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J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

Vice President Mike Pence and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., read the final certification of Electoral College votes cast in November's presidential election early Thursday after working through the night.

Chaos and confirmation

Biden victory is certified after pro-Trump mob storms Capitol

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Congress confirmed Democrat Joe Biden as the presidential election winner early Thursday after a violent mob loyal to President Donald Trump stormed the U.S. Capitol in an attempt to overturn the election, undercut America's democracy and keep Trump in the White House.

Lawmakers were resolved to complete the Electoral College tally in a display to the country, and the world, of the nation's enduring commitment to uphold the will of the voters and the peaceful transfer of power. They pushed through the night with tensions high and the nation's capital on alert.

Before dawn Thursday, lawmakers finished their work, confirming Biden won the election.

Vice President Mike Pence, presiding over the joint session, announced the tally, 306-232.

SEE CHAOS ON PAGE 9

A police officer cleans up debris and personal belongings strewn across the floor of the Rotunda in the early morning hours of Thursday.

ANDREW HARNIK/AP

■ Woman fatally shot identified as Air Force veteran **Page 8**

■ Facebook bans Trump at least through Biden inauguration **Page 10**



Ossoff seals Democrats' Senate sweep

BY SUDHIN THANAWALA
Associated Press

ATLANTA — As a teenager, Jon Ossoff was inspired by the pivotal role John Lewis played in the fight for racial equality when the civil rights icon was in his early 20s.

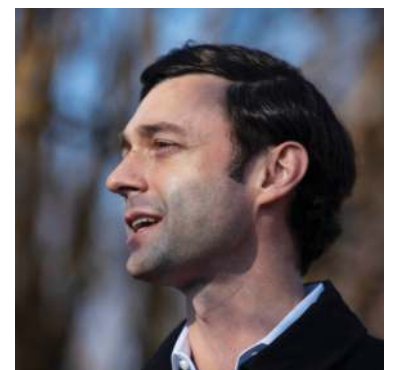
He was in awe of Lewis' life, he told The Associated Press in December, particularly how someone "so young" had achieved such a prominent position as chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

At 33, the millennial Democrat will assume his own leadership mantle after being one of two candidates to help the party sweep Georgia's crucial U.S. Senate runoff elections, a victory that sealed Democrats' control of the chamber. Ossoff defeated Republican David Perdue in the runoff that was held Tuesday after neither he nor Perdue received 50% of the vote in November.

This is Ossoff's first election to public office, and he will be the youngest member of the Senate. But he has never let youth and inexperience be barriers to his aspirations.

In 2017, at the age of 29, he ran

SEE OSSOFF ON PAGE 10



BRANDEN CAMP/AP

Jon Ossoff, whose election will give the Democrats control of the Senate, also will be the youngest member of the chamber.

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	Azores	Belgium	Turkey
Germany	\$2.524	\$2.914	\$3.170	\$2.915	..	..	..
Change in price	+0.6 cents	+0.5 cents	+0.6 cents	+0.5 cents	..	..	..
Netherlands	..	\$3.457	\$3.703	\$3.517	..	\$2.060	\$2.249
Change in price	..	+1.1 cents	+3.0 cents	-3.6 cents	..	No change	No change
U.K.	..	\$2.813	\$3.069	\$2.814	..	..	\$3.041
Change in price	..	+0.5 cents	+0.6 cents	+0.5 cents	..	..	+9.2 cents

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	Commercial rates
Euro costs (Jan. 8)	.7370
Dollar buys (Jan. 8)	.7371
British pound (Jan. 8)	1.2719
Japanese yen (Jan. 8)	6.4703
South Korean won (Jan. 8)	6.0681
Bahrain(Dinar)	15.7012
Britain (Pound)	.8158
Canada (Dollar)	7.7534
China(Yuan)	292.06
Denmark (Krone)	3.1843
Egypt (Pound)	103.81
Euro	.3034
Hong Kong (Dollar)	8.4433
Hungary (Forint)	48.13
Israel (Shekel)	3.68
Japan (Yen)	3.7514
Kuwait(Dinar)	1.3249
Norway (Krone)	..
Philippines (Peso)	..
Poland (Zloty)	..
Saudi Arab (Riyal)	..
Singapore (Dollar)	..

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	South Korea	Guam
Japan	..	\$2.959	..	\$2.709	\$2.329	\$2.719
Change in price	..	No change	..	+1.0 cents	+1.0 cents	+1.0 cents
Okinawa	\$2.319	..	..	\$2.709	\$2.329	\$2.969
Change in price	+1.0 cents	..	..	+1.0 cents	+1.0 cents	No change

*DieselEFD **Midgrade
For the week of Jan. 8-14

INTEREST RATES

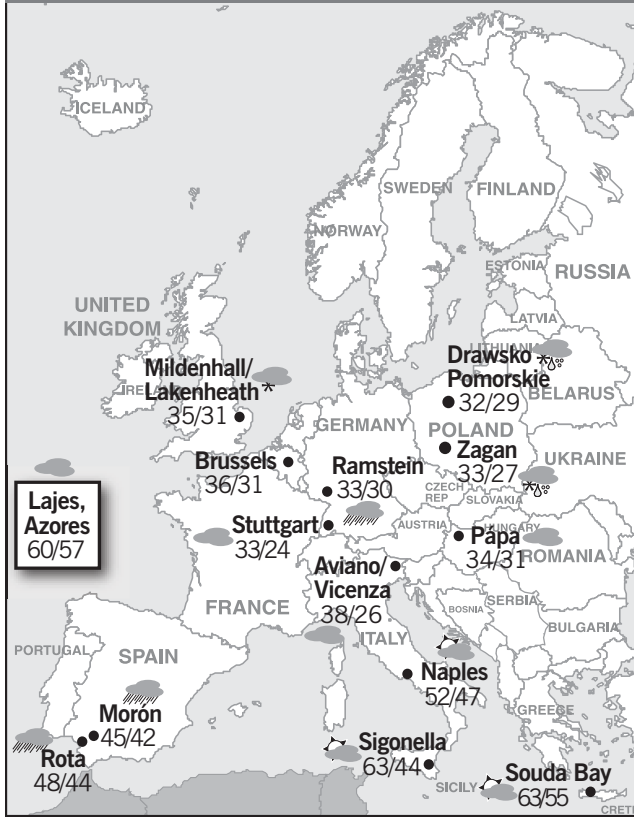
Prime rate	3.25
Interest Rates Discount rate	0.75
Federal funds market rate	0.09
3-month bill	0.10
30-year bond	1.82

WEATHER OUTLOOK

FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



FRIDAY IN EUROPE



SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

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MILITARY

Afghanistan hit with multiple attacks

By RAHIM FAIEZ

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Attacks in Afghanistan left at least 23 civilians and security forces dead, officials said Thursday, even as Afghan negotiators were in Qatar to resume talks with the Taliban aimed at finding an end to decades of conflict.

In southern Uruzgan province, a suicide car bomber detonated a vehicle full of explosives early Thursday near a military base, killing six security forces, said a provincial council member who was not authorized to speak with

the media.

Mohammad Karim Karimi, deputy head of the provincial council in Uruzgan, confirmed the attack on the military base in Tirin Kot, the provincial capital, but couldn't provide an exact death toll. He said the explosion was so strong it sent shock waves through the city.

In southern Helmand province, at least five civilians were killed and five others wounded in a suspected airstrike late Wednesday on the outskirts of Lashkar Gah, the provincial capital, according to Attaullah Afghan, head of the

provincial council. He said the casualties included children and women.

Abdul Nabi Elham, provincial governor, said officials were investigating to determine whether the assault was an airstrike or some other type of attack.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for either attack.

In northern Kunduz province, Taliban fighters stormed a military checkpoint, killing at least 12 security personnel, said a provincial official who was not authorized to speak with the media.

He said about 10 other security

forces were missing and may have been taken into custody by the Taliban during the attack. The official said reinforcements were dispatched to the area outside the provincial capital Kunduz.

Two military vehicles were destroyed and weapons and ammunition from the checkpoint were seized by the insurgents, he added.

Inamuddin Rahmani, spokesman for the provincial police chief in Kunduz, confirmed the Taliban attack.

Zabihullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesman, claimed responsibili-

ty for the attack and said Taliban fighters killed around 15 security forces and arrested 11 others.

Mujahid said seven security forces were killed at the checkpoint and eight others from reinforcement units were also killed.

An Afghan negotiating team is in Qatar's capital of Doha to resume talks aimed at finding an end to decades of relentless conflict even as violence has spiked across the country. The stop-and-go talks come amid growing doubt over a U.S.-Taliban peace deal brokered by outgoing President Donald Trump.

UN Command based in S. Korea supported by US bases in Japan

By SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — A pale blue United Nations banner flutters alongside the American, Japanese and POW/MIA flags over the home of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo.

That banner is one of the few clues that Yokota, a key U.S. airlift hub in Japan, has also been the headquarters of the United Nations Command — Rear, since 2007.

It's a subordinate of South Korea-based U.N. Command, led by the head of U.S. Forces Korea, Army Gen. Robert Abrams.

The command's work in Japan is vital to the defense of South Korea since it would help facilitate reinforcements that would head to the peninsula through Japanese ports in an emergency. It also facilitates the missions of warships and aircraft that monitor North Korea's efforts to evade U.N. sanctions.

The organization, led by Royal Australian Air Force Group Capt. Adam Williams, 48, of Brisbane, guides the movement of troops, supplies and equipment for nine of 22 nations — Australia, Canada, France, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom and Italy — that have sent forces to South Korea as part of the U.N.'s efforts to defend the Asian democracy from communist North Korea since 1950.

"You can't fight a major engagement in Korea without access through Japan," Williams said during a recent interview at his office, which shares a building with the USFJ and the 5th Air Force.

The U.N. command has an agreement with the Japanese government to allow foreign forces to pass through the country to sup-

port its work in South Korea, he said. Williams is a former C-17 Globemaster III and DH-C4 Caribou pilot who has flown missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"It shouldn't be normal for a French aircraft to land at a U.S. airbase and everything to work smoothly, but around here it is," he said.

Roots in Korean conflict

At the outbreak of the Korean War, the U.N. appointed Gen. Douglas MacArthur, then supervising the post-World War II occupation of Japan, to lead the U.N.'s defense against invading North Korean communists. For the duration of the fighting and until 1957 the U.N. command overseeing the Korean campaign was headquartered in Japan.

"By 1957 it was clear that there was not going to be a rapid resolution to the political disputes, and they were going to maintain the command for some time ... so the U.N. command moved to Yongsan Garrison in Seoul," Williams said.

The command relocated last year to Camp Humphreys, south of Seoul.

The U.N. Command — Rear was established in Japan when its higher headquarters moved to Seoul. It was at Camp Zama, home of U.S. Army Japan in Kanagawa prefecture, before moving to Yokota in 2007 to be close to U.S. Forces Japan, Williams said.

The U.N. command has only five personnel working at Yokota, although that could be increased significantly in an emergency, Williams said. The staff includes a Canadian deputy commander, two American soldiers and an American civilian.

That's far fewer than the command has at Camp Humphreys,



SETH ROBSON/Stars and Stripes

United Nations Command — Rear commander Royal Australian Air Force Col. Adam Williams, left, and deputy commander Royal Canadian Air Force Maj. Leon Hachey at Yokota Air Base, Japan, in November.

where about 90 staff work, he said. Numerous other personnel in South Korea perform missions that range from demining to monitoring the Demilitarized Zone that separates the country from North Korea.

Royal Canadian Air Force Maj. Leon Hachey, 53, of Richards Landing, Ontario, has been at Yokota for two years as deputy commander. A change to Canadian Air Force regulations allowed him to grow a beard that has been getting thicker since 2018.

Working in a multinational environment is nothing new to Hachey, who traveled to Afghanistan in 2007 as a logistics officer.

The U.N. Command — Rear gets some VIP visitors such as South Korean army brass and members of the South Korean National Assembly. But Hollywood stars who have taken an interest in other U.N. missions have yet to stop by, Williams said.

"Outside of a few professionals who work on these agreements that have been around for 65

years, our work is not well-known," he said.

Sanctions monitors

The U.N. command staff wear their national uniforms, but you won't see blue berets or helmets, which are reserved for U.N. peacekeepers, he said.

U.S. forces are the U.N. command's key mission partners in Japan, Williams said.

"We are clearly not out there throwing ropes to the boats and refueling aircraft," he said of his staff.

A big part of the command's work in Japan involves facilitating ships and aircraft passing through the country to monitor compliance with sanctions on North Korea that the U.N. imposed due to the North's nuclear weapons program, Williams said.

"The sending states are committed to monitoring sanctions on North Korea," he said. "A lot of the ships and aircraft that have visited Japan in recent years have been sanctions monitoring activity."

The U.N. command's work in Japan can also involve evacuating foreign forces from bases in the path of typhoons or arranging medical care for injured troops.

For example, a U.S. sailor recently fell down a hatch on a vessel that was near a warship involved in sanctions monitoring, Williams said.

"We had a Canadian ship in the area and brought a guy from the U.S. ship to the HMCS Winnipeg, which evacuated him by helicopter to Sasebo," he said.

Yokota is one of seven U.S. military bases in Japan where the U.N. command has access to logistical support for nations sending troops to South Korea, Williams said.

The other installations are Yokosuka and Sasebo naval bases and Camp Zama on the main islands of Japan as well as Kadena Air Base, Marine Corps Air Station Futenma and White Beach Naval Base on Okinawa.

MILITARY

More flu vaccine arrives for Americans in Europe

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — A bulk shipment of flu vaccine for Department of Defense personnel and family members has arrived in Europe and is being distributed to base medical clinics that still need the shot, U.S. health and military officials in Germany said this week.

The U.S. military in Europe received about 56,000 doses of the vaccine this week, which “should be more than enough for everyone we still need to vaccinate,” said Gino Mattorano, spokesman for Regional Health Command Europe.

Roughly 70,000 service members and Defense Department employees, many with dependents, live in Europe, where flu season typically begins in October. A limited supply of flu shots were available earlier in the season, but service members were given priority for jabs then and many Americans affiliated with the military in Europe were not vaccinated.

The delay in getting the remainder of the flu vaccine to Europe was caused by a coronavirus outbreak and a maintenance issue at the Pentagon’s supplier, Seqirus, said Patrick Mackin, a spokesman for the Defense Logistics Agency.

With the arrival of the new shipment, vaccination clinics are being scheduled across Europe. At some bases, they will be held concurrently but separately with COVID-19 vaccination clinics, officials said. The overlap is not expected to affect the inoculation schedule for either illness, Mattorano said, even though the two vaccines cannot be given at the same



JENNIFER H. SVAN/Stars and Stripes

Airman 1st Class Sofia DeLeon screens airmen as they wait in line for flu shots outside the Southside Fitness Center Annex at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, on Dec. 8.

time.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends a minimum of 14 days between the two vaccinations to allow for better tracking of adverse reactions, and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control says anyone who feels ill or has been in close contact with someone infected with the coronavirus in the past two weeks should not have a flu

job.

Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany is planning to hold its flu inoculations jointly with the Air Force at Ramstein Air Base from Jan. 19 to 22, Mattorano said. They will likely hold a mass vaccination clinic, with no advance sign-ups required.

Flu and COVID shots will be administered at two different locations on those days, base officials

at Ramstein said.

The flu vaccine will be available at LRMC and Ramstein to people who typically receive shots on base, officials said.

Officials at Spangdahlem Air Base said this week that they had still not received additional flu vaccine.

Influenza activity has been lower than usual this season, the European Centre for Disease Pre-

vention and Control said last month. In the United States, less than 1% of nasal and throat samples have been positive for flu, the CDC said last month. The low incidence suggests measures aimed at slowing the spread of the coronavirus may also be limiting the spread of influenza, the CDC said.

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Sweeping vets bill becomes law, impacting ‘every corner’ of community

By NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump signed a sweeping legislative package Tuesday that aims to help veterans facing a variety of challenges, including homelessness, access to care for women and Native Americans, toxic exposure and the coronavirus.

The legislation gained unanimous approval in Congress on Dec. 17 and was sent to the White House on Dec. 24. Tuesday was the final day for Trump to signal his support for the legislation. Presidents are given 10 days to sign bills before they become law without their signatures.

“Congress passed this critical end-of-year veterans’ package to enact changes and provide support for every corner of our veteran community,” said Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., leader of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee. “I applaud President Trump for

signing this important legislation into law.”

The package is more than 340 pages long and includes dozens of measures — some of which have been in the works for nearly four years. It’s titled “The Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020,” named for former Republican leaders of the House and Senate veterans’ affairs committees.

Much of the bill focuses on improving services for female veterans. It creates a dedicated Office of Women’s Health at the Department of Veterans Affairs, provides \$20 million to retrofit VA hospitals with women’s health spaces and makes permanent a program to provide childcare at VA facilities, among other measures. It also mandates that every VA hospital hire a dedicated women’s health provider.

“For nearly four years, IAVA has been working hard to see this

legislation finally cross the finish line, and we can now send a powerful message to women veterans that our nation respects their service and will not tolerate substandard care for them at the VA,” said Jeremy Butler, CEO of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America.

In addition to improving health services for women, the bill aims to address a negative culture for women at VA facilities. It would require the VA to create an anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy and designate someone at each facility to receive reports of harassment. A working group will be created to help implement the policy.

The bill also aims to help veterans suffering from military sexual trauma. In 2018, the VA Office of Inspector General reported that the department wrongfully denied benefits to thousands of veterans who filed claims for military sexual trauma — rejection that potentially caused stress and psy-

chological harm, the IG said. The legislative package requires teams who specialize in military sexual trauma to process those benefits claims. It also allows veterans who must be examined during the claims process to choose the sex of the medical provider examining them.

A few provisions address problems created by the coronavirus pandemic. One attempts to ease the federal grant process for organizations that aid homeless veterans. The organizations need the money to help veterans get into housing and renovate shelters to account for social distancing.

The bill also requires the country’s 162 state-run veterans’ homes to regularly report to the VA about their coronavirus cases and deaths. The homes, which are operated by states but overseen by the VA, currently do not report information about their coronavirus cases to the department. The VA is now required to publicly

post the number of coronavirus cases and deaths at the homes before Feb. 4.

The legislative package also includes measures to aid student veterans. It increases legal protections for GI Bill benefits and places more scrutiny on schools with a history of taking advantage of beneficiaries. A key provision requires the VA to analyze whether schools facing legal or punitive actions from the government should be cut off from GI Bill money, a critical protection clause that has been lobbied for by advocates for more than a decade.

The package also made strides for Native American veterans by prohibiting the VA from charging them copayments and by creating an advisory committee that will advise the VA secretary about the unique challenges facing tribal veterans.

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MILITARY

Family questions effort to find soldier before suicide

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — Police have concluded Fort Hood Sgt. Elder Fernandes was alive for up to three days between the time that he went missing and when he died by suicide, leaving the soldier's family to question the Army's efforts to find him.

"What we do know is that had they put out the proper alerts, there was a real good opportunity to get him on [Aug. 19]," said Leny Kesten, an attorney hired by Fernandes' family to uncover answers about the soldier's final days.

The 23-year-old Fernandes was released from Fort Hood's Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center on Aug. 17, a week after he had admitted himself to the hospital for suicidal ideations. Fernandes' supervisor, a staff sergeant, drove him from the hospital to a residence in Killeen. The soldier, who served as a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear specialist, was not heard from again, according to the Temple Police Department's death investigation report released last week.

On Aug. 25, a railroad employee found the soldier's body near a

stretch of tracks in Temple. Police determined Fernandes died by suicide.

"They dumped him on the side of the road. Then he went missing and they didn't do anything," Kesten said. "It's such a disservice to a soldier, to any human being."

However, officials from Fernandes' unit, the 1st Cavalry Division, have said they began looking for the soldier "within hours" — on and off the base.

The family wants to know exactly what the Army did and when, Kesten said. He believes those details are in files that the Fort Hood detachment of the Criminal Investigation Command, known as CID, has yet to release.

Chris Grey, the spokesman for CID, said the case file is being finalized and redacted. When complete, "copies of the investigation will be made available to authorized recipients," he said.

Congress also sent a request for

the CID file as part of an ongoing congressional investigation into the deaths of several soldiers this year who were assigned to Fort Hood. Subpanels of the House committees on oversight and armed services are leading the investigation and have received some documents and communications related to Fernandes "on a rolling basis," said a senior Democratic committee aide speaking on the condition of anonymity.

But they have not received the CID report or the investigation that will determine any misconduct or negligence and could impact the family's benefits, the aide said.

"The subcommittee is focused on conducting as thorough of an investigation as possible in order to do right by the victims' families and to ensure the investigation's findings and recommendations help to improve the future command climate at Fort Hood and other installations throughout the Army. The investigation will certainly continue in the 117th Congress," the aide said.

While Fernandes' family awaits information from Fort Hood, the investigation report from Temple police provides a glimpse into how

the soldier spent his final days by reviewing phone data and interviewing a local resident who encountered the soldier.

From Aug. 17 to 20, Fernandes continued to turn his cellphone on and off multiple times to check his messages, according to Temple police. Meanwhile, he traveled about 30 miles east, on foot or possibly by hopping onto a train car, until he reached an area of railroad tracks in Temple tucked between a golf course and a butcher shop, according to police.

Along the way, he purchased a barbecue lunch in Harker Heights and a witness saw him resting near Interstate 14 in Nolanville, according to police. On Aug. 20, police determined Fernandes either turned off his phone for the final time or its battery ran out.

Temple police found the phone Aug. 25 alongside his body, which was hanging from a tree branch at least seven feet above the ground near the railroad tracks. The last voicemail was from his mother on Aug. 17. She was concerned he hadn't called her after he was released from the hospital.

Police also found more than \$450 in cash, extra clothing, sunscreen, potato chips and two bot-

les of water with Fernandes' body. An autopsy found his system clear of drugs or alcohol.

Because Fernandes was last seen in Killeen, that city's police department led the search efforts, though Kesten questions why Fernandes' unit didn't contact CID to begin an investigation on Aug. 18 when he missed the morning formation.

"You would think every bell in the world would go off," he said.

When Fernandes' family began calling, they were told the Army wouldn't look for him until he was missing for 30 days.

"The Army released a press release saying they immediately began searching as soon as he didn't show up for work, which I don't believe for a minute. They began searching when mom got there [Aug. 19]," Kesten said.

Fort Hood and Killeen police entered Fernandes into the missing persons database on Aug. 19, according to Temple police. It wasn't until after 9 p.m. the following day that the 1st Cavalry Division released a plea to the public to look for the soldier.



Fernandes

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VIRUS OUTBREAK ROUNDUP

Surge in 'hot spot' places focus onto Arizona's governor

Associated Press

PHOENIX — As Arizona has experienced periodic spikes in coronavirus cases since last spring, Gov. Doug Ducey frequently resisted calls to take stronger measures. He has declined to institute a statewide mask mandate, allowed school districts to mostly make their own choices and allowed businesses to stay open.

All of those choices by the Republican governor are now getting renewed scrutiny as the Grand Canyon state becomes what health officials call the latest "hot spot of the world" because of soaring caseloads.

C.J. Karamargin, the governor's spokesman, said the current number of cases and deaths are "heartbreaking" but it's a phenomenon happening in other states even with strict stay-at-home orders.

At the same time, the state is working to ramp up vaccination distribution efforts, Karamargin added. More than 119,000 people in Arizona have received the vaccine, state health officials said Wednesday. That is less than 2% of the state's population. Nationally, as of Wednesday, more than three weeks into the U.S. vaccination campaign, 5.3 million people had gotten their first shot.

Texas

AUSTIN — Rep. Kevin Brady said he has tested positive for the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

The Southeast Texas congressman and ranking Republican Ways and Means Committee member revealed his test results in a tweet late Tuesday, followed by a prepared statement Wednesday. The disclosure came as a record number of Texas COVID-19 deaths were reported Wednesday.

A record 326 COVID-19 deaths were reported Wednesday, shattering the previous record of 278 deaths reported on July 23, according to statistics compiled by the Texas Department of State Health Services. That brought the Texas death toll for the eight-month-old outbreak to 28,545.

The state reported 19,535 new confirmed coronavirus cases and 4,026 probable cases on Wednesday, bringing to almost 1.9 million the number of confirmed and probable cases in Texas. Of those, 320,540 cases were active on Wednesday, the 10th consecutive record day, and a record 13,628 were hospitalized.

North Dakota

FARGO — A man serving a life sentence for the murders of two U.S. marshals who were killed in a shootout near a small North Dakota town nearly four decades ago wants to be released from prison after testing positive for COVID-19.

Scott Faul, 67, has been in federal custody since 1983. Faul, along with Gordon Kahl and Kahl's son, Yorie, were involved in a shootout with law enforcement officers near Medina, about 120 miles west of Fargo. The incident gained national attention in part because Gordon Kahl was a leader of a group of tax protesters.

The shootout resulted in the deaths of U.S. Marshal Kenneth Muir and Deputy Marshal Robert Cheshire.

North Carolina

RALEIGH — North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper on Wednesday announced a three-week extension of a 10 p.m. curfew aimed at helping slow the spread of the coronavirus as some counties experienced a bumpy rollout of vaccines for residents over age 75.

As the state moved beyond health care workers and those in nursing homes and shifted to the new phase of vaccine distribution for certain elderly members of the general public, some sites quickly ran out of supplies or experienced long lines or crowds.

Not all counties had begun the new phase because key health care workers who regularly come into contact with COVID-19 haven't all had the opportunity to get their first dose of a Pfizer or Moderna vaccine.

At a time when data from the state Department of Health and Human Services shows 96 of North Carolina's 100 counties with substantial or critical community spread, Cooper warned residents to remain vigilant.

Florida

ST. PETERSBURG — Florida began converting one of its major testing locations into a vaccination site and Gov. Ron DeSantis said Wednesday that residents over 65 should be soon able to receive a shot at other large-scale venues, churches and even some grocery stores around the state.

