馆看起来像是罗马的竞技场，这并非巧合。希特勒的主要建筑师阿尔伯特·斯佩尔在设计中使用了帝国罗马的权威性影响。

博物馆的永久展览“迷恋和恐怖”教会访客关于纳粹主义在德国的崛起、影响及其后果。

作为一名在美国长大的人，我原以为我对纳粹德国的一切都了解了，但实际上我学到了很多。

大多数对历史感兴趣的美国人对第二次世界大战的战役、策略和装备有所了解，但对纳粹德国的非常早期部分了解就不多。

第一个展览展示了一战后德国经济的惨状，有几张报纸的照片，上面印着价值10万马克的纸币。

展览继续展示希特勒及其追随者的政治机器及其残酷的运作。博物馆依赖于大尺寸的高质量图片，也展示了一些希特勒主题的彩色玻璃窗和集中营的标志。

博物馆配有非常有信息量的音频导游，所以即使是不懂德语的人也能通过。

当你参观完后，纳粹集会场地的赛道就在大会堂后面几步远的地方。

希特勒和他的追随者站在那里欣赏着狂热的民族主义者的信仰。

你甚至可以爬上等级，站在希特勒的观礼台上。这让人感到不安，但它是一个重要的历史部分。
For more than 20 years, I’ve built my North Wales coverage around a charming medieval banquet at Ruthin Castle. Driving into Ruthin — and knowing its banquet was now being held less frequently — I intended to cut the town entirely from my book. But as soon as I entered good old Ruthin — and saw the funny half-timbered pubs, the humble fountain, the cheap-but-loved WW1 monument, the house where Cynthia Lennon lived after John left her, the church with the never-locked wrought-iron gate where everything is in Welsh, and the views down cobbled lanes leading directly into forested hills — I knew I’d have to keep it in my book. Even with only occasional performances of the banquet, I couldn’t cut Ruthin entirely.

Welsh magic is like that. Beyond its lush landscape, powerful castles and huggable small towns, the nation just has a certain poetry to it. And that poetry has its own language. Despite centuries of English imperialism, the Welsh language remains alive and well. Though everyone in Wales speaks English, one in five can also speak the native tongue. In the northwest, well over half the population is fluent in Welsh, and uses it in everyday life.

Less urbanized and less wealthy than England, Wales consists of miles of green land where sheep graze (because the soil is too poor for crops). And behind a fence of walls, the land where sheep graze (because the soil is too poor for crops), stands through good and bad times. From 2 p.m., a parade of 1,400 historically costumed enactors, 250 horses, medieval street entertainers from around the world, each act gets a 20-minute slot. The shows play out simultaneously across three venues. Performances run from 2 to 11 p.m. Aug. 2 and continue in the same format from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. the following day. At 8 p.m. Aug. 3, a magical extravaganza and awards show takes place at the Schlossplatz; in the event of bad weather, this moves inside to the Saalbau. From noon-8 p.m. Aug. 4, the fun carries on with a magic festival geared to families.

Entry to the festival is free on all days. Sankt Wendel’s streets. Entry to the parade costs 5 euros and those who opt for an un-fussy burger and beer will find live music is another important element of the offerings. With acts playing sounds from Latin rock to Dixieland and pop to opera, finding a band to suit one’s taste should be a breeze.

The Stuttgart Sommerfest at the Pen-y-Gwryd Hotel Pub, at the base of the road leading up to the Pen-y-Pass by Mount Snowden. Today the bar is wowed by the beauty. Look for Mount Snowdon, the tallest British mountain south of Scotland. Each year, half a million people ascend one of seven different paths to the top of the 3,560-foot mountain. Hikes take from five to seven hours; if you’ve fit and the weather’s good, it’s an exciting day.

Wales a land of undeniable poetry, magic

TOP TRAVEL PICKS

Dragon slaying in eastern Bavaria

Each year in August, the Bavarian city of Furth im Wald returns to the year 1431, when war raged and the city’s existence was threatened by a fearsome dragon. The boundaries between reality and myth blur as a battle between good and evil plays out on various dates between Aug. 2 and 18. The Drachenstech, or Slaying of the Dragon, is the portrayal of children slaying the beast — a 50-foot-long, fire-breathing robotic wonder — and the only two knights who can stop it, one male and one female. The boundaries between reality and myth blur as a battle between good and evil plays out on various dates between Aug. 2 and 18, as well as 3:45 p.m. Aug. 11. Adult ticket prices range from 22 to 31 euros, depending on date and seating. On the second and third weekends of the play’s run, additional festivities are staged. On Aug. 11, Furth hosts its annual historical pageant portraying life in the town over the past centuries, through bad times and good. From the event, a parade of 1,400 historically costumed reenactors, 250 horses, medieval weaponry, musical ensembles and others march through the streets. Entry to the parade costs 4 euros for adults and 2 euros for children. Online: drachenstech.de

Stuttgart fetes summer

An outing with a touch of class is within easy reach to those in the Stuttgart area this weekend. The Stuttgart Sommerfest distinguishes itself in terms of ambiance, elegance and entertainment. From white pavilions set up on the stately grounds of the summer palace, restaurants and caterers serve tasty bites along with wines of the region. Even those who opt for an un-fussy burger and beer will find high-quality options. Live music is another important element of the offerings. With acts playing sounds from Latin rock to Dixieland and pop to opera, finding a band to suit one’s taste should be a breeze.

The round towers of Conwy Castle just dramatically over the River Gwyll in Wales.

Europe’s new UNESCO World Heritage Sites

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) maintains a World Heritage list of more than 1,000 sites in 167 countries, chosen for their outstanding beauty, cultural significance or other unique qualities.

This year’s new additions include places in Europe.

Erzgebirge Mining Region in Czech Republic and Germany; The Ore Mountains, shaped by continuous mining for silver and other metals for 800 years.

Jodrell Bank Observatory in the United Kingdom

Krzemionki Prehistoric Striped Flint Mining Region in Poland: Four mining sites dating back to the Neolithic Age.

Landscape for Breeding and Training of Ceremonial Carriage Horses at Klaudy nad Labem, Czech Republic.

Le Colline del Prosecco di Conegliano e Valdobbiadene in Italy: Center for the production of Prosecco wine.

Risco Caido and the Sacred Mountains of Gran Canaria in Spain.

Royal Bank of Mafra in Portugal: Italian Baroque 20 miles northwest of Lisbon, conceived by King Joao V in 1711.

Sacred Mountain of Bormio Jesus del Monte in Braga, Portugal.

Water Management System of Augsburg, Germany: First engineered in the 14th century.

The Ohrid region of Albania and North Macedonia: Parts of Lake Ohrid already on the list for World Heritage status.

Wales a land of undeniable poetry, magic
Europe’s ‘flight shame’ movement to combat climate change doesn’t stand a chance in the US, experts say

BY HANNAH Sampson
The Washington Post

Across Europe, flying has become the activity that the environmentally minded love to shun. Fueled by activists in Sweden and the term “flyskam,” which loosely translates to “flight shame,” the movement has captured the attention of airlines, travel agencies, tour operators and even politicians. The groundswell provoked a defense of air travel from an airline industry trade group official.

“Flying is freedom,” wrote Alexandre de Juniac, director general and CEO of the global airline trade association IATA, in a blog post. “Confining people’s horizons to train distances or boat speeds back-steps on a century of worldwide progress. Relying on virtual meetings to make global connections ignores the feelings and sensations, especially over short distances when a train would suffice.”

Experts say the trend is well and good in Europe, where rail is widespread and countries are close together.

“Among Europe’s countries, there are lots of small countries, so the option to travel by train is a lot easier,” says Aseem Prakash, founding director of the University of Washington’s Center for Environmental Politics, said he has mixed feelings about the “shame” element of Europe’s movement. With co-author and wife Nives Dolsak, he writes regularly about climate change and the steps individuals can take to reduce their own effect. They zero in especially on travel and tourism, the second largest industry in the US.

Airlines recently launched a sustainability campaign that urges travelers to consider flying less, among other actions, especially over short distances when a train would suffice. The carrier says the aviation industry is responsible for 2% to 3% of man-made carbon dioxide emissions globally. IATA puts that number at 2%.

Experts say the trend is well and good in Europe, where rail is widespread and countries are close together. But in the United States, climate-conscious travelers have far fewer options to reduce their carbon footprints.

“One thing that’s different in Europe is that rail is a viable alternative today; for a lot of people, that’s not the case in the U.S.,” says airline expert Seth Kaplan. “A reason why you’re unlikely to see U.S. airlines doing this in any kind of big way is that in the U.S., what’s the alternative?”

Driving is an option, but not always a great alternative for the environment. Speedy train travel across the United States is a dream that may never come true, though the proposed Green New Deal calls for investment in high-speed rail. As it stands, experts say the rail system in the United States takes too long to connect far-flung parts of the country to make it a viable substitute for air travel outside of regions such as the Northeast.

“In most parts of the world, the only way to have less of an environmental impact than flying is not to travel,” Kaplan says. “But, he said, the general feeling is still that traveling is a social good that brings people closer together.”

“I think that’s something that people want to feel — that when they travel, they’re mostly doing a good thing,” he says. “And sure, socially conscious people are thinking, ‘Could I do it in some better way?’”

One option is to choose carriers such as Spirit, which packs more passengers onto a plane than the roomier, more comfortable competitors. Travelers can also avoid business class or first class, because those seats take up more room on a plane.

“If they were all flying in a dense, economy configuration, the environmental impact would be considerably less because you’d be able to fit all of those seats onto considerably fewer airplanes,” Kaplan says.

In its “Fly Responsibly” campaign, KLM also suggests that passengers pack lighter to reduce weight on a plane so it burns less fuel. The airline offers travelers an easy way to buy offsets for the amount of carbon dioxide emissions generated by their trip and allows other carriers to use its offset program.

“We don’t like to shame,” says Boet Kreiken, KLM’s executive vice president for customer experience. “We frame it as responsible behavior from the airlines, the customers and the industry. That’s a better step than only shaming, that doesn’t solve any issue.”

Prakash and Dolsak say they subscribe to the “fly less” movement among academics. Between them, they have turned down invitations to travel, opted for regional conferences instead of global ones further away; bought carbon offsets for any required travel as well as for visitors to the university; and turned to Skype instead of in-person meetings. Prakash said the goal is not to issue heavy-handed edicts.

“Our simple plea is that of all of us should become responsible and become a bit more conscious of our own carbon footprint,” he says.

Dolsak lauded KLM’s efforts and said the advice about avoiding short flights should apply where possible in the United States. “There’s absolutely no reason to have flights between D.C. and New York,” she said.

And for good behavior, she singled out the tour company Rick Steves’ Europe, which recently announced it would invest $1 million a year to offset the impact of trips between the United States and Europe.

“There are people in this business that are very serious about it and acknowledge it and lead in finding ways to find solutions.”

Illustration by Noga Ami-Rav / Stars and Stripes

THAT WON’T FLY
WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

In search of a Good Scoop

Journalist scours Kaiserslautern, a city dripping with possibilities, for the best ice cream options

By Karin Zeitvogel
Stars and Stripes

Taylor Swift says curling up with pints of it makes her happy. Arizona Governor Doug Ducey says it brings people together. Actor James Dean once likened it to love.

“It” is ice cream, and one of the first things I noticed when I moved to Kaiserslautern at the start of the summer was the number of people walking around with cups or cones of it. So I set out to find K-Town’s best scoop.

For 72 hours, I had ice cream for breakfast, lunch, dinner and dessert. To make my quest more interesting, I tried the most unusual flavor that each place offered. Establishments were rated based on ice cream variety, taste and quality of service.

Here, in the order of testing, are the ice cream places I tried.

At Eiscafe Venezia, Eisenbahnstrasse 46, the woman scooping on Sunday afternoon seemed impatient as I contemplated my choices, and at one point left to do something else. When she handed me my cup of cinnamon ice cream, a flavor I don’t remember seeing back in the U.S., I noticed the remnants of someone else’s frozen treat on the edge of my scoop. But I thought I’d eat it anyway because it looked like the traces of berry sorbet and I quite like berries.

The first spoonful had that been-in-the-freezer-too-long taste. I tried to discern even a hint of cinnamon in the ice cream but quickly gave up. When I found myself chewing on something gritty, I decided my best option would be to throw away what remained of my 1 euro cup, which was almost all of it. I started thinking my quest for the best ice cream might not be a great idea.

Continuing down Eisenbahnstrasse, I got to Italiano Sapori Veri. Their most unusual flavor was lemon-basil sorbet. High in basil and not too sweet, the lemony twang and the flavor was lemon-basil sorbet. It could have done with a touch more basil, I thought. Owner Grazia Rizzo said they add and drop new flavors on a regular basis throughout the summer. Scoops here are 1 euro each.

On day 2, I visited Palazzo Sandro at Marktstrasse 37. They’ve been making ice cream in Landau, about 30 miles southeast of Kaiserslautern, since 1996. The Kaiserslautern branch opened four years ago and offers 35 flavors, including the very unusual pumpkin seed. I took a scoop of that, topped with a scoop of vanilla, while my guests shared a mixed berry sundae, which we got at the happy hour price of 4.50 euros.

Pumpkin seed ice cream, it turns out, tastes like hemp oil. When I shared this information with the server, he asked, “But did you like it? Because I had someone here earlier who cursed me out and said it was the worst ice cream ever, and I was worried I’d done something wrong.” Then he told me that if the person who serves you ice cream doesn’t thoroughly rinse the scoop and there are leftovers from someone else’s ice cream on it, the ice cream could have that been-in-the-freezer-too-long taste.

Palazzo Sandro adds new flavors every year, dropping ones that weren’t well received the previous summer. In addition to adventurous flavors, a helpful, friendly server, and a seven-day-a-week sundae happy hour after 7 p.m., Palazzo Sandro does gluten-free cones and ice cream delivery by motorcycle. And, yes, I like pumpkin seed ice cream.

Having just eaten ice cream that tasted like hemp oil, I should have been hard to impress when I went next door to Eiscafe San Marco. But they succeeded with excellent service, great variety of flavors and tasty ice cream. This Eiscafe has been in Kaiserslautern for 20 years and makes ice cream in a room above the shop. My tiramisu ice cream tasted just like tiramisu, only colder, and the enthusiastic staff insisted that I also try their lemon-basil sorbet. It could have done with a touch more basil, I thought. Owner Grazia Rizzo said they add and drop new flavors on a

A server at La Luna, located in the K in Lautern shopping mall, scoops ice cream for a customer on July 23.

Continued on page 31

LAST LICKS

My final scoop on ice cream* in Kaiserslautern:

3rd place: PALAZZO SANDRO
Most innovative selection, great taste, good service

2nd place: RIALTO
Excellent selection, best taste, good service

1st place: EISCAFE SAN MARCO
Great selection, excellent taste, best service

*Ice cream tastes expressed in this article are the author’s alone.
FROM PAGE 30

Cafe owner Werner Braun insisted that I have sauce on my spaghetti ice cream (because who eats spaghetti without sauce?), so I took chocolate. Dolomiten’s ice cream is made in-house and mine contained real coffee, giving me my caffeine fix for the day. My breakfast spaghetti ice cream cost 5 euros, but a single scoop goes for 1 euro.

For lunch, I had a bright green Waldmeister ice cream at La Luna in the K in Lautern mall. Called sweet woodruff in English, Waldmeister is an herb that Germans make a syrup out of and use in an alcoholic punch they drink in the summer. The service was friendly, there were 22 flavors to choose from, a list of which ones contain what allergens and additives, and the mall air conditioning was working better than usual. But I wasn’t bowled over by my 1-euro scoop and still can’t describe what Waldmeister tastes like.

Nearby, on Muehlstrasse, is the Rialto Eiscafe. Rialto has been in Kaiserslautern for 51 years. They offer 35 homemade flavors, including cinnamon, which I timorously tried again, and marzipan. Tasting the two flavors together was like having cool Christmas cookies in the middle of July. Rialto restored my faith in cinnamon ice cream, demonstrating why it consistently gets great reviews. Contrary to what the internet says, they’re not open 24 hours a day, though. A scoop is 1 euro.

Lastly, I tried IceRobot at Spittelstrasse 6. If you have kids, go here. You place your order on a large touch screen, which gives you a ticket with a bar code that you scan on a nearby cylindrical post. Then you wait until a machine that looks like a robot vacuum cleaner emerges through a tunnel, carrying your ice cream. All-you-can-eat toppings and whipped cream are included in the price, which starts at 3 euros for a single scoop. My bright purple sweet potato ice cream was too sweet for my taste, but IceRobot is worth it, if only for the automated gourmantic experience.
**History, firsthand**

Brisbane’s MacArthur Museum features volunteer who knew American general during WWII

**By Seth Robson**
Stars and Stripes

Australian Ron Rees was just 6, on his way home from a fishing trip with his older brother, when he met Gen. Douglas MacArthur on the street in 1942. Rees raised his hand in the two-finger Wolf Scout salute, which MacArthur took to be a “V for Victory” sign.

Rees, now an 83-year-old retired Australian Army officer and a volunteer guide at the MacArthur Museum in the general’s old Brisbane headquarters, recalled that he had written “U.S. Army” on his school cap. When MacArthur noticed, he asked Rees what his rank was and, getting no reply, handed the boy a shiny lieutenant’s bar.

MacArthur’s wartime office in Brisbane’s historic AMP building looks exactly like it did during World War II. It’s been fitted out with furniture matching what was there when it was the focal point for the Pacific campaign.

A sign in the room reads: “The US Seventh Fleet was formed in this headquarters 15 March 1943.”

It’s the sort of thing that might appeal to modern 7th Fleet sailors. Museum staff estimate about 100 crew from the USS Ronald Reagan aircraft carrier visited during the recent Talisman Sabre exercise Down Under.

The museum also hosted a group of Japan Self-Defense Force and Australian Defence Force personnel during the exercise. Rees was waiting at the front door at opening time that day proudly wearing a blazer with an American eagle patch.

Standing among the exhibits, he talked about a second chance meeting with MacArthur during a trip to the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York. The pair also exchanged letters over the years, he said.

The museum, which opened in 2004, includes exhibits detailing MacArthur’s time in Brisbane and the city’s role in World War II. There’s a large conference table that the general used for meetings covered in maps and other historical documents.

A glass case holds the control yoke from a twin-engine Japanese Mitsubishi G4M bomber shot down over the island of Bougainville, killing Japanese Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto, who orchestrated the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The museum is also a good place to learn about Brisbane’s war history. There’s a section devoted to local women who married American soldiers and moved to the U.S. after the war.

But perhaps the real treasures are volunteers like Rees who can tell you what it was really like during those dark days and how strong the bonds are between the U.S. and Australia.

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**ON THE QT**

**DIRECTIONS**
The MacArthur Museum is a five-minute walk from the Brisbane Central Station. Exit the station on the corner of Ann and Edward streets and continue down Edward Street, crossing both Adelaide and Queen streets. The entrance to MacArthur Museum is on Edward Street.

**TIMES**
Open 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. Other times are available for groups by appointment. Allow at least an hour to see all exhibits.

**COSTS**
About $7 for adults; $3.50 for children; $14 for families.

**FOOD**
None available at the museum, but there are restaurants serving everything from breakfast to beer across the street.

**INFORMATION**
Online: mmb.org.au

— Seth Robson
Never oil the grill

Many people oil the cooking grates — big blunder! Follow my mantra: “Oil the food, not the grates!” If you brush oil on hot cooking grates (and a lit grill), you run the risk of a big flare-up. The oil that you have brushed on will instantly burn, leaving a sticky residue that will “glue” your food to the grates, making it stick, break apart and dry out — like dehydrating food. If you oil the food, it will stay juicy, promote caramelization — those great grill marks! And help to prevent “stickage.”

Don’t put food on a cold grill

Always preheat a gas grill with all burners on high or wait until charcoal briquettes are covered with a white-gray ash. Preheating also burns off residue and makes it easier to clean the grill. Contrary to popular belief, you don’t ever need to cook on a grill that is hotter than 550° F. The hotter the grill, the more likely you will burn the outside of the food before the inside is cooked.

Clean that dirty grill

An outdoor grill is like a cast-iron skillet. It gets better and better the more you use it, but you do need to clean it every time you use it. Clean the grill grates twice every cookout with a stiff metal bristle grill cleaning brush — before and after you cook. If you do this, it will never be a big job to clean your grill. If you don’t have a grill cleaning brush, crumble a ball of heavy-duty aluminum foil and hold it in a pair of 12-inch locking chef tongs to use to clean the grill.

Distinguish between direct and indirect heat

The most frequent mistake is to choose the wrong cooking method. To be a good griller, you must know the difference between direct, indirect or combo grilling and when to use them. Direct grilling means that the food is set directly over the heat source — similar to broiling in your oven. Indirect grilling means that the heat is on either side of the food and the burners are turned off under the food — similar to roasting and baking in your oven. Combo grilling means that you sear the food over direct heat (i.e., to sear a tenderloin, or large steak) before moving it to indirect heat to finish the cooking process. Remember this general rule: If the food takes less than 20 minutes to cook, use the DIRECT METHOD. If the food takes more than 20 minutes to cook, use the INDIRECT METHOD.

The right way to deal with flare-ups

Never use a water bottle to extinguish a flare-up. Spraying water on a hot fire can produce steam vapors that could cause severe burns. The water can also crack the porcelain-enamel finish, resulting in damage to your grill. Fire loves oxygen, so cook with the lid down and don’t peek. Repeatedly lifting the lid to “peek” and check the food while it’s cooking lengthens cooking time. If you have a full-on fire, turn all the burners off, remove the food and extinguish the flames with kosher salt or baking soda. In a worst-case scenario, use a fire extinguisher but know that it will ruin your grill.

Avoid frequent flipping

If you are cooking food by the direct method (ham, burgers, hot dogs, boneless chicken breasts, small steaks, vegetables, etc.), flip only once halfway through the cooking time. All protein will stick to the grates as soon as it makes contact with the hot grill. As it cooks, it will naturally release itself, and that is when you can turn it over with a pair of tongs. Just remember to oil the food, not the grates!

No cross-contamination

One of the most common mistakes backyard cooks make is using the same tongs for raw and cooked foods. This creates cross-contamination and can result in food-borne illness. It’s easy to fix this problem. I have been color-coding my 12-inch locking chef tongs with red and green duct tape for as long as I have been grilling. The different colors help me to remember which pair of tongs I used for raw food (red), like chicken, and which are safe to use for the cooked food (green). And remember to use a separate clean platter for your cooked food, too.

Don’t sauce too soon

If I had a dime for every time I saw someone pour thick sweet barbecue sauce on bone-in chicken pieces or a whole rack of ribs while they were raw, I would be a very wealthy griller! All barbecue sauces have a lot of sugar in them and sugar burns very quickly. Almost always burning the outside of the food before the inside cooks. Generally I only brush food with sauce during the final 10-15 minutes of cooking time. With ribs and chicken that cook 2-3 hours, I will brush with a diluted sauce (½ beer and ½ sauce) for the final 30 minutes of cooking time.

Resist testing for doneness by cutting

Cutting your food to test for doneness is another common way people bungle their food. When you cut any protein, you are letting the precious juices escape and if the food is under-cooked, the area where it was cut will be overcooked when you put it back on the grill. Use an instant-read meat thermometer to test for doneness, and always let your food rest for at least 5 minutes before cutting into it.
Pack these 8 things in your carry-on bag for the best sleep on an airplane

BY NATALIE B. COMPTON
The Washington Post

When trying to sleep on a plane, the obstacles are stacked against you. The environment is loud, bright, crowded and uncomfortable. But while it most likely won’t be the same quality as at home, it is still possible to get some shut-eye with the right gear.

Before you get shopping, there are a few key considerations to keep in mind. Just because you have trouble sleeping on a plane now doesn’t mean you’re doomed. Sleeping on a plane is like any other skill: You have to practice to get good at it. It’s as much a mental hurdle as a physical one.

“Don’t underestimate the power of rest. Don’t get too caught up in ‘I need to sleep,’” says Ellen Wermter, a board-certified family nurse practitioner and fellow of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. “It’s all about finding a place that’s comfortable, quiet, dark and it doesn’t seem quite right, don’t give up right away. Michael Breus — sleep expert, clinical psychologist, fellow of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine and diplomat of the American Board of Sleep Medicine — suggests flipping the script on the classic neck pillow.

He says that a lot of people, when using C-shaped neck pillows, “their head bobs forward and it wakes them up. I tell them to take the really thick part and put it under their chin,” Breus says.

Eye mask

Between the flashing entertainment systems, blinking seat-belt notifications, cabin lighting and the screens of your fellow travelers, there’s a lot of stimulating light that can keep travelers awake.

“All of the research clearly indicates that you don’t want any blue-light emissions anywhere,” says Chris Tomshack, CEO and founder of HealthSource Chiropractic.

Although you may not have any control over the lights on the plane, you can pack an eye mask to create a light-tight setting. Buy one that doesn’t press too firmly on your eyes and still covers enough ground to protect from light getting inside.

Blue-light-blocking glasses

While we’re on the subject of light, experts say that blue light — that artificial light that beams out of phones, computers and LED displays — is a detriment to your sleep quality. And unfortunately, planes are full of blue light.

“The plane is one of the largest sources of what we call ‘junk light’ that we can possibly put ourselves in,” says Tomshack. “So let’s eliminate that variable and wear blue-light-blocking glasses. It tells our brain, ‘Hey we’re not supposed to be awake. We’re supposed to be dialing down.’”

Blanket

In a perfect scenario, you’d be falling asleep in a dark room with the temperature around 66 degrees Fahrenheit. But if you’ve ever flown before, you know that temperatures can fluctuate from plane to plane, or even within the duration of a flight.

“If you’re hot, that’s not conducive for sleep. You’re uncomfortable, sweaty, itchy,” Wermter says. “On the other end, sometimes it’s freezing.”

Prepare for a cold scenario by packing a scarf, shawl or blanket in your carry-on.

Compression socks

Compression socks are another way to keep warm on a plane, but that’s not the only reason they’re recommended by our experts.

“This isn’t just for people over 60 or 70 who are at risk for deep-vein thrombosis or blood clots in their legs,” Tomshack says of compression socks. “This is for everybody because they improve circulation. The compression socks will help prevent stagnant blood flow while you’re stuck being sedentary on the plane.

Earplugs or headphones

Planes are loud. Really loud. Earplugs and noise-canceling headphones are your best options for combating noise pollution.

For plugs, Tomshack recommends finding a pair that have a noise reduction rating (NRR) of at least 30 to be effective on a plane.

Choosing what to play on your noise-canceling headphones is up to personal preference. You can try audiobooks; sleep or relaxation apps; music or white noise.

Melatonin

You can help send a signal to your brain that it’s time to sleep by using melatonin. Melatonin is a more natural alternative to a prescription sleep aid, and it’s available at drugstores over the counter.

“When it comes to melatonin, we really shouldn’t exceed a half-milligram to 1 milligram on any given day,” Tomshack says.

Plan to take melatonin about 30 minutes before you want to snooze.

Water

Pack your own water bottle so you don’t have to live at the mercy of the flight attendants’ service schedule.

“I used to always be worried about missing the drink cart and Biscoff cookies,” says Wermter. “If you already come prepared with a water bottle, you can go into sleep mode without worrying about missing the refreshment cart.”

Furthermore, skip the booze if you’re trying to sleep on a plane. What sounds like a way to unwind can actually stimulate you, and additionally, alcohol is dehydrating.
Next came those whose curiosity piqued when in 2016 the giant steel dome known as the New Safe Confinement was slid over the sarcophagus encasing nuclear reactor number four, which exploded in April 1986, spewed radiation across Europe and forced hundreds of thousands to flee from their homes.

Then in May, HBO’s “Chernobyl” miniseries aired, and tourism companies reported a 30 to 40% uptick in visitors to the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, abandoned and eerily frozen in time.

Now the Ukrainian government — capitalizing on the macabre intrigue — has announced that Chernobyl will become an official tourist site, complete with routes, waterways, checkpoints and a “green corridor” that will place it on the map with other “dark tourism” sites.

“We must give this territory of Ukraine a new life,” President Volodymyr Zelensky said during a visit to Chernobyl. “Until now, Chernobyl was a negative part of Ukraine’s brand. It’s time to change it.”

At the nuclear facility and in the nearby town of Pripyat, wildlife has returned and now roams freely. Flora and fauna grow up around decaying homes, playgrounds and an amusement park. Letters, dinner tables and baby dolls remain where their owners abandoned them 33 years ago.

Radioactive dust still coats it all.

“Chernobyl is a unique place on the planet where nature revives after a global man-made disaster,” Zelensky said. “We have to show this place to the world: scientists, ecologists, historians, tourists.”

Though exploiting a historical space like Chernobyl could infuse Ukraine’s economy with tourism dollars and motivate developers to revive the area, there are significant downsides, experts say.

The grounds remain coated with plutonium, cesium, strontium and americium — radionuclides (atoms that emit radiation) that could pose potentially serious health risks to those who touch or ingest them. Some areas are more radioactive, and thus more dangerous, than others.