DeSantis spoke at the Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens, and some first responders were vaccinated. He called Wednesday a "soft opening" that will last a few



NAM Y. HUH/AP

People wear masks as they line up to enter the Illinois Department of Motor Vehicles in Deerfield, Ill., on Wednesday. Illinois driver facilities are set to reopen statewide after pandemic-related closure.

days until the site opens to the regular public.

More than 329,000 people have been vaccinated in Florida — or about 1.5% of the population — almost all of them either health care workers, residents in care homes, or people over the age of 65.

The state's Department of Health on Wednesday said there were 17,783 new cases of COVID-19, bringing the state's total to just over 1.4 million people. It's the highest single-day total released since the pandemic began. Also, 129 new deaths were announced, bringing the resident death toll to more than 22,000.

South Dakota

SIOUX FALLS — South Dakota health officials on Wednesday confirmed six new deaths due to complications from the coronavirus, which came after two straight days with no fatalities.

The deaths lifted the total to 1,519 since the start of the pandemic. That death count is the seventh-highest per capita in the country at about 171 deaths per 100,000 people, according to The COVID Tracking Project.

The update showed 608 new positive tests, with 144 in Minnehaha County, 31 in Lincoln County, 36 in Brown County and 35 in Codrington County. The state has confirmed 91,875 cases overall.

South Dakota ranks 34th in the country for new cases per capita in the last two weeks, Johns Hopkins University researchers said. One in every 302 people in South Dakota tested positive in the past

week.

Massachusetts

BOSTON — The coronavirus field hospital in Worcester has expanded to 75 beds and has treated 275 patients since reopening last month, officials said Wednesday.

The field hospital run by UMass Memorial Health Care first treated patients last spring.

All told, nearly 500 patients were treated at the field hospital in 2020, UMass Memorial President Dr. Eric Dickson said during a virtual town hall meeting, Masslive.com reported.

The average age of patients is 66 years old and the average length of stay is four days, he said.

Nebraska

LINCOLN — A new, more contagious strain of the coronavirus that has been discovered in five states is probably in Nebraska as well, but officials haven't yet confirmed its presence, the state's chief medical officer said Wednesday.

Dr. Gary Anthonie said the new strain is concerning because it could lead to an increase in hospitalizations in Nebraska. Anthonie said the state's public health lab is purchasing its own equipment to test for the mutated virus. The new strain has led to a national lockdown in England, and the virus has been detected in California, Florida, New York, Georgia and neighboring Colorado.

"We can all say with some certainty that it's most likely... here in Nebraska," Anthonie said at a

press conference with Gov. Pete Ricketts.

Ricketts said state officials plan to keep close watch for the new strain, and that he expects to see a confirmed case in Nebraska soon given the state's proximity to Colorado.

New Jersey

TRENTON — Police officers and firefighters in New Jersey are eligible to get the COVID-19 vaccine beginning Thursday.

They follow health care workers as the second wave of professionals eligible to get the shot. Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy made the announcement Wednesday.

"We are able to open up vaccination to them based on the available supply," Health Commissioner Judy Persichilli said. New Jersey has about 400,000 shots on hand, she has said, and more than 134,000 vaccines have been administered so far, up from 101,000 the previous day, she said.

Persichilli has added that health care workers and those in long-term care homes continue to be a priority, and expanding vaccination eligibility to another group doesn't mean that earlier categories are now closed to getting the shots.

There are about 650,000 people in the so-called 1a category, including health care workers, and 2.5 million essential workers, according to Persichilli. She said the state is hoping to get enough vaccines to be through vaccinating those groups by April or May.

VIRUS OUTBREAK

US unemployment claims drop down to still-high 787K

By **CHRISTOPHER RUGABER**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans seeking unemployment aid fell slightly to 787,000, further evidence of a job market stumbling in the face of the coronavirus pandemic and the damage that it has inflicted on the economy for nearly 10 months.

Thursday's figure from the Labor Department, a slight decline from the previous week, showed that many employers are still cutting jobs as the pandemic tightens business restrictions and leads anxious consumers to stay home.

At the same time, the number of people who are receiving regular state unemployment aid fell by 125,000 to 5.1 million. And fewer people were on extended unemployment benefit programs.

On Friday, the government will likely issue a gloomy jobs report for December. Economists expect it to show that hiring slowed for a sixth straight month — and possibly that employers shed positions for the first time since the job market collapsed in April just after the pandemic erupted.

Unemployed Americans gained some urgently needed help late last month when a \$900 billion rescue aid package was signed into law. That measure provided a \$300-a-week federal jobless benefit on top of an average state benefit of about \$320. As many as half the states are now distributing the federal benefit, according to an unofficial tally at UnemploymentPUA.com. In states that take longer to pay out the \$300 payments, any missed payments can be made retroactively.

The federal extension of benefits was lengthened to 24 weeks by the congressional legislation. That program will remain in

place until mid-March. A separate program that provides jobless aid to contractors and gig workers who previously weren't eligible was also extended for 11 weeks. Both benefits had briefly expired Dec. 26, temporarily cutting off all aid for 10 million jobless Americans.

The Labor Department said this week that despite President Donald Trump's delay in signing the relief package — he did so six days after Congress approved the bill — jobless benefits under the extended programs that initially lapsed Dec. 26 should continue to be paid out without any interruption.

The continued weakening of the U.S. job market coincides with other signs that hiring and economic growth are faltering under the weight of the ongoing pandemic. On Wednesday, payroll processor ADP reported that private employers shed 123,000 jobs in December, the first such monthly decline since April. ADP's figures generally track the government's jobs data over time, though they can diverge significantly from month to month.

In November, consumer spending — the lifeblood of the economy — experienced a decline for the first time in seven months, having steadily weakened since the summer. Retailers have been especially hurt by the pandemic. Purchases at retail stores have dropped for two straight months.

During the holiday shopping season, consumers pulled back on spending, according to debit and credit card data tracked by JPMorgan Chase based on 30 million consumer accounts. Such spending was 6% lower in December compared with a year ago. That was worse than in October, when card spending was down just 2% from the previous year.



EUGENE HOSHIKO/AP

Pedestrians walk through the Shibuya area of Tokyo on Thursday. Tokyo is experiencing a surge in new coronavirus cases, reporting more than 2,000 on Thursday.

Tokyo in state of emergency after one-day surge of over 2K cases

By **JOSEPH DITZLER**
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — A record-breaking coronavirus surge continued Thursday in Tokyo, which reported more than 2,000 new cases in one day for the first time.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government reported 2,447 newly infected individuals, according to public broadcaster NHK. Nearly 69,000 people in the city have contracted the virus during the pandemic, and more than 650 have died, according to metro government data.

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga on Thursday evening declared a state of emergency in Tokyo and the three surrounding prefectures that comprise the greater metro area: Kanagawa, Saitama and Chiba. The declaration would allow governors in those areas to ask businesses to limit their hours and encourage their employees to telework, among other measures.

U.S. military bases in Japan reported 20 new coronavirus patients as of 6 p.m. Thursday; U.S. Forces Korea reported 29 individuals had tested positive since Dec. 22, including four civilians this week at Yongsan Garrison.

Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, 500 miles west of Tokyo, reported another 11 individuals had contracted the virus, according to a Facebook post Thursday. Ten were close contacts of a previously infected person and were already

in quarantine; the remaining individual was not in quarantine.

The air station has reported 28 new cases of coronavirus thus far in January.

Naval Air Facility Atsugi, 25 miles southwest of Tokyo, on Thursday reported that one individual tested positive while in quarantine, base spokesman Sam Samuelson said.

The Marine Corps late Wednesday reported that four individuals had tested positive at its bases on Okinawa: three at Camp Hansen and one at Camp Foster, according to a Facebook post by Marine Corps Installations Pacific. On Thursday, the Marines reported another four: two more at Camp Hansen and two at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma.

The Marines also reported Wednesday that two second-grade classrooms at Bechtel Elementary School, a Defense Department school at Camp McTureous, were closed Thursday after someone associated with the school had tested positive for the coronavirus.

U.S. Forces Korea reported that four individuals already in the country tested positive on Tuesday and Wednesday. Another 25 individuals tested positive after arriving in South Korea between Dec. 22 and Wednesday.

A Defense Department civilian employee at Yongsan Garrison in Seoul tested positive Tuesday after developing symptoms of CO-

VID-19, according to a new release Wednesday. The individual last visited Yongsan on Dec. 30 and self-quarantined at his home in Seongnam.

Three more civilians, a family at Yongsan that had contact with that individual, also tested positive Wednesday, according to a USFK news release. They are two DOD employees and their dependent; they last visited the installation on Tuesday.

All four are now quarantined at Camp Humphreys, according to USFK.

All of the remaining 25 are new arrivals to the peninsula and tested positive while still in isolation, according to a USFK news release Thursday.

Fifteen service members and four dependents arrived at Osan Air Base on the Patriot Express, a government-chartered passenger air service from the United States, on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday.

Six service members arrived on commercial flights to Incheon International Airport on Dec. 22, Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday.

Nineteen tested positive on their first mandatory test upon arriving in South Korea, five tested positive while in quarantine and one tested positive on the test required to exit quarantine, according to USFK.

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NATION

NATO chief condemns violence at US Capitol

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — NATO's top official has condemned the scenes of mob violence at the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday with the kind of rebuke normally reserved for adversaries and failed states.

"Shocking scenes in Washington, D.C.," Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said on Twitter as hundreds of rioters, egged on by an incendiary speech by President Donald Trump, stormed the Capitol, where lawmakers were validating President-elect Joe Biden's win in the November presidential vote.

"The outcome of this democratic election must be respected," Stoltenberg said.

The brief comment on Twitter was out-of-character for the NATO leader, who has made a point of not weighing in on the domestic politics of alliance members during his six-year tenure.

Diplomats and high-ranking military, government and NATO officials also condemned the unrest, many using more forceful language than Stoltenberg.

German defense minister An-



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

Police with guns drawn watch as protesters try to break into the House Chamber at the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday.

negret Kramp-Karrenbauer said in an interview with Welt-TV that the unrest was the result of the "intellectual and political arson" that Trump had stoked during his presidency.

She praised American lawmakers for reconvening hours after the assault on the Capitol, and working through the night to confirm Biden's election victory. They showed "that they won't al-

low themselves to be brought down, and that's a good sign for the future," she said.

Former U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis said the violence was "an effort to subjugate American democracy by mob rule" and blamed Trump for fomenting it.

But the retired four-star Marine Corps general, who served for two years as Trump's first defense secretary, expressed faith in Ameri-

ca's democratic foundations.

"Our Constitution and our Republic will overcome this stain and We the People will come together again in our never-ending effort to form a more perfect Union, while Mr. Trump will deservedly be left a man without a country," he said in a statement.

Berlin's ambassador to the United Kingdom, Andreas Michaelis, urged democracies around the world to heed the lessons the U.S. taught Germany in the aftermath of World War II.

"After our catastrophic failure in the 20th Century, we Germans were taught by the US to develop strong democratic institutions," he wrote on Twitter. "We also learnt that democracy is not just about institutions. It is about political culture, too. All democratic nations need to constantly defend it."

And James Stavridis, former supreme allied commander of NATO, said the upheaval in Washington played into the hands of enemies of the West.

"Our adversaries will be dumbfounded with their good fortune seeing this insurrection — Russia and China will be actively think-

ing how can they extend it," he said.

Stoltenberg has faced questions for years about whether Trump was undermining alliance unity with his frequent criticism of NATO. As president, Trump badgered NATO members to spend more on their defense, complaining that the U.S. carries too much of the alliance's financial burden, and periodically threatened to quit the alliance, founded in the aftermath of World War II as a bulwark against the Soviet Union, if his demands weren't met.

But Stoltenberg has always demurred, and even credited Trump with putting defense spending at the top of NATO's agenda.

Privately, however, diplomats from member states have expressed disdain for the U.S. president who was seen as undermining the military pact because of his alleged personal dislikes of some European politicians.

NATO defense ministers will hold their first meeting under the incoming Biden administration in February.

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Woman fatally shot in Capitol identified as Air Force veteran

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — When a group of pro-Trump rioters stormed the Capitol and smashed windows on Wednesday, a woman jumped onto a pane and started through.

Seconds later, a gunshot rang out and the woman, who had a Trump flag tied around her waist, tipped back and fell onto the marble floor as blood spilled from her shoulder.

"They shot a girl!" someone yelled as the crowd ran out of the southeast entrance.

She died later that day, police said. She was one of four fatalities from the violent rioting that wreaked havoc through the halls of Congress on Wednesday, halting the certification of President-elect Joe Biden's electoral victory. Three others died of unspecified medical emergencies during the chaos.

The woman was 35-year-old Ashli Babbitt, a California native and Air Force veteran, her former husband told The Washington Post. Before her death in the Capitol, she had used her social media to express fervent support for President Donald Trump and echo many of the president's conspiracy theories and false claims of mass voter fraud.

Police have not yet confirmed Babbitt's



Facebook

Ashli Babbitt, was identified by a San Diego TV station as the woman shot and killed in the Capitol Building on Wednesday.

identity or confirmed details about how she was shot. The woman was shot by U.S. Capitol Police, Washington D.C. Police Chief Robert J. Contee III told reporters on Wednesday.

Babbitt, a native of San Diego, served in Afghanistan and Iraq in the Air Force before other deployments with the National Guard to Kuwait and Qatar, ex-husband Timothy McEntee told The Post. McEntee and Babbitt met in the Air Force and were married for 14 years, before splitting in May 2019.

McEntee, who did not know Babbitt had traveled to D.C. for the protests, was shocked by the news of her death and described her as smart and strong-willed.

"I feel absolutely terrible and sick to my stomach about it," he wrote in a text message. "She was never afraid to speak her mind and in a way this was her way of speaking her mind (going to the rally)."

McEntee said Babbitt had remarried and owned a pool supply company with her husband, Aaron Babbitt.

Babbitt's mother-in-law told WTTG, who did not identify her by name, that her son did not accompany Babbitt to Washington.

"I really don't know why she decided to do this," she said.

In an interview with San Diego station KUSI, Babbitt's husband said she was a passionate Trump supporter. McEntee echoed those sentiments, adding that she

was "very loud and opinionated, but caring, sweet, thoughtful, loving."

"You would never forget meeting her," he wrote.

On social media, Babbitt recorded combative videos about immigration policy, while expressing her support for a border wall. In early September, she tweeted a picture from a Trump boat parade in San Diego wearing a shirt that said, "We are Q," referring to QAnon, the far-right conspiracy theory. The tweet also included the hashtag "#WWG1WGA," an acronym used by supporters who believe in the claims that Trump was battling a group of "deep state" child abusers.

Babbitt also retweeted messages calling for Vice President Pence to resign and be charged with treason, videos of Trump rallies and photos of the president's supporters flying to D.C. for the protests.

In one of her final posts, she responded to a tweet saying that many flights to D.C. were canceled because of weather. "The entire world is corrupt," the person said.

In response, Babbitt wrote: "Nothing will stop us . . . they can try and try and try but the storm is here and it is descending upon DC in less than 24 hours . . . dark to light!"

DC National Guard troops activated to ward off mob at US Capitol

By COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

The entire D.C. National Guard was activated Wednesday to help federal law enforcement ward off a mob of President Donald Trump's supporters who stormed

the U.S. Capitol, breaking windows and forcing a halt to proceedings to certify the presidential election results.

Some 1,100 D.C. National Guard troops were quickly mobilized Wednesday afternoon, Army Sec-

retary Ryan McCarthy said, as Trump backers, who echoed the president's unsubstantiated claims of mass election fraud, entered the building as both chambers of Congress were voting to certify President-elect Joe Biden's

victory. It was not immediately clear how the Guard troops would be employed, as military officials declined to provide specific details about the activations. About 340 D.C. National Guard troops had been activated Monday to support

crowd and traffic control during the rallies, which officials feared could turn violent. None were stationed on the Capitol grounds.

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NATION

Chaos: Pence says he could not claim 'unilateral authority' to reject votes

FROM PAGE 1

Trump, who had repeatedly refused to concede the election, said in a statement immediately after the vote that there will be a smooth transition of power on Inauguration Day.

"Even though I totally disagree with the outcome of the election, and the facts bear me out, nevertheless there will be an orderly transition on January 20th," Trump said in a statement posted to Twitter by an aide.

On Thursday, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer calling on Trump's Cabinet to remove him from office.

Schumer said the attack on the Capitol "was an insurrection against the United States, incited by the president." He added, "This president should not hold office one day longer."

Schumer said the vice president and the Cabinet should invoke the 25th Amendment and immediately remove Trump from office. He added, "If the vice president and the Cabinet refuse to stand up, Congress should reconvene to impeach the president."

Also Thursday, Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao said she is resigning effective Monday, becoming the highest ranking member of Trump's administration to resign in protest after the assault on Capitol.

Chao, who is married to Senate GOP leader Mitch McConnell, said the incident "has deeply troubled me in a way that I simply cannot set aside."

The Capitol was under siege Wednesday, as the nation's elected representatives scrambled to crouch under desks and don gas masks while police futilely tried to barricade the building, one of the most jarring scenes ever to unfold in a seat of American political power. A woman was shot and killed inside the Capitol, and Washington's mayor instituted an evening curfew in an attempt to contain the violence.

The rioters were egged on by Trump, who has spent weeks falsely attacking the integrity of the

election and had urged his supporters to descend on Washington to protest Congress' formal approval of Biden's victory. Some Republican lawmakers were in the midst of raising objections to the results on his behalf when the proceedings were abruptly halted by the mob.

Together, the protests and the GOP election objections amounted to an almost unthinkable challenge to American democracy and exposed the depths of the divisions that have coursed through the country during Trump's four years in office. Though the efforts to block Biden from being sworn in on Jan. 20 were sure to fail, the support Trump has received for his efforts to overturn the election results have badly strained the nation's democratic guardrails.

Congress reconvened in the evening, with lawmakers decrying the protests that defaced the Capitol and vowing to finish confirming the Electoral College vote for Biden's election, even if it took all night.

Pence reopened the Senate and directly addressed the demonstrators: "You did not win."

Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said the "failed insurrection" underscored lawmakers' duty to finish the count. Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Congress would show the world "what America is made of" with the outcome.

The president gave his supporters a boost into action Wednesday morning at a rally outside the White House, where he urged them to march to the Capitol. He spent much of the afternoon in his private dining room off the Oval Office watching scenes of the violence on television. At the urging of his staff, he reluctantly issued a pair of tweets and a taped video telling his supporters it was time to "go home in peace" — yet he still said he backed their cause.

Hours later, Twitter for the first time since locked Trump's account, demanded that he remove tweets excusing violence and threatened "permanent suspen-



JOHN MINCHILLO/AP

Supporters of President Donald Trump gather outside the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday, in Washington.

sion."

A somber President-elect Biden, two weeks away from being inaugurated, said American democracy was "under unprecedented assault," a sentiment echoed by many in Congress, including some Republicans. Former President George W. Bush said he watched the events in "disbelief and dismay."

The domed Capitol building has for centuries been the scene of protests and occasional violence. But Wednesday's events were particularly astounding both because they unfolded at least initially with the implicit blessing of the president and because of the underlying goal of overturning the results of a free and fair presidential election.

Tensions were already running high when lawmakers gathered early Wednesday afternoon for the constitutionally mandated counting of the Electoral College results, in which Biden defeated Trump, 306-232. Despite pleas from McConnell, more than 150 GOP lawmakers planned to support objections to some of the results, though lacking evidence of fraud or wrongdoing in the election.

Trump spent the lead-up to the proceedings publicly hectoring Pence, who had a largely ceremonial role, to aid the effort to throw out the results. He tweeted, "Do it Mike, this is a time for extreme courage!"

But Pence, in a statement shortly before presiding, defied Trump, saying he could not claim "unilateral authority" to reject the electoral votes that make Biden president.

In the aftermath of the siege, several Republicans announced they would drop their objections to the election, including Sen. Kelly Loeffler, R-Ga., who lost her bid for election to a new term Tuesday.



ANDREW HARNIK/AP

People shelter in the House gallery as protesters try to break into the House Chamber at the Capitol on Wednesday. The Capitol was under siege, as elected representatives scrambled to crouch under desks and don gas masks while police futilely tried to barricade the building.

Earlier, protesters had fought past police and breached the building, shouting and waving Trump and American flags as they marched through the halls, many without masks during the COVID-19 crisis. Lawmakers were told to duck under their seats for cover and put on gas masks after tear gas was used in the Capitol Rotunda. Some House lawmakers tweeted they were sheltering in place in their offices.

Rep. Scott Peters, D-Calif., told reporters he was in the House chamber when rioters began storming it. Security officers "made us all get down, you could see that they were fending off some sort of assault."

He said they had a piece of furniture up against the door. "And they had guns pulled," Peters said. Glass panes to a House door were shattered.

The woman who was killed was part of a crowd that was breaking down the doors to a barricaded room where armed officers stood on the other side, police said. She was shot in the chest by Capitol Po-

lice and taken to a hospital where she was pronounced dead. City police said three other people died from medical emergencies during the long protest on and around the Capitol grounds.

Staff members grabbed boxes of Electoral College votes as the evacuation took place. Otherwise, said Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., the ballots likely would have been destroyed by the protesters.

The mob's storming of Congress prompted outrage, mostly from Democrats but from Republicans as well, as lawmakers accused Trump of fomenting the violence with his relentless falsehoods about election fraud.

"Count me out," said Trump ally Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. "Enough is enough."

Despite Trump's repeated claims of voter fraud, election officials and his own former attorney general have said there were no problems on a scale that would change the outcome. All the states have certified their results as fair and accurate, by Republican and Democratic officials alike.



JOHN MINCHILLO/AP

D.C. National Guard members stand outside the Capitol on Wednesday night. Congress reconvened in the evening, with lawmakers decrying the protests that defaced the Capitol.

NATION

Ossoff: Newly elected Georgia Dem looks to John Lewis for example

FROM PAGE 1

for Congress in Georgia in a race closely watched as an early referendum on President Donald Trump.

Though he lost, he shattered fundraising records and made the contest in a once reliably Republican district competitive. For his Senate campaign, he took a sharper approach. His platform was unabashedly liberal, calling for a \$15 minimum wage, a “public option” government health plan, and a new voting rights act to restore federal oversight of state election laws.

He also launched a fierce attack on Perdue while shrugging off his opponent’s exaggerated claim that he was pursuing a “radical socialist agenda.” At a debate in October, he called the 71-year-old former corporate executive “a crook” who used the COVID-19 pandemic to protect his stock portfolio while downplaying the seriousness of the virus. Perdue insisted the allegations were false.

Ossoff is smart, has a “good heart” and will put in the work to be a good senator, said Sarah Riggs Amico, a fellow Democrat who ran for lieutenant governor in

Georgia in 2018 and challenged Ossoff in the Senate primary.

“The reality is government functions better when there are people from a wide variety of backgrounds who come to the table,” she said.

Voter Kaitlynn Poborsky, 28, said she chose Ossoff because she is looking for change and a senator who is passionate about addressing the coronavirus and climate change. She did not have concerns about his age.

“I think we need young people,” she said outside a polling site in downtown Atlanta on Tuesday. “People who are in office are too old.”

Ossoff said his first race taught him the importance of grassroots campaigning and to ignore “the paint by numbers, garden variety nonsense that the GOP throws at me.”

“I don’t pay any attention to it, and I really couldn’t care less what they say,” he told the AP last month. His campaign declined an interview request on Wednesday.

Raised in a wealthy family in Atlanta, Ossoff was 16 when he read Lewis’ memoir about the civil rights movement, “Walking With



BRANDEN CAMP / AP

Jon Ossoff waves after speaking to the media at Dunbar Neighborhood Center during Georgia’s Senate runoff elections, Tuesday, in Atlanta.

the Wind.” He wrote a letter to Lewis, and Lewis offered him a summer job.

Lewis referred him to Hank Johnson, an Atlanta-area attorney running for Congress in 2006. Ossoff, a Georgetown University graduate, became the fourth member of Johnson’s campaign staff. Lewis would continue to be a mentor.

Ossoff worked for five years on Johnson’s Washington staff. In 2013, after Ossoff inherited money from his late grandfather, he invested in a small London-based film production company. Insight TWI finances investigative documentaries and sells them to broadcasters including the BBC. Ossoff is the company’s CEO.

In a victory speech early

Wednesday, Ossoff said he would follow the example set by Lewis. The Georgia Democrat died last year after serving in Congress for more than three decades.

“This campaign has been about health and jobs and justice for the people of the state, for all the people of the state,” he said. “And they will be my guiding principles as I serve this state in the U.S. Senate.”

Facebook bans Trump through inauguration, maybe longer

Associated Press

After years of treating President Donald Trump’s inflammatory rhetoric with a light touch, Facebook and Instagram are silencing his social media accounts for the rest of his presidency. The move, which many called justified following Wednesday’s insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, is also a somber reminder of the enormous power that social-media platforms can exercise when they choose.

Facebook and Instagram said Thursday they will bar Trump from posting at least until the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden.

In a post announcing the un-

precedented move, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg said the risk of allowing Trump to use the platform is too great following the president’s incitement of a mob that touched off Wednesday’s deadly riot at the Capitol. Zuckerberg says Trump’s account will be locked “for at least the next two weeks” but could remain locked indefinitely.

“The shocking events of the last 24 hours clearly demonstrate that President Donald Trump intends to use his remaining time in office to undermine the peaceful and lawful transition of power to his elected successor, Joe Biden,” Zuckerberg wrote.

Trump has repeatedly har-

nassed the power of social media to spread falsehoods about election integrity and the results of the presidential race. Platforms like Facebook have occasionally labeled or even removed some of his posts, but the overall response has failed to satisfy a growing number of critics who say the platforms have enabled the spread of dangerous misinformation.