“Chernobyl was the worst nuclear accident in human history,” said Jim Beasley, an associate professor at the University of Georgia who has studied the Exclusion Zone since 2012. “Even though the accident occurred over 33 years ago it remains one of the most radiologically contaminated places on earth.”

Today, radiation levels inside the Exclusion Zone vary widely from location to location, said Dr. T. Steen, who teaches microbiology and immunology at Georgetown’s School of Medicine and oversees radiation research in organisms at nuclear disaster sites. She advises anyone visiting to be educated and cautious while inside the Exclusion Zone, and to limit time spent there.

“The longer you’re exposed, the more that future impact is,” she said.

She advises visitors to the Exclusion Zone to wear clothes and shoes they are comfortable throwing away. If they’re going to be touching or disturbing anything, she recommends a mask and gloves. Most importantly, Steen says, Chernobyl tourists should avoid plant life, and especially the depths of the forests. Those areas were not cleaned in the aftermath of the disaster and remain highly contaminated by radiation. Research has shown that the fungus, moss and mushrooms growing there are radioactive.

Those who stay on the paved pathways, which officials cleaned, are much less likely to absorb harmful toxins.

None of that will prevent tourists from disturbing Chernobyl’s spirit, however.

“I think it is important to not lose sight of the fact that Chernobyl represents an area of tremendous human suffering,” Beasley said. “Hundreds of thousands of people were forever displaced from their homes or otherwise impacted.”

Scientists say Chernobyl safe for visitors — if you avoid kicking up the dust

**By Katie Mettler**
The Washington Post

The tourists first started flocking to Chernobyl nearly 10 years ago, with video game fans wanting to see firsthand the nuclear wasteland they’d only visited virtually.
‘She’s a perfectionist’

British songwriter-producer Labrinth discusses working with Beyonce on ‘Lion King’ soundtrack

By Mesfin Fekadu
Associated Press

British singer-songwriter-producer Labrinth knew what he was in for when he learned he was about to work with Beyonce: “She’s a perfectionist and she’s a Virgo, like my wife. Virgos are serious perfectionists.”

“I was like, ‘I know what I’m in for, and I like that,’” he added.

The Grammy-nominated musician, born Timothy McKenzie, worked on the pop icon’s newest song, “Spirit,” from the new “Lion King” film, where she voices the character Nala. Labrinth said he and co-writer Ilya Salmanzadeh, who has crafted a number of Top 10 hits for Ariana Grande, were working on tracks for the film and hoped they’d come up with something Beyonce could connect to.

“We kind of sent a rough demo over to her. She heard the song and she loved the vibe. She was like, ‘OK, I’m going to get in on it with you.’”

She started helping us write the rest of the record,” Labrinth said in an interview from London in June. “It was just like, ‘This is incredible. It was just one of those moments where it was like, ‘OK, I think God’s blessing me now.’”

“Spirit” appears on two albums: The new “Lion King” soundtrack as well as “The Lion King: The Gift,” a Beyonce-produced album featuring songs inspired by the film. “The Gift,” which debuted July 19, includes collaborations with Jay-Z, Blue Ivy and Kendrick Lamar, as well as African artists such as Tiwa Savage and Burna Boy.

Labrinth, who has produced for the Weeknd, Rihanna, Ed Sheeran and Nicki Minaj, said he was impressed with Beyonce’s attention to detail and human spirit when working together.

“She cared about everything that was in the record. She cared about what piano we were going to use. Is there enough bass? Not many artists care that much,” he said.

“Also, just the way she treated us, as well. A lot of artists in her position, they can be divas and they can be hard to deal with. Her energy and the messages she sent to us in terms of saying thank you for contributing to ‘The Lion King’ — she sent really beautiful messages. I was really kind of surprised to see that someone in her position still has that humility. For me that’s when I was like, ‘She’s got all the respect from me in the world that I can give.’”

Labrinth, 30, is probably having his best month ever: He’s also the lead composer on the hit HBO series “Euphoria,” which stars Zendaya and is co-produced by Drake. The show, which follows a group of suburban high school students dealing with sex, drugs, love and social media, has been highlighted for its acting and also its music, which ranges from ‘50s crooner Jim Reeves to Beyonce and Lil Wayne.

Labrinth, who is in the supergroup LSD alongside Sia and Diplo, said he got the gig after show creator Sam Levinson heard his song “All for Us” and more of his music, and asked him to jump on board.

“Being involved with ‘Euphoria’ has given me another outlet to show how deep my world goes. I’m kind of doing orchestral compositions on there as well as electric productions, hip-hop, ’60s classic music. It’s allowed me to be a kid in a playground,” he said.

Though Drake is part of the show, Labrinth hasn’t gotten a chance to work with the rap star yet: “Funny enough, I did a tour years ago and I supported him around Europe and we spoke then. It was weird that we crossed paths again on a whole different platform (with ‘Euphoria’).”

“Zendaya’s actually been a good creative to bat ideas with (regarding) the music,” he added.

The show has become a family affair, literally, for Labrinth, who grew up in a musical home and has relatives who have worked with gospel icon Kirk Franklin and R&B singer Angie Stone.

“My family is singing on some of the ‘Euphoria’ records,” Labrinth said. “I love using their voices. They sound amazing together.”
**WEEKEND: MUSIC**

**WHAT'S NEW**

**'Love-making music'**

With 'Bedtime Story,' Brian McKnight gives fans what they have been waiting on: an entire record dedicated to love

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**By Chevel Johnson**

Associated Press

D

don't ask Brian McKnight where he's been. That ques-
tion is really telling, he says, because his true fans
know where to find him.

"That question tells me you don't really follow me
on Instagram and you're not really in tune with where R&B is
today," McKnight said. "If you're listening to where they play
music today, you'd know I have a Top 10 single on that chart. If
you're an avid concertgoer, you'd know I do 150 shows every
year. I'm here. You just have to know where to look."

Starting a recent tour stop in New Orleans, the 17-time Gram-
my-nominated artist sat down with The Associated Press to
discuss his latest project, "Bedtime Story," which was scheduled
for release in June but has been pushed to later this year, and his
thoughts about music today.

"It's 60 minutes of love-making music," the crooner said, with
a smile, about the upcoming release. "I don't know what anybody
else's situation is, you might just need 7 minutes or 12 minutes or
20 minutes, but I'm giving you 60 so that you can just press play
and let it flow, let it happen."

McKnight, now 50, has been serenading fans for nearly 30
years and in that time, he said he's been asked over and over
to make an entire record dedicated to love — and all that
tells us.

"We'll see if those people, who think they're genius and know
what I should be doing, know what they're talking about," he
said, laughing. "It's been fun and a challenge to make because
all the songs are about the same tempo, and how do you make a
whole record this way and not repeat the same idea without being
redundant?"

"Bedtime Story," featuring the hit single "When I'm Gone."
follows his 2017 release "Genesis," which included the single "I
Want U."

"I feel very fortunate after all this time that there are people
in this world who still want to pay to hear me sing songs that I've
created, some more than 20 years ago," McKnight said. "My joy comes from seeing their faces
when I sing a song or I'm about to play a song I
wrote and they recognize it."

That was evidenced during his June 4
show at New Orleans' legendary music hall Tipitina's, where he closed out an
appearance broadcast live on Sirius XM's "Heart and Soul" channel that
included sets by singers V. Bozeman, Raheem DeVaughn and Avant.

McKnight went through songs like "Never Talk This Way," "Crazy
Love," "Back at One" and "Any-
time," bringing familiar screams from the women in the audience.

"When you see me, I want them to think when they
leave that they didn't pay enough," he said. "I want them to leav-
knowing I played everything they
wanted to hear, that I sang as
well or better than they thought
I would, that I was funnier than
they thought I would be and
that they leave saying 'When he
comes back, I'm definitely coming
back to see him again.'"

Anita Brown, a fan from New Or-
leans, said there's no doubt about that.
Brown said his performance was "brilliant" and
she'd definitely "invest in a ticket or two" if she returns to
the Big Easy.

"He was amazing," she said. "His voice was on
point and, oh my God, he's looks better now than he
did back then!"

McKnight's career began at 19 when he signed his
first recording deal with Mercury Records subsidiary,
Wing Records. His self-titled debut album
dropped in 1992 and featured the Top 20 hit "One Last Cry." In
1999, he released his most successful album to date, "Back At
One," which went on to sell more than 3 million copies.
McKnight, who also plays eight instruments, shared his
thoughts on the music genre that is R&B.

"I'm not sure what I do or have ever done has been R&B,"
McKnight said. "When I think of rhythm and blues music, I'm
thinking of the Temptations or James Brown, and I've never
created music that looks like that. I think we as a people get
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created music that looks like that. I think we as a people get
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Fascinating account of how Las Vegas revitalized Elvis' career

By Marion Winik

A mong the literary relati ves of Colson Whitehead's stellar new novel, "The Nickel Boys," is George Orwell's famous personal essay, "Such, Such Were the Joys." In it, Orwell describes at length the physical and mental abuse, "the force and fraud and secrecy" that prevailed at the British reforming school he was sent to from 1911 to 1916. Among the horrifying details he provides is a description of the porridge served in the dining hall; it contained "more lumps, hairs and unexplained black things than one would have thought possible, unless someone were putting them there on purpose."

Disgusting porridge, force, fraud and secrecy are all in play at the South Florida reformatory school in Whitehead's heart-breaking coming-of-age novel. But young Eric Blair endured his ordeal and went on to become George Orwell. Whitehead's characters, whose version of this story is shot through with the depravity of Jim Crow, are not so fortunate.

"The Nickel Boys" arrives on the heels of "The Underground Railroad," winner of both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. Though I admired "The Underground Railroad," it didn't come close to involving my emotions in the way "The Nickel Boys" has. Where that novel had the heady contrivances of magical realism, this one has the hot breath of a true story. It also has a beautiful, unforgettable young hero who walks right off the page and into your heart.

In a prologue, a group of archaeology students from the University of South Florida uncover a secret graveyard on the grounds of a long-closed reform school. The skeletons they dig up have "fractures and cratered skulls, the rib cages riddled with gunshot." As Whitehead explains in the acknowledgments at the end of this book, this really happened; it was reported in the Tampa Bay Times in 2014. The students' discovery precipitated the emergence of horrific truths about the erstwhile Dozier School for Boys in Marianna, Fla., the real-life model for Whitehead's Nickel Academy. The main part of the novel opens in 1962, when we meet high school student and tobacco store clerk Elwood Curtis. Elwood has a big mind, a brave spirit and a prodigious capacity for hard work. The realities of life for black people in the South could not be clearer to him, and he is drawn to the nascent civil rights movement. When he receives for Christmas an album of Martin Luther King's recorded speeches, it is "the best gift of his life... even if the ideas it put in his head were his undoing." Dr. King's imperative: "We must believe in our souls that we are somebody, that we are significant, that we are worthful, and we must walk the streets of life every day with this sense of dignity and this sense of somebody-ness." — becomes Elwood's lodestar, countering the opposite message about his worth that is delivered to him every day, one way or another, including the day when he was 6 and his mother left town, never to be seen again.

The summer of Elwood's junior year, he gets an opportunity to attend Melvin Griggs Technical High School, a colored college south of Tallahassee that admitted gifted high school students. He hitchhikes to campus his first day and is picked up by a man in an emerald Plymouth. They haven't gone more than a few miles when they are pulled over by the police. The car is stolen. Then Elwood is headed to another campus entirely.

"In a sad joke," the red brick buildings and lush lawns of Nickel Academy resemble Elwood's vision of Melvin Griggs. But what awaits him at Nickel is a brutal gauntlet that tests and transforms his understanding of King's gospel: We will wear down you by our ability to suffer, and one day we will gain our freedom. Fortunately, he meets an ally, a boy named Turner, who eats soap powder to in order to be sent to the hospital where Elwood is recovering from his first visit to what the boys call The Ice Cream Factory; it is a brutal gantlet that tests and transforms Elwood and Elwood's perception of Melvin Griggs.

"The Nickel Boys" has the appealing shape of a classic coming-of-age story: the promising young hero who eats soap powder in order to be sent to the hospital where Elwood is recovering from his first visit to what the boys call The Ice Cream Factory; it is a brutal gantlet that tests and transforms Elwood and Elwood's perception of Melvin Griggs. But for black boys in the South in the early '60s, no coming-of-age was on the agenda. The future was a hoax. For those unfamiliar with Whitehead's novels, "The Nickel Boys" is the perfect place to start.

By Douglass K. Daniel

Associated Press

For the King of Rock 'n' Roll, the 1960s was a slow-moving abdication. Elvis Presley spent the better part of that decade appearing in one silly movie after another instead of performing live, a career strategy that tested the patience of his fans and cost him his edge in the music world. Meanwhile, the Beatles and the rest of the British invasion bands were redefining popular music just as he had done years earlier.

In 1969, Elvis decided he wanted to regain his throne. "Elvis in Vegas" is author Richard Zoglin's fascinating tale of how the king got his groove back and Las Vegas re-packaged its own image, together supersizing live entertainment in America's adult playground. Blending new interviews with top-drawer research focusing on how Las Vegas evolved as the pleasure capital, Zoglin produces a gem of pop culture history.

Elvis was no stranger to Vegas. He had been a fish out of water when he first performed there, in 1956, and with just one hit, "Heartbreak Hotel," to his credit. Rock 'n' roll wasn't what the typical Vegas patron sought at the time, and the gig fizzled. But Elvis the man loved the all-day, all-night quality of the city and would frequently visit between movies.

Thirteen years and millions of records later, Elvis chose Las Vegas for his return to live performing. He pulled out all the stops at the International Hotel and, in Zoglin's words, "established a new template for the Las Vegas show: no longer an intimate, sophisticated, Sinatra-style nightclub act, but a big rock concert-like spectacle."

Two backup singing groups, a rhythm band, a full orchestra plus the indefatigable Elvis — the star — writes Zoglin, "was now his own act."

For those unfamiliar with Whitehead's novels, "The Nickel Boys" is the perfect place to start.
NEW ON DVD

“Long Shot”: The rom-com could have just as easily been called “She’s Out of His League 2.” The idea that a frumpy journalist (Seth Rogen) could win over the heart of a much-loved political candidate (Charlize Theron) with her eye on the White House sounds as outlandish as suggesting a reality show star could become president.

The concept sounds preposterous but by the end of the film, it’s easy to root for the opposites to attract. It works because it is built on telling two interesting people, putting them in situations where comedy feels natural and telling a love story that grows at a natural rate. This is a winning ticket.

**Q&A**

*By Mark Kennedy*

Associated Press

For his latest TV show, famed chef Gordon Ramsay has definitely left the comforting familiarity of his kitchens. On “Uncharted,” Ramsay visits global destinations to explore flavors far from routine. He eats guinea pig in Peru, fishes for eel with his bare hands to make a Maori dish in New Zealand and forages for hearts of palm in Morocco.

“It’s a million miles away from my high-end, three-star Michelin kitchen,” he says of the show airing on the National Geographic Channel. “It’s straight to the source.”

After spending a week learning about the ingredients, Ramsay ends each hourlong show with a cooking competition, pitting himself against a local chef. Think of it like Anthony Bourdain crossed with Bear Grylls and then add some “Top Chef.”

Ramsay, who is also a host on Fox’s “MasterChef,” told The Associated Press about being a fish out of water for once and how kitchens are changing.

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Fat-acceptance influencers are on the rise, so what happens to their careers when they lose weight?

**By Leanne Italie**

Associated Press

Fashion and lifestyle blogger Maui Bigelow has always been curvy and built up a social media presence by embracing every pound.

Until the worst happened. At nearly 380 pounds, her health took a dive. She was diagnosed with a blood cancer and multiple uterine fibroids that couldn’t be treated due to her weight. That’s when she decided to have bariatric surgery, a weight loss procedure.

She hadn’t yearned to be thinner, but she wanted to live at least long enough for her two children, ages 20 and 16, to make her a grandmother.

“For months I talked to my counselor about how I would share my truth with you,” Bigelow told her followers at Phatgirlfresh.com after the weight loss surgery last year. “I was concerned about how you would receive it. I feared the plus-size and body positive communities wouldn’t understand or respect my choice.”

Bigelow, a former teacher in Albany, Ga., with 67,500 monthly unique visitors to her site and nearly 40,000 followers on Instagram, was pleased her fans were resoundingly positive.

That’s not a small thing in her corner of the internet.

Fat-acceptance and body positive influencers like Bigelow are on the rise on social media and as fashion models as they fight back against the damaging pressures of idealized beauty peddled online and off. But what happens when, as in Bigelow’s case, weight poses a serious health risk, or they decide to shed pounds for other reasons, turning their careers and social channels from fat acceptance to smaller sizes, dieting and fitness?

“The people who are having weight loss surgery in our community, they have the surgery, they go about their business and they shut up, for the most part. But it’s important to share,” Bigelow said.

There are women who are struggling with health issues who need this surgery,” Bigelow explained in an interview.

She’s down to 240 pounds, but she’s struggling to fully accept her future of fewer pounds, both personally and professionally.

“I was a bomb ass girl at almost 400 pounds,” Bigelow said. “Some of these influencers, they talk about being fat and how they love their plus-size bodies and how they’re so empowered in the space that they’re in, and they have all of these women who support them, who are cheering them on. Then fast forward, they lose the weight and you see the before and after pictures: Oh, this is when I was 350 pounds. I was so depressed. I felt so ugly. And this is me now. I’m so happy. I’m so free. Wait a minute, girl. Didn’t you say two years ago when you were 350 pounds that you loved your body and that you loved the size that you were? Me, I came into womanhood as a fat woman. I’m not as confident as I was.”

Pia Schiavo-Campo, who posts from Los Angeles about style and culture on Instagram and blogs at Mixedfatchick.com, isn’t a fan of dieting, before-and-after pictures or the lack of dialogue from fat-acceptance influencers about weight loss.

As someone who has struggled with an eating disorder for the better part of 30 years, she’s triggered by diet talk and conflicted about weight turnarounds, especially those not directly addressed.

It’s the messaging, she said in an interview, especially when dieting or weight loss surgery transforms the online mission through photos and new collaborations focused on health and weight-loss products.

Schiavo-Campo’s concerns are echoed by others in the anti-diet movement.

“Diet culture,” she says, has been “basically imposed on us, mostly women. By the same token, I also believe that people should do what’s best for their bodies.”

JennyLee Molina in Miami did what’s best for her body by losing 80 pounds in a year, trimming down to a size 8 after being told she was pre-diabetic. She did it without surgery, and lost one of her heroes, body-positive model Tess Holliday, in the process, after documenting her health and weight journey on Instagram, where she has 11,900 followers.

Molina’s feed includes before-and-after photos. She said she sought out Holliday through private messaging after realizing Holliday had unfollowed her.

“Your weight loss posts are too triggering for me, I’m sure you understand,” Holliday explained in a private reply earlier this year. “It’s not personal.”

A representative for Holliday did not respond to requests for comment.

Molina recalled how much she loved Holliday’s take-no-prisoners approach to fat acceptance as she gained popularity with a groundbreaking modeling contract and her “effyourbeautystandards” movement on Instagram in 2013. Molina, who has a 9-year-old son, was thrilled when she had a chance to meet Holliday in 2015, at a time when Molina had gained a significant amount of weight after knee surgery.

“When she was a go-to for inspiration, someone I admired in terms of embracing your curves, embracing where you’re at,” Molina said. “The community is very divided between those who are more about fat pride, which is fine, and the ones who are all about wherever you’re at, be comfortable in your own skin. That’s where I feel like I am. I think everybody should embrace themselves at every step of the journey and we shouldn’t shame people who decide to lose weight to feel better.”

Pia Schiavo-Campo and blogger JennyLee Molina in Miami did what’s best for their bodies.”
Nonprofit distributes baby dolls to elderly patients

By CATHY FREE
Special to The Washington Post

Almost 15 years ago, Sandy Cambron noticed her mother-in-law, Pearl Walker, had become withdrawn and quiet after she moved into a nursing home for Alzheimer’s patients in Shepherdsville, Ky.

“We tried everything — photo albums, old stories — but nothing worked,” said Cambron. “It was really hard on everyone to see how she had changed.”

Then one day while Cambron was in a toy store, she had an idea: Why not give Pearl a baby doll so she could feel as if she were caring for something again? While she was at it, why not give one to all the other care center residents?

The plan worked. As soon as Cambron gave Pearl the doll, wrapped in a soft pink blanket, her mother-in-law’s face lighted up. “She started talking again and she never went anywhere without that baby,” said Cambron. “She took ‘baby’ to the dining room with her and slept with her in her arms every night. When she passed away a year later, we even buried her with that well-loved baby doll.”

In the following decade, Cambron and her husband, Wayne Cambron, continued to buy dozens of dolls in Pearl’s memory, dressing them in cute footie pajamas and handing them out to residents of care centers near their home in Shepherdsville every Christmas, instead of giving gifts to each other.

Now Pearl’s Memory Babies is a nonprofit that has donated more than 300 dolls to seniors with Alzheimer’s disease or dementia at nursing homes throughout western Kentucky and southern Indiana since February 2018.

The Cambrons started the charity with help from Shannon Gray Blair, a co-worker at the optometry store where Sandy Cambron once worked.

“When Sandy offered to give a doll to my mom, who had Alzheimer’s, I knew this was something I wanted to be a part of,” said Blair. “She knew it again last year after shutted Valentine’s Day photos on Facebook of seniors reacting to a batch of dolls she and Cambron delivered to a local nursing home. The post went viral overnight with more than 210,000 shares.

“Just like that, we had a new home,” said Cambron. “We deliver a load of dolls and the Cambrons came back with stuffed ‘therapy’ animals for seniors who once owned pets and who might prefer to have a dog or cat.”

“They are still ‘Mom’ or ‘Dad’ inside. Some residents feel a real purpose in taking care of their babies because it is ‘important’ work. That nurturing instinct is so innate.”

Elise Hinchman, executive director at Sayre Christian Village, a nonprofit retirement community in Lexington, Ky.

“Delivering dolls, comfort and love in a way that cannot be measured,” she said. “Some people cry when you hand them their baby. Even though we don’t know exactly what they’re thinking, you can tell that the doll has helped bring back some kind of nice memory.”

When Alzheimer’s patients hold their dolls close, they receive therapy and comfort in a way that cannot be measured, said Elise Hinchman of Sayre Christian Village, a nonprofit retirement community in Lexington, Ky.

“It’s overwhelming to see how they naturally fall into a rhythm of swaying, rocking and cooing,” said Hinchman, a marketing and development director. “The way they light up is like taking a step back in time. You can imagine them holding their own children.”

While dementia takes away memories, it does not rob people of their ability to love, she said. “They are still ‘Mom’ or ‘Dad’ inside,” Hinchman said. “Some residents feel a real purpose in taking care of their babies because it is ‘important’ work. That nurturing instinct is so innate, and the doll babies bring back fond memories of long ago.”

Workers’ eyes filled with happy tears at the retirement community on June 19, when Cambron and Blair wheeled in wagons loaded with 41 dolls and stuffed animals.

“Delivery day was something I’ll never forget,” said Karen Venis, executive director at Sayre Christian Village, where 60 percent of the residents are at or below the poverty level.

“After selecting the perfect baby for the resident, Sandy would quietly lean down and present each doll baby,” said Venis. “Those who witnessed it would swear the doll became real before our eyes.”

Helping Cambron with Pearl’s Memory Babies has made the grief of losing her mother to Alzheimer’s last year more bearable, said Blair.

“We deliver these babies, then we cry,” she said. “It’s overwhelming, but it’s therapeutic.”

Friday, August 2, 2019

POTATOES OF LIFE

DOD scolded in military family readiness report

Last week, three hot shots from the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine presented a report titled “Strengthening the Military Family Readiness System for a Changing American Society” at the Military Child Education Coalition’s National Training Seminar in Washington, DC. The 320-page report gave a scholarly scolding to the DOD for “silencing” and fragmenting the many services for military families.

The National Academies undertook the study to examine the state of military family readiness and the DOD’s Military Family Readiness System, a network of agencies, programs, services and individuals that promotes the well-being and quality of life of military service members and their families.

“The system lacks a comprehensive, coordinated framework to support individual and population well-being and resilience among military families,” the National Academies’ Committee on the Well-being of Military Families concluded.

One guiding principle of the study was that military families are distinct in some respects, and the committee cited four reasons why the well-being of families is essential to the DOD. First, family well-being affects individuals deciding whether to enter or remain in military service. Second, family difficulties force DOD to pay cost for legal, medical, mental health or financial problems. Third, family stress takes a servicemember’s focus away from the mission. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, servicemembers’ families support the military mission by supporting them while they are deployed and helping them set up at home to leave home to train and deploy, and providing significant care for servicemembers when they are wounded, ill or injured.

A variety of challenges pose a threat to family readiness and resilience, according to the report, including illness, injury, troubles with housing, lack of career progression, financial instability, moving, deployments, temporary duty away from home and lack of connection to the local community. Combat exposure and family separation are identified as acute stressors.

While the DOD recognizes the importance of military family readiness and provides many sources of support, the study concluded that the MFRS was fragmented because it did not coordinate these sources and programs so that they were easily accessible to families in need. The committee also found an increasing number of military families who are “invisible” to the DOD because their makeup does not fit the definition of a military family. “Examples of invisible families may include same-sex-headed households and families as well as co-parenting but unmarried families. . . . Fully understanding military families and their needs may require greater attention to family complexity and diversity.”

Having a military family of my own, I agree that my spouse’s readiness to serve hinged on our family’s support. When my husband, Francis, was able to stand watches, travel and deploy because we, his family, were fairly healthy and content, holding down the home fort for him. Now, as the spouse of a recently retired Naval officer with 23 years of active-duty service, I see the shortcomings that this new study has identified. Even though I’ve read about new budgets and programs, our health clinic has drastically reduced services for dependents, base housing services are inconsistent and traditional services have shut down on some bases. I’m worried about losing services that affect military family well-being.

When I find myself forgetting about changes in services that I’d become accustomed to as a military spouse, I wonder to myself: Am I too set in my military ways? Am I refusing to go through the self-service checkout at the commissary? Am I just mad because I’m no longer allowed to see the base PX clerk? No. This new study affirms that, despite my bunions, I am not just a grumpy old military spouse.
NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

BY JASON MUELLER AND JEFF CHEN / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

50 YEARS ON

ACROSS
1. Org. whose workers can be a little frisky?
4. Meager
9. Charged
14. Picture framer’s aid
17. Bad foods for diminished nuts to have
19. Part of a broadcast feed
20. On the qui vive
21. Second-largest of the Hawaiian Islands
22. “However,” in textpeak
23. Name of a sea first visited in 1669
25. Pot starter
26. World capital near the 60th parallel
27. What mattresses and spirits may do
29. Sign of nervousness
30. Good name for a fishmonger?
32. Gaming neophyte
33. Kind of diet
35. They don’t keep their thoughts to themselves
36. Two tablespoons
38. End of a rope
40. Sean who played Rudy in “Rudy”
42a. La-la head-in
43. Certain seafood delicacy
44. Attention
45. Not as one
49. Appropriately pointed reply to “Madam, I’m Adam”
50. Someone who might engage in a hobby with some frequency?
51. Bit of media hoopla
53. Words of Jesus
55. “Great” hide
57. Hillary who climbed Everest
59. The Nomadic (Supreme Court nickname)
60. Possible response to “No, you’re not”
62. Skin-care brand
64. Chancy place to hide money
67. “If . . .”
70. Suarez competitive
71. Newsmaker of July 1969
72. Weeper of myth
73. Relating to the kidneys
74. Santa, Calif.
75. Where I go when my baby smiles at me, in song
76. Bartender’s supply
77. Necessary for going online, in brief
79. Chased
83. Loopyercursive letters
84. “There was no other choice!”
87. Discursive
88. Request for a cold one
92. Bottom-dwelling fish that look fins
94. “NewsHour”
95. Wizards, but not witches
96. Place to get a shot
97. Amalieres at some holds
100. Understanding
102. The last Pope Julius
103. Sis (per head)
105. Hawk — snake — frog — insect, e.g.
109. Summer pest
110. Announcement of July 1969
115. “A.O.K. for launch!”
117d. Is nothing’s state
118. Trojan warrior in the “Iliad”
121. What’s gotten into your head
122. Represented in sheet music
123. 1960s TV’s “Remington . . .”
124. Carol Brady and Camilla Parker Bowles, for two
125. Scruffs
126. B_nonvers attachment

DOWN
1. Ticket issuers
2. Straffies
3. Long-distance traveler of 1969
4. 400 things?
5. One putting on a show
6. “What goes up must come down”
7. Dietist Anais
8. Chef’s hat
9. Mrs. Gerbachev
10. Totally
11. Some sound effects in westerns
12. Performer
13. Texter’s sign-off
15. Dictator
16. Radar connectors
18. Unconventional home in a nursery rhyme
21. English football powerhouse, to fans
24. Strike caller
32. What 71-Across took in 1969, as represented literally in a corner of this puzzle
34. Regan’s father
35. French comic actor Jacques
36. What 71-Across took in 1969, as represented literally in another corner of this puzzle
39. Third-Largest of the Hawaiian Islands
41. Composer Charles
46. Domain of a municipal department
47. Baron
48. Wild party
52. Capital of South Australia
53. Dressed up
54. Dangerous substance that stings like biter allomons
56. Receiver with a crystal
58. Org. with an Inspiration Award and an Award of Valor
61. So
62. Big initi in news
63. Wraith
65. Nationally seen in most of Romania
66. Satan’s father
68. Slot for which Hank Aaron holds the all-time record
69. Common Market units
70. Sport that players are not allowed to play self-handed
71. Nile hitter
81. On waiting in line at an airport
82. Network with “Paul Fronat With Zanatha Gg”
83. Goes out
84. Apple on a desk
85. Pitch
86. Comes clean about
87. Member of a popular package delivery service
88. Mother of Hermes
90. Release
91. Tough job for a mover, maybe
92. “Peter Pan” dog
93. Access an account
98. Confused of
99. Paris (up)
101. Angered
104. Weizmann, first president of Israel
106. Dirty mouth?
107. Economy
108. Test taker’s downfall, perhaps
111. Obstacle to teamwork

GUNSTON STREET

“Gunston Street” is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and visit gunstonstreet.com.