In light of Wednesday’s riot, however, Zuckerberg said a more aggressive approach is needed.

“The current context is now fundamentally different, involving use of our platform to incite violent insurrection against a democratically elected government,” he wrote.

Instagram, which is owned by Facebook, will also block Trump’s ability to post on its platform “indefinitely and for at least the next two weeks,” Adam Mosseri, the head of Instagram tweeted Thursday.

Twitter also locked President Donald Trump’s accounts for 12 hours after he repeatedly posted false accusations about the integrity of the election. That suspension was set to expire sometime Thursday; the president had not yet resumed tweeting as of late Thursday morning.

A company spokesman said the company could take further action as well.

“We’re continuing to evaluate

the situation in real time, including examining activity on the ground and statements made off Twitter,” the spokesman said. “We will keep the public informed, including if further escalation in our enforcement approach is necessary.”

Meanwhile, the platforms continued to face criticism from users who blamed them, in part, for creating an online environment that led to Wednesday’s violence.

“Today is the result of allowing people with hate in their hearts to use platforms that should be used to bring people together,” singer and actress Selena Gomez wrote on Twitter to her 64 million followers.

Iraq issues arrest warrant for Trump over Soleimani death

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — An arrest warrant was issued Thursday for outgoing President Donald Trump in connection with the killing of an Iranian general and a powerful Iraqi militia leader last year, Iraq’s judiciary said.

The warrant was issued by a judge in Baghdad’s investigative court tasked with probing the

Washington-directed drone strike that killed Gen. Qassim Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the court’s media office said. They were killed outside the capital’s airport last January.

Al-Muhandis was the deputy leader of the state-sanctioned Popular Mobilization Forces, an umbrella group composed of an array of militias, including Iran-

backed groups, formed to fight the Islamic State.

Soleimani headed the expeditionary Quds force of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps.

The arrest warrant was for a charge of premeditated murder, which carries the death penalty on conviction. It is unlikely to be carried out but symbolic in the waning days of Trump’s presidency.

The decision to issue the warrant “was made after the judge recorded the statements of the claimants from the family of Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis,” according to a statement from the Supreme Judicial Council. The investigation into the killings is ongoing, the court said.

The killings sparked a diplomatic crisis and strained U.S.-Iraq

ties, drawing the ire of Shiite political lawmakers who passed a non-binding resolution to pressure the government to oust foreign troops from the country.

Iran-backed groups have since stepped up attacks against the American presence in Iraq, leading to threats by Washington to shutter its Baghdad diplomatic mission.



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WORLD

Kim vows to bolster North Korea's military

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea leader Kim Jong Un vowed to strengthen the country's military defenses in a speech at a major ruling party meeting that provides insights into his priorities amid growing economic challenges and a U.S. presidential transition.

Kim made clear his "will to reliably protect the security of the country and people and the peaceful environment of the socialist construction by placing the state defense capabilities on a much higher level, and put forth goals for realizing it," the Korean Central News Agency said.

The state media report Thursday on Kim's speech to the Workers' Party congress the previous day didn't elaborate. North Korea has previously underscored its need for nuclear weapons and



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un attends a ruling party congress in Pyongyang, North Korea on Wednesday.

AP

missiles as a deterrent and a preemptive strike capability to cope with what it describes as American hostility.

Cheong Seong-Chang, a fellow at the Wilson Center's Asia Pro-

gram, said Kim's speech likely contained "sensitive contents" that can provoke the United States and South Korea.

Kim halted his country's nuclear and long-range missile tests be-

fore engaging in high-stakes summitry with President Donald Trump in 2018. But with his advancing arsenal on the negotiating table, their diplomacy fell apart due to wrangling over the weapons and U.S.-led sanctions on North Korea.

Kim since then has openly pledged to expand his nuclear capability that he says already put the American mainland within its striking range. However, he has not resumed high-profile weapons tests, which some analysts say could completely derail diplomacy with the United States and further diminish prospects for winning sanctions relief.

South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers in late November that Kim was worried about President-elect Joe Biden's expected new approach on North Korea. Biden has called Kim a "thug" and crit-

icized his summit diplomacy with Trump.

This year's congress — the first in five years — comes as Kim faces what appears to be the toughest moment since taking power in late 2011, due to what he calls "multiple crises" caused by an economy battered by pandemic-related border closings, a series of natural disasters and the sanctions.

On the first day of the congress Tuesday, Kim admitted his previous economic development plans failed, saying that "almost all sectors fell a long way short of the set objectives." Kim on Wednesday presented goals for developing the North's transport, construction, commerce and other industries and proposed ways to expand production in agriculture, light industry and fishing to improve public livelihoods, KCNA said.

Indonesia's Merapi volcano spews hot clouds, 500 evacuate

Associated Press

YOGYAKARTA, Indonesia — Indonesia's Mount Merapi volcano spewed avalanches of hot clouds Thursday morning as hundreds more residents were evacuated from its fertile slopes.

Authorities evacuated more than 500 people living on the mountain in Magelang district on Java Island. Thousands of people already have had to leave their homes and farmland because of the dangers on Merapi, Indonesia's most active volcano.

Light eruptions continued during the day — one sending a column of hot clouds rising 200 yards into the air. The initial eruption was obscured by fog, but using seismic and other data, the Geological Disaster Technology Research and Development Center estimated the hot clouds spread less than 0.6 miles from the crater.

"Until now, the potential danger

is not more than 5 kilometers (3 miles)," chief of Yogyakarta's Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation Center, Hanik Humaida, said in a statement.

The geological authority had raised the alert level of Mount Merapi to the second-highest level in November after sensors picked up increasing activity. Tourism and mining activities were halted.

Some evacuees had returned to the slopes after the activity subsided but had to leave again Thursday.

The 9,737-foot mountain is about 18 miles from the Yogyakarta city center. About a quarter million people live within 6 miles of the volcano, according to authorities in surrounding districts.

Merapi spewed ash and hot gas in a column as high as 3.7 miles into the sky in June, but no casualties were reported.

Its last major eruption in 2010



SLAMET RIYADI/AP

Mount Merapi spews volcanic steam from its crater seen Thursday from Sleman, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

killed 347 people and caused the evacuation of 20,000 villagers.

Indonesia, an archipelago of

more than 250 million people, sits on the Pacific "Ring of Fire" and is prone to earthquakes and volcanic

eruptions. Government seismologists monitor more than 120 active volcanoes.

Activist Wong questioned, US lawyer released in Hong Kong crackdown

Associated Press

HONG KONG — Jailed Hong Kong pro-democracy activist Joshua Wong was arrested on a new charge under the national security law on Thursday while an American rights lawyer who was detained in a sweeping crackdown was granted bail.

Friends and family of Wong, who is serving a 13½-month prison sentence for organizing and

participating in an unauthorized protest in 2019, were informed that he was arrested on suspicion of violating the national security law and was taken away to give a statement on the new charge, according to a post on his Facebook page.

The post also stated that Wong's lawyer was unable to meet with him, and that Wong had been transferred back to prison after

giving the statement, which was not disclosed.

Separately, John Clancey, an American human rights lawyer who works at law firm Ho Tse Wai & Partners, was granted bail, his associate said. He was one of 53 activists arrested Wednesday under the national security law. He did not immediately return a call seeking comment.

The activists are accused of tak-

ing part in an unofficial primary election last year that authorities say was part of a plan to paralyze the government and subvert state power.

The mass arrests were the largest move against Hong Kong's democracy movement since Beijing imposed the law last June to quell dissent in the semi-autonomous territory following months of anti-government protests in

2019.

The primaries were held by the pro-democracy camp to determine the best candidates to field as they sought to gain a majority in Hong Kong's legislature.

While most of those arrested were candidates in the primaries, Clancey was a treasurer for political organization Power for Democracy, which was involved in the event.

WEEKEND



Carey Mulligan
defies expectations
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BIG GUNS IN 2021

Next-gen consoles give video game fans good reason for anticipation. Here are the titles worth watching for.

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Halo Infinite
MICROSOFT

WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY

Get a grip

AI-powered bionic hand offers lifelike dexterity for amputees

BY DALVIN BROWN
The Washington Post

Engineers at BrainRobotics have created a next-generation prosthetic that's meant to be more mobile and affordable than other robotic limbs used today. It's a hand powered by artificial intelligence that gives amputees precise control over each finger, enabling them to perform numerous gestures and grips.

The hand is undergoing FDA testing, and this month the company is testing the technology with the people it is intended to help.

In today's world of brain-powered bionic limbs, highly functioning prosthetics are too expensive to reach many people who could benefit from them, researchers in the field say. The BrainRobotics device seeks to be the answer to that, with prices expected to start 30 percent lower than what's on the market right now.

What primarily sets BrainRobotics' prosthetic apart from those on the market is its algorithm, which detects minute muscle signals, converts them into hand movements and learns over time.

"The innovation is in the algorithm. It's in the software," said Max Newlon, CEO of Brain-

Robotics, a subsidiary of BrainCo. "The innovation that gives our users this really precise, lifelike control is what sets us apart."

The company was born out of Harvard's Innovation Lab. Initially, it sought to control artificial limbs via brain signals but later found that measuring muscle signals was far more reliable, Newlon said.

Researchers developed the device for people such as Carey Duval, an Army captain who lost his right hand in Afghanistan. He began testing the prosthetic in early December, spending a few weeks training to use the device proficiently. The robotic hand enabled him to complete activities such as playing Jenga and opening a water bottle with relative ease.

Other prosthetics without the BrainRobotics algorithm or as many grips made those tasks difficult to achieve, he said.

"I could flex inside the prosthetic, and it would change from a finger point to a two-finger pinch, and then from a pinch to a fist," Duval said. "I could control a computer mouse and work a keyboard for the first time in a long time. I haven't played a computer game in six years."

Roughly 2 million Americans live with the loss of a limb, half a million of which are without



BrainRobotics

Army Capt. Carey Duval tries out his BrainRobotics hand during a meal. BrainRobotics has created an AI prosthetic that reads minute muscle signals and responds to create a variety of hand gestures.

upper limbs. Those seeking artificial hands have faced a landscape of static options offering limited functionality for years. Meanwhile, many of the robotic limbs that have cropped up either have physical buttons or require shaking to activate. They provide a limited number of finger motions, allowing wearers to switch between predetermined gestures.

The BrainRobotics hand prosthesis connects to a smartphone app via Bluetooth, maintains a charge throughout the day and can be programmed within a few minutes, the company says.

The hand is made using aviation-level aluminum and plastic. To set it up, amputees are instructed to "think" about moving

individual fingers and making hand gestures while the prosthetic is attached. Meanwhile, the device measures and remembers what each signal looks like. It's ready to operate within 15 minutes, the company says. After training, the robotic hand will respond to each of the muscle triggers it picked up during the exercise. So in practice, it can intuitively perform the users' intended motions and gestures and become more lifelike over time.

BrainRobotics developed two versions of the hand: A two-channel prosthetic with two sensors attached to the wearer's limb and a higher-functioning eight-channel prosthetic with eight sensors.

The company's two-channel

device enables up to 24 hand movements and is undergoing FDA testing, which it expects will be completed within the first quarter of 2021. Its eight-channel device with unlimited combinations of hand movements is next in the pipeline.

Prices are expected to start at about \$14,000, or at least 30 percent lower than what's currently on the market. Comparable prosthetics can cost \$20,000 to \$40,000 per unit. Other bionic limbs that function similarly but look more like a human hand can cost up to \$100,000.

The company works with prosthetic centers to get their technology to people like Carey, who is medically retiring from the Army.

GADGETS

A new phone deserves a protective case

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

I know many Apple purists like to keep decorative smartphones natural, unprotected and caseless, but the accessories are a necessity for some. While keeping aesthetics in mind, when choosing a case, it's best to consider what degree of protection is needed to keep it working after it's inevitably dropped and banged.

For everyday use, the Smartish GripZilla armor (\$19.99) is perfect with its hard exterior and soft rubberized interior. Smartish, an iPhone accessory company known for clever, innovative products that are useful in so many environments, prides itself on its inexpensive, well-made products.

The GripZilla Armor is described on the box as mighty protective, with grooved sides and a beastly grip. After having a phone in the case, it's easy to see what they mean; the phone holds firm, like a handshake.

The wireless charging case is designed for daily bumps, bangs and small drops, which will happen. The unobtrusive grip's textured grooves, which Smartish refers to as "groovier than your dad's wedding hairdo," are comfortable and enable the phone to be held without it sliding out.

Online: smartish.com

For the more active user, the Pelican Marine Active case (\$70) with four layers of extreme protection is a beast. The case has two pieces that snap on and off easily for full protection. Even while encased, it's not big and bulky; the controls are all accessible. Tiny flaps snap in place to cover the exposed charging port and silent mode switch.

Pelican is well-known for the top-of-the-line protective cases with military-spec protection for first responders. The specs for the Marine Active case equipped with Micropel include drop protection up to 18 feet. They're splash-proof, dust-proof IP54

rated and work with wireless charging.

Pelican even allows a smartphone to float with the Marine Series Waterproof Floating Pouch (\$24.99). It's IPX68 rated for underwater submersion with built-in air cushions. The pouch has clear windows enabling the smartphone's touchscreen to be used while in the pouch. A detachable lanyard is included.

Online: case-mate.com

Lifeproof has announced the new FR case lineup for the iPhone 12. Built with the theme of taking on any line of work, exercise and activity, the FR case has a modern look and durable construction.

They are built with 60% recycled plastic (35 percent ocean-based plastic) and are waterproof up to 2 meters for 1 hour, dirt proof, snow proof and drop proof from 2 meters. A built-in screen cover gives them complete 360-degree protection.

Online: lifeproof.com; \$89.99



SMARTISH/TNS

The Smartish GripZilla armor for iPhone

WEEKEND: MOVIES

Mulligan takes a dark turn

‘Promising Young Woman’ aligns with actress’ desire to defy expectations

BY SONIA RAO
The Washington Post

It had to be Carey Mulligan. Writer-director Emerald Fennell had just seen her in “Wildlife,” Paul Dano’s directorial debut about a woman trapped in an empty marriage in 1960s Montana. The performance sparked the same sense of awe Fennell felt after “An Education,” the 1960s coming-of-age drama for which Mulligan, 35, earned an Oscar nomination a decade ago. Steve McQueen and the Coen brothers directed her in between, a span of her career that also included an acclaimed supporting turn in the art-house thriller “Drive.”

The English actress’ roles were diverse, but her inimitable screen presence threaded them together. She has a certain quality to her, Fennell said in an interview with The Washington Post. No matter how quiet the character, you don’t mess with her. So when the time came for Fennell, also 35, to cast the lead in her own feature debut — “Promising Young Woman,” whose protagonist seeks to avenge her lifelong best friend’s sexual assault — she knew Mulligan could strike the right tone.

“There’s something so exciting about someone who only does the stuff they want to do, and it’s a treat to see them,” Fennell says. “She’s so interesting, Carey. ... I just had a feeling that she would be incredible, and honestly, the fact that she said yes, I was blown away.”

At first, “Promising Young Woman” may seem a surprising choice for Mulligan. Perhaps it’s the candy-colored aesthetic and blaring pop music, a stark contrast with the sober hues and tone of, say, “Inside Llewyn Davis.” People often think of her as a period actress these days, Fennell says — nodding to the streak of films that also includes “Suffragette” and “Mudbound” — but she hasn’t always existed in that space.

You could argue that Fennell’s film is deceptively bubble gum, a layer of sugar coating its sour core, a taste we more often associate with gut-wrenching work. But that’s just the point, according to Fennell: Who’s to say all the girly stuff isn’t serious, too?

“Nobody suspects the person with the multicolored manicure to scratch their eyes out,” she adds.

Fennell subverts genre conventions — par for the course with the director, who helmed the second season of BBC America’s “Killing Eve” — while Mulligan’s character, Cassie, surprises those around her. Her projected femininity allows her to hide in plain sight. Having dropped out of medical school, Cassie spends her days as a barista and, at night, swings by bars, trolling for self-proclaimed “nice guys” — the same sort who assaulted her friend, Nina. She pretends to be blackout drunk, and the men offer to take her home, only to try to take advantage of the nearly unconscious woman they just met. Then, when they least expect it, Cassie snaps back into an alert state.

Mulligan’s decision to play Cassie came down to “just feeling like I wanted to do it,” she said in a separate interview. She recalls getting continually “wrong-footed” by the script, drawn into its humor and romance before it turned dark “within half a page.” The shoot lasted just over 20 days, during which Mulligan threw herself into Cassie’s fury (but not to the extent that she took the character home with her, she adds, beyond the Barbie-esque nails and blonde hair extensions).

“It’s a similar reason to why the Coen brothers thought it was so funny to cast me in ‘Inside Llewyn Davis’ as a sort of enraged woman,” Mulligan says. “I suppose people can get to know you from a certain performance, and it can be hard to break out of that sometimes.”

Fennell set out to defy expectations with her supporting cast as well, selecting beloved figures to play the secretly skeezy men. Former teen heartthrob Adam Brody (“The O.C.”) appears at the very start, with “New Girl” favorite Max Greenfield popping in later on. Comedian Bo Burnham plays Cassie’s former classmate, Ryan, her love



Focus Features

Carey Mulligan stars as Cassie in “Promising Young Woman,” by filmmaker Emerald Fennell.

“I’ve become really interested in the last couple of years in these kinds of characters ... where women are allowed to be flawed and troubled by things and behave in ways we don’t necessarily agree with, even. But we still root for that person.”

Carey Mulligan



FOCUS FEATURES/AP

Cassie, played by Mulligan, seeks to avenge her best friend’s assault in “Promising Young Woman.”

interest and, she hopes, the sweetheart to redeem his gender. But the quest for vengeance doesn’t stop at the gender divide, as Cassie also targets women she considers complicit in the crime against Nina — including one portrayed by Connie Britton.

Rather than choosing one villain, Mulligan says, the film is “much more about our general approach to this kind of stuff as a society and a reaction to what we’ve grown up with.”

“Women have played a part in that,” she continues. “We’ve all bought tickets and laughed at comedies that have made this stuff seem really trivial and funny for so long.”

Cassie’s own actions aren’t immune to criticism, Fennell says, which is where Mulligan’s strengths as a performer come in. Beneath all the glitter, “Promising Young Woman” is a portrait of grief, of a woman whose revenge plot has gone from noble to “miserable.” Cassie has spent years hanging onto a ghost, continuing to torment herself almost as much as she does the men.

Fennell and Mulligan chatted about their childhood best friends to build out a backstory for Cassie and Nina, who never appears in the film. The actress declines to expand on the imagined story, noting that the mystery is “why film is so interesting — what you don’t see or hear is almost as important as what you do.” Nina’s physical absence is just as deliberate; she is a constant presence in Cassie’s mind.

“What [Cassie] does is an addiction,” Fennell says. “She stays on this road that is miserable and lonely and cold and dangerous. But there’s this other one, which

every single other person is saying, ‘Look, it’s rainbows and sunshine and love,’ and all of that fluff. We all, as an audience, want her to choose that path, too. It’s about showing how hard her journey is.”

Mulligan was daunted at first and admits that she wondered whether Fennell — an actress herself, most recognizable to American audiences as Camilla Parker Bowles in “The Crown” — ought to play Cassie instead. Mulligan tends to call cut on herself mid-take, a habit she says Dano helped curb on “Wildlife” by encouraging her to channel her self-doubt into the character’s state of mind.

She returned to this advice for a scene in “Promising Young Woman” in which Cassie runs into Ryan mid-scheme, faking drunkenness outside a bar with her arm around another man. She straightens up immediately, her usual confidence traded for deep shame. Mulligan was having one of those nights when “just everything feels wrong,” she says. But then she realized that’s exactly what Cassie felt.

“In film, a lot of the opportunities that have come my way have been much more in a sort of serious, domestic space,” Mulligan says. “I’ve become really interested in the last couple of years in these kinds of characters ... where women are allowed to be flawed and troubled by things and behave in ways we don’t necessarily agree with, even. But we still root for that person.”

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS

An epic tale of courage

Hanks' Captain Kidd is doggedly heroic in 'News of the World'

BY MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

Tom Hanks rides a horse and blasts a six-shooter in his new film, "News of the World." Some of you might be thinking this must be his first cowboy role. To those, we respond: Have you forgotten about Woody so soon?

All of Hanks — not just his voice — is employed in this second cowboy role, playing Capt. Jefferson Kyle Kidd in 1870, a gentle Texan whose quiet and itinerant life is interrupted by the arrival of a girl.

Director and co-screenwriter Paul Greengrass reunites for the first time with Hanks since their 2013 outing, "Captain Phillips." This time, they've ditched the open water for an ambitious adventure firmly on land, based on the novel by Paulette Jiles. It's a visually stunning film with a soulful message about forgiveness and moving past trauma.

Kidd is scarred — literally — by the Civil War and has found a life as a newsreader, a man who goes from town to town reading aloud the nation's headlines to small-town residents or "for anyone with 10 cents and the time to hear it."

He comes across a feral 10-year-old girl who is an orphan twice over — her settler parents are dead and the Native Americans who raised her are also gone. She speaks no English and frightens everyone. "She's got kind of a wild look about her, doesn't she?" someone comments. Says another: "Sure as I live, that child's trouble."

The girl has distant relatives hundreds of miles away and, naturally, it falls on Kidd to be the hero. "This little girl is lost. She needs to be home," he says. So these two broken souls embark on an epic odyssey — like "The Searchers" mashed with "True Grit" — through hostile terrain and bandits, while he teaches her English along the way, like a cowboy Henry Higgins. "I guess we both have



BRUCE W. TALAMON/AP

Tom Hanks, left, and Helena Zengel set off on an epic cross-country journey in "News of the World."

demons to face going down this road," he notes.

Greengrass' approach is more slack here — certainly from his work on the Jason Bourne films — but he manages to add tension to virtually every scene, often with just an actor scanning the horizon. Cinematographer Dariusz Wolski frames things like a high-art photographer with careful use of light and dark. Many of the best scenes are silent, enhanced by a wonderfully wistful score by James Newton Howard.

This is an ugly-beautiful film. You can almost feel the grime, hear the squelch through muddy streets and choke on the smoke. It practically reeks of leather and wet cattle. It's a setting where dogs bark incessantly, dust is everywhere and socks have holes. In this naturalistic world, Hanks sticks out, but not for the right reasons.

His character is a former Confederate soldier who is dismayed by the lynching of Black men and even kindly buries a victim of it. He notes ruefully that settlers kill Native Americans for their land and that Native Americans kill settlers for doing that, a deadly cycle that he stands outside. He feels the frustration between Southern civilians and Union troops but hopes all sides can get along.

"We're all hurting. All of us," he says. "These are difficult times." All around him there is filth and violence, and yet Hanks' captain is not of it.

This is the film's big weakness. The script tries to suggest that our patient captain is riddled with guilt for what he did as a soldier, but the Hanks we see is just too pure and noble. When someone asks him about the motives for his quest — "They paying you, or are you doing it out of the goodness of your heart?" — there's just one answer. "I want to get you away from all this pain and killing, get you clear of it," he tells the girl.

Hanks' Kidd never shoots first, despite being pursued by murderous thugs. He tries to connect North and South by showing cattlemen in Texas what they have in common with coal miners in Pennsylvania. Even facing off a racist mob, Kidd doesn't back down — a champion of the poor and democracy.

Here is the film's heavy-handed message to us in 2021: "The war's over," he says. "We have to stop fighting."

"News of the World" is rated PG-13 for violence, disturbing images, mature thematic material and some strong language. Running time: 118 minutes.

This 'Pinocchio' is dark, more demented than you're used to

BY MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN
The Washington Post

What is it about "Pinocchio"?

Italian writer Carlo Collodi's 1883 children's book — a fable about a wooden puppet who yearns to become a human boy but who must first prove himself worthy through selflessness — has been called a metaphor for the human condition. The story has proved resonant enough to receive numerous film adaptations, including Disney's animated 1940 classic and a live-action 2002 version directed and starring the then-50-year-old Oscar-winner Roberto Benigni in the title role. Netflix has also announced a reportedly darker stop-motion version to be co-directed by Guillermo del Toro and Mark Gustafson ("The Fantastic Mr. Fox").

So it shouldn't surprise anyone that there's another one. What may come as a bit of a shock is that the film is directed by Mat-



GRETA DE LAZZARIS/Roadside Attractions

Roberto Benigni, left, and Federico Ielapi star in "Pinocchio."

teo Garrone, the Italian filmmaker behind the excellent and violent 2008 crime drama "Gomorra" — and that the new film again features Benigni. No, not as Pinocchio this time, but as the woodworker Geppetto, who becomes the adoptive father of the puppet when it springs to a semblance of life after he carves its features out of a tree trunk. The title character is played by

Federico Ielapi in this English-dubbed, live-action version of the Italian original, which features ingenious — and sometimes creepy — makeup and prosthetics instead of CGI.

If the new "Pinocchio" resembles anything — and it certainly is its own thing — it will be reminiscent of Garrone's "Tale of Tales," an adaptation of Giambattista Basile's 17th-centu-

ry anthology of fairy tales, for anyone who saw that unsettling 2015 work.

One image from the new film that is burned indelibly in my head: a scene in which Pinocchio, recovering from being hung from a tree by the treacherous Cat and Fox (Rocco Papaleo and Massimo Ceccherini), is nursed back to health by the Blue Fairy (Alida Baldari Calabria), who introduces herself by telling us that she's dead. Meanwhile, a group of rabbit undertakers — actors in bunny masks that look like rejects from a "Donnie Darko" production-design meeting — show up with a child-size casket for the protagonist. Puttering around in the background is a snail-woman (Maria Pima Tino), complete with shell, sticky tail and — er, eye stalks, I presume, sprouting from her forehead.