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE

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Insult, or hommage? Bruce Lee family calls martial arts icon's treatment in 'Once Upon a Time in Hollywood' a 'mockery'

By Jen Yamato
Los Angeles Times

In Quentin Tarantino's Tinseltown fantasy “Once Upon a Time in Hollywood,” Bruce Lee faces off with Brad Pitt's fictional stuntman Cliff Booth to spar outside the set of Lee's TV series “The Green Hornet.” Lee brags that he could beat boxing champ Cassius Clay, aka Muhammad Ali, in a fight. “My hands are registered as lethal weapons.”

But after taking a big game and knocking Cliff down in the first round, it's Lee who gets unceremoniously thrown into the side of a parked car by the stuntman before others intervene.

The scene has offended fans of Lee, and it has offended his family. Lee's daughter, Shannon Lee, called the depiction “disrespectful” and “a mockery” of her late father's legacy.

“I understand this is a Tarantino film, that the movie characters are ‘antiheroes’ and this has his characteristic style and is another of his rage fantasies,” said Lee after a Q&A before an L.A. screening. “While I understand that the mechanism in the story is to make Brad Pitt's character out to be succeptible so that he can beat up Bruce Lee, the script treatment of my father as this arrogant, egotistical punching bag was really disheartening and — and, I feel, un-American.

The director “seems to have gone out of the way to make fun of my father and to portray him as kind of a buffoon,” added Lee, who is chief executive of the Bruce Lee Family Co. and heads her father's namesake charity. “I feel like he turned my confidence into arrogance and his intelligence into mockery. I've met Mike and I know that he loves my father and he's a working actor, and I really hold no negativity toward him whatsoever. Again, I feel like the portrayal is a caricature — not a character, but a caricature. But I think he was probably directed that way.”

Moh describes his performance as homage to the icon he admires. Tarantino, he said, could not be reached for comment for this story. During his press tour, he said the scene serves a more direct purpose: to make a case for Cliff's own killer capabilities.

To Jeff Yang, author of the Chinese cinema history book “Once Upon a Time in China” and cohost of the podcast “They Call Us Bruce,” any use of Lee's memory warrants deeper inspection. “The biggest question I have here is: Where does the line get drawn between homage and exploitation?” he said, noting that Lee's legacy is intertwined with a flood of copycat movies that followed his death in 1973 as imitators leapt to cash in on his image. “It is ironic that Quentin, who claims to be a fan, would engage in a very similar process.”

Organizers cancel troubled Woodstock 50 festival

Woodstock 50 is officially canceled. Organizers announced Wednesday that the troubled festival that hit a series of setbacks was canceled.

The three-day festival was originally scheduled for Aug. 16-18, but holdups included permit denials and the loss of a financial partner and a production company.

Last week Jay-Z, Dead & Company and John Fogerty announced that they wouldn't perform at the event after organizers said it was moving to Maryland from New York.

“We are saddened that a series of unforeseen setbacks has made it impossible to put on the festival we imagined with the great lineup we had booked and the social engagement we were anticipating,” festival co-founder Michael Lang said in a statement Wednesday. “We released all the talent so any involvement on their part would be voluntary. Due to conflicting radius issues in the DC area many acts were unable to participate and others passed for their own reasons.

Organizers said they were planning to make Woodstock 50 a free benefit concert at the Merriweather Post Pavilion in Columbia, Md., before announcing they had canceled the festival altogether.

Lang announced the 50th anniversary event in March alongside Fugerty and rapper-actor Common, two acts that were slated to perform. Other artists who were booked for the festival included the Killers, Miley Cyrus, Imagine Dragons, Chance the Rapper, The Plant and The Sensational Space Shifters, David Crosby, Janelle Monae, Brandi Carlile and Halsey.

Woodstock 50 was originally supposed to take place across three main stages at Watkins Glen International racetrack in Watkins Glen, N.Y., about 115 miles northwest of the original site, but the venue pulled out.

Broadway icon Prince dies

Harold Prince, a Broadway director and producer who pushed the boundaries of musical theater with such groundbreaking shows as “The Phantom of the Opera,” “CABaret,” “Company” and “Sweeney Todd” and won a staggering 21 Tony Awards, has died.

Prince was best known for his fluid, cinematic director’s touch and was unpredictable and uncompromising in his choice of stage material. He often picked challenging, offbeat subjects to musicalize, such as a murderous, knife-wielding barber who barked his victims in pies or the 19th-century opening of Japan outside the set of Lee’s TV series “The Green Hornet.” Lee brags that he could beat boxing champ Cassius Clay, aka Muhammad Ali, in a fight. “My hands are registered as lethal weapons.”

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Dem's big ideas are unlikely to become reality

By CARL P. LEUBSDORF
The Dallas Morning News

I

laying down markers for this week’s debates, Democratic presidential candidates will be forced to play a form of an old radio quiz show called “Can You Top This?” as they scrambled to outdo one another with elo.

The next president’s initial priorities will almost certainly be to restore a proper presidential tone and undo as many of the so-called “tanker wars” includes his international moves like abandoning the Iran nuclear deal and the Paris climate agreement and squaring the domestic ones like reducing federal scrutiny from environmental and civil rights laws.

Three principal reasons make more stepping stones unlikely. First, even if the Democrats add a narrow Senate majority to control the House, passing major legislation will be difficult. And the odds are still that Republicans will keep the Senate. Second, Trump has used his executive powers to dramatically weaken a half-century of bipartisan efforts to regulate private industry and protect the civil and other rights of millions. The odds are against the government ability to enact costly initiatives is severely constrained.

What Iran will do next, and how the West can respond

By JAMES STAVRIDIS

Predictably, Iran is reacting badly to the announcement that Europe is planning to send a multina.

What seems clear is that U.S. Central Command’s operational director — will include significant intelli.

The current bipartisan funding measure, passed by the House and headed for the Senate, it ensures Trump’s GOP-passed tax cut, it ensures Trump’s policies will keep up the pressure to modify Iran’s bad behavior.

It seems clear the Iranians have little inclination or motivation to back down. They will probably increase the aggression toward merchant shipping, either putting mines in the Strait of Hormuz (which they did as part of the so-called “tanker wars” in the 1980s) or actually sinking a ship, probably surreptitiously using a diesel submarine. They could also widen the conflict “horizontally” by unleashing their surro.

The strategic backdrop, of course, is the U.S.-Iran conflict is being played out in the aftermath of the American pullout from the 2015 agreement to circumscribe the Iranian nuclear program. Disappoin.

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What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross-section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other state-side syndicates.

#MoscowMitch misrepresents facts for pure political gain

The Wall Street Journal

Mitch McConnell, the most phlegmatic man in American politics, rarely gets riled up. But on Monday the Senate majority leader let fly over Madeleine Kunin, a former Vermont governor who he accused of lying about his reputation, and we're glad he did.

McConnell was responding to a Demo- cratic ad that took aim at a difficult-to-market The Kentucky defense hawk as a toady for Russia. His offense is opposing some Demo- cratic proposals to protect the 2020 election from foreign meddling. In particular he opposes attempts to nationalize election rules and ballot procedures that have been historically managed by the states.

That is his long-held position and makes sense since a national system would be easier to hack than the systems of 50 states. But McConnell is running for reelection next year, and the left needs a villain for the fall. Of course, he was no Russian asset, but McConnell later said that he had never heard of such a thing. A few hours later came the Washington Post column. It was authored by Dana Milbank, a Washington Post reporter who spent much of the Obama administration carrying water for its failed foreign policies and excusing President (Barack) Obama's weakness on Russia.

The column was headlined, “Mitch Mc- Connell is a Russian asset,” which the sen- ates would have thought is a bad headline.

The truth is that McConnell has been far tougher on Vladimir Putin than most Demo- crats, having signed the Gang of 14 letter with John W. Bush and Obama administrations. He pushed for tougher sanctions on Russia than many in the Senate, an issue he supported the Magnitsky Act that has allowed the U.S. to sanction Putin’s cronies. He has also supported the bipartisan Senate Intel- ligence Committee investigation into Rus- sian meddling in 2016.

Republicans can’t count on a media slanted media to defend them from unfair at- tacks, so like McConnell they have to do themselves.

Trump’s food stamp ‘reform’ would harm many in need

The New York Times

The Trump administration, which often talks about the importance of reducing reunification spending on food stamps, has played a small role in a bipartisan effort to make it easier for poor children to get enough food.

The department is proposing to end provisions that prevent kids from getting food stamps if they would not meet the old standards. By the same logic, the government could save $60 billion a year by suspending the entire program. But those savings will not come from denying food stamps to millionaires. The vast majority of the government’s money is given to Americans who are hun- gry, so they may eat.

The proposal once again highlights the gap between Trump’s rhetorical promises to help low-income families and the reality of his policies, which have systematically made life more difficult for those families.

Congress should move to codify the cur- rent food stamp rules, which have been in place for a family of two adults and two children. States also can waive a requirement that benefits must have no more than $2,250 in assets.

Critics have long argued that the expan- sion was overly generous; the Trump ad- ministration is proposing to substantially restore the old rules. Officials at the Agri- culture Department have highlighted the example of Rob Undersander, 66, a Minne- sota resident who qualified to receive food stamps even though he had more than $1 million in assets because Minnesota, like most states, has chosen to waive the asset cap.

Undersander applied for food stamps in 2016, in the manner of a man who robs a bank to demonstrate the need for more security. He collected money in benefits he did not need, donating the money to charity while seeking to publi- cize his story.

“There may be other millionaires” on food stamps, an administration official told reporters.

But the proposed changes are not tai- lored to keep millionaires from getting food stamps. They would keep millions of low-income families from getting food stamps.

The Trump administration estimates that 4.9 million beneficiaries live in households with incomes above 130 per- cent of the poverty line. But all recipients, including those households with putative income of $2,500 or more, must demonstrate that their disposable incomes, after deductions for housing, child care and other basic expenses, fall below the poverty line. That’s hardly an open-door policy — which is why relatively few households qualify. And those with higher incomes get smaller monthly payments. The program is meant to cover the gap between income and need.

In all, the administration says the gov- ernment can save about $2 billion a year by denying benefits to 3.1 million people who would not meet the old standards. By the same logic, the government could save $60 billion a year by suspending the entire program, which is a good start. University financial aid offices and college counselors also have a role to play in ending this abuse.

And oh, yes: Parents and teens need to honestly report their financial circum- stances. The college experience should be an accrual of life lessons. What does it teach teenagers when their parents sign them out of the family and ask them to de- clare poverty to position themselves for ill- gotten financial aid?

Like the “Variety Tubes” college admis- sions scandal that broke earlier this year, in which rich families were accused of bribing their kids into elite colleges, this is not a victimless act. Money is diverted from students in real need, as grant money does run out. This could make the differ- ence between whether a low-income teen can afford to attend college or not. Court resources are wasted on nonsense guard- ianship requests that flout the intention of financial aid regulations.

The Wall Street Journal found 38 similar incidents in a study of 1,000 probate cases in Lake County. The reporting described a Chicago-area woman with a household income of more than $250,000 a year who transferred guardianship of her then-17- year-old son to the boy’s grand- mother. Claiming only her $4,200 summer job earnings, instead of her parents’ income, the woman secured $21,000 in need-based aid, including a federal Pell Grant. Yes, taxpayers foot the bill for some of this.

There’s some credit due in this outra- geous saga. Not to the “collecting out- looking” company apparently involved, and not to the law firms who shepherded the guardianship requests. Rather, to one, who heads the high school counselor, unnamed in the articles, who raised the issue after she smelled something fishy. And to the university officials who aren’t vanishing their words.

The “scam,” Andy Borst, director of undergraduate admissions at the Univer- sity of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, told ProPublica.

True, that.

Public at risk from shooters — and lawmakers’ inaction

Los Angeles Times

Two days after summer celebrations and gun violence — collided in jarring fashion over the weekend. Here are the articles, which appeared in The Wall Street Journal, several dozen others were wounded or in- jured fleeting the pandemic. Police on Monday were still trying to find out why the gunman, identified as Santino Wil- liam Legan, 19, of Gilroy, decided to shoot up the fair.

A day earlier, gunmen opened fire dur- ing a neighborhood Old Timers Day cele- bration in Lake County, Illinois, a short drive from Chicago. One person was shot and 11 others were wounded.

Police were investigating whether the incident was gang-related, the reports said.

We’ve become slowly accus- tomized to such senseless violence, with att- acks on houses of worship, on schools, at workplaces and on family members. Just last week, police in Los Angeles arrested Gerry Dean Zaragoza after he allegedly shot two people in a San Fernando Valley Park, killing two of them, then shot a for- mer girlfriend and a man at a gas station, killing both. In Lake County, Illinois, last week, police in Los Angeles arrested Gerry Dean Zaragoza after he allegedly shot two people in a San Fernando Valley Park, killing two of them, then shot a for- mer girlfriend and a man at a gas station, killing both.

The investigative arm of the U.S. Depart- ment of Education has suggested a possible fix, according to the Journal: tightening the language about legal guardianship in the Federal Student Aid handbook. This seems like a good start. University financial aid of- fices and college counselors also have a role to play in ending this abuse.