It's all so upsetting. But also, kind of cool, in a

nightmarish way. One wonders what a very young audience will make of this uncanny valley of talking creatures rendered by actors — owl, raven, tuna fish — some of whom (like the familiar cricket, at whose head Pinocchio hurls a mallet) are portrayed by little people in costume and outlandish makeup. There is also a theme of the mistreatment of children that is likely to alarm sensitive viewers.

Garrone's film, co-written by Ceccherini, follows Collodi's book more closely than Disney's, although it takes a few minor liberties in its path toward delivering the worthy moral: Kids, listen to your parents, go to school and think of others before yourself. Fairy tales have always held the threat of darkness as punishment for misbehavior, and this "Pinocchio" is no exception.

"Pinocchio" is rated PG-13 for disturbing images. Running time: 125 minutes.

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS



NETFLIX/AP photos

Molly Parker, left, and Vanessa Kirby appear in a scene from "Pieces of a Woman." The film presents a rare look at the somewhat taboo experience of miscarriage through the eyes of Martha (Kirby).

Unforgettably vulnerable

'Pieces of a Woman' goes to extremes to show personal trauma

BY LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

"Pieces of a Woman" begins with a tragedy. Martha (Vanessa Kirby) is expecting her first child with her partner, Sean (Shia LaBeouf). For a few minutes, we see them in the final stages of preparation for life with a baby: She's saying farewell to her co-workers and packing up her things; her mother is signing the papers on a practical minivan; they're hanging final photos up in the well-stocked and tastefully neutral nursery.

Then, suddenly, Martha is in labor, and for almost 30 minutes the audience is given a front-row seat to the most realistic and graphic depiction of a home birth ever put on film. It's a difficult labor — Martha is almost drunk with pain — and it's made even more stressful by the fact that their midwife is unavailable and a replacement is sent. Then it ends in death.

It is a brutal and harrowing start to a film that is committed to telling the ugly truth about a loss so devastating that it's almost taboo. And it's just one of many deeply unpleasant occurrences to come. Like Martha and Sean, you are left somewhat paralyzed and drained after the events of the beginning and have no choice but to continue this emotionally wrenching and hauntingly visceral journey with them.

Martha attempts to go about her life but is constantly being reminded of what happened, whether it's seeing children out in the wild, running into her mother's friend at the grocery store or all the physical postpartum changes that one's body endures



Shia LaBeouf, left, plays Kirby's partner in "Pieces of a Woman."

regardless of whether or not the child has survived. She's also navigating her own family's grief, arguments over burials and epitaphs and a legal battle against the substitute midwife (Molly Parker), which is thankfully relegated to the backdrop.

Kirby, the English actor who portrayed Princess Margaret in the first seasons of "The Crown," plays Martha not as a wilting flower but as a kind of steely, determined robot alternating between utterly detached and aggressively angry. It is fiercely unguarded.

If the gutting discomfort feels more authentic than you're used to, it's because the story is personal for the writer and director couple. Kata Weber wrote the script based on her own experience losing a child with director Kornel Mundruczo during pregnancy. And "Pieces of a Woman" goes places that many films wouldn't dare. The first half hour will likely get most of the attention, but there are a few other jaw-dropping scenes of grief and anger that you must see to believe, including a late-film argument between Martha and her mother, who is played by Ellen Burstyn.

Aside from the revelatory moments, however, the film unravels

a bit as it goes on. The focus turns too often to Sean, a construction worker whose relationship with Martha, an educated professional from a wealthy family, never makes a lot of sense. His descent is a bundle of clichés and distracts from the uniqueness of Martha's story. He also has a moment of sexual aggression with Martha that is even more troublesome to watch in light of the recent allegations against LaBeouf.

But it doesn't detract from Kirby's achievement here. Hers is an unforgettably vulnerable performance that deserves attention and consideration this awards season. The same also goes for Burstyn in a difficult supporting role that she commands.

This movie will not be for everyone, but it is important not least because it continues to advance the discourse around miscarriages, a trauma that couples, but mainly women, have been expected to shoulder in secret for far too long. The ending won't be satisfying either, but that's probably the point. There is often no satisfying end to tragic loss, just survival.

"Pieces of a Woman" is rated R for sexual content, brief drug use, language and graphic nudity. Running time: 126 minutes. Now available on Netflix.

Mulligan's commitment makes 'Promising Young Woman' credible

BY JUSTIN CHANG
Los Angeles Times

Cassandra Thomas is a hell of an actress. (Ditto Carey Mulligan, who plays her.) The first time we see her in the deviously coiled revenge thriller "Promising Young Woman," she looks about ready to pass out drunk, struggling to steady herself in a club jammed with revelers, on-lookers and predators-in-waiting.

It takes commitment to appear this helpless, to stumble down a flight of stairs in heels, one painful step at a time, on the arm of that nice guy who offered to take you home. But the payoff is worth it, for us and presumably for Cassie, who waits until just the right moment — after the nice guy has plied her with more booze and slipped off her panties — to snap to attention, fully conscious and fully sober.

We don't see what happens to the nice guy, though the angry-looking hash mark Cassie etches in her notebook the next morning doesn't bode well. He's the latest in her book of personal conquests, men who see her looking hammered in public and swoop in with concerned smiles, eager to take her home and take advantage, only to reel back in horror (or worse, indignation) when they realize they've been played.

Cassie's confrontational question aside, it's clear enough what these men are doing, and also what she's doing. Offering herself up as live if barely conscious bait, she's making the world a little safer for women and a little less comfortable for rapists, one supremely nasty shock at a time.

Who is the real Cassie? Her parents (Jennifer Coolidge and Clancy Brown) have no idea, and they've been worried about her since she dropped out of medical school years ago and essentially put her life on hold. They don't understand why their brilliant, beautiful daughter still lives at home with them at 30, works at a coffee shop and appears to have no friends apart from her supportive boss (Laverne Cox). They definitely have no idea what Cassie gets up to in the evenings, their obliviousness underscored by a glibly amusing shot of them watching "The Night of the Hunter."

Similarly in the dark at first is Ryan (a perfectly cast Bo Burnham, the writer-director of "Eighth Grade"), a tall, gangly charmer who stops by the coffee shop one morning and recognizes Cassie from their med-school days.

Ryan's reappearance in Cassie's life pushes her in two equally fascinating directions. That Ryan is the first man in ages to



FOCUS FEATURES/AP

Carey Mulligan is a 30-year-old bent on revenge in the thriller "Promising Young Woman."

bypass her natural defenses, to awaken in her feelings of affection and desire rather than contempt, raises the question of whether she might be ready to turn a new page. But their history as former classmates can't help but draw her back into the past, and specifically to the tragic memory of her best friend, Nina, who is clearly at the heart of Cassie's grim mission.

What happened to Nina is not hard to figure out, though the steady, meticulous unwinding of that backstory produces its own shivery satisfactions. Shifting her focus away from random men in clubs, Carrie turns her laserlike fury on the many people who failed Nina, women and men alike. Running the gamut from oblivious (Connie Britton) to callous (Alison Brie) to self-flagellating (Alfred Molina), they unwittingly illuminate a culture of sexual assault that routinely slut-shames accusers and gives the accused the benefit of the doubt.

In these fierce reckonings, "Promising Young Woman" plays hard with your empathy and your schadenfreude, as if to suggest that the two reactions, far from being opposed, are in fact closely bound.

Certainly they are for Cassie, a bundle of contradictions just about held together by Mulligan's shape-shifting, fastidiously controlled performance, without which the story's dark, unruly pleasures might have veered into incoherence.

She pushes this determinedly unstable movie about as far as it could possibly go, even if that ultimately isn't quite far enough. It doesn't all come together, though there's an undeniable thrill in seeing it come apart.

"Promising Young Woman" is rated R for strong violence including sexual assault, language throughout, some sexual material and drug use. Running time: 113 minutes.

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



Sony Interactive Entertainment

Horizon Forbidden West involves exploring a new frontier in a postapocalyptic world in an attempt to locate the source of a deadly infectious disease.

The most anticipated games of 2021

New gaming platforms should make this year's titles more exciting, immersive than ever

The Washington Post

For its many miseries, 2020 delivered some extremely memorable video games. And now, with the arrival of the PlayStation 5 and Xbox Series X, there's more reason than usual to get excited for the offerings of the year ahead.

Here are the titles we're most eagerly anticipating. While not all release dates have been confirmed, we've included games that are supposed to arrive before Jan. 1, 2022.

Hitman 3

Available on: PC, PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X/S, Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, Xbox One, Stadia

Recent games in the Hitman franchise have taken a games-as-service approach; they are supported and expanded upon long after their initial release. IO Interactive is continuing that with the release of Hitman 3. Coming Jan. 20, players who already own Hitman 1 and Hitman 2 can import their maps into the third game to continue from where they left off, and can expect regular updates to the game post-launch.

This assassination game puts you in the shoes of Agent 47, a cipher who plans out kills like a series of puzzles in large locations ripe with opportunity. At its best, the Hitman franchise offers plenty of replay value: You can



IO Interactive

Hitman 3 has lots of replay value.

hunt down foes with different methods each time. The polished and at times comedic gameplay offers creative situations like disguising yourself in a flamingo suit at a racetrack or finishing off a target by slapping them with a dead fish. For Hitman 3, fans of the series can expect new levels and under-the-hood improvements, like an engine that supports 300 active NPCs at once, making locations feel busy and lived in.

— Elise Favis



Microsoft

Halo Infinite developers hope to recapture the franchise's magic.

Halo Infinite

Available on: PC, Xbox Series X/S, Xbox One

The expectations for this title are high. Halo Infinite will lift the Xbox again. Halo Infinite will change online multiplayer. Halo Infinite will rescue the series from its yearslong lull. Halo Infinite will, at least, be good.

The game was sent back into incubation after a chilly, meme-filled reception to a preview this past summer. Now with the addition of Joseph Staten, the original trilogy's writer, as creative director, Halo Infinite is getting all the fixings it can to meet the above

expectations, and hopefully surpass them.

It's also expected to boost the already-rich fortunes of the Xbox Game Pass subscription service, where it will be offered free. Pair that with the ability to play the game on the cloud via xCloud, and it's clear it's in Microsoft's best interest to make Halo Infinite the crown jewel of its entire strategy. The game should be social. It should be addicting. It should feel like a whole other world. At the very least, it should be a good Halo title. It's up to Staten and the team at 343 Studios to recapture that old magic.

— Gene Park

Deathloop

Available on: PlayStation 5, PC

First-person action shooters nowadays need something different — different aesthetics, different gameplay, different gimmicks — to stand out in a genre saturated by bland, same-y games. Deathloop appears to have all three. It takes place in a deliciously campy world filled with '60s-styled music and spy show splash screens.

You play as Colt, a hired gun tasked with assassinating eight targets before midnight. The problem? You're being hunted by Julianna, an agent hired to kill Colt before he hits his targets. If you die, or fail to kill all eight targets before midnight, the loop repeats. The game is a Groundhog Day-like scenario where you slowly learn things about the loop and are doomed to repeat it until you successfully kill all targets without dying yourself.

If the concept isn't enough to get you excited, the competitive aspect of the game should. Other players can assume the role of Julianna, and hunt Colt players down before they kill their eight targets. Add the fact that Arkane Lyon and Bethesda, the developers of the Dishonored series, are at the helm, and you've got a game that can definitely break the mundane first-person action shooter mold.

— Jhaan Elker

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WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

Titles: Technical advances expected

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Far Cry 6

Available on: PC, PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X/S, PlayStation 4, Xbox One, Stadia

I guess the question of whether “will Giancarlo Esposito be good” is out the window. He always seems to knock performances out of the park. Really, it’s the legacy of Far Cry that’s at stake here. The first game revolutionized the first-person shooter, while the third cemented what’s now recognized as the Ubisoft formula for open-world games.

Will the sixth game finally upend the tower-climbing, bandit-camp-raiding, hunting loop that the past three titles and most Ubisoft games have adhered to? Ubisoft has claimed it would start reinventing some of its series, so there’s some hope that a true next-gen Far Cry might finally push the developers into new waters. It remains to be seen whether developing for the last-gen consoles might hold this title back in the same way it did Cyberpunk 2077. But for the most part, Ubisoft is pretty good at this thing. Let’s see if they can be better.

— Gene Park

God of War sequel

Available on: PlayStation 5 (and possibly PlayStation 4; Sony has not confirmed whether it’s a next-gen exclusive)

There’s no release date yet (though Google says it’s 2021), nor even a confirmed title, but anticipation swirls given the greatness of the game’s predecessor. The 2018 installment of the God of War franchise from Santa Monica Studio injected protagonist Kratos into Norse mythology for a rumble with some of the gods lower down the divine pecking order from the better-known Odin and Thor. The beautifully rendered, interdimensional, open-world adventure game explored the relationship between Kratos and his son, Atreus, as the latter realizes that he too is a god — one with a different name than the one his father gave him.

The final scenes of the 2018 game appeared to set the stage for what the upcoming PlayStation exclusive will chronicle: A mega-scrap with the God of Thunder et al, possibly tied into the events of Ragnarok, the legendary war that doomed Odin and a number of other Norse deities. And given what Sony’s studios have been able to introduce via the haptics of the DualSense, it’s exciting to wonder what Kratos’ ax or the Blades of Chaos could feel like with the PS5’s controller.

— Mike Hume

Senua’s Saga: Hellblade II

Available on: PC, Xbox Series X/S

Announced at The Game Awards 2019, this sequel to 2017’s Hellblade: Senua’s Sacrifice astounded the audience with an evocative trailer centering on protagonist Senua. The first game followed her harrowing descent into hell, where she aimed to save the soul of her dead lover. The journey was captivating even in its most uncomfortable moments, and profound in how it tackled mental illness and psychosis, a condition rarely portrayed in video games. Far more than a simple hack-and-slash action game, Hellblade was praised by critics as a work of art.

We don’t know much about the sequel, Senua’s Saga: Hellblade II, but we hope developer Ninja Theory will go to the same lengths and take the same care as they did in its predecessor.

— Elise Favis

Resident Evil Village

Available on: PC, PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X/S

Capcom has been on a creative roll that started with the inspired, first-person reinvention of Resident Evil VII. The revamped RE Engine has powered some of best games of recent years, including Devil May Cry 5, Resident Evil 2 Remake and Monster Hunter World. Capcom seems to realize that the survival horror genre it helped to invent has an eager audience that isn’t done with frights and zombies and inventory management.

The Resident Evil series has a weird history of becoming really good, and then flubbing a subsequent game by leaning a little too hard into successful ideas. Resident Evil 4 made way for a goofier, more action-packed series, while VII returns the series to its roots. Village signals the return of hero Chris Redfield, so it seems Capcom is interested in returning to the old lore of the games. That could be good or bad news, considering how nonsensical the entire story has been. Still, Capcom has shown a lot of growth in how it designs its horror setpieces. Both remakes of the second and third sequel were practically new titles altogether, ones that recontextualized the old games in fresh, exciting ways. Village may yet discover new ways to needle our anxiety.

— Gene Park

Horizon Forbidden West

Available on: PlayStation 5, PlayStation 4

The Horizon series is a new and exciting RPG IP that takes place in a post-apocalyptic world where humanity is forced to live

in tribes to survive in a world overrun by advanced machines (large robots in animal form). You play as Aloy, a critically-adored hunter voiced by Ashly Burch who sets out on a journey to discover more about her and humanity’s past. Despite the original game releasing right when Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild came out, Horizon Zero Dawn more than held its own, in encouraging players to explore its rich, unique world.

Horizon Forbidden West continues Aloy’s story, and while we’ve only seen one trailer so far, we know that it involves exploring a new frontier in an attempt to locate the source of a deadly infectious disease. Coincidental timing aside, Forbidden West looks to repeat the same magic that captivated audiences the first time around.

— Jhaan Elker



Mass Effect: Legendary Edition will contain all of the three games’ downloadable content.

Mass Effect: Legendary Edition

Available on: PC, PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X/S, PlayStation 4, Xbox One

For a long time, a remaster of the original Mass Effect trilogy felt more like rumor than reality. Reports suggested the project was delayed from its targeted May 2020 release, though the game hadn’t even been announced yet. Finally, BioWare confirmed late this year that the studio is working on the project. Modernized versions of the three games will come in the spring, returning fans to the Normandy starship where they can travel to different galaxies, fight off the Reapers and Collectors and find love among the stars.

Aside from its release window, little is known about Mass Effect: Legendary Edition. The collection will include all of the games’ downloadable content, faster frame rates, 4K compatibility and visual enhancements. Exactly what tweaks are being made beyond that are unknown.

— Elise Favis

Psychonauts 2

Available on: PC, Xbox Series X/S, PlayStation 4, Xbox One, macOS and Linux

2005’s Psychonauts is a delightfully weird game, where you



Nintendo

Super Mario 3D World: Bowser’s Fury adds online play to the game.

play as a young boy named Raz with psychic abilities, who attends a summer camp with other children who wield similar powers. The platformer became a cult hit, and more than 15 years later, we’re seeing the continuation of its story.

In Psychonauts 2, you once again play as Raz, and the story takes place shortly after the events of the first game. Instead of returning to summer camp, Raz will join the “psychonauts,” agents with full-fledged psychic powers, at their headquarters, where he must prove himself as an intern.

In 2015, a successful crowd-funded campaign on Fig to kickstart the game’s development raised \$3.3 million, but the release window continued to shift with every passing year. In 2019, Microsoft acquired the developer of the game, Double Fine. We’re hoping 2021 will be the year Psychonauts 2 gets out the door. It’s been a long time coming.

— Elise Favis

Super Mario 3D World: Bowser’s Fury

Available on: Nintendo Switch

The best co-op game to come out of Nintendo’s last generation will finally be released from Wii U purgatory. Super Mario 3D World: Bowser’s Fury has upscaled textures and better performance, and on top of that, it will include brand new content, including a new world. Not much is known about the new content other than a tantalizing shot of a level featuring stormy weather and a sphinx.

But the most exciting feature? Online play. Super Mario 3D World was already a great couch party experience that took the classic 2D Mario level structure and applied it to 3D environments with 3D Mario games’ typically tight controls. It created a quasi-competitive environment where you take risks for a higher personal score at the hilarious cost of your teammates’ lives. Taking this balance online is the boost the original needed to become a go-to party game.

— Jhaan Elker

Five Nights at Freddy’s: Security Breach

Available on: PC, PlayStation 5, PlayStation 4

Indie developer Scott Cawthon’s Five Nights at Freddy’s franchise has become one of YouTube’s biggest gaming hits. In the series, you need to survive rampaging animatronics seemingly possessed by the spirits of dead children that once inhabited a Chuck E. Cheese-like pizzeria.

Five Nights at Freddy’s was never about graphical fidelity, and it only recently ventured into true 3D space with the VR game Help Wanted. But that didn’t stop it from featuring in Sony’s official stream alongside AAA giants like Final Fantasy XVI, Call of Duty and Spider-Man: Miles Morales — a high mark of validation for an indie developer.

Not much is confirmed about the story or gameplay other than that it involves an ’80s mall environment ripped straight out of something like TV’s “Stranger Things,” and hiding from a new antagonist in a bunny suit called Vanny.

It will be interesting to see where this series goes, graphically and gameplay-wise, with its new PlayStation cred.

— Jhaan Elker

Cyber Shadow

Available on: PC, Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, Xbox One

Dripping with 8-bit nostalgia, action platformer Cyber Shadow is evocative of NES classics like Ninja Gaiden Batman. You play as a ninja who navigates through the futuristic ruins of a world called Mekacity to rescue the rest of his clan.

The game is drop-dead gorgeous, with big sprites, snappy animations and massive, over-the-top bosses. Developed by one-man studio Mechanical Head and published by the makers of indie darling Shovel Knight, the game looks to continue the recent trend of excellent retro-style titles like The Messenger and Bloodstained: Curse of the Moon.

— Joe Moore

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Pedaling through Amsterdam makes sense

As we've had to postpone our travels because of the pandemic, I believe a weekly dose of travel dreaming can be good medicine. Here's a reminder of the fun that awaits us in Europe at the other end of this crisis.

Sightseeing is more than just seeing. To get the full experience of a place, you need to feel, hear, taste and smell it. On this visit to Amsterdam, I made a point to focus on sensual travel. This city engages all the senses.

I always rent a bike here. The lack of hills and the first-class bike lane infrastructure makes biking a breeze. The clerk at the rental shop must be tired of explaining why they don't carry mountain bikes in this flat land. When I ask, he responds — in classic Dutch directness — "Mountain bikes in the Netherlands make no sense at all. When a dog takes a dump, we have a new mountain. You pedal around it ... not over. It's no problem."

I ride off along the shiny wet cobbles, my Amsterdam experience framed by my black bike's handlebars. I get pinged by passing bikes and ping my bell to pass others. When it comes to bike bells, there's no language barrier. For my own safety, I

wish I had a bigger periphery, as cars, trams, bikers and pedestrians seem to float by from all directions in silence — their noise lost in the white noise of breezing through this dreamy city on two wheels.



Rick Steves

Reaching the Red Light District, I stop to use a classic old street-corner urinal. It's painted green and designed to give the user plenty of privacy from the neck down and a slice-of-Amsterdam view at the same time. The pungent smells of pot smoke and someone else's urine compete with the dank smell of the canal. Across the lane, an abundant woman in a cliché of lingerie eyes me seductively from a window, framed in red. I think to myself, "This is probably the most unforgettable trip to a urinal I'll ever have in my life."

Continuing on my ride, it strikes me that much of Amsterdam still looks like it did three or four centuries ago, during the Dutch Golden Age, when this was the world's richest city.

I continue on to a square called Museumplein where Amsterdam's three big art museums are



DOMINIC ARIZONA BONUCELLI/Ricksteves.com

Amsterdam is best seen on two wheels, a sentiment shared by locals and tourists alike.

gathered. Long lines plague the Dutch Master-filled Rijksmuseum and Van Gogh Museum — both understandably popular. There's rarely a wait at the Stedelijk Museum, nicknamed "the bathtub" because of the striking shape of its modern architecture. Inside are 20th-century favorites (Dali, Picasso, Kandinsky) and crazy contemporary art.

Last night I enjoyed a grand rijsttafel (literally "rice table"), a ritual dish for tourists in Holland. Not a true Indonesian meal, it's a Dutch innovation designed to highlight the best food of its former colony — specifically to show off all the spices that in some ways originally motivated the colonial age. The dinner includes 20 dishes and a rainbow

of spices with white rice to mix and mingle on your plate and palate. Working your way through this tasty experience, it's clear why the Dutch called Indonesia "The Spice Islands."

Rick Steves (online: ricksteves.com) writes European guidebooks, hosts travel shows on public TV and radio and organizes European tours. You can email Rick at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

Winter doesn't mean the end of wandering through Europe

Does the thought of strapping on skis or snowboards to your feet and careening downhill leave you cold? That need not stop you from enjoying the pristine, snow-

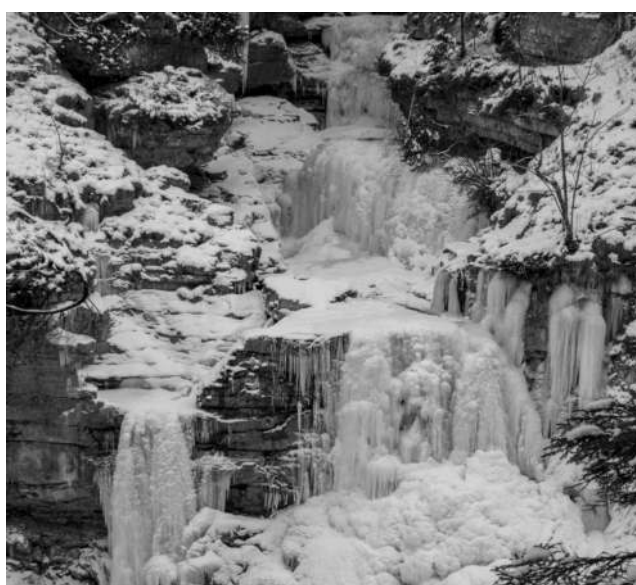


Karen Bradbury

draped landscapes of the season. Numerous mountainous areas dependent on the winter tourist trade cater to outdoor lovers undeterred by chilly weather with miles of maintained trails that make hiking through snowy vistas a safe and comfortable experience. With the moratorium on overnight hotel stays looking set to continue throughout much of Europe for a while yet, it may be premature to go out and book a holiday; meanwhile, we can dream of the day when embarking upon one of these stunning strolls becomes a reality.

Austria

The five villages making up the Olympiaregion of Seefeld in the Austrian state of Tyrol offer more than 100 miles of marked and maintained winter hiking trails. In addition to taking on these trails as single-day hikes, guests to the region can opt for a three-night, four-day distance hiking experience inclusive of hotel stays and arrangements for transporting your baggage from one place to the next. The experience takes one through the 10-mile Leutasch Valley, known for its reliable snow cover and plenty of winter sun. At a height of 3,600 feet above sea level, hikers get themselves from one accommodation to the next, where tasty regional fare warms body and soul. A highlight of the trip comes on night three, spent at the Wettersteinhütte mountain lodge. You'll have to make do without your luggage on this particular night, and the bunk or cabin accommodation might prove rather rustic, but the blue gentian schnapps, a homemade treat from your hosts Hans and Beate, will make your stay memorable for all the right reasons.



iStock

The ice-covered Kuhflucht Waterfall, which is accessed via the ski lift on the Ried in Farchant, makes a picturesque destination in the Zugspitz region of Germany.

When and if coronavirus regulations allow for overnight stays, the self-guided package starts on Mondays only and is available through March 8. Its 340 euro per-person cost includes overnight stays, half board and visitor tax; the single room surcharge is 72 euros. Online: tinyurl.com/y7gctayp

Germany

In the shadow of the Zugspitze, Germany's highest peak, walking trails tempt adventurous souls of all levels of ability. The "Graswangrunde" is billed as a family-friendly winter hiking trail starting off from the village of

Ettal, winding through the Graswang Valley and Weidmoos Nature Reserve along groomed paths to a height of around 3,280 feet, where views of the Kienjoch, Kreuzspitze and Klammspitze rock massifs make the journey worth the effort. The Ettaler Muehle makes a welcome stop for refreshment and rejuvenation. If the snow cover is thick enough, little ones will enjoy being pulled along on a sled. Be prepared to step out of the way for the odd horse-drawn sleigh or cross-country skiers with whom you'll be sharing the trail. Online: tinyurl.com/ycctaofu

Although the sun sets early this time of year, nightfall doesn't have to spell the end to outdoor fun. The tourist offices of Garmisch-Partenkirchen and the Zugspitz region offer a variety of guided hikes by torchlight through March. Participants may be required to have spikes, poles and suitable footwear. Possible itineraries include a hike to the ice-covered Kuhflucht Waterfall, which is accessed via the ski lift on the Ried in Farchant, or through the Partnach Gorge. From the Kurhaus in Grainau, one can take a 45-minute hike through a snow-encrusted landscape to the Neuner Alm, where musicians in Bavarian attire entertain. Online: tinyurl.com/y7fa2jey

Italy

The Alpe di Siusi, also known by its German name Seiser Alm, in Val Gardena of the Dolomites range, is the biggest high-altitude plateau in Europe. In the winter, it's a mecca for snowshoers and hikers, who share some 40 miles of groomed trails. Proposed hikes range from easy, 45-minute walks to strenuous six-hour tours for which snowshoes are a must. Many of the trails are loops; those that aren't often end at a bus stop from which you can ride back. Several trails pass by mountain huts that operate through the winter, where delicious regional cuisine awaits. Plenty of the region's cable cars will give hikers a lift, and numerous tobogganing slopes make for a fun way to return. Online: tinyurl.com/ybeaos67

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING



JOHN VANDIVER/Stars and Stripes

The dakgalbi at C1, Stuttgart's newest Korean restaurant, is a tasty choice for diners seeking spicy heat.

Sticking to their roots

C1 restaurant in Stuttgart is just good, old-fashioned Korean food

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

With coronavirus cases climbing fast in early November and a second lockdown looming in Germany, there was no time to lose to try the newest Korean restaurant in Stuttgart.

C1, located on the city's north side near Killesberg park, opened in the early fall, in space once occupied by a fish restaurant. It's unclear why the restaurant is called C1.

Opening in the midst of a pandemic that has crushed many businesses made me wonder if C1's days were already numbered. So right before "lockdown light" closed restaurants for a second time, we booked a table to test its offerings. I figured it could be a first and last chance to do so.

Luckily, we had a reservation, because every table was filled. And for good reason.

The menu at C1 features only Korean staples like kimchi stew, bibimbap — a rice dish with mixed veggies, beef, egg and red pepper paste — and various meat-based entrees flavored with Korean red pepper sauce called gochujang.

That's unlike many of the other Korean restaurants that have sprouted in Stuttgart in recent years. One of the oldest ones — Eat Drink, Man Woman — has a much bigger menu that also includes Thai and Chinese dishes, which German customers are probably more familiar with.

But part of C1's charm is that it doesn't stray from its Korean roots. I ordered a kimchi pancake served with soy sauce for an appetizer and dakgalbi — bite-sized chicken pieces in a spicy sauce, served with a side of rice — as my main course. It was savory and brought the heat, although probably slightly less than what you'd get in Seoul.

The service was friendly, albeit slightly slower than expected. That's probably because it's a husband-and-wife operation without extra staff. The wife comes from South Korea, where her family ran a restaurant, according to writeups in the local press. Prices were slightly high, I found, considering that



AFTER
HOURS
GERMANY



C1, a new Korean restaurant in Stuttgart, offers takeout service Tuesday to Sunday.

C1

Location: 217 Birkenwaldstrasse, 70191 Stuttgart
Hours: Adjusted hours for takeout during lockdown: Tuesday-Sunday, 11:30 a.m.- 2:30 p.m.; 5 p.m.- 8 p.m.
Prices: Main courses range between 12 and 14 euros (around \$13-\$15).

Information: To place a takeout order or reserve a table when there's no more lockdown, call 0711 38060419. Orders can also be placed online at c1stuttgart.com/order-online.

John Vandiver

what you get at C1 is basically good, old-fashioned homestyle cooking. But the restaurant is still worth a visit, given how hard it can be to find good Korean food in Germany.

C1 also offers takeout service, which means you can get your Korean food fix while the coronavirus continues to upend normal life.

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Warm up with a plate of creamy Swedish meatballs

BY GRETCHEN MCKAY
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Of all the dishes made with ground beef, meatballs are probably my favorite. There's something just so comforting about the golf ball-size globes of meat, which depending on how much time you have to spare, can be fried, baked, steamed or braised in sauce.

Being a family of pasta lovers, we eat plenty of Italian meatballs in red sauce. Come winter (or after any visit to IKEA), we add Swedish meatballs to the menu. Typically paired with buttered egg noodles instead of spaghetti, or skewered on toothpicks as an appetizer, they're flavored with nutmeg, ginger and allspice instead of parsley, garlic and grated Parmesan cheese. Finally, they are served with a creamy, roux-based sauce made with beef broth, heavy cream and sour cream.

While many recipes call for frying the meatballs before adding them to the sauce, I prefer roasting them so I don't stress over the balls falling apart in the pan when they are browned. Cooking the meatballs in the oven also eliminates the need for additional oil or butter in a recipe that already counts a fair amount of fat.

A trip to IKEA for its iconic lingonberry jam wasn't possible because of the pandemic, so I served them with jellied cranberry sauce instead for a sweet-tart contrast.

SWEDISH MEATBALLS IN CREAM SAUCE

Ingredients

For meatballs:
3 slices soft white bread, torn into pieces
½ cup whole milk, warmed
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
½ yellow onion, minced (about ½ cup)

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 pound ground beef
1 pound ground pork
2 eggs, slightly beaten
½ teaspoon allspice
¼ teaspoon ground ginger
½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
Olive oil for pan

For sauce:
2 tablespoons flour
2 cups beef broth or stock
½ cup heavy cream
Salt and pepper, to taste
¼ cup sour cream
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
Cooked egg noodles, for serving
Chopped parsley, for garnish
Cranberry sauce or jelly, for serving

Directions

Preheat oven to 425 degrees.



GRETCHEN MCKAY/TNS

Roasted Swedish meatballs are served in a rich, roux-based gravy made with beef broth, heavy cream and sour cream.

Place breadcrumbs in a small bowl and cover with warm milk. Stir to combine, then set aside.

Melt 1 tablespoon butter in a large saucepan or skillet. Cook onion until soft and translucent, about 5 minutes.

Transfer onion to a large bowl and add ground beef, ground pork, eggs, allspice, ginger, nutmeg and the moistened breadcrumbs. Season with a generous pinch of salt and a couple of grinds of black pepper. Mix by hand until thoroughly incorporated.

Drizzle a little olive oil into a 9-by-13-inch baking dish and evenly coat the entire surface.

Roll the meat mixture into round, golf ball-size meatballs (about 1 ½ inches), making sure to pack the meat firmly. Place the balls in the prepared baking dish, being careful to line them up snugly and in even rows vertically and horizontally to form a grid. The meatballs should be touching one another.

Roast for 20 minutes, or until the meatballs are firm and cooked through. (Alternatively, you can fry the meatballs in batches in oil or butter until well browned on the outside and cooked through.) Transfer to a plate.

Make sauce: In a large saucepan (I used a 12-inch cast-iron skillet), melt remaining 3 tablespoons butter. Sprinkle in flour. Stir with a whisk until flour browns, about 3 minutes, to get rid of the raw flavor. Whisk in broth and heavy cream. Then season with salt and pepper.

Simmer, whisking regularly, until reduced to a sauce, about 5 minutes. Then stir in the sour cream and mustard. Taste and adjust seasoning.

Add meatballs to sauce, and gently stir to combine. Allow meatballs to simmer in sauce until warmed through, about 5 minutes.

Spoon meatballs onto cooked egg noodles and garnish with chopped parsley. Serve with cranberry sauce/jelly on the side. Serves 8.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Dark times remembered

Between Blood Road and German culture stands the barbarism of Buchenwald

BY MARCUS KLOECKNER
Stars and Stripes

“Blood Road,” says the gray sign alongside the road that leads to what was once Germany’s largest concentration camp, Buchenwald.

Just 4.5 miles from Weimar, a city known for German cultural icons like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and composer Johann Sebastian Bach, and as the birthplace of German constitutional democracy in 1919, the Nazis established a camp at Buchenwald where cruelty and barbarism were part of daily life.

On a visit in December to the site on Ettersberg hill where the camp once stood, it was hard not to be moved by the stark contrast between the culture and history of Weimar and the monstrous crimes committed by Germans at Buchenwald — and by the Soviets after World War II, when the Iron Curtain fell on eastern Europe.

Around four hours from Kaiserslautern, or three hours from Grafenwoehr or Vilseck, the former camp was deserted during a recent visit in December. The visitor center was closed because of coronavirus restrictions, and guided tours were canceled. But outdoor sites, including the former inmates’ camp, the SS area and mass graves, are accessible daily until sundown, the camp’s website says.

The East Germans turned part of the camp into a memorial in 1958. “Its monumentality is intended to reflect the extent of the crimes, but it serves first and foremost as a national memorial,” focused on German Communist party members who resisted the Nazis, and many of whom died at Buchenwald.

Over the years, the memorial has been expanded to become the largest site in Germany commemorating those who died in the Nazi regime’s barbaric camps.

After the fall of communism and the reunification of Germany, more commemorative plaques and other markers were added at the former camp to remember victims other than German communists.

Among the additions was a stone honoring at least 169 allied airmen, nearly half of them American, who were shot down over France in 1944 and interred at the camp. Two of them died, and the rest were transferred to the Stalag Luft III prisoner of war camp in Poland. The stone memorializing them was dedicated on April 13, 2004, by survivors of Buchenwald, a little more than 59 years after the camp was liberated by the U.S. 3rd Army.

A bronze statue by Fritz Cremer, dedicated in 1958, stands in front of the bell tower. Called “Revolt of the Prisoners,” it depicts 11 figures, one holding up clenched fists and others making gestures that could be signs of victory.

With the visitor center closed, there was no information available about the statue, and looking online also shed no light on what Cremer intended it to depict. But it could be a commemoration of the group of prisoners who rose up against their Nazi guards as the U.S. 3rd Army neared the camp in April 1945. The prisoners were in radio contact with the approaching Army, and when the Americans got close enough, they attacked the guards, historical documents say.

Ohrdruf, a subcamp of Buchenwald, was the first part of the sprawling site to be liberated by the Americans, when the 89th Infantry Division overran it on April 4, 1945.

Two days later, knowing that American troops were



PHOTOS BY MARCUS KLOECKNER/Stars and Stripes

The bell tower is part of the memorial the East German government built at the Buchenwald site. In front of it, a bronze statue by Fritz Cremer, called “Revolt of the Prisoners,” has become one of the focal points of the site.



One of the three mass graves at Buchenwald, the former Nazi death camp in Germany.

approaching, the Nazi commander of the main camp put thousands of prisoners on trains or forced them to evacuate on foot in one of the death marches that took place across occupied Europe in the waning days of the war.

When the 3rd Army arrived at Buchenwald on April 11, the Nazis had “evacuated” some 28,000 prisoners, but 21,000 others, many in a pitiful state, had been left behind to die.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, visited Ohrdruf a day after the liberation of the main camp. With him were Generals George S. Patton and Omar Bradley.

“The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty and bestiality were so overpowering as to leave me a bit sick,” Eisenhower, who became President after the war, said in a cable he sent to another general after the visit.

“I made the visit deliberately, in order to be in a position to give firsthand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to ‘propaganda.’”

When then-President Barack Obama visited Buchenwald in 2009, he commented on the “irony about the beauty of the landscape and the horror that took place here.”

“For amidst the countless acts of cruelty that took place here, we know that there were many acts of courage and kindness as well,” he said.

On the QT

Directions: To get to the memorial site, take exit 48 off the A4 Autobahn and head toward Weimar. Then follow signs to the Buchenwald Memorial, around 11 miles away. It’s about a 4-hour drive from Kaiserslautern, slightly less from bases in Bavaria. Budget around two hours for a visit when all facilities are open, less when you can only visit the outdoor parts.

Hours: Outdoor areas of the camp are accessible, free of charge, daily until sundown, but be careful not to violate German or military travel rules. The visitor center and museums will reopen to visitors once the coronavirus restrictions have been lifted. Their hours are available online at buchenwald.de/en/171

Food: Cafe Paul at the memorial is currently closed because of the pandemic. Its non-pandemic opening hours are posted on the website. There are multiple eating establishments in Weimar.

More information: Parts of the memorial are not recommended for young children. More information is available online in English at buchenwald.de/en/69

Marcus Kloeckner



One of the 11 figures depicted in “Revolt of the Prisoners” defiantly clenches his fist.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Following the leader

Traveling in the company of dogs

BY WALTER NICKLIN
Special to The Washington Post

The very first dog that I could properly call “my own” (when I was a preteen, I named “Scout.” His name says it all, encapsulating the impulse that led me to a lifetime of travel, both in the United States and around the world. This ever-curious beagle and I would explore the planet together, with his inquisitive nose always leading the way.

But first, Scout and I would have to make short exploratory expeditions in and around our neighborhood. Wherever Scout pointed the way, I followed. He always lived up to his name, as we discovered places even my parents didn’t know existed. There were, for example, groundhog holes hidden in the tall grass of our next-door neigh-

bor’s yard. Also, I remember an underground stream uncovered only because Scout’s floppy, fine-textured ears picked up the soft sound of moving water. During the pandemic, dogs can help us see the world differently. In this Time of Corona, when you’re not supposed to leave your house, much less travel to exotic locations, dogs help bring the outside world inside. By retaining a hint of wildness that the modern world has long buried, dogs — these domesticated wolves — represent a source of forgotten knowledge. The kind of knowledge you might absorb by observing jackals on an African safari or coyotes while camping in a national park. And you don’t even have to pay to travel away from home for the experience.

Dogs can also help us interact with other humans, even if their



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Allowing your dog to lead the way, you can uncover new places and things about your own neighborhood.

faces are hidden behind masks. That was the role happily assumed by the dog my classmate and I adopted when I spent a year studying in Vienna. “Der Hund” we called him, and his affable presence served as a bilingual tour guide facilitating our interactions with natives. The language of dogs is universal.

In pre-pandemic times, the typical sidewalk parade of assorted furry creatures — led by their human companions clutching plastic bags of doggy poop — could seem a blur, hardly worth noticing. But once you start paying newfound attention, each dog can assume the air of an exotic creature spotted traveling to a foreign land.

What are all the different breeds of dogs, you may wonder now more than ever, that you encounter on daily walks outside your home? It’s a fun game to play during the pandemic, not unlike birdwatching. As there are field guides to bird identification, there are plenty of illustrated encyclopedias and online resources to help recognize the different breeds and learn their fascinating histories.

“Excuse me, is that a Brussels griffon?” The human on the other end of the leash, like a proud parent, will be happy that you ask. This small terrier-like dog was originally bred to be kept in stables to eliminate rodents, you may be told while standing six feet away. It’s a small dog, usually no more than 12 pounds, with a coat typically black or tan. And soon you’ll learn this individual dog’s name.

Maybe it’s Pierre. Or Jacques, Thatcher, Sandy, Kenzy, River, Trixie, Buckley, Sandy, Maggie, Ivy, Brinley. Those are just some of the dogs whose names I have come to know during my twice-daily walks in the neighborhood. I recognize them more easily

than the masked neighbors holding the leashes, whose names I always seem to forget.

Dogs can also provide a convenient excuse to get outside — a ticket to much-needed escape from sheltering-in-place isolation. During the tight lockdowns in some parts of Europe, dog owners have been especially privileged — giving them a pass to leave their homes without fear of governmental censure. In the United States, a colleague reports that only because she was looking for some place to walk her dog did she discover the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, whereby old railroad lines and other public spaces “are reimagined to create safe ways for everyone to walk, bike and be active outdoors.”

So on your next walk with your dog to escape the COVID-imposed confines of your house, let the dog lead you — instead of the other way around. While seeing-eye dogs are bred and trained for visually impaired people, all dogs — if you let them — are in effect travel guides, allowing us to see the world anew. The most familiar neighborhood can then become the equivalent of a faraway vacation, since the most rewarding sojourns, no matter how short, are all about exploration and discovery.

You never really noticed the beauty of that magnolia tree around the corner from your house — until your dog insists on stopping and lingering to sniff the urinous scents left by other dogs. It’s the canine version of reading the morning newspaper, as my grandmother used to say. And when you get home, you find yourself searching on the Internet to learn all you can about the polished leaves of a magnolia, as if it were a first-time travel destination — a tree you had formerly taken for granted.

The dogs in my life have al-

ways enriched my travel experiences. Take, for example, our mongrel Mitty, whose fondness for chasing sticks was obsessive. When hiking in the woods, searching among the countless other sticks littering the forest floor, she never cheated and would always drop at your foot the very stick that you had thrown as far as you could.

She could discriminate among the twigs and branches of chestnut oak, tulip poplar, white pine and so forth, as I could not. But like a wise and patient travel guide, she awakened my curiosity about the wonders of trees and the types and textures of their wood. Thanks to Mitty, I began to fancy myself an amateur forester or dendrologist.

Another rescue dog, a beagle/terrier mix, helped soothe the ache after Mitty died. My two daughters, studying high school physics at the time, christened her “Quark.” She would disappear for hours to follow scents of unknown creatures. In trying to find and follow her, I had to rely on my eyes (not nose), and so became conversant in scats and tracks — an outdoor traveler’s road map.

Scientists estimate that the canine sense of smell is more than 10,000 times greater than our own, giving them the ability to pick up scents as far as 12 miles away. “If you make the analogy to vision, what you and I can see at a third of a mile, a dog could see more than 3,000 miles away and still see as well,” in the words of James Walker, former director of the Sensory Research Institute at Florida State University.

Dogs become extensions of ourselves, with their acute hearing and especially keen noses expanding our field of perception from the visual world to the odoriferous. Talk about travel!



WALTER NICKLIN/For The Washington Post

The author allows his beagle mix, Angel, to lead the way during a cross-country skiing expedition.

WEEKEND: FOOD

From skeptic to advocate

Learning to love the air fryer

BY CYNTHIA R. GREENLEE
Special to *The Washington Post*

If I applied Marie Kondo's simple yet polarizing question to my kitchen appliances, only my air fryer would make the cut. It has undeniably sparked a particular kind of pandemic joy: the pleasures of safe experimentation, mental activity and the illusion of control.

I had resisted buying an air fryer precisely because too many friends had gushed about them with obnoxious enthusiasm. I'd seen the same kind of technological evangelism among former PC users who converted to Macs in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when Apple's legendary commercials characterized its competition as middle-aged, bloated, slow and stodgy.

I groused — as author and Food Network personality Alton Brown did on Twitter in early October — that these miniature convection ovens aren't fryers at all. Instead, they surround food in an El Niño of hot air, cooking with little or no oil. Baking and roasting, yes; frying, no. Plus, chances were high that any new countertop appliance would soon join my junk-cabinet graveyard of George Foreman grills, bullet juicers, electric griddles and Tupperware.

But then a friend mentioned the magic words: "egg rolls." The last time I'd bitten into one that snapped, crackled and popped, I was dining at my favorite Vietnamese restaurant in the Before Times. I had tired of sad, soggy takeout egg rolls that needed broiler time to reach their full crunch potential.

Armed with my air fryer and anticipation, I fired up chicken wings, roasted carrots and broccoli, citrus salmon and moist banana bread. Trying to recapture the spontaneity the pandemic has drained from everyday life, I tossed fruit into the air fryer. An unpeeled plantain yielded steamed — but not appropriately caramelized — maduros. I rescued one of summer's last peaches from incipient mealiness with a single pat of butter and brown sugar. The infamous mushiness of a whole Red Delicious apple became a delightful no-added-sugar applesauce.

All I do is buy and load ingredients in

the basket with a minimum of planning. But I feel like I am doing something. Listening to the automated heavy breathing of my air fryer at work, I puff out my chest in confidence in a task well done — what a psychologist might call self-efficacy.

Perhaps it seems odd to think of sentiment and appliances. But it shouldn't in this moment when going to the grocery store feels like an exhausting feat. Nor is it surprising in the broad sweep of U.S. history, where identity and household technology have always merged.

Advertisers have long tried to tell us that the right appliance might make us happier. A 1970 Frigidaire advertisement shows a svelte model wearing a minidress, an astronaut's helmet and silver pumps while casually leaning on a refrigerator in three fashion colors, including a hideous rouge and a cobalt blue. "What these buoyant colors can do for your kitchen, for your spirits, is just short of unbelievable!" Marketing is rarely subtle, but it is the art of creating or channeling desire into transactions.

While I don't expect my appliances to double as mechanized mood elevators — or see myself as particularly suggestible to advertising influences — part of my affection for the air fryer comes from wanting to be a low-effort "early adopter" of new technology, if only in the confines of my kitchen. And pandemic-weary as I am, and cooking-impatient even in the best of times, I also want to make meals without complications or kitchen marathons.

The air fryer is a modest investment and scant risk (no oil splatters!), the margins for error typically generous. I can pop out the basket and lay eyes on my fries, see if they're browning or burning. I don't worry about interrupted cooking and letting the heat out of my full-size oven. If I make a mistake, I reload and start over. Sure, you can do that with any oven, but not nearly as quickly. The trial and error that is cooking never felt so adventurous, yet low-stakes. This is a risk I can take.

Air frying is accessible enough that Tanya Harris, a self-confessed former non-cook and ex-public defender, has become a professional food blogger and recipe developer. About half the recipes



TOM McCORKLE/The Washington Post

Shrimp for Spicy Air-Fryer Bacon-Wrapped Shrimp lay in a single layer inside the basket of an air fryer. A 4-quart fryer will hold about 12 jumbo shrimp.

on her website, My Forking Life, were designed for an air fryer.

She wasn't exactly a candidate for "Worst Cooks in America," but the Raleigh, N.C., mother of two now laughs about serving a disastrous mess of a lemon meringue pie to her mother-in-law and pasty, unseasoned chicken-breast slabs to her now-husband during their courtship.

"I'd cook, and he'd eat it, but then say, 'Let's go out to eat,'" she said.

Now she makes spatchcocked chicken, snackable roasted chickpeas and applesauce muffins (yes, you can bake!) in her air fryers. She tests recipes on the trio of popular models that her readers are likely to have, but she has eight air fryers and won't rule out buying more.

Among her common-sense tips: Don't go too small when buying an air fryer. Harris recommends 5-quart machines for families and adjusting serving sizes as needed (as a singleton, I opted for a smaller one). She avoids batters — most air fryers can't handle wet ingredients dropped directly in the cooking chamber — and is realistic about what an air fryer can do.

But when Harris does try something battered, she breaks out cupcake foils, a flexible silicone muffin pan, and parchment paper to lie under pizza dough. Small pans, as sometimes recommended, just don't do the trick.

Harris is not afraid to adapt other rules. While many manufacturers encourage shaking the basket contents for even cooking, Harris advises judiciousness when cooking breaded items. Shake too hard, too much or too early, and there goes the breading. Sometimes, she allows cooking to go undisturbed for the first half of the required time. But at the halfway mark, she'll hit pause and then spray the kids' chicken tenders with a light coating of oil for optimal crispiness, popping the basket back in for the remaining minutes.

And for people trying to convert a standard oven recipe, she urges lowering the conventional oven temperature by at least 10 to 15 percent because the food in an air fryer is ideally getting more direct heat from every angle.

Harris' advice boils down to this: Know your fryer, and you can make more than junk food in it. I hear what she's saying on that latter point, although I unabashedly use mine for those egg rolls I had been craving, mozzarella sticks and the delightfully less-greasy-but-still-satisfying versions of restaurant appetizers I won't get now.

I use it exactly because I miss those things, the sociability of collective meals, the impromptu "let's go have a drink."

SEE AIR FRYER ON PAGE 25

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WEEKEND: FOOD

Air fryer: The appliance that brings back the joy of cooking

FROM PAGE 24

Air Fryer Korean-Style Chicken Wings

Air-frying produces crisp-skinned chicken wings that can then be tossed in your favorite sauce. This spicy Korean-style sauce is made with gochujang (Korean chile paste). The sauce is enough to lightly coat 2 pounds of chicken wings, about 20 or so pieces.

It is possible to cook this recipe in a 4-quart capacity air fryer, but if using a smaller appliance, you may need to cook the wings in batches to avoid overcrowding.

There is no need to spray the chicken wings with oil before air-frying because the chicken skin should produce enough oil. But if traces of cornstarch still show after cooking, you can lightly spray the pieces.

Gochujang is available at international markets or well-stocked grocery stores.

Leftover wings can be refrigerated for up to 3 days. Unsauced leftover wings can be reheated in the air fryer for 2 minutes. Sauced wings should be reheated in a conventional oven.

Ingredients

For the wings:

2 pounds chicken wings (drumettes and flats)

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup cornstarch

1 teaspoon garlic powder

1 teaspoon onion powder

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon fine sea salt

For the sauce:

3 tablespoons honey

2 tablespoons gochujang (Korean chile paste), or your favorite chile paste

2 tablespoons light or dark brown sugar

1 tablespoon soy sauce

1 teaspoon minced or finely grated fresh ginger

1 teaspoon minced or finely grated garlic

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon fine sea salt

Sliced scallions, for serving (optional)

Sesame seeds, for serving (optional)

Directions

Make the wings: Set the air fryer to 390 degrees and preheat for about 5 minutes.