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Friday, August 2, 2019

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**WBA**

**EASTERN CONFERENCE**

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**FOOTBALL**

**WESTERN CONFERENCE**

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**TENNIS**

**WTA 2021**

- *Women's matches*
  - Philadelphia 25, New York 16
  - Chicago 15, Miami 12

**Futures**

- Houston 15, Nashville 7

**Singles**

- Andy Murray (GBR), Russia, 6-3, 6-2
- Stan Wawrinka (SUI), Switzerland, 6-4, 6-3

**Wednesday's transactions**

- *BASEBALL*
  - Baltimore Orioles traded OF Adam Hall to the Chicago Cubs
  - Chicago White Sox assigned RHP Caleel Clarke to their alternate site

**RUSHING**

- *NFL*
  - Arizona Cardinals: DeAndre Hopkins, 120 yards
  - Dallas Cowboys: CeeDee Lamb, 123 yards

**Deals**

- *Soccer*
  - San Francisco Earthquakes: Signed Raul Jimenez to a multi-year contract
  - Manchester United: Signed Marcus Rashford to a new contract

**WBA**

**ANNOUNCING**

- *to be announced*

**MLB**

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**WCF**

**Wednesday**

- *At Williams Field*
  - WPT: 61,955 (ATP/WS), Surface: Hard-Outdoor

**Open**

- **Men's**
  - Alexander Bublik (KAZ), Kazakhstan, 6-3, 6-2
  - John Isner (USA), United States, 2-6, 10-7

**Saturday, August 1

- *NASCAR*
  - Bubba Wallace (USA), Virginia, 500, Richmond, VA

**Sunday, August 2

- *NASCAR*
  - Bubba Wallace (USA), Brickyard 400, Indianapolis, IN

**Monday, August 3

- *NASCAR*
  - Christopher Bell (USA), Alabama, 500, Talladega, AL

**Tuesday, August 4

- *NASCAR*
  - Bubba Wallace (USA), Pocono 400, Long Pond, PA

**Wednesday, August 5

- *NASCAR*
  - Christopher Bell (USA), Michigan, 400, Brooklyn, MI

**Thursday, August 6

- *NASCAR*
  - Bubba Wallace (USA), Kansas, 400, Kansas City, Kan.

**Friday, August 7

- *NASCAR*
  - Christopher Bell (USA), Chicagoland, IL

**Saturday, August 8

- *NASCAR*
  - Christopher Bell (USA), New Hampshire, 400, Loudon, NH

**Sunday, August 9

- *NASCAR*
  - Christopher Bell (USA), Charlotte, NC

**Monday, August 10

- *NASCAR*
  - Christopher Bell (USA), Michigan, 400, Brooklyn, MI

**Tuesday, August 11

- *NASCAR*
  - Christopher Bell (USA), Talladega, AL

**Wednesday, August 12

- *NASCAR*
  - Christopher Bell (USA), Loudon, NH

**Thursday, August 13

- *NASCAR*
  - Christopher Bell (USA), Michigan, 400, Brooklyn, MI

**Friday, August 14

- *NASCAR*
  - Christopher Bell (USA), Charlotte, NC
Above: Allyson Felix holds her daughter Camryn after running the women's 400 final at the U.S. Championships Saturday in Des Moines, Iowa. She gave birth to Camryn in November and the six-time Olympic gold medalist is campaigning for the rights of mothers. Below: Felix waves to fans before a 400 heat at the U.S. Championships.


Jones inches closer to win, new contract

BY DAN GELSTON
Associated Press

LONG POND, Pa. — Erik Jones started the season on the hot seat for Joe Gibbs Racing. Now, 21 races into the season, he is on a hot streak for the best team in NASCAR and making an easy case for a new contract.

With five races left before NASCAR sets the playoff field, Jones is close to clinching a spot in the 16-driver lineup on points, though he is still looking for a win that would guarantee him a shot at a championship.

Kyle Busch, Martin Truex Jr. and Sunday's Pocono Raceway winner, Denny Hamlin, are the elite stars that make JGR the class of NASCAR. The 23-year-old Jones could wiggle his way into the conversation should he find his way into victory lane.

Jones was runner-up in the No. 20 Toyota at Hamlin at Pocono, and finished third each of the previous two races at Kentucky and New Hampshire. Jones has scored eight of his 11 top-10 finishes since early May to move up to 13th in the standings. One driver has clinched a playoff spot with wins and Aric Almirola, Ryan Blaney and William Byron would need disastrous finishes to miss the playoffs. Jones, Kyle Larson, Clint Bowyer and Ryan Newman hold the final spots, with seven-time champion Jimmie Johnson on the outside nipping at the fringe contenders.

Jones plans to make it a four-driver class for JGR in the playoffs.

“We’re doing great building points, but it would be great to knock a win out,” he said. “We’re just so close, it stings a little bit more when you get close to it.”

His seven top-five finishes so far are three shy of last year’s total, though he won his only career Cup race in July 2018 at Daytona. He failed to advance out of the first round of the playoffs and finished 15th.

Jones opened this season with a third-place finish in the Daytona 500 before falling into a funk: four straight races where he failed to finish better than 13th. He ended that skid with a fourth at Texas, only to finish 14th or worse over the next three races.

The pressure for better results was mounting — JGR has prized prospect Christopher Bell stashed in the second-tier Xfinity Series, thirsty for an open seat. Gibbs has no mercy when it comes to dumping drivers (including Joey Logano, Daniel Suarez, Matt Kenseth) when the next big thing comes along.

JGR has since formed an alliance with Leavine Family Racing and could put Bell in the No. 95 Toyota next season. A deal could be worked to get Bell in a second Leavine car, but expansion might stretch the small team too much. Bell could also just replace driver Matt DiBenedetto.

Jones raced his rookie season in 2017 on a one-year loaner contract to Gibbs’ sister team, the now-defunct Furniture Row Racing. He and crew chief Chris Gayle have since hit on a formula that has pushed them close to a checkered flag.

“We all know with young guys, Denny has been there, drivers have been there, once they get it, it can be something special for them,” Gibbs said. “I think Erik is right on the verge. I know for everybody at that race team, we’re all excited about Erik and his future, doing everything we can to kind of get everything in place to make sure we have him taken care of.”

By the numbers

13th
Erik Jones’ place in the NASCAR Cup standings after 11 top-10 finishes this season, including eight since early May.

60
Number of laps led this year by the 23-year-old Jones in NASCAR Cup.

0
Number of races he’s won this season despite seven top-five finishes. He was the 2017 NASCAR Cup Series Rookie of the Year.

SOURCE: NASCAR.com

Friday, August 2, 2019

TRACK AND FIELD/AUTO RACING

• STARS AND STRIPES •

Felix says maternity protection in sponsor deals is way overdue

BY PAT GRAHAM
Associated Press

About a month after her daughter’s emergency delivery, sprinter Allyson Felix went through one of her toughest workouts — a 30-minute walk.

It was then the six-time Olympic gold medalist realized just how difficult the road ahead would be in her return to track. It was also when she became even more determined to line up for another sort of race: campaigning for greater maternity protection from sponsors.

She, along with other track moms, spoke up. Their voices are starting to be heard. Case in point: Felix agreed to a sponsorship deal Wednesday with the women’s apparel company Athleta that offers maternity safeguards and guarantees.

“I totally want to be remembered for having some impact on the sport, having changed things for women of the next generation to not have to feel like they have to choose between a career and motherhood,” Felix said in a phone interview. “If I could walk away from the sport with some of these issues looking a little different, that’s a win for me.”

Felix was only 32 weeks into her pregnancy when her daughter, Camryn, was delivered on Nov. 28 via emergency C-section after tests showed the baby’s heart rate was 28 via emergency C-section after tests showed the baby’s heart rate was 28. The 33-year-old Felix explained her situation in a New York Times editorial piece on May 22: Nike wanted to pay her 70% less. Although she was willing to accept a reduction, she wanted assurances around maternity. It was declined.

Alyssa Montano and Kara Goucher also spoke out about the need for sponsors to support female competitors before, during and after pregnancy — that contracts shouldn’t penalize someone for starting a family.

In a May 17 statement, Nike wrote: “Last year we standardized our approach across all sports to support our female athletes during pregnancy, but we recognize we can go even further. ... We recognize we can do more and that there is an important opportunity for the sports industry to evolve to support female athletes.”

For Felix, taking an initial stand was daunting. She didn’t know if there would be repercussions.

“I just felt compelled,” she said. “I think it was becoming a mother and knowing that this is a world that my daughter will grow up in and even though it’s uncomfortable and it’s still scary, sometimes you just have to talk about your experiences. When I did I was just overwhelmed with the stories that women shared with me. It just reinforced that it was the right thing to do.

Athletes like Felix on board with a wide-ranging partnership deal as she becomes the company’s first sponsored athlete. The partnership includes such things as collaboration on initiatives to empower women and a hand in designing products.

“When you’re supported in that way, you are now a better athlete, you’re a better mother and you’re a better person,” said Felix, who’s still working on obtaining a shoe contract. “It’s already hard enough to be a new mother. It’s extremely difficult to be an athlete. It’s so much better this way.”

The road back to sprinting hasn’t been easy. Felix wasn’t sure if she would even make it back.

She remembered one day in early December being in the newborn intensive care unit with her daughter, who was struggling to breathe.

“I just remember that day just feeling heavy and feeling like I don’t know if I will return,” she said. “I don’t know if it’s still as important to me.”

Her first workout was a simple walk (it was taxing). Her first track practice wasn’t until around March.

Gradually, Felix is rounding back into form.

At the U.S. championships last weekend, she finished sixth in the 400-meter final during her first competition in 13 months. A solid step forward and one that earned her a chance to possibly run in the relay at the world championships in Doha, Qatar, this fall.
Deadline day deals dazzle

Astros made biggest splash, but plenty of names on the move

By Ben Walker
Associated Press

While the Astros’ acquisition of pitcher Zack Greinke from Arizona for four minor leaguers became the talk of baseball, plenty of familiar names were on the go Wednesday — Shane Greene and Mark Melancon boosted the bullpen, with Scooter Gennett, Jesus Aguilar, Mike Leake and Tanner Roark among those also moving.

“Houston made some big deals. They’re really good. They were good before,” Red Sox President of Baseball Operations Dave Dombrowski said.

A lot of contenders were busy.

The Chicago Cubs added Detroit’s Nicholas Castellanos to their lineup, the Phillies got outfielder Corey Dickerson from Pittsburgh and the Washington Nationals acquired relievers Daniel Hudson, Roenis Elias and Hunter Strickland.

In most cases, major leaguers were swapped for prospects.

“When it comes to trades, one thing I’ve learned is, just wait,” Cubs manager Joe Maddon said. “You’ve got to wait until the very end and it plays itself out. The 11th hour is the most powerful hour there is.”

Several players whose names swirled in the tradewinds stayed put.

Giants ace Madison Bumgarner, Mets starters Noah Syndergaard and Zack Wheeler and Pirates closer Felipe Vazquez remained in place. So did Mets closer Edwin Diaz and Texas starter Mike Minor.

“Nothing changed for me. I never expected to be somewhere else until that happened,” Bumgarner said. “I just have a job to do and I’m going to do it.”

Major League Baseball made July 31 a hard deadline this year for trades — no deals can be made until after the World Series.

“This was a unique deadline, it felt,” said Yankees general manager Brian Cashman, whose AL East-leading team didn’t make any significant moves.

Pitchers Marcus Stroman, Andrew Cashner, Homer Bailey and Jason Vargas were among the players traded in recent weeks.

And on Tuesday night, the Cleveland Indians agreed to send pitcher Trevor Bauer to Cincinnati in a three-team swap that landed outfielder Yasiel Puig.

The Atlanta Braves traded a pair of prospects for Detroit Tigers All-Star closer Shane Greene on Wednesday. Greene has 22 saves and a 1.18 ERA.

The Houston Astros made the biggest move ahead of Wednesday’s trade deadline, acquiring Arizona Diamondbacks ace Zack Greinke in exchange for four minor leaguers.

GET A GRIP ON YOUR GOALS WITH THE NEW "HIT THE BOOKS" PROGRAM

Aces: 2017 World Series champs add third All-Star arm to formidable rotation

FROM BACK PAGE

there was times I thought it was dead and times I thought it was 50/50, but at pop hit did think it was over 50/50,” he said. “And then when it all came together we just looked at each other in the room and said: ‘Is this really happening? We kind of had to pinch ourselves.”

The 2017 World Series champs were in the market for another starter as the rotation behind their top three has performed inconsistently this season. The Arizona ace is 10-4 with a 2.87 ERA in 22 starts this season and provides a pronounced upgrade over the variety of players they’ve cycled through to start behind Justin Verlander, Gerrit Cole and Wade Miley this season.

Arizona agreed to send Houston $24 million to offset much of the $74,161,290 Greinke is owed in salary plus $2 million to cover the assignment bonus he gets for being traded. The Diamondbacks pay the Astros $2 million on Nov. 1 for the assignment bonus and pay Houston $3,333,333 on Oct. 15 plus $1,333,333 each on July 1 in 2020 and 2021.

Greinke’s $206.5 million, six-year contract includes a $31.5 million salary for this year — which has $10,161,290 remaining — plus $32 million in each of the next two seasons. His deal defers $10.5 million in 2019 salary and $11 million in each of the next two years, and Houston assumes responsibility for the deferred money being accrued starting Thursday.

Luhnow said it was difficult to give up four top prospects to snag the 35-year-old Greinke, but that he and owner Jim Crane believed they needed to be aggressive to upgrade this team, even though it has a comfortable lead atop the AL West.

“You’re excited, I’m excited,” Cole said. “They’re excited, I’m excited,”

Greinke’s ERA in 22 starts. He joins Justin Verlander (2.73), Gerrit Cole (2.94), and Wade Miley (3.06) in Houston.

Greinke’s ERA across his 16-year career, including stops with the Brewers and Dodgers. He’s 197-122 in 477 games.

“Dave Dombrowski Boston Red Sox President of Baseball Operations

Zack attack

Number of Astros starting pitchers with ERAs in the top 15 this year after Wednesday’s trade for Zack Greinke.

Greinke’s ERA in 22 starts. He joins Justin Verlander (2.73), Gerrit Cole (2.94), and Wade Miley (3.06) in Houston.

Greinke’s ERA across his 16-year career, including stops with the Brewers and Dodgers. He’s 197-122 in 477 games.

SOURCE: Associated Press
Xander Bogaerts and the Boston Red Sox are setting their sights on an AL wild-card berth, believing the AL East title is out of reach.

By JIMMY GOLEN
Associated Press

BOSTON

The defending World Series champion Boston Red Sox are setting their sights on an AL wild-card berth, and they’re doing it with the players they already have.

Red Sox baseball boss Dave Dombrowski conceded on Wednesday that the ballclub doesn’t have a “realistic” hope for a fourth straight AL East title, and said he was unwilling to part with a major asset just to push for the team to have any chance to repeat.

“...it’s easy to say to fix the people you have,” Dombrowski said. “It’s easy to say to do it a little differently as far as what you’re trying to do and the risks you’re willing to take.”

“If we were closer to first place, I would have been more open-minded,” Dombrowski said shortly after the 4 p.m. deadline passed without any moves and before the team’s game against Tampa Bay. “Realistically, we’re probably playing first for a wild-card spot. I look at that a little differently as far as what you’re trying to do and the risks you’re willing to take.”

The Red Sox ended Wednesday night trailing the Yankees by 10 games in the division, and with the 8-5 loss to the Rays, they fell 2 ½ games behind Tampa Bay and 2 games behind Oakland for the AL’s final wild-card spot. Standing pat at the trade deadline was less an expression of faith in the current players than an acknowledgement that — with or without reinforcements — they would need to perform better for the team to have any chance to repeat, anyway.

“We know the team we have, whenever we’re playing up to our capabilities, how good we are,” shortstop Xander Bogaerts said. “We’re one of the best teams in the league.”

Chief among the disappointments this season has been starting pitchers Chris Sale, the ace who is 5-10 with a 4.26 ERA, Rick Porcello, who fell to 9-8 and has allowed six earned runs or more in four of his last six starts; and David Price, who has a 7-4 record but is 0-2 in his last three starts, including one to acquire slugger Jesus Aguilar from Milwaukee, the Red Sox and Yankees stood pat.

“...it’s important that we have our young guys in the rotation, we can, I think, beat anybody,” Dombrowski said. “We’re one of the best teams in the league.”

Craig Kimbel, Dombrowski said that could be solved by more consistent outings by the rotation. Last week, while the Red Sox were winning five of their first six games against the Yankees and Rays, the two teams already have.

Dombrowski said he had texts from 20 general managers on Wednesday alone, but none of the proposals was tempting enough to jump at. Manager Alex Cora said he understood Dombrowski’s decision, and he wasn’t disappointed.

“There are certain things that make sense or not. That’s how it works,” Cora said. “It’s not one team saying, ‘We want this guy.’”

The Red Sox have won three straight division titles for the first time in franchise history — including last year, when they won a record 108 games in the regular season and their fourth championship since 2004.

But with largely the same roster, they started off their title defense with a 6-13 record, and they were facing a double-digit deficit in the division as recently as last week. During their current stretch of 14 straight games against the Yankees and Rays, the two teams headed ahead of them in the division, they are 5-4.

“We know the team we have, whenever we’re playing up to our capabilities, we need to do that in the regular season and in the playoffs,” Bogaerts said.

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This was the Red Sox starting pitcher Rick Porcello’s big year, and he was allowed three earned runs or more in four of his last six starts; and David Price, who has a 7-4 record but is 0-2 in his last three starts.

“The reality is, if we’re going to be the guys in the clubhouse,” Dombrowski told reporters, pointing to the clubhouse behind him. “We could have added pieces, but we have a very talented club.”

While the bullpen has struggled this year, the club decided not to re-sign closer
No bull: Redskins’ Norman keeps things interesting

BY STEPHEN WHYNOS

RICHMOND, Va. — Washington Redskins defensive back Josh Norman flipped the switch from a whirlwind offseason to a “see ball, get ball” approach at training camp.

That’s way different from Norman’s “see ball, jump over bull” summer.

A year after competing on ABC’s “Dancing with the Stars,” Norman flew with the Blue Angels, took in a Champions League soccer match, ran with the bulls in Pamplona, donated to an immigrant detention center and financed the construction of a youth facility in his hometown.

“It showed I can tackle anything, literally. But at the same time, I might run out of the way of a bull,” Norman said. “I’m all fun and games. ... I feel so loose and relaxed just because I’ve been through a roller-coaster offseason.”

Video of Norman leaping over a bull stood out from the typical player Instagram posts featuring workouts. It has been the subject of plenty of barbs, like coach Jay Gruden joking that he knew the bull wouldn’t hurt Nor- man because he avoids contact.

“I spoke to his dad and I said I wasn’t really a great fan of the dancing the year before, but now I like the dancing,” Red- skins President Bruce Allen said.

“Dancing with a woman versus dancing with a bull, I thought was a better idea for a summer proj- ect. But that’s Josh. I can’t wait to see what he comes up with next.”

For all the fun Norman has, Gruden doesn’t want people to forget that the 31-year-old spends plenty of time and money trying to make the world a better place.

“Josh is a man of the world,” Gruden said. “Josh has experi-enced more things in his life at his young age than most people have in their whole life. Obvi- ously, we wouldn’t recommend that for our players and we want them to keep out of harm’s way. Josh is a unique man, and he has done a lot of great work other than jump- ing over bulls. He has done a lot of charitable work that people don’t know about and great things for the community. I applaud Josh and the way he lives his life.”

Norman is far from a one-trick pony during his time away. His Instagram page is a tapestry of everything from a video of climb- ing into the cockpit of a Blue Angels plane to photos of him don- ating $18,000 to an immigrant detention center and looking over plans for the Josh Norman Teen Center in Greenwood, S.C., which he considers his greatest feat to date.

“I’m always about helping, man, in any way I can,” Norman said Tuesday when asked about his donation to the detention center.

“That’s why we’re here. I feel like if you have it and you see there’s a need, then you do it. What am I going to use it for? I feel like I’ve been blessed with, I try to give back in multitudes because I feel like people need it the most. What do I need it for? I can always make more.”

Cards’ Kirk reconnects with Murray

BY JOSE M. ROMERO

GLendale, Ariz. — Christian Kirk owns the distinction of having caught Kyler Murray’s first college touchdown pass, a 10-yarder on Sept. 12, 2015, when Kirk was a junior at Auburn.

But the Arizona Cardinals duo — Kirk is a second-year wide receiver and Murray the top pick in this year’s NFL Draft — go back even further than that. The two met during a campus visit to College Station and were teammates during a 7-on-7 foot- ball event for top high school players.

Now Kirk is catching passes from his buddy at Cardinals training camp, and the two figure to link up for some NFL touch- downs for years to come.

“I didn’t get a shot at that time to hit Kirk in full camp,” Kirk said. “It was completely something that needed to be fixed. It was just something that needed to be fixed.”

Kirk got his first opportunity in the Cardinals’ 3-13 2018 season. He caught 43 passes for 590 yards with three touchdowns and added 164 yards as a punt returner. But he broke his foot on Dec. 2 at Green Bay and was lost for the rest of the season.

The injury required surgery, but Kirk was back on the field long before training camp. He’s enjoyed taking in new coach Kliff Kingsbury’s wide-open offense.

“It obviously started in the spring. It started in the spring coming off the foot injury. Getting back out here in camp and knowing that the real deal is right around the corner,” Kirk said. “It’s tough to come in here and not be ex- cited. It’s exciting to take the field and just get an opportunity to get better.”

Kirk got his first taste of NFL suc- cess under head coach Mike Wilks, who was fired at the end of last season. He handled the pressure and the publicity and the expectations.

“With the expectations there, I don’t think the expectations are going to go down. And we know what we bring back on this team, but people know the potential as well,” Kirk said. “You can kind of tell we’re going to have something consistent here and something to build off of for years to come. Now that we have this offense in place, we have Coach Kingsbury, it’s been good to be able to dive in knowing Kyler’s our starter. It’s been a good to just kind of hone in on that.”

Crowder catches on quickly as a weapon in Jets’ offense

BY DENNIS WASZAK JR.

FLORHAM PARK, N.J. — Jamison Crowder signed with the New York Jets as a free agent in the offseason because he envisioned plenty of action in Adam Gase’s offense.

Well, the wide receiver has caught on quickly in training camp, showing how valuable he can be while becoming a fa- vorite target of Sam Darnold.

“I just want to be a weapon,” Crowder said Wednesday. “Somebody that’s reli- able, somebody that’s consistent. I just want to gain that trust with him that when he wants to go my way that he has that trust and that confidence that I’m going to make the play.”

Crowder shook off a scare from Monday, when he left practice with a foot injury that had him limping — and the Jets and their fans holding their breath.

“It was just something that needed to get checked out, but I was good, though,” he said. “I was happy to be back out there today and I feel great.”

The 26-year-old receiver, who has dealt with various injuries during his short NFL career, underwent tests on Tuesday that revealed no issues. After a day off from practice, Crowder practiced fully Wednes- day and showed no signs of any issues, making the first catch of team drills.

“He’s so quick,” Darnold said. “Everyone knows how quick he is, but he’s fast, too. I think he can hit another gear, too. He’s got game speed, especially when someone gets the better of him. If someone maybe pre- dicts what route he’s going to run and they might beat him to the spot on one play, the next play you know he’s just going to come firing.”

Crowder spent his first four NFL sea- sons with Washington after being a fourth- round draft pick out of Duke in 2015. His mix of speed, shifti- ness and ability to get open and make plays made him an in- triguing option in Jay Gruden’s offense with the Redskins.

The receiver never quite had the breakout performance many expected, though, and various ailments — hip, ankle, groin — contributed to that. Crowder played in just nine games last season, catching a career-low 29 passes for 388 yards and two touchdowns. He couldn’t find chem- istry with Alex Smith early on, and then an ankle injury sidelined him for seven straight games.

Crowder was not brought back by the Redskins, and he signed with the Jets on a three-year, $28.5 million deal that includ- ed $17 million guaranteed. While Crowder doesn’t expect to have a “main role” in the offense — “I feel like I could have a solid role in it” — he recognizes that he should get lots of opportunities to make plays in New York.

“In this offense, you look at it and slot guys have had success,” Crowder said.

“That was one of the things that really caught my attention. I just felt like this was the right place for me at the time.”
Kevin Stefanski said. “It speeds everybody up, so
do well,” offensive coordinator
all shapes and sizes, so we kind of
ent in that room. They come in
no pun intended, wide open.
radar rookies, the opportunity is,
biggest guy. I’m not the fastest
of the concepts and preferences
Kubiak has infused into the
system, having played under him
with the Broncos.
It obviously is an advantage, for
sure. These other guys are
doing a great job of learning the
offense as well, but just being able
to play multiple positions if need
be, I can, I think only help you,”
Taylor said.
Second-round draft picks Ola-
bisi Johnson and Dillon Mitchell
have joined undrafted rookies
Davion Davis and Alexander Hol-
lins and second-year speedster
Jeff Badet in the deep end of the
pool.
“They have not been precise
enough in these first couple
days, these young receivers,” Vikings
coach Mike Zimmer said Sunday.
“They need to get their rear end
in gear.
For everyone in the mix ex-
cept perhaps Treadwell, the
first-rounder, there is plenty of
motivation to become the next
Thielen or Diggs, the two origi-
nally overlooked prospects and
now self-made stars.
“They’re just gamers, and I
love that about them,” Beebe said.
“So just to be able to watch them
day in and day out and see what
they do, that’s something that I
would be crazy not to try to do
the same.”

Despite Thielen and Diggs,
Vikings want No. 3 receiver

BY DAVE CAMPBELL
Associated Press
EGAN, Minn. — No pair of
throwers last season totaled
more than the 215 combined
catches amassed by Adam Thielen
and Stefon Diggs for Minnesota.
With Thielen and Diggs, the
Vikings were also one of only
four teams with two members
of the 1,000-yard club last year.
But following a 5-11 season in
which the team ended up with
nearly 30 players, including sev-
eral offensive starters, on injured
reserve and facing a running
back Leonard Fournette for half
the year, Coughlin and Marr-
one decided to take a different
approach.
“Doug is showing love,” two-
time Pro Bowl cornerback Jalen
Jackson said after a quick and
better. The energy is better. Ev-
everyone is a little happier out
here than they were in 2018.
The kinder, gentler Jags are on
the field nearly two hours earlier
than they were in 2018, avoiding
the hottest part of the day as well
as afternoon thunderstorms. They
get 90 minutes after practice for
the hour and a half to rest and visit
with family and friends.
They have recovery time built
into the schedule, too, allowing
players to get cryotherapy, cup-
ping, dry needling or other ther-
apeutic care after lunch.
They also leave the facility in
the afternoon and hold meet-
ings at a nearby hotel, providing
players with a brief break to travel
between venues and allowing them
to go straight to their rooms once
the nightly sessions end.
It’s a far cry from the ultra-
physical and risky — and risky —
preseason.
“Last season kind of woke a lot
of guys up,” Fournette said.
Coughlin and Marrone includ-
ed. They said they wanted to
“set the tone” in camp, Marrone
said. But players typically stay
in better shape year-round, reduc-
ing the need for an ultra-physical
— and risky — preseason.
“Have to be smarter than that,”
Marrone said.
Gil Brandt, a former vice president of player personnel for the Dallas Cowboys, talks to the media Monday at the team’s training camp on Thursday, Aug. 1, 2013, in Oxnard, Calif.

“Everybody was . . . good at their job,” said Brandt, who is a sportswriter for Pro Football Rumors. “But there are still several years left to go before we can make that claim."

The Cowboys’ success in the 1980s, and also because of their active 80-year-old remains in the NFL so many years after Dallas owner Jerry Jones fired him following the 1989 draft.

The dismissal of Brandt came a couple of months after Jones dumped Landry as soon as he bought the team. Schramm’s res- ignation quickly followed.

The Hall of Fame voted little time recognizing those two. Landry was inducted in 1990, 10 years before he died. Schramm’s 1993 enshrinement came 12 years before his death. The trio reached seven Super Bowls, winning two.

“How could you not be over- shadowed by Tex and Tom?” asked a chuckling Cliff Harris, a former safety who was among the club’s first three players who be- came All-Pros after being targeted by Brandt. “Everybody was . . . good at their job.”

The Cowboys assigned values to players, Brandt said. He wanted to tell the story of how Vince Lombardi chided them by asking if their computer had broken down while Dallas held up the 1964 draft waiting for medical information on Mel Renfro before taking the future Hall of Fame de- fensive back in the second round.

“I think Gil, in terms of quanti- fying so many things about scout- ing, was really ahead of his time,” said Calvin Hill, a running back who simply weren’t getting. Hill, who went to Yale, points to the tireless pursuit of information to plug into the computer.

Brandt’s longevity also has turned him into one of the de facto unofficial historians for the NFL — a good time for that role because the league is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year.

“I feel like I have reinvented myself,” he said. “From some- body that did pretty good with the Cowboys to somebody that’s doing pretty good right now with social media.”

By Schuyler Dixon

DALLAS — Gil Brandt is fi- nally into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, nearly three de- cades after Tom Landry and Tex Schramm were enshrined a year apart for their roles in the rise of America’s Team, the Dallas Cowboys.

The former player personnel director who helped build one of the most iconic brands in sports ever felt overshadowed by his more famous coach and general manager, it doesn’t really matter now that the triumvirate from the club’s first three years is about to be together in Canton, Ohio.

And by the way, Brandt doesn’t feel overshadowed.

“I feel like I’ve got credit,” said Brandt, who will be inducted Saturday. “And I think Tex righ- tfully gets credit for things and myself. Because he was a very media-savvy person. When somebody from Sports Illus- trated called, they didn’t talk to me. They talked to Tex.