Dry the wings with paper towels and place them in a large bowl. In a small bowl, combine the cornstarch, garlic powder, onion powder and salt.

Cover the wings with the cornstarch mixture and, using your hands or kitchen tongs, toss, ensuring all pieces are coated.

Once the fryer is preheated, tap each piece of chicken on the side of the bowl to remove excess starch and place it in the air fryer basket. Wings can touch each other, but do not overcrowd them. Cook in batches if necessary.

Close the basket and cook chicken wings for 30 minutes, turning and rotating chicken about every 10 minutes.

Make the sauce: While the chicken is cooking, in a small saucepan, whisk together the honey, gochujang, sugar, soy sauce, ginger, garlic and salt until combined. Set the saucepan over medium-high heat and bring to a boil, stirring often. Reduce the heat to low and simmer until slightly thickened, stirring occasionally, about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat.

Once the chicken is done, transfer the wings to a shallow bowl or platter, add sauce and toss to coat. Sprinkle with the scallions and sesame seeds, if using, and serve.

Serves 4.



PHOTOS BY TOM McCORKLE/The Washington Post

Crispy-skinned wings can be tossed with your favorite sauce. The sauce in these Air Fryer Korean-Style Chicken Wings is enough to coat about 2 pounds of wings. Unsauced leftover wings will keep for 2 days in the refrigerator.

Spicy Air-Fryer Bacon-Wrapped Shrimp

Use frozen shrimp to make this easy appetizer in just 15 minutes. Dust the peeled shrimp — it's OK if they are still slightly frozen because that makes them easier to wrap up — with your favorite seasoning blend, wind them in bacon and slip them into a preheated air fryer for 11 minutes. If your bacon unfurls a bit, they'll still be tasty. These are spicy, so cut back on the seasoning if you want a milder dish.

If using a 4-quart air fryer, you can cook 12 jumbo shrimp at once; if it is a smaller capacity, you may have to cook in batches.

Leftover shrimp can be refrigerated up to 2 days; the sauce for up to 3 days. Reheat in the preheated air fryer for 2 minutes.

Ingredients

For the shrimp:

12 jumbo shrimp (21-25 count), peeled with the tail shell left on, and deveined

1 tablespoon Creole seasoning

2 teaspoons finely ground black pepper

3 thin slices bacon, halved lengthwise and then halved across

For the sauce:

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup orange marmalade

2 tablespoons dark rum

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes, plus more to taste

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon minced or grated garlic

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon minced or grated fresh ginger

Directions

Make the shrimp: Preheat the air fryer to 400 degrees for 5 minutes.



Using shrimp that is still slightly frozen will make wrapping the bacon a little easier when making Spicy Air-Fryer Bacon-Wrapped Shrimp. Cut back on the seasoning for a milder dish.

While the air fryer is preheating, pat the shrimp dry with paper towels and season with the Creole seasoning and pepper on both sides. Wind a quarter of a bacon strip around each shrimp, doing your best to cover as much of the shrimp as you can.

Arrange the shrimp in a single layer in the air fryer basket without overlapping. Try to place the shrimp so the ends of the bacon are under the shrimp. Cook for 11 minutes.

Make the sauce: While the shrimp is cooking, in a small bowl, stir together the marmalade, rum, pepper flakes, garlic and ginger until well combined. Taste, and season with more pepper flakes if desired.

Arrange the shrimp on a platter and serve with the dipping sauce on the side.

Serves 3 (4 shrimp per serving.)



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WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE

Taking the fear out of technology

Effectively teach a Boomer to Zoom from 3,000 miles away

BY ADAM TSCHORN
Los Angeles Times

Do all your chats back home to Mom these days start, “You’re on mute. The button’s lower left”? Or have you at least once in the past nine months asked Gramps if you could FaceTime the back of his TV set as a way of helping him find the strange beast known as an HDMI port? If so, you’re not alone; you’re part of an ever-growing group of people trying to help their less tech-savvy loved ones zip into Zoom, hop onto Hulu and master gadgets like robot vacuum cleaners and Wi-Fi picture frames from a greater distance than usual thanks to the global pandemic.

And, chances are, you found it a tiny bit frustrating to spend something close to 14 hours talking through something that you easily could have done in 14 seconds.

I say this from my own experience — twice over. Early in these quarantine times, I talked my 81-year-old mother through the basics of downloading, installing and using Zoom so she could join in a weekly coast-to-coast, familywide conversation. (In full disclosure, *The Times’* owner, Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong, is an investor in Zoom.) The little bit of effort spent teaching her how to tweak the settings and toggle from grid view to speaker view paid immediate dividends; she is now an enthusiastic participant in these weekly calls — despite, for the first four months, having her cat’s name displayed on the screen instead of her own.

The real challenge came with our second adventure in remote tech coaching: helping her set up an Apple TV.

It’s a task that would have taken five minutes (at most) if we’d been in the same room. Instead, it required a week’s worth of lengthy phone calls across multiple time zones and, ultimately, a FaceTime encounter with the back of her TV set to accomplish. It was a surprisingly frustrating experience (for both of us, I’m sure she’d tell you) and one that highlighted the challenges of remote intergenerational IT support.

The good news, according to the folks who work at the intersection of aging and technology, is that getting a Boomer on Zoom or teaching the home team to livestream from some faraway place can not only be stress-free but also life-enriching and empowering, if you take the right approach. To that end, here are things to keep in mind.

Instill confidence

“Younger generations have been taught to fudge around [with technology] and hack,” said Lisa M. Cini, author of “Boom: The Baby Boomers Guide to Leveraging Technology, So That You Can Preserve Your Independent Lifestyle & Thrive.” “This generation was not taught that at all. They were taught that technology was dangerous and not to mess with it. Back in their day, there were tons of little kids that were killed by electrical outlets. ... When you don’t comprehend it, you get scared you’ll break it.”

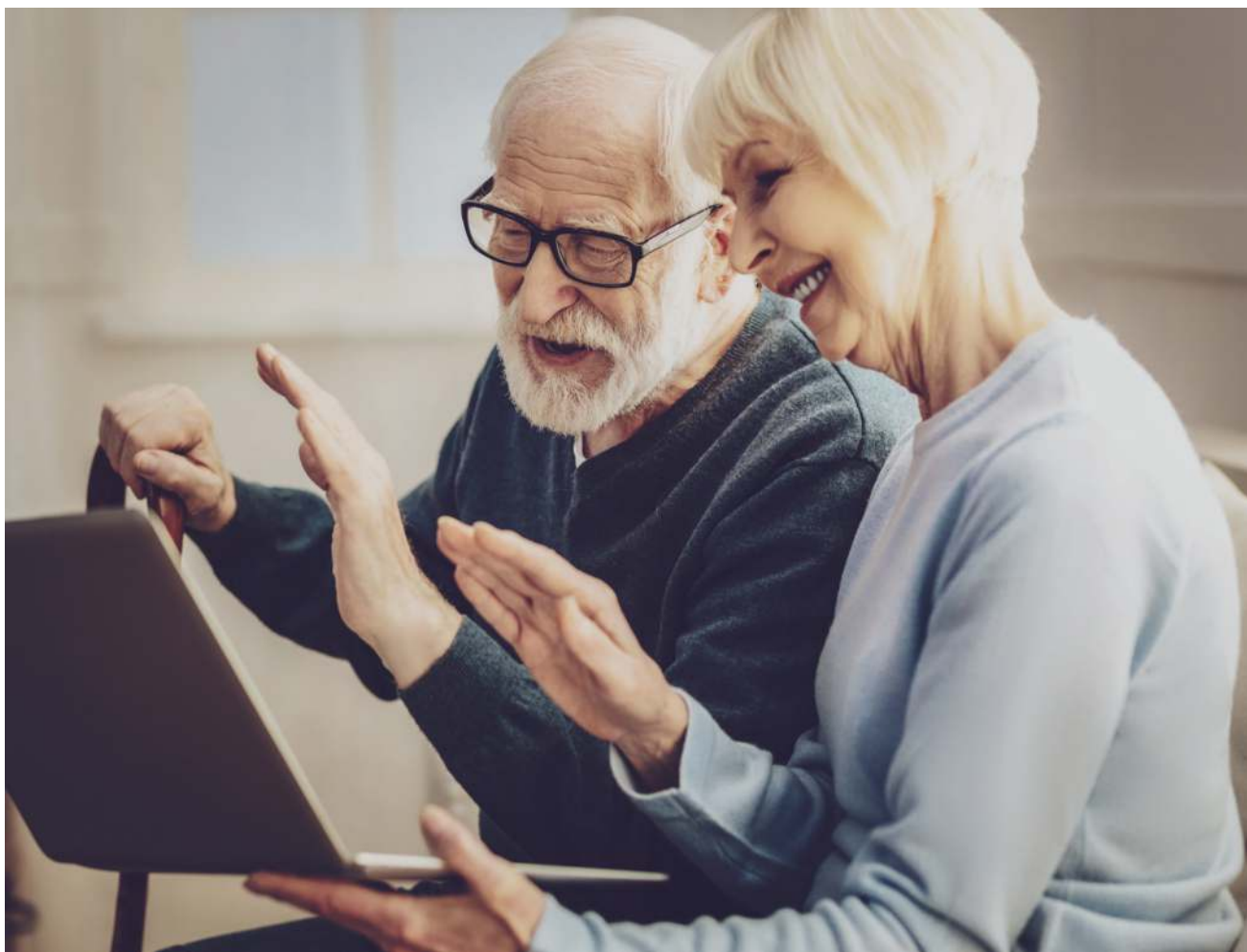
Cini says the result is the fear that an errant button push or mis-swiped finger will render the piece of technology at hand totally useless. That’s why it’s important, she says, to underscore — often — that nothing they do to today’s tech gadgets will result in irreversible damage.

That’s an approach echoed by Alex Glazebrook, director of operations for Older Adults Technology Services (OATS), a 16-year-old nonprofit that helps seniors make the most of the technology around them.

“[Telling them] ‘You can’t break it’ is where we start from,” he said. “We try to really calm people’s nerves and try to make them feel like they’re in control, that they can do this. [If we build that] confidence, they’ll be successful.”

Take it step by step

When it comes to helping the less tech-savvy set explore a new gadget or service, both Glazebrook and Cini



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COVID-19 pushed family gatherings online, leaving many Boomers in the dark. The task of teaching older generations how to use the technology, such as Zoom, can be frustrating, but it doesn’t have to be.

likened it to learning a foreign language — both literally and figuratively; a process best done by taking it step by step. “If you think of it as a language, once [you] start talking through things you’ll realize there are a lot of little things we take for granted as a common language that are not,” Cini said. “Simple things like ‘swipe left,’ ‘swipe right’ or ‘click on the hamburger [icon]’ that they don’t even have the capacity to understand.”

Glazebrook said approaching new technology like for-

“This is a generation that’s used to fixing their own cars and bicycles.”

Lisa M. Cini

author of “Boom: The Baby Boomers Guide to Leveraging Technology, So That You Can Preserve Your Independent Lifestyle & Thrive”

eign-language learning is helpful because both are about adding to a knowledge base piece by piece over time.

“When you learn a language it builds,” he said. “You learn nouns, you learn verbs, [you learn] conjugation and then sentence structure, you build complexity.”

Make a manual

Cini says creating an easy-to-follow guide complete with photos, pointer arrows and clear, detailed instructions (even as basic as “press the enter button”) can go a long way toward flattening the learning curve and empowering people. “This is a generation that’s used to fixing their own cars and bicycles,” she said. “And they’re used to looking at manuals. So if you can create a good set of step-by-step instructions — with visuals — and print it out ... they’ll be able to refer to it and not have to worry about remembering all the steps.”

Outsource it

What about the not-inconceivable situation in which you lack the requisite tech skills to be your parents’ or grandparents’ IT department from afar? That’s where organizations like OATS come in. Glazebrook says OATS’ national Senior Planet hotline (open Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. Pacific, (920) 666-1959) is staffed with live bodies who offer one-on-one technology help — completely free of charge.

“If you’re struggling with a device, you can call in and get help and the person on the line will spend as much time as it takes,” Glazebrook said, “whether you need to get on your first Zoom or download your Capital One banking app because you can’t go to the branch anymore and you need to deposit a check.”

Glazebrook said that at the beginning of the pandemic, the most requested assistance had to do with connecting via video.

“There were a lot of requests for [help with] Zoom because people were really just trying to stay connected and Zoom kind of came out of the gate as a leader,” he said. “After that it was a lot of access-to-services type stuff, people needing access to home grocery delivery or to their financial institutions.”

Cini pointed out that of all the tech skills to master, getting the Boomers to Zoom has an additional upside. “Video chats are really important,” she said. “You can see their facial expressions; you can see if they’ve lost weight. Most seniors have hearing issues and read lips — even if they don’t know they’re reading lips — and if they can see your face it’s a lot easier for them to understand you.

“And we know, scientifically, it’s very hard not to smile when someone else is smiling,” she added. “So we have the ability to increase somebody else’s happiness just by doing a [video chat] instead of a phone call.”

And with happiness such a scarce commodity these days — and the likelihood that we’ll be gathering together from afar for the foreseeable future — that’s the kind of life hack worth taking the time to teach.

WEEKEND: BOOKS

What to read in 2021

Your favorite read of 2020 could inspire picking up one of these new titles

BY ANGELA HAUPT

Special to *The Washington Post*

We're all anxious to leave 2020 in the dust. But before barreling onward, take one last look back to survey your favorite reads. They might inspire which titles you pick up in 2021. Here are 14 books, from a variety of genres, to consider based on recent favorites.

■ **If you enjoyed "Little Disasters," by Sarah Vaughan, read "The Push," by Ashley Audrain (Jan. 5):** What happens when a mother doesn't love her daughter? Audrain's debut is a tense, chilling dip into the dark side of motherhood, narrated by Blythe, whose own upbringing raises the question: Can one inherit an inability to parent? "The Push" is uncomfortable and provocative.

■ **If you enjoyed "Think Like a Monk," by Jay Shetty, read "Think Again," by Adam Grant (Feb. 2):** If there hasn't been enough room in your brain to give your own thoughts any thought, we hear you. But Grant, an organizational psychologist, coaches readers on how to better understand their unexamined — and unchallenged — beliefs. "Think Again" delivers smart advice on unlearning assumptions and opening ourselves up to curiosity and humility.

■ **If you enjoyed "The Particulars of Peter," by Kelly Conaboy, read "When Harry Met Minnie," by Martha Teichner (Feb. 2):** In 2016, CBS News correspondent Teichner and her bull terrier, Minnie, were introduced to a woman dying of liver cancer. The woman wanted to ensure that her own bull terrier, Harry, would have a good home when she was no longer around. The sweet — if wrenching — memoir is an ode to our dearest four-legged friends, and the people they lead us to.

■ **If you enjoyed "Agent Sonya: Moscow's Most Daring Wartime Spy," by Ben Macintyre, read "The Princess Spy," by Larry Loftis (Feb. 9):** In 1943, Aline Griffith, an American fashion model, was recruited by the Office of Strategic Services to hunt for Nazi supporters among Spain's social elite. While there, she met and married a Spanish aristocrat, making her the Countess of Romanones. Loftis, a historian who's written two previous nonfiction spy thrillers, delivers a rich, deeply researched account of Griffith's espionage escapades.

■ **If you enjoyed "Transcendent Kingdom," by Yaa Gyasi, read "Of Women and Salt," by Gabriela Garcia (March 30):** This family saga centers on five generations of strong Latinas: Maria, one of the only women to work at a Cuban cigar factory in the 1800s; Carmen, an im-

migrant who's found success in the United States; Jeanette, who's addicted to drugs and abusive men; and Gloria, who's taken into custody by ICE, leaving her young daughter behind. Their stories are a mesmerizing patchwork of determination, courage and survival.

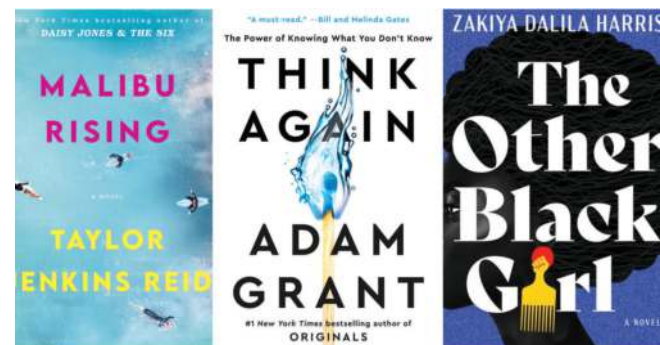
■ **If you enjoyed "Joy at Work," by Marie Kondo and Scott Sonenshein, read "Laundry Love," by Patric Richardson (March 30):** Richardson loves doing laundry — yes, laundry. He's made a fulfilling career out of it, running Laundry Camp at the Mall of America to teach others his techniques. In "Laundry Love," he shares his favorite tips and hacks for sorting your laundry, figuring out which settings to use for the best results — and changing your relationship with the often dry task. Add it to your laundry, ah, reading list for spring.

■ **If you enjoyed "All Adults Here," by Emma Straub, read "Early Morning Riser," by Katherine Heiny (April 13):** When you enter a relationship with a man who has had relations with, well, half the town, things will probably get weird. Jane, the star of Heiny's offbeat and funny new novel, falls for Duncan — who comes with an over-size load of small-town baggage. The story, which spans 17 years, sparkles with Heiny's trademark witticisms and cutting observations.

■ **If you enjoyed "The Searcher," by Tana French, read "What Comes After," by JoAnne Tompkins (April 13):** Two neighboring families in the remote Pacific Northwest are reeling over the deaths of their teenage sons when a pregnant girl with a secret emerges from the woods. As she becomes entangled in both families' lives, they're forced to reckon with their shared histories. "What Comes After" is a mystery — and a gritty meditation on loss and redemption, drenched in stillness and grief.

■ **If you enjoyed "Sex and Vanity," by Kevin Kwan, read "Dial A for Aunties," by Jesse Q. Sutanto (April 27):** When Meddelin Chan accidentally kills her blind date, her mother — naturally — calls in the "meddling Asian aunties" to dispose of the body. Despite good intentions, they problematically ship the body to the over-the-top, very important island wedding Meddy's company is planning. Netflix has signed on to adapt the delightful rom-com.

■ **If you enjoyed "I Hold a Wolf by the Ears," by Laura van den Berg, read "The Rock Eaters," by Brenda Peynado (May 11):** Peynado's curious story collection blends science fiction and fantasy, drizzled with magical realism: levitating children who eat rocks to stay tethered



Ballantine

Malibu Rising; Think Again; The Other Black Girl

to the ground; oblations performed to cattle-like angels; lost limbs that correspond to lost rights. It's a genre-bending sociopolitical commentary with prose that shines.

■ **If you enjoyed "Big Summer," by Jennifer Weiner, read "Malibu Rising," by Taylor Jenkins Reid (May 25):** It's 1983 in Malibu, and the famous Riva siblings are hosting their annual end-of-summer party — a legendary affair. By morning, the house is in flames, a blaze fueled by smoldering secrets and long-simmering drama. Reid has once again crafted a fast-paced, engaging novel that smoothly transports readers between decades and story lines.

■ **If you enjoyed "When No One Is Watching," by Alyssa Cole, read "The Other Black Girl," by Zakiya Dalila Harris (June 1):** Hulu has already snagged the rights to Harris' bold debut, about a young editorial assistant who's the only Black employee at a New York publishing company — until another woman arrives. Their budding friendship turns sinister as ominous notes hint at bad intentions. It's a thrilling, edgier "Devil Wears Prada" that explores privilege and racism.

■ **If you enjoyed "You Should See Me in a Crown," by Leah Johnson, read "Blackout," by Dhonielle Clayton, Tiffany D. Jackson, Nic Stone, Angie Thomas, Ashley Woodfolk and Nicola Yoon (June 22):** Talk about star power: Six YA powerhouses teamed up for this epic celebration of Black joy. As New York is blanketed in heat-wave-rendered darkness, six young couples are forced to confront their feelings. The story, which plays out over a single day, is a love letter to New York and teen romance.

■ **If you enjoyed "The Night Watchman," by Louise Erdrich, read "Brothers on Three," by Abe Streeep (Sept. 6):** In 2018, Streeep wrote a piece for the *New York Times Magazine* about the Arlee Warriors, a high school basketball team on Montana's Flathead Indian Reservation. It inspired "Brothers on Three," in which Streeep follows the Warriors — and their community — as they forge their way on the court and into adulthood. It's a rich, expansive portrait of modern Indigenous life, set amid a suicide crisis.

'Ready Player Two' blurs lines between video games, reality

BY ROBERTO ONTIVEROS

The Dallas Morning News

Ernest Cline's 2011 debut novel, "Ready Player One," a kind of Willy Wonka-meets-"Tron" adventure story, validated the digital diversions of gamers and 1980s enthusiasts alike with its arcade in-jokes and allusions to John Hughes movies.

With the release of "Ready Player Two," the Austin, Texas-based author tweaks the expectations of his own brand of nostalgic escapism with an Easter egg of ambivalence regarding the addictive nature of the very internet-based obsessions that initially inspired him.

"Well, yeah, you know, I am 10 years older than when I wrote the first book, and 20 years older than when I started the first book," Cline says. "I've matured, and my life has changed a lot."

Cline, who is married to poet Cristin O'Keefe Aptowicz and has two daughters, says he actually has a love/hate relationship with the internet and its corresponding



of a cautionary tale."

In "Ready Player Two," our hero Wade Watts, who has gone from living the life of a poor gamer to winning control of the virtual reality system OASIS, finds out about a technology called ONI that has been kept from the public. This suppressed technology enables users to experience OASIS with all five senses, to re-

cord and even upload real-life experiences. Regarding the warnings of too much social media and screen time that seem sewn into his sequel, Cline says: "I try to show the good side and the bad side of technology, but this one is definitely more

cord and even upload real-life experiences.

ONI is a highly addictive, potentially brain-damaging simulation that will change the world forever.

"That's the end point in the evolution of video games and virtual reality," Cline says. "When it becomes indistinguishable from reality. Then it becomes like you can't tell the difference or feel the difference or smell or hear the difference. Then it would feel the same as reality and become highly addictive — especially since it would be a reality that you could have control over."

Cline, who admits that his own addiction to games in his 20s inspired his first novel, is not sure how he would take to the kind of virtual reality temptations he details in his new book.

"I am glad that technology does not exist yet so I don't have to find out," he says, adding: "Once this technology becomes a mind-altering substance, then it, too, will

have to be regulated like a narcotic."

If Cline is ambivalent about the technology he writes about, he is also unsettled about how the more dystopian aspects of his first novel (such as reality TV stars entering politics and the havoc caused by a worldwide pandemic) have become real.

"It was strange to see so much of the story come true just in nine years," Cline says. "I set it 25 years in the future when it was published. A lot of it, especially the virtual reality aspects of it, came true. And a lot of its dystopian elements ... you know, some of them where I was being playful or suggesting that reality TV stars would be elected to public office ... that was something that I just threw in there that I was not thinking would come true, much less in less than a decade."

Regarding the uncanny way elements of the "Ready Player One" universe have lined up with the real world, Cline says: "I worry sometimes that the only thing you need to be prescient is to be pessimistic."

WEEKEND: MUSIC



MARK HUMPHREY/AP

Guitarist, songwriter and record producer Steve Cropper poses Dec. 2 in Nashville. Cropper has been in the music business for more than six decades. When he began working at Stax Records, it was common for white musicians to co-opt the work of Black artists. Cropper kept a lower profile and instead chose collaboration.

Steve Cropper still adding to legacy built on collaboration

BY ADRIAN SAINZ
Associated Press

It's 1966, and a thunderstorm illuminates the night sky in Memphis, Tenn. Two Stax Records musicians, guitarist Steve Cropper and singer Eddie Floyd, sit in a room inside the Lorraine Motel, struggling to fashion a song about love and superstition.

The pair try many references to good and bad luck — rubbing rabbits' feet, walking under ladders, breaking mirrors — but nothing fits. Then, as the lightning flashes and the thunder roars, Cropper asks Floyd: "What do people usually do for good luck?"

"And Eddie goes, knock, knock, knock," Cropper told The Associated Press in November. "I said, 'There's our song, 'Knock on Wood.'"

At a time when it was common for white musicians to co-opt the work of Black artists and make more money from their songs, Cropper was that rare white artist

willing to keep a lower profile and collaborate. That might explain why now, more than half a century later and still making music at 79 years old, he can walk through an airport or a grocery store without being recognized, while the original songs he co-wrote — played on sound systems in those same public spaces — remain instantly familiar.

From "In the Midnight Hour" to "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay" to "Soul Man," Cropper worked alongside the likes of Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett, Isaac Hayes, Sam and Dave, Eddie Floyd and many others to leave an indelible imprint on the American songbook.

Missouri-born and Memphis-raised, Cropper joined the Stax Records team as a 20-year-old. Working as a songwriter, producer, and guitarist in the biracial house band Booker T. and the MGs, Cropper laid the foundation for songs that have outlasted the studio that created them.

"Knock on Wood" featured Cropper's catchy, hip-moving guitar and rousing horns, setting the stage for lines still heard in TV commercials and movies:

"I listen to the other musicians and the singer. ... Once we've presented the song, then I listen to the song and the way they interpret it. And I play around all that stuff. That's what I do. That's my style."

Steve Cropper
On his musical philosophy

"It's like thunder and lightning, the way you love me is frightening. I better knock, on wood, baby."

"When Steve and I would write a song, we jelled so good together, you couldn't tell us we didn't have a hit," Floyd told the AP.

On "Knock on Wood," and countless other songs, Cropper produces a lean, precise, understated-yet-signature sound. "In the Midnight Hour," "Soul Man" and "Time is Tight" feature irresistible intros that lure the listener. Cropper mastered the art of filling gaps with an essential lick or two, then stepping aside as organist Booker T. Jones, bassist Donald "Duck" Dunn, trumpeter Wayne Jackson, drummer Al Jackson Jr. and others led the way.

"I listen to the other musicians and the singer," Cropper said. "I'm not listening to just me. I make sure I'm sounding OK before we start the session. Once we've presented the song, then I listen to the song and the way they interpret it. And I play around all that stuff. That's what I do."

SEE LOW-KEY ON PAGE 29

WEEKEND: MUSIC

Dave Alvin

From an Old Guitar (Yep Roc)

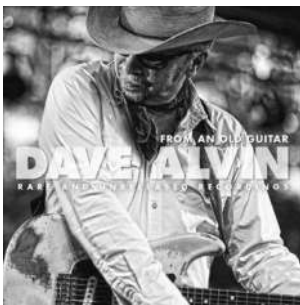
Dave Alvin established himself as a brilliantly concise songwriter in the '80s, when he championed "American music" as the guitar-slinger with the great, roots-rocking Blasters. But since 2011's "Eleven Eleven," he hasn't written much, focusing instead on non-originals in collaborations with artists such as his brother and Blasters mate Phil Alvin, along with Jimmie Dale Gilmore.

"From an Old Guitar" collects 16 stray tracks from Alvin's solo career, and, again, most are by other writers. But the performances highlight his skills as an interpreter and the expressiveness of his smoke-cured baritone, which has grown considerably since he made the move from silent six-stringer to frontman.

Backed mostly by members of his various bands over the years, Alvin touches on blues, country, rock 'n' roll and jazz as he takes on numbers by contemporaries (Chris Smither's "Link of Chain," Peter Case's "On the Way Downtown") and elders (Dylan's "Highway 61 Revisited," Marty Robbins' "Many Walks Among Us"). He goes way back with Lil Armstrong's "Perdido Street Blues" and Bo Carter's "Who's Been Here," a raucous duet with Christy McWilson.

A particular delight is the tempo-shifting instrumental "Variations on Earl Hooker's Guitar Rhumba."

"Beautiful City 'Cross the River" and "Signal Hill Blues" are tough, blues-drenched originals that remind you how good a storyteller Alvin is and make you wish he would get back to writing more.



— Nick Cristiano
The Philadelphia Inquirer

Kacy & Clayton and Marlon Williams

Plastic Bouquet (New West)

Second cousins Kacy Anderson and Clayton Linthicum emerged from rural Saskatchewan in the past decade as a dynamic traditional folk duo who evoke the Canadian prairie, Appalachia and the Scottish Highlands.

The musical reach extends farther — to the Southern Hemisphere — on "Plastic Bouquet," which features a collaboration between Kacy & Clayton and New Zealand singer-songwriter Marlon Williams.

It would be difficult to find another 2020 album featuring three more distinctive instruments — the voices of Anderson and Williams, and Linthicum's electric guitar. The set was recorded pre-pandemic, and Anderson's commanding but warm alto blends beautifully with Williams' equally formidable tenor, the enthusiasm for the partnership apparent as they harmonize and trade solo leads. "Sorry for laughing," she says before the final song.

Linthicum's role as lead guitarist is more subtle but evident from the opening bars, an ear-catching swirl of timeless twang, tremolo and idiosyncratic intervals. The songs are short, and guitar geeks would hope Kacy & Clayton make an album someday that really allows him to stretch out. Linthicum also contributes saloon piano and calliope organ, as well as weepy steel guitar on "Old Fashioned Man," a country waltz about not dancing. Williams' influence is especially evident on "Arahura," a love song to a New Zealand river, and "Light of Love," which takes Kacy & Clayton into 1960s-style California pop.

Elsewhere the trio also sounds like something from the '60s — the 1860s. The unique music of Kacy & Clayton and Marlon is rooted in different times and time zones.

— Steven Wine
Associated Press



Low-key: Cropper has new album due in April

FROM PAGE 28
That's my style."

Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards, asked once about Cropper, said simply, "Perfect, man." On a YouTube instructional video, guitar virtuoso Joe Bonamassa says Cropper's moves are often copied.

"If you haven't heard the name Steve Cropper, you've heard him in song," Bonamassa said.

By his early teens, Cropper knew he wanted to be a musician. As a newcomer to Memphis, he fell in love with music emanating from churches, clubs and car radios.

"I had never really heard gospel music, or rhythm and blues," said Cropper, who chuckles frequently as he talks. "When I turned the radio on in Memphis, there was a gospel program on. And I never looked back."

Cropper bought his first guitar from a Sears catalog at age 14. When buddy Charlie Freeman came home from guitar lessons, Cropper was waiting at Freeman's house.

"He would teach me what he learned that day, and then I would play behind him rhythm guitar so he could practice what he had learned that day," Cropper said. "So we started a band together, and got to be pretty good at it."

The band's name was the Royal Spades. It later morphed into the Mar-Keys, which scored a hit in 1961 with "Last Night."

Formed by Jim Stewart and Estelle Axton, Stax Records became a soulful, gritty counterpoint to Detroit's Motown. Book-

er T. and the MGs, with Cropper, Dunn, Al Jackson and Jones, became the lead house band and scored a hit with the instrumental "Green Onions." When trumpeter Wayne Jackson and saxophonist Andrew Love joined them, they called themselves the Mar-Keys.

Cropper, Dunn and Wayne Jackson were white. Jones, Al Jackson and Love were Black, defying both local and music industry custom.

"When you walked in the door at Stax, there was absolutely no color," Cropper said. "We were all there for the same reason — to get a hit record."

In 1962, when Johnny Jenkins and the Pinetoppers arrived at Stax to record, a valet named Otis Redding was with them.

As Cropper tells it, Redding pestered Al Jackson to ask Cropper to hear him sing. Cropper relented, giving Redding an impromptu audition.

"He starts singing, 'These Arms of Mine.' And I went 'Holy s---,'" Cropper said. "My hair stood up on my arms. I said, 'Stop right there.' He said, 'What, you don't like it?' I said, 'No, I love it.'"

The song became Redding's first hit for Stax, and the beginning a string of hits that included "Try a Little Tenderness," "Pain in My Heart," and "I've Been Loving You Too Long." In 1967, Cropper and Redding sat down to write "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay," Redding's song about lost time, loneliness and self-reflection.

As they worked, Cropper de-



STAX MUSEUM OF AMERICAN SOUL MUSIC/AP

Stax Records musicians are pictured at an airport during their tour of Europe in 1967. From left are Eddie Floyd, Sam Moore, Steve Cropper, Otis Redding, Wayne Jackson and Arthur Conley. "When you walked in the door at Stax, there was absolutely no color," Cropper said. "We were all there for the same reason — to get a hit record."

cided the song needed something to put the listener on the dock. Cropper went to a Memphis studio known for producing jingles and recorded sound effects of sea gulls and ocean waves.

Cropper sent the recording to Atlantic Records, which had a distribution agreement with Stax. It became Redding's biggest hit.

Cropper left Stax in September 1970. He stayed with Booker T. and the MGs but also worked on projects with Levon Helm, Ringo Starr, Rod Stewart, John Prine, Peter Frampton and others.

Cropper and Dunn appeared in the Blues Brothers, the 1980 film featuring John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd as ex-convicts looking to put their band back together.

When Cropper gets recognized, it's often by fans of that movie.

Cropper has lived in Nashville for more than 30 years. He still cuts guitar dubs at RCA Studio 3, and has a new album set for release in April.

The last time he saw Redding was on a Friday at the studio while he was putting the finishing touches on "Dock of the Bay."

"He popped his head into the control room. At the time, I was setting up to do the guitar licks," said Cropper. "Otis said, 'I'll see you Monday. I said, 'Ok, I'll see you Monday.' That's the last word I heard from him.'"

Redding, 26, and four members of his band died in a plane

crash on Sunday, Dec. 10, 1967. They were headed to a show in Madison, Wis., when their plane plummeted into a frigid lake.

Cropper and his bandmates were in an Indianapolis airport when they heard Redding died. Songwriter David Porter had called his wife, who broke the news to her husband.

"David Porter looked like he had the blood drained out of him. We said, 'David are you all right? What's the matter?' So, he said, his wife just told him that Otis' plane had gone down, and he had died," said Cropper, his voice cracking. "Pretty heavy duty."

Redding never got to hear Cropper's final version of "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay."

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

Looking for the personality in the dance

Q&A: Abdul talks about her judging 'Masked Dancer,' COVID-19's effect on the show and how she spent 2020

BY MAKEDA EASTER
Los Angeles Times

When performer, choreographer and veteran talent competition judge Paula Abdul received a call from Fox asking her to be part of "The Masked Dancer," a spinoff to wacky competition show "The Masked Singer," her first reaction was laughter.

"I'm like, 'Oh, how brilliant is this,'" Abdul said. "And then I thought, wait a minute, this is going to be so ... hard."

On "The Masked Singer," based on the South Korean original, celebrity contestants perform in elaborate costumes as panelists try to guess the identities behind the masks.

"The Masked Dancer" uses a similar format, but instead celebrities — some with extensive training and others without — perform hip-hop, tap, salsa and other dance numbers as over-the-top characters including Sloth, Moth and Ice Cube. Returning panelist Ken Jeong and newcomers Brian Austin Green, Ashley Tisdale and Abdul make their guesses based almost solely on dance moves and clues sprinkled throughout the show, which premiered Dec. 27.

Abdul, who has been splitting time between LA and Palm Springs, spoke to The Times about her experience on "The Masked Dancer," which she called one of her top three favorite projects. The following has been edited for clarity and length.

Los Angeles Times: How is the judging process on "Masked Dancer" different from other shows you've worked on such as "American Idol" or "So You Think You Can Dance"?

Abdul: The cool thing about this is, it's not like we're judging. It's about celebrating the fact that — whether they have formal training or not — they are having a blast on their stage. And they have that reckless abandon and freedom of being in a costume and dancing, whether it's something that they like as a hobby or something that they've never even done before. For us, it's not about judging, it's about commenting on all the wonderful things that we did see and funny things or obvious things that lend itself to a clue as to who these people are.

Are there any favorite moments from the show that you can share?

Sitting next to Ken Jeong is quite the experience. The whole panel got along great. One of the fun things that I can directly relate to Ken Jeong is there's only one part in the show format where the [contestants'] voices are unmodulated for just one word. The segment's called "Word Up," and the song "Word Up" plays by Cameo.

And when that happens, it's like Ken and I are racehorses at the starting gate, and we can't wait to start, because we start dancing through the whole process.

I pride myself on being a dancer, but you know how yawns are very contagious? Well, this is what happens with dancing. I see peripherally to the left of me a guy who's just doing crazy dance steps on the upbeat as opposed to the downbeat, and it's contagious because then I can't dance. I started inhabiting his dance moves. I just learned early on, if you can't beat 'em, just join 'em.

As someone who has coached performers on dancing, what do you look for in a performance, or what catches your eye?

When a dancer has a certain je ne sais quoi-like spirit about them or they have some technique, that's wonderful. But it's

"The cool thing about this is, it's not like we're judging. It's about celebrating the fact that — whether they have formal training or not — they are having a blast on their stage."

the ones who inhabit their own special sauce, so to speak. They've created something that's so unique to them. As a choreographer, that's what I've worked on with artists, to create their own very individualized persona. Certain stances and certain looks and certain angles and things that become so unique to them.

That's what's incredible because so many people love to dance, but I look for the personality in the dance. That's what excites me. Technique is beautiful to watch, but it doesn't always reach my heart. It has to be someone who's extra unique. And that's not always in the training.

As a legendary choreographer who has worked with Janet Jackson, George Michael and others, did you ever find yourself nitpicking the actual steps that the contestants were doing or wishing that you could choreograph any of the dances?

I always am such a big fan of dancing, and I'll always be a choreographer. There were some times where I'd go, oh man, I wish I could have choreographed that part — that's inevitable; that goes with everything that I do. But I was so taken by the creativity, and how the choreographers that work on the show, how they were able



MICHAEL BECKER/FOX

to really capture key movements that were very, very particular to the character that they were.

The costumes are so elaborate. It seems like it would be challenging to dance in something like that.

I was in awe of the costume designers. They were able to do such elaborate outfits. They were lightweight and incorporated a lot of Lycra so that these performers could kick, they could do flips if necessary, but it never took away from the intricacy of the costuming. The costumes were beautiful; very creative. It's not easy dancing in the costume where you're covered in a head mask that has some weight to it. It has to be weight-distributed evenly, so that you can spot for turning and you still feel the center core of your body. Otherwise, if it's not weight-calibrated right, you could be top-heavy and

that I had the ability to work during the pandemic. Fox spared no expense of working with state and city officials to make sure all the COVID rules are implemented. And on top of that, having Ken Jeong as a doctor who is so particular, and so full-on task force, making sure everyone's safe. I never felt more safe. We got tested almost every single day.

We were grateful to have a virtual audience involved, and the virtual audience was able to partake during our taping days so that they could vote on the performances. Besides it being one of the most fun experiences I've had, it was such a gift to be able to be excited during lockdown, during quarantine, where I could get up every day and be excited to go to work.

Was it weird having a virtual audience there instead of an in-person audience?

It's harder, I think, for the performers. But then, because they're in a costume, they don't have that expectancy of a live audience reacting. We were whoopin' and hollerin', but I think that it worked out pretty well. I didn't feel a deficit at all. It was such a limited amount of crew on set, and we got through it. The crew was laughing at times when it requires a laugh or two, and Craig Robinson as the host was so incredible. He's so incredibly talented, and he just was great.

How has 2020 been for you, and what's been getting you through the pandemic?

I went from zero to 100, back to zero. I literally trained a year and a half of my life, putting my Las Vegas show together. And then I did my residency, and I finished the second week of January. I just finished my first part of the residency, and I knew I was going to be coming back in August. So I went on a little vacation and did some skiing, and then bam, it hit.

I was used to performing every single week in Las Vegas and then to go from that to nothing, it was a hard transition. I started doing what everyone did. I binge-watched everything that was on TV. But then I started getting bored, and I would go on long walks with my dog. I started picking up hobbies, things that I would never normally do.

I was taking cooking classes online. I was even taking tap classes online and ballroom dancing, which is hysterical because you're by yourself and you're watching your partner on TV. I have a group FaceTime chat with like 20 people; we spoke like three times a week, and that was great.

But for me, I love working, and I missed that. So when I got called to do "The Masked Dancer," I was really grateful that I could be around creative people and truly work.

What's been your experience working on this show during the pandemic? What were the safety precautions like?

I feel so extremely lucky and grateful

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

NEW ON DVD

“Jungleland”: The Kaminski brothers (Charlie Hunnam and Jack O’Connell) are in dire straits. Their story begins with a familiar morning routine sequence unfolding as manager Stanley (Hunnam) prods younger brother and star boxer Walter (O’Connell) out of bed and gets him ready to hit the gym. But in a grim twist on the old adage about what happens when God closes a door, an exterior shot reveals that their home has been repossessed, the front entrance barred, the brothers forced to exit via the window.

Walter (ring name “Lion”) shows promise in the illegal underground fighting world, but it’s not paying the bills, and the brothers need cash, fast, as they owe gangster Pepper (Jonathan Majors) more than what they have. Pepper sends them on a cross-country road trip from Massachusetts to Jungleland, a bare-knuckle fight in San Francisco with a six-digit prize. The catch? They must also transport a young woman, Sky (Jessica Barden), who has more secrets than one, to a mob boss in Reno, Nev.

Also available on DVD

“American Dream”: A pair of entrepreneurs (Michiel Huisman and Luke Bracey) face the wrath of a Russian mobster (Nick Stahl) after refusing his money.

“Average Joe”: A superhero team joins forces with a regular guy (Jason Sedillo) to take down an evil nemesis.

“Beyond Hell”: A woman (Kearsten Johansson) experiences a new level of hell after trying out a drug and becoming possessed by a murderous demon.

“Legacies: The Complete Second Season”: The CW fantasy series returns after Hope (Danielle Rose Russell) has given up everything to save the world.

“Lupin III: The First”: The animated film follows the familiar manga character as he embarks upon a journey to decipher the Bresson Diary. In Japanese.

“Manifest: The Complete Second Season”: The hit NBC drama continues with the mysteries of Flight 828 and its transported-to-the-future passengers.

“Monsoon”: A man (Henry Golding) returns to Vietnam decades after fleeing during wartime. In English and Vietnamese.

“Skylines”: A captain (Lindsey Morgan) and her crew race to save the human race after a virus pits people against aliens.

“Spell”: After a mysterious plane crash, a pilot (Omari Hardwick) must escape from an attic of a sinister woman (Loretta Devine).

“The Twilight Zone: Season Two”: The Jordan Peele-hosted reboot of the classic anthology series returns.

— Katie Foran-McHale/TNS



AP photos

Ted Danson stars as Mayor Neil Bremer, left, and Bobby Moynihan as Jayden Kwapis in the new comedy “Mr. Mayor,” which premieres Jan. 13 on AFN-Spectrum. The cast considers the show to be anything but political.

No preaching about politics

Most political aspect about new NBC comedy ‘Mr Mayor’ is government office in its title

BY MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

There’s a government office right there in the very title of Ted Danson’s new series, but the new NBC comedy “Mr. Mayor” is anything but political.

“If you consider politics the headlines in the papers and the breaking news on CNN, that ain’t us,” said Danson, who stars as Los Angeles mayor Neil Bremer. “We point out the foibles and silliness, and wonderfully lovable, pathetic, lame side of humanity, but we don’t stop and preach. We never are preaching.”

The show is from Emmy Award-winners Robert Carlock and Tina Fey, the brains behind “30 Rock” and “Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt.”

Danson plays a businessman who made a fortune on billboards and then retired. He ran for mayor just to impress his daughter, a sophomore in high school played by Kyla Kenedy from “The Walking Dead.”

The new mayor is not a very polished political figure, prone to mangling Spanish and saying things like “I’m very open to a robot police force.”

He’s got a dubious staff behind him — the trio of comedians Bobby Moynihan, Vella Lovell and Mike Cabellon — and a chief rival in Holly Hunter, who plays an ultra-liberal council member.

“Like underwear bought in a drug store, you’re not going to last



Holly Hunter plays the role of Ted Danson’s rival, an ultra-liberal council member, in “Mr. Mayor.”

two months,” she warns the mayor.

In the first episode, the mayor, hoping for a winning issue, steals the idea of a plastic drinking straw ban from his daughter and it blows up in his face. Hunter’s character offers to help — but only if he will rename coyotes as “mini-wolves.” There is satire, but nothing that might pit red states against blue ones.

“Immediately, I think the audience is alerted to the fact that we’re not going to be dissecting the Trump administration,” Hunter said. “This is not some new angle on a political conversation.”

Danson — a veteran TV star of such shows as “Cheers,” “Becker” and “The Good Place” — hadn’t worked with Hunter, the

world boundaries — face masks and shields, social distancing, daily COVID-19 tests and van rides that held only one actor.

“It’s all very different. They’re a little bit sad, a little bit lonely because the kids don’t get to rush into the playground and embrace each other because we’re so happy to be working,” Danson said.

“The first day or two, it’s weird. And then all of a sudden you get used to the new normal,” he added. “After years of doing this, when they say ‘Action!’ and you’ve taken the masks all off, it comes back.”

But Danson is quick to put it in perspective. “It’s tricky as actors to talk about sacrifices,” he said. “We came back after nine months of the pandemic where the whole world saw who the heroes were, who the celebrities really were, who the people were that really, truly put their lives on the line.”

The time off might actually have helped the show, giving the cast time to digest the rat-a-tat scripts, which are stocked with Carlock and Fey’s astute cultural observations and sometimes absurdist flights of fancy.

“It’s practice, practice, practice, practice, practice, practice before you show up so that those words can come trippingly off your tongue,” Danson said. “You have to play the music, and you have to play Tina and Robert’s music.”

“Mr. Mayor” premieres Jan. 13 on AFN-Spectrum.

Oscar-winner for “The Piano” and star of the TNT drama series “Saving Grace.” But the two instantly clicked, a pair of show biz pros.

The cast and crew have endured a lot during the pandemic. They shot three episodes until production had to shut down for nine months. The cast kept in contact during the hiatus, even going over scripts virtually.

“We had jam sessions Zooming together, and I think in a way that created a certain feeling of tightness,” Hunter said. “We would just read a new script just to hear it between us. You know, it formed a different kind of bond.”

When they all reunited, a TV set designed for a fast-paced, wacky comedy now had real-

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

Getting to the root of gray hair

Scientists investigating why some go gray sooner, and if it can be reversed

BY MARLENE CIMONS
Special to The Washington Post

Marco Kaltofen was 11 when he noticed his first white hairs. As his hair grew whiter, his middle-school friends started calling him “the professor.” By his mid-30s, it was completely white, as it had been for three of his grandparents. His parents went white in their 40s, “so I had no chance of avoiding this,” Kaltofen says.

Now 61, he is a civil engineer who lives in Boston. He wears his white hair in a pony-tail.

“White hair is part of my identity, and I am completely at peace with it,” he says.

Then there is Joe Rees, 75, a retired customs attaché who lives in Washington. He is balding, but the hair that remains — on the sides and in the back — is the same dark brown it always has been. He jokingly attributes this to “clean living and a pure heart,” although, like Kaltofen, it probably is genetic. His mother’s black hair didn’t start to go gray until she was in her 70s, and was “50/50” when she died at 88, he says.

Still, “I’d rather be gray than bald,” he says. “That way, I wouldn’t have to worry about wearing a hat all the time.”

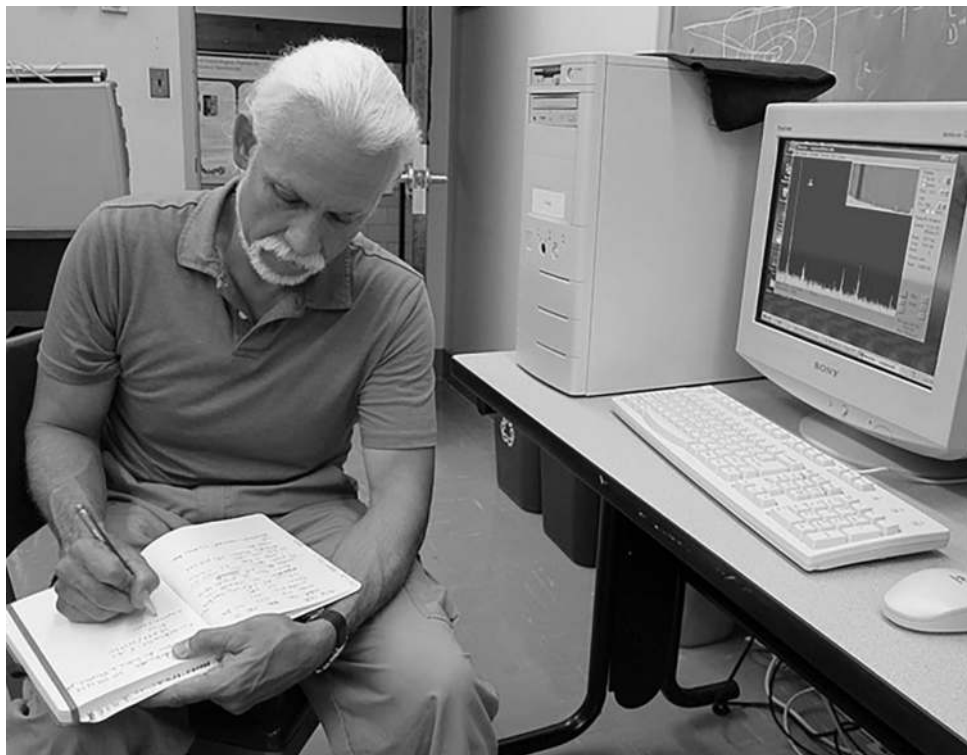
To be sure, Rees and Kaltofen are exceptions, since most people start graying in their 50s and 60s. Nevertheless, their experiences are among the many mysteries of gray, white or silver-looking hair that scientists are exploring to learn more about aging. They want to know why some people turn gray early and others late — or not at all — and what this might signal about their health. They also want to understand the factors that hasten graying, and even whether gray hair is reversible — which could be a boon to those allergic to hair dye, or who hate spending money to keep the gray away.

Most important, studying gray hair could point to new approaches in promoting healthier aging, says Candace Kerr, health scientist administrator in the National Institute on Aging’s Division of Aging Biology.

“While graying is one of the markers of aging — aging is the ultimate risk factor for why hair goes gray — it highlights the need for better understanding of the mechanisms that drive aging and age-related diseases,” she says. “To be able to target these pathways will be critically important for our aging population to live longer and happier lives.”

Hair that looks gray, white or silver actually is colorless. Hair color comes from melanin, a pigment produced by cells in the hair follicles. Over time, these cells suffer damage and become depleted, losing their ability to make melanin. This results in new hair without pigment — meaning, no color.

People use “gray,” “white” and “silver” interchangeably to describe hair that is turning or has turned. Its appearance — whether it looks gray, white or silver — depends on how much natural color, or



KATRINA GOLDSAITO/For The Washington Post

Marco Kaltofen, 61, says he first started noticing white hairs at 11. His hair was completely white by the time he reached his 30s like that of three of his grandparents.

pigment, remains, experts say. Hair that has lost all its color typically appears white.

Studies have identified a number of factors that also may speed up gray hair, including smoking, diet, stress and genetics.

“Our hair color depends on a set of specialized stem cells called melanocyte stem cells, and every time a new hair grows, these melanocyte stem cells have to divide in two and make a new melanocyte, [or]

Hair color comes from melanin, a pigment produced by cells in the hair follicles. Over time, these cells suffer damage and become depleted, losing their ability to make melanin. This results in new hair without pigment — meaning, no color.

pigment cells,” explains Melissa Harris, assistant professor of biology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. “These pigment cells stay in the base of your hair and their job is to produce pigment. These melanocytes reach out skinny arms, called dendritic processes, that shuttle the pigment to the hair shaft as it grows. So if all your melanocyte stem cells disappear, so do your melanocytes and so does your hair pigment. Thus — gray hair.”