“But it was not a concern of mine at all,”

Brandt was voted in as a con- tributor mostly because of the innovations he helped introduce in scouting in the 60s, which also because of his active 86-

© 2013 by Associated Press

"I strongly believe that he knew that he got into the Hall of Fame," said Brittany Bowlen, the owner’s 29-year-old daugh- ter who aims to one day assume control- ling ownership. "He had a really big smile when he found out. And I find that a real blessing to know that he knew."
Wherever Robinson roamed, championships soon followed

By Dave Skretta
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — It seemed that one by one, members of the only Kansas City Chiefs team to win the Super Bowl would get a phone call or a knock on the door letting them know they had become Hall of Famers.

The quarterback, Len Dawson. The linebackers, Bobby Bell and Willie Lanier. Even the coach, Hank Stram. Eight in all from the team that beat the Vikings in Super Bowl IV were enshrined in Canton.

Now there are nine.

Johnny Robinson, the former LSU standout-turned-star safety during the years of the AFL-NFL merger, was chosen by 48 selectors after being nominated by the Hall of Fame's seniors committee. Robinson was passed over six times during the 1980s, but will finally get to slip on that famous gold jacket.

“I'm thrilled,” he said in a statement. “I can’t tell you how pleased I am to have been selected.”

Robinson declined interview requests through a Chiefs spokesman, but his induction still echoed requests through a Chiefs spokesmen. “I can’t tell you how pleased we are to have Johnny Robinson’s Boys Home for at-risk youth. It has been his life’s work for much of the past four decades, the 1985 death of his own son, Tommy, and the numerous health problems Robinson has battled through the years: arthritis in his spine, thyroid cancer; non-Hodgkin lymphoma; a quadruple bypass; and a severe stroke. He has acknowledged over the years that some of that may stem from his days playing football.

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He was one of 20 players to play all 10 seasons of the AFL, then left an indelible mark on the NFL. He finished his career with 37 interceptions in a decade playing safety, earned a spot in seven Pro Bowls, received all-league recognition five times and was chosen to the AFL's all-time team.

What Robinson, now 80, accomplished after his playing days may be even more important.

After hearing the plight of a young boy at church, Robinson purchased a home in Monroe, Louisiana, and established Johnny Robinson’s Boys Home for at-risk youth. It has grown from a then-franchise record 1,464 yards in 1999 by the now Pro Football Hall of Fame running back to keep everyone on the same page.

Robinson was drafted twice in 1960, by the Detroit Lions in the NFL and the Dallas Texans in the AFL. He wound up in Dallas and helped the franchise beat the two-time defending champion Houston Oilers to win the AFL title in 1962, then followed the rechristened organization to Kansas City in 1963.

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Mawae blocked for seven of Curtis Martin’s 10,000-yard seasons with the Jets, including a 1,000-yard rushing season in 1999 by the now Pro Football Hall of Fame running back.

Mawae played 177 consecutive games until a torn left triceps ended his final season with the Jets after six games in 2005. He signed with the Tennessee Titans and impressed Mike Munchak, who noticed that Mawae aggra-vated his opponents so much they talked to the center throughout a game.

By Teresa M. Walker
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Dirty. A cheap shot artist. Even a dirty Christian for wearing a cross on his face mask and then using every trick Kevin Mawae knew to open holes for his running back or protect his quarterback.

Mawae heard all that chatter, and it didn’t bother him. Then he realized he was playing football the only way he knew how as an undersized center in the NFL.

“I wasn’t stronger and bigger than a lot of guys,” Mawae said. “Early in my career, I was considered a finesse player, and that bothered me because I wasn’t. I was a technician. And I learned my craft, and I took it as an art form in some sense that I knew what I was doing. I put my body in position to do things that guys didn’t know how to counter, and they didn’t like that.”

And on Saturday, Mawae will be inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, capping a career of 241 games played over 16 seasons with three teams. A three-time All Pro, he was an eight-time Pro Bowl center and a member of the NFL’s All-Decade Team for the 2000s. He also blocked for a 1,000-yard rusher in 13 seasons by five different running backs, capped by the NFL’s sixth 2,000-yard rushing performance in his final season.

The honor is still a surreal feeling for Mawae, who found it difficult just going into the bust room at the Hall of Fame a couple of months ago.

“That’s where legends live, and I’m thinking about guys I played against that are there or played with or the legends I grew up watching play and I get to be among them,” Mawae said. “And you know it’s exciting, but it’s still like you got to pinch yourself to make sure it’s a reality.”

Mawae earned his spot by finding ways to fend off men bigger and stronger than he was at 6-foot-4 and 289 pounds. That meant studying each opponent, knowing the game, making calls and run checks at the center spot. Mawae never made a mistake when making a run check.

“That definitely was the right decision,” Chris Johnson said with a chuckle of Mawae’s calls while in Tennessee.

He blocked for two of Chris Warren’s 1,000-yard rushing seasons in Seattle. When the Seahawks told Mawae he wasn’t the caliber of player he thought he was after four seasons, he became the highest-paid center in the NFL in 1998 playing for coach Bill Parcells with the New York Jets.

That’s where Mawae and his fellow offensive linemen started including running backs in their meetings each Thursday to keep everyone on the same page. Mawae blocked for seven of Curtis Martin’s 10,000-yard seasons with the Jets, including a then-franchise record 1,464 yards in 1999 by the now Pro Football Hall of Fame running back.

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PRO FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME

Gonzalez forever changed his position

Clutch catches helped redefine role of tight end

**By Charles Odum**
Associated Press

Atlanta’s Matt Ryan was in only his second season in 2009 when he kept hearing newly acquired tight end Tony Gonzalez insist he was open on plays.

“Tackle, tackle, tackle,” Gonzalez told The Associated Press. “They would split me out wide and put everybody on the other side and throw me jump balls, they’d throw slants. They’d put me one on one and it was all about matchups. No one had really done that before.”

The 6-foot-5 Gonzalez played football and basketball in college at California. His size, strong hands, leaping ability and perhaps unprecedented commitment to health science helped him maintain a high level of production through 17 seasons. He had at least 50 catches in each of his last 16 seasons, including 14 seasons with at least 70. But he never got to a Super Bowl.

A first-round draft pick by Kansas City in 1997, Gonzalez was 33 when he retired following an 83-catch season in 2013. Gonzalez, 43, has stayed close to the game through his work as a Fox TV analyst. Asked if he was ever tempted to come out of retirement, like Dallas tight end Jason Witten this season following one year away from the game, Gonzalez laughed and said, “No, not even close.”

“‘My first year out I had a couple teams call me, some really good teams, and even then it was no,’” he said.

Gonzalez said he understands why some former players struggle to replace the adrenaline rush they found on the field.

“I miss the fears. I miss that,” he said. “I miss going over the middle and not knowing if I’m going to make that play. I think that’s the part of the game you miss the most, that excitement of it. Then you think of the physical part as a retired player and I’m like, ‘hell no.’”

The Associated Press

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**PRO FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME**

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Associated Press

Matt Ryan was in only his second season in 2009 when he kept hearing newly acquired tight end Tony Gonzalez insist he was open on plays.

“I would go back and watch the film and he was like completely covered,” Ryan said.

Covered? The Atlanta Falcons quarterback saw play after play where Gonzalez was surrounded by two or three defenders.

“I was like, ‘What are you talking about, man?’” Ryan said. “And he was like, ‘Nah, if you just put it in this one spot, it’ll be perfect.’

It took me a while to develop that trust to let it rip and throw it to this spot, but he was right. He was open, and if you could deliver the ball in that spot, he could make a play, he didn’t let you down.”

It was the ability of Gonzalez to make those tough catches, especially on third down and in the red zone, that helped make him a first-ballot pick who will be inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame on Saturday.

Gonzalez became the most productive tight end in NFL history in his career with the Kansas City Chiefs and Falcons. He was elected to the Chiefs’ Hall of Fame in 2018 and says he’s grateful to fellow inductees in Kansas City and Atlanta.

“Chiefs fans know how I feel about them and so do the Atlanta Falcons fans,” he said.

Chiefs president Mark Donovan said Friday, “We’ll always think of Tony as a Chief.”

“We have a great relationship with Tony,” Donovan said. “I think one of the things that gets lost in this, if you played for a bunch of teams you’re in a tough spot. You have to take care of all the fans. Tony is a Chief and we appreciate everything he did for the organization.”

Gonzalez’s mark on the game was about more than his 1,325 receptions, second only to Jerry Rice in NFL history.

By the numbers

**1,325**

Number of receptions by tight end Tony Gonzalez, second only to Jerry Rice in NFL history.

**16**

Number of seasons in which Gonzalez had at least 50 receptions. He played 17 seasons.

**6**

Number of times Gonzalez was named All-Pro. He never got to a Super Bowl.

**SOURCE: Associated Press**

Above: Kansas City Chiefs tight end Tony Gonzalez hauls in his 63rd career touchdown during the first quarter against the Cincinnati Bengals on Oct. 14, 2007 in Kansas City, Mo. Gonzalez set the NFL record for touchdown catches by a tight end with the reception.

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**SOURCE: Associated Press**

Tony was different,” Ryan said. “That’s not a slight on anybody. I mean, this is a first-ballot Hall of Famer.”

It also wasn’t easy for Gonzalez to walk away. Thanks to his excellent physical condition, which he credits to his all-natural, vegan-based diet, which was eventually tweaked by adding one meat per week, Gonzalez delayed his retirement at least twice before finally walking away following an 83-catch season in 2013.

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**SOURCE: Associated Press**

Big dreams drove Law to greatness

By Dennis Waszak Jr. Associated Press

NEW YORK — Ty Law was a wide-eyed youngster with big dreams when he started making summer visits to his Uncle Tony’s home in Texas.

They fueled his passion for football. And, they guided his journey to greatness.

Tony Dorsett was forging his own path to the Pro Football Hall of Fame long before his nephew even put on a uniform and became one of the best cornerbacks to play the game. Dorsett’s days in Dallas as one of the NFL’s greatest running backs followed an incredible college career at the University of Pittsburgh — and it all had Law imagining someday being like his famous uncle.

“I used to just stare at that Heisman man, stare at his Hall of Fame bust,” Law recalled. “And that right there, it meant the world to me because I realized dreams do come true. He walked the same streets that I did, so why can’t I? Why not me? But, I knew there had to be a lot of sacrifice to get to that point.”

Law, like Dorsett, grew up in Aliquippa, Pa., a football hotspot that also produced the likes of Mike Ditka, Darrelle Revis and Sean Gilbert. “Pistol” Pete Maravich also honed his shooting touch and showmanship on the basketball courts of the steel town in western Pennsylvania.

On Saturday, Law will be inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio — 25 years after he watched Dorsett slip on his gold jacket, pose with his bronze bust and take his place in football immortality.

By Arnise Stapleton Associated Press

DENVER — From the moment he played his first pickup game on a steamy summer day in the three-stoplight town of Folkston, Ga., Camp Bailey had a nose for the football.

“I mean, he was greedy with the football,” said Boss Bailey, his younger brother by 16 months who played with Champ in high school, college and the pros. “He wanted the ball in his hands. He never said, ‘Nah, give it to somebody else.’”

Those ball-hawking skills served Bailey well when he converted from a star running back and quarterback in high school to a superstar cornerback in college and the pros, where he was downright gluttonous with the football during a 15-year NFL career in Washington and Denver that landed him in the 2019 class of the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Bailey picked off 54 passes — the most in 15 seasons in the NFL with the Redskins and Broncos, cornerback Champ Bailey intercepted 54 passes.

“Once I got to the NFL, there was no stopping me because in the back of my mind I still see that little kid staring at that Heisman Trophy and Hall of Fame bust,” said Law, who’ll be presented by childhood friend Byron Washington. “So, that was the goal from Day One, and I just went for it. And I knew you had to play a long time. I know you had to play consistently.

“They just don’t give those things away, no matter how long you played. You had to make an impact, and that’s what I tried to do.”

Law was a first-round pick by New England out of Michigan in 1995 and played 15 seasons in the NFL, including 10 with the Patriots. He also had two one-year stints with the New York Jets and with Kansas City.

He quickly established himself as one of the NFL’s true shutdown cornerbacks who routinely covered and regularly quieted — opponents’ best receivers. Law helped Bill Belichick’s Patriots win three Super Bowls as the heart of a defense filled with other stars such as Willie McGinest, Rodney Harrison, Tedy Bruschi, Mike Vrabel, Lawyer Milloy and Richard Seymour.

Law, a member of the NFL’s All-Decade Team for the 2000s, is the only Hall of Famer among them.

By WINSLOW TOWNSEND

Former New England cornerback Ty Law raises one of the Patriots’ Lombardi Trophies before a game against the Pittsburgh Steelers on Sept. 10, 2015 in Foxborough, Mass.

Number of Pro Bowl teams to which cornerbacks Ty Law was selected during his 15-year NFL career.

5

Number of interceptions Law made during his pro career.

800

Number of tackles Law made during his pro career. He also had five sacks and scored seven times.

SOURCES: Associated Press

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Law was selected for five Pro Bowl teams and was a two-time All-Pro. He finished with 53 career interceptions, twice leading the NFL in that category, had over 800 tackles, 169 passes defensed, five sacks and scored seven times.
Astros bolster rotation, add Greinke at trade deadline

By KRISTIE RIEKEN
Associated Press

HOUSTON — Out of nowhere, the Houston Astros got a huge head start on October. On a dizzying day that featured two dozen trades, the Astros pulled off the biggest and most startling deal, adding ace Zack Greinke to an imposing rotation already loaded with All-Stars Justin Verlander and Gerrit Cole.

After pulling off the deal, Houston general manager Jeff Luhnow surveyed the stunned room in a bit of a daze.

“I can’t believe we just added Zack Greinke to this rotation and this team,” Luhnow said, sharing the thought he had as he completed the trade.

Luhnow orchestrated the swap to bring the six-time All-Star who won the 2009 AL Cy Young Award to Houston from Arizona in exchange for four minor leaguers as the headliner of a flurry of trades he made Wednesday to beef up the talented squad.

Houston also acquired two other pitchers, getting starter Aaron Sanchez and reliever Joe Biagini from Toronto and bringing back catcher Martin Maldonado, who spent the last 41 games with the team in 2018, from the Cubs.

Luhnow said getting Greinke only became a possibility in the last two days and talks for the veteran right-hander didn’t really heat up until the final 24 hours.

“We are definitely going for it this year.”

Jeff Luhnow
Houston Astros general manager

The Houston Astros added Zack Greinke, center, to a formidable rotation that already included Gerrit Cole, Justin Verlander, and Wade Miley at the trade deadline on Wednesday.

AP, TNS photos

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