Because stem cells directly influence hair color, studying gray hair can provide insights about why stem cells age and ultimately fail, offering important clues about the workings of other stem cells in the body — for example, those found in muscles, bones and organs. In turn, these ultimately could point to whether gray hair could be a marker for disease, or the opposite, a longer life. Previous studies have not shown a relationship between life span and gray hair, including whether late onset of gray hair predicts longevity. Some research, however, indicates that gray or white hair can be a sign of early heart disease, regardless of age.

A 2018 mouse study by “Team Hair-Us” (Harris’ nickname for her lab colleagues) found a connection between MITF (microphthalmia), a transcription factor (a protein involved in gene expression) important in managing pigment production, and the innate immune system, suggesting that some people’s hair may turn gray in response to serious illness or chronic stress. They discovered a relationship between genes involved in hair color and

those that trigger an immune response to a viral infection, suggesting this interaction could increase the chances of developing gray hair.

“MITF, in a sense, shields melanocyte stem cells from our own immune system,” she says. “Normally our immune system protects our bodies from infection. But for melanocyte stem cells, too much immune response is bad for their health, and this leads to their loss and to gray hair. Why melanocyte stem cells are so sensitive to our own natural means for protection, we still don’t know.”

“There is still much to learn about what regulates these stem cells and what may contribute to their loss,” says Ya-Chieh Hsu, associate professor of stem cell and regenerative biology at Harvard University and principal faculty member of the Harvard Stem Cell Institute.

Among other things, Hsu studies the effect of stress on graying. Most of us are familiar with those “before-and-after” photographs of U.S. presidents — most recently Barack Obama — showing a striking increase in gray hair during their

terms, even in relatively young presidents. It’s known as the “Marie Antoinette Syndrome,” after the 18th-century French queen whose hair allegedly turned white overnight before she went to the guillotine and her death at age 38 during the French Revolution.

“With the aging process, we gradually lose melanocyte stem cells one by one over a very long period of time,” Hsu says. “What we found in our research was that the stress can accelerate that process.”

Hsu and her colleagues found that stress stimulates the same nerves that trigger the “fight-or-flight” response, which in turn causes permanent damage to the pigment-producing cells in hair follicles. The fight or flight response “is thought to be a good thing in stressful situations because it can drive us and other organisms to respond to danger rapidly,” Hsu says. This activation “causes a spike in the neurotransmitter norepinephrine.”

But norepinephrine also tells melanocyte stem cells to pump up their activity and proliferate, “and too much norepinephrine, in this case triggered by stress, causes the melanocyte stem cells to burst into so much activity it leads to rapid depletion of the stem cell reservoir,” she says. “If all the stem cells are depleted, no more pigment-producing cells can be produced anymore, and the hair turns gray.”

Other stress hormones — ACTH (adrenocorticotrophic hormone) for example — can cause melanocyte stem cells to migrate away from the hair follicle before they can produce the melanocytes needed for hair and skin color, according to research.

“Such hormones are known to increase in the body after stress, and may have the potential to promote the loss of these cells, regardless of age,” says study author Mayumi Ito, associate professor in the departments of cell biology and dermatology at the New York University Grossman School of Medicine.

Ito also found that certain cell-signaling proteins called endothelins (substances known to constrict blood vessels and raise blood pressure) bind to melanocyte stem cells and, in doing so, keep them healthy. Interrupting the process causes cell loss and early graying in mice. They are studying whether the same happens in human hair follicles, hoping to find ways to preserve or regenerate the key stem cells that give hair its color.

All of this raises the intriguing possibility that scientists could discover ways to prevent or reverse gray hair.

“Team Hair-Us” recently published a paper describing a topical drug combination that increased melanocyte stem cells in gray mice, ridding them of their gray and restoring their original fur color — perhaps for good. Because the treatment — originally developed to regrow hair — replenished pigment-producing stem cells, the effects could be long-lasting, Harris says.

“We didn’t keep the mice forever, so we don’t know,” says Harris, who plans more studies. “This has made us very interested in whether gray hair really is permanent, and if we can do something about it. We really want to know — and so does everyone else we talk to — is whether and when we can bring this to humans.”

WEEKEND: FAMILY



Teaching kids about the risks and rewards of using credit cards can help them make better decisions as adults. iStock

Priming kids on plastic

Modern children need lessons on credit, not pennies for their piggy banks

BY SARA RATHNER
Nerdwallet.com

Many older millennials may have learned to manage money much like our parents did: waiting for statements to arrive in the mail, balancing checkbooks and paying in cash. But if you're planning to impart the same lessons to your own children, ask yourself a few questions first.

Is this still how you deal with your finances? How often do you carry cash anymore? Do you even know where your checkbook is? If the respective answers are "no," "rarely" and "maybe in that box I never unpacked since moving six months ago," then the money lessons of the '90s aren't going to cut it for the next generation.

The way we handle money had already been changing dramatically, but the pandemic accelerated those changes. One example: A September 2020 American Express study found that since the COVID-19 outbreak began, 70% of merchants had customers request contactless payment options, and 73% of merchants prefer customers to pay with a card or app instead of cash.

So trade in those old-school money lectures for a primer on plastic and digital payments. By the time your kids become financially independent, they may thank you for it.

Teach about credit early

Because cash is tactile, it provides a natural way to introduce younger kids to money. But according to Gregg Murset — founder and CEO of the BusyKid app, which teaches kids about money manage-

ment — you don't need to stick to coin counting for long.

"I think kids are very smart these days, and they can learn that a quarter equals 0.25 in like five minutes," he says.

Since cash is out and cards are in, there's little reason to avoid introducing credit and debit lessons as soon as possible. Swap checkbook lessons for monitoring bank and credit accounts online. Show your kids what a credit card statement looks like. Talk about building credit history by showing them your credit report.

Help kids track finances

Rosanna Agado, who recently moved from the Seattle area to Glasgow, Scotland, maintains a spreadsheet for her three kids. Rather than give them their weekly allowance in the form of cash, Agado and her husband act like a bank account and lender combined.

When one of their children decides to buy something, the parents pay and deduct the total from that kid's savings. The kids are allowed to go into debt and aren't charged interest, but they must skip however many weeks of allowance are needed until the debt is repaid.

Their eldest son, who is 14, now has a bank account with a debit card, and while Agado doesn't monitor his purchases, she does check the balance daily.

"Having that freedom of having the card to spend on his own, it's like credit card lite," she says. "He knows there's a limit on what he can spend."

If something seems unusual, Agado discusses the purchase with her son to verify that it's accurate

— not to judge his decision, but to teach him the importance of monitoring his account for suspicious activity.

Share your habits, errors

Credit cards can be a much-feared financial product because of the risk of getting into high-interest debt, but they can be a useful tool, too. Sharing your credit triumphs and errors with your kids can help them make confident decisions as adults.

Agado and her husband don't want credit to be a mystery to their kids. They discuss topics like credit card rewards, which card to use for which purchase and what happens if you take on debt or miss a credit card payment.

"One of the main driving forces was the fact that my husband and I both destroyed our credit when we were younger," she says.

Hover less, trust more

Money talks are important, but kids learn even more when they apply those lessons to real-life purchasing decisions. Let your kids choose what to buy, within reason, even if you think they're making a frivolous choice that will blow through a month's worth of their allowance. Much as you learned from your own regrettable decisions, your children can do the same. Better a \$10 mistake at 13 than a \$10,000 mistake at 33, after all.

"I think it's a big mistake for parents to helicopter their kids too much when it comes to money," Murset says. "I would much rather kids buy something with their money and have the heartburn that comes with remorse."

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



The same 10 pounds never gone for long

Like many Americans, I resolve to lose weight every New Year. The semantics of my annual pledges may vary — "get fit," "eat healthy," "fit into my jeans and still be able to breathe" — and my success rate has been highly unstable. But my motivation is always the same: Rid myself of that stubborn 10 pounds of flab that has haunted me since my mid-20s.

Over the past three decades, I've tried almost every diet in one form or another, which, arguably, renders me an expert on the subject.

In my attempts to succeed, I've found that most diet plans fall into one of four general categories:

1. Low-fat diets, otherwise known as "Self-induced agony";
2. Low-carb diets, otherwise known as "A good excuse to eat bacon";
3. Subscription diets, otherwise known as "Weight loss for suckers;" and
4. Fad diets, otherwise known as "Yeah, right, and the Cleveland Browns will win the Super Bowl."

Exercise was always incorporated into my New Year attempts to drop pounds. In my 20s, I was a "runner," which is somewhat of a misnomer considering that my movement would more accurately be defined as a "shuffle." On my two-mile jaunts, I was red-faced, blotchy and swerving. Passers-by thought I'd either escaped from long-term captivity or was suffering a major cardiac event.

After having babies in the '90s, I bought VHS tapes allowing me to exercise at home during nap time. There were videos by Kathy Smith, Jane Fonda, Denise Austin, and one MTV's "The Grind" hip-hop dance tape.

When our VCR died, I went to the local YMCA, finally investing in presentable workout clothes for step, kickboxing, spinning, Pilates, boot camp, body pump and Zumba, during which I achieved new levels of personal humiliation.

For me, the problem wasn't exercise. It was the can of Pringles I'd eat later that afternoon. No matter how many miles I shuffled or Y classes I took, I always knew that my weight-loss goals would fail without a proper diet plan.

An old favorite was "The Cleveland Clinic" diet, which had nothing to do with the famed hospital, and was also slanderously called "the three-day Army diet," "the American Heart Association diet" and "the hot dog and ice cream diet." I usually achieved success, losing 10 pounds in three days. The problem? When normal eating resumed, I'd gain it all back.

I invested in Weight Watchers, a healthy subscription plan involving a points system, nifty daily journals, recipe cards and weekly meetings. I lost a few pounds; however, I found the strict privacy of the weigh-ins to be a disappointment. What's more motivating than a bit of public fat shaming?

Eventually, I discovered Sugar Busters, Atkins, Dukan and their ilk, which began a long odyssey of low-carb self-denial, during which I believed in strict adherence to an eating plan that looked like "Cool Hand Luke" at a Brazilian meat festival. At first, the notion of unlimited butter, bacon, cheese and chicken skin was liberating. But I developed unfamiliar feelings like cravings for vegetables and worried that I might grow carnivorous fangs.

This New Year, I might give the Fast Metabolism Diet a go because it involves a healthy rotation of low-fat, high-carb, low-carb, and balanced days every week. However, it also requires buying the book, meticulous record keeping, strict adherence to three different allowed food lists, and, therefore, CPA certification and a Ph.D. in nutrition.

In a month or two, stay tuned for my next review, which will likely be titled "Elastic Waistband Fashion," or "Wearing Maternity Clothing Post-pregnancy."

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

PARTNERSHIPS

BY DANIEL GRINBERG / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

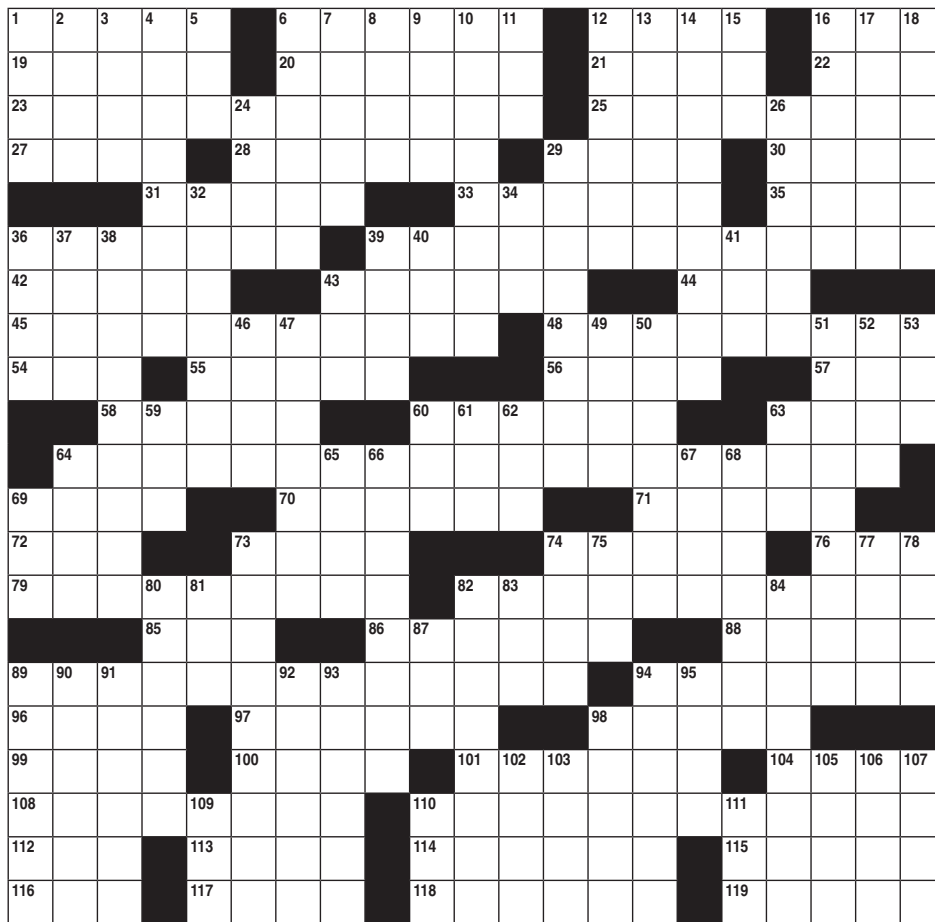
Daniel Grinberg, of Philadelphia, is a researcher and designer in the field of user experience. In 2018, he earned a Ph.D. in film and media studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara. When the pandemic started, Danny had the idea of constructing 30 crosswords in 30 days as a way of coping with lockdown anxiety. He didn't quite make it — more like 28 puzzles in 60 days. That's still quite productive. He thought of this puzzle's theme while brushing his teeth one night (which is not a hint). It's his second appearance in The Times and his first Sunday. — W.S.

ACROSS

- 1 Venomous snake
- 6 "To be honest . . ."
- 12 "My goodness!"
- 16 Extinct flightless bird that once grew up to 12 feet
- 19 Like the water in a whistling teakettle
- 20 Puzzled remark
- 21 A student may pass it
- 22 Kid's refrigerator display
- 23 Law partners
- 25 Booty call?
- 27 How-to manual component
- 28 ___ learning
- 29 Richard of "Chicago"
- 30 Mount ___, workplace of the Cyclopes in Greek myth
- 31 Having a very high body mass index
- 33 Singer with the 2020 album "A Holly Dolly Christmas"
- 35 Problems with streaming
- 36 Puller of strings?
- 39 Silent partners
- 42 Noticeably amazed
- 43 Leigh who played Scarlett
- 44 Train ticket info, for short
- 45 Writing partners
- 48 Spaceman Spiff and Stupendous Man, for Calvin in "Calvin and Hobbes"
- 54 Red ___
- 55 Who "can get in the way of what I feel for you," in a 2007 No. 1 Alicia Keys hit
- 56 Business suits?
- 57 Famous bed-in participant
- 58 Nest noise
- 60 For example
- 63 Salmon and sturgeon delicacies
- 64 Partners in crime
- 69 Modern meeting method
- 70 Some U.S. space launch rockets
- 71 "See ya"
- 72 Requests at security lines
- 73 Chicago mayor Lightfoot
- 74 Gave up
- 76 First dynasty of imperial China, 221-206 B.C.
- 79 Flier trier?
- 82 Business partners
- 85 Commotion
- 86 Fervent believer
- 88 Walker's need
- 89 Romantic partners
- 94 Tight-fitting suits
- 96 Apartment, in real estate talk
- 97 Core principles
- 98 Bake, as an egg
- 99 Evil Kermit or Grumpy Cat
- 100 How Phileas Fogg traveled
- 101 Money in coins rather than bills
- 104 Earnest request
- 108 Like some vinaigrette
- 110 Domestic partners
- 112 Sponge off of
- 113 Calendar row
- 114 Magazine bestowing Best of Beauty awards
- 115 Not a big studio film
- 116 Take possession of
- 117 Makes a typo, say
- 118 Gave a boost
- 119 S-shaped moldings
- 16 Cocktail with rum, curaçao and fruit juice
- 17 Like monarch butterflies
- 18 Debut album for Etta James
- 24 Apollo's half brother
- 26 Fool
- 29 Sweet red dessert wine
- 32 Representatives' term lengths
- 34 A thing in poker?
- 36 Unfortunate events, old-style
- 37 C.I.A. whistle-blower Philip
- 38 Encountered by chance
- 39 Subject of a Magritte work (or not?)
- 40 Simple palindromic reply to "Madam, I'm Adam"
- 41 Fiscal year div.
- 43 Ryder ride
- 46 Dweeb
- 47 Rihanna or Mariah Carey
- 49 Have a preference
- 50 Deep-fried tortilla dish
- 51 Group of heavies
- 52 Universal donor's blood type, in brief
- 53 Brand of pads
- 59 Sewing 101 assignment
- 60 Didn't go anywhere
- 61 Spanish article
- 62 Investment options, for short
- 63 Setting for Hitchcock's "Notorious," informally
- 64 Portend
- 65 Emperor who ruled for more than 13 years, dying at age 30
- 66 More eye-catching
- 67 Anthony ___, 1950s British P.M.
- 68 Villain with the "real" name Edward Nigma
- 69 Teen's woe
- 73 Big game changer?
- 74 This is what it sounds like when doves cry
- 75 P.D. or F.D. worker
- 77 Kindergarten comeback
- 78 Indefinite degrees
- 80 Sweetness and sourness
- 81 Canoodling in a crowd, for short
- 82 Prominent feature of the Who's "My Generation"
- 83 Cheer for Real Madrid
- 84 Drinking game that requires aim
- 87 Winter setting in N.Y.C.
- 89 Deceptive talk
- 90 Perturbation
- 91 Small hole-drilling tool
- 92 Obstinate sort
- 93 Talents
- 94 Really stood out
- 95 Patchy in color
- 98 Close call
- 102 Sport with saddles
- 103 Bevy : quails :: mob : ___
- 105 Fill with freight
- 106 Lake largely fed by the Detroit River
- 107 Lemon or lime drinks, informally
- 109 Wonder
- 110 Piano tune
- 111 Words accompanying a headshot, in brief

DOWN

- 1 Officers above capt.
- 2 What San Diego and Tijuana do
- 3 Airplane ___
- 4 "Notorious" rap nickname
- 5 It may be blond, brown or ginger
- 6 Of the utmost quality
- 7 Snapchat's request
- 8 1981 Stephen King thriller
- 9 Certain bolt holder
- 10 Being fixed, as a car at a garage
- 11 Vegan milk source
- 12 Still being debugged
- 13 Turn against
- 14 Event organizer's count
- 15 ___ to come

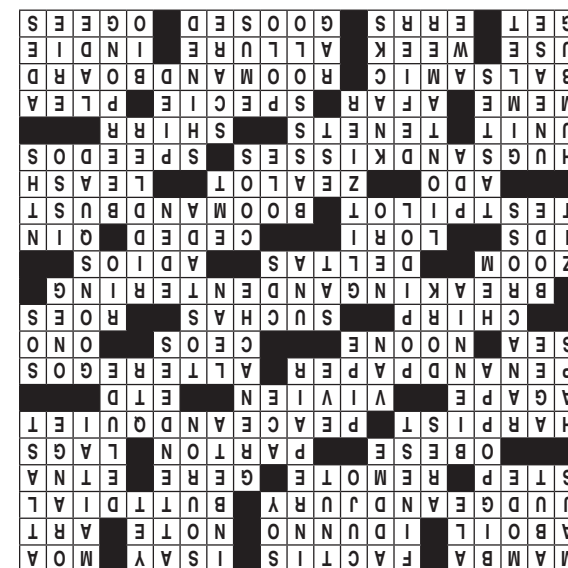


GUNSTON STREET



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FACES

She's your woman

Marsha Stephanie Blake examines stellar career

BY JEN YAMATO
Los Angeles Times

Marsha Stephanie Blake logs on to the Zoom call looking like a million bucks. It's noon on a weekday in December and the "I'm Your Woman" actress is calling from New York, where among other things this year she's celebrated virtual movie premieres, attended protests, sewed masks for essential workers, campaigned to get out the vote and filmed a Netflix show inside her home with her family during the pandemic.

In such an unprecedented year, multitasking has been a big part of Blake's life. "I was getting all dressed up because I have to tape an audition," she explains with a laugh.

Among the year's stellar supporting turns, Blake's performance as Teri in Amazon's 1970s-set crime thriller "I'm Your Woman" stands tall. In her nearly two-decade career, the last few years in particular have seen the character actress flourishing on film and TV screens in indelible roles such as Rosemary in 2019's "Luce"; opposite Viola Davis on "How to Get Away With Murder"; and as Linda McCray, the devoted mother of wrongfully accused Antron McCray in "When They See Us," for which she was Emmy-nominated.

With director Julia Hart's "I'm Your Woman," Blake embraced a character who'd already been through the ringer and come out stronger for it by the time she enters the picture. The film begins with characters the genre often sidelines: suburban housewife Jean ("The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel's" Rachel Brosnahan) is sent off into the night with a bag of cash and an infant son after her husband's criminal shenanigans go awry. With the help of his associate Cal (Arinze Kene), Jean learns to take the wheel of her own destiny for the first time in her life.

But it's her budding friendship with Cal's guarded wife, Teri (Blake), who grudgingly takes the naive Jean under her wing, that fuels their shared journey and anchors the recentering of the female experience. Casting for the perfect Teri, star and producer Brosnahan pitched one name: Marsha Ste-

phanie Blake, with whom she had starred in "Othello" in 2016 at the New York Theatre Workshop.

Before that taped audition she had to get to, the Jamaica-born and Jamaica, Queens-raised Blake, also seen this year in "The Photograph" and "An American Pickle," looked back on her "I'm Your Woman" role and her stage and screen career.

Los Angeles Times: We haven't seen a lot of women like Teri in the movies. She's fierce and capable, she has a tender side, and she carries such a quiet power.

Blake: I loved the character of Teri for so many reasons, and a big part of it was that I often have played women in the middle of a traumatic event. And a lot of what I'm going through are very intense, emotive, emotional, quite heartbreaking things. And what I loved about Teri was that we were meeting her after that trauma, and she was now helping someone else navigate that.

There are several temperature shifts in her dynamic with Jean, and while it's called "I'm Your Woman," inspired by a line Tuesday Weld says to James Caan in "Thief," arguably the most important relationship in this film is actually between these two women.

What's also lovely about Teri is she's a reluctant helper. She's coming in like, "I know the ropes and I'll try to show you," but she's doing it reluctantly. Because [Rachel and I] already had a relationship outside of the film, I had to remind myself how I actually felt about Jean. A lot of the inner work was remembering that Teri is a woman who is now at a point in her life where she doesn't let people in easily. There's a wall, and there's a reason there's a wall—it's for protection, it's for her family, and it's for survival.

Rachel Brosnahan, who plays Jean and is a producer on the film, was instrumental in bringing you into this project. You had acted together onstage in "Othello." How did she first bring it up?

The first time she ever mentioned it, we were out. We'd be each other's dates for plays every once in a while. I remember I was running across the street, it's the middle of win-



STEVEN FERDMAN/TNS

Marsha Stephanie Blake attends the premiere of "The Photograph" Feb. 11 in New York City. Blake stars in "I'm Your Woman," streaming on Amazon.

ter, and as soon as I got to her she immediately said, "I pitched you for this film!" And I was like, "Oh, great! Hi!"

You've worked extensively in film and TV, but beyond leading to film roles like "I'm Your Woman," why has your stage work also been an important foundation in your career?

What I love about the theater are the relationships you build. The reason I became friends with Rachel, and which led to us doing the film together, was because we'd done a theater piece off-Broadway together, this tiny little theater where we were arm's length from each other in the dressing room. And you learn a lot watching other people work. You're there in rehearsal sometimes for hours, watching other people rehearse. That is the best education an actor can get.

In recent years you've given incredible performances in projects such as "When They See Us" and "Luce," to name a few. Have these characters felt particularly meaningful to you?

I love the difference between [Rosemary in] "Luce" and Linda McCray [in "When They See Us"] because while I have all of them in me, they are not me. Maybe a bit of Linda McCray, that mama bear, is more who I am. Maybe a little bit of Teri. But Rosemary? I don't feel like that's me. However, there but for the grace of God, right? Because it could just take an incident for that to become me. An incident, a break, a physical or emotional trauma, anything. So I always think that as much as I feel like those characters are different from who I am, they are a part of me. They are me.

Rescheduled Grammys create conflict

BY GLENN WHIPP
Los Angeles Times

The SAG Awards announced in July that it would be moving its ceremony to March 14, 2021, shifting its event back by nearly two months as the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted every date on the awards season calendar.

Apparently the Recording Academy didn't circle the date on its calendar.

When the music organization decided Tuesday to postpone the 63rd annual Grammy Awards from Jan. 31 because of concerns over the spread of COVID-19, it moved to March 14 as well, setting up a conflict that could have SAG-AFTRA scrambling for another date.

Rescheduling could be somewhat problematic, though, as every other guild and awards group locked in dates last year when the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences pushed back the 93rd Oscars to April 25.

The March 14 date also coincides with the NCAA



LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

"Parasite" director Bong Joon Ho cheers his cast's win Jan. 19, the first time a foreign-language film has won the SAG Award for best ensemble.

basketball tournament's Selection Sunday, when the March Madness brackets will be revealed. CBS airs both the Grammys and the NCAA tournament.

Kardashian, West are headed for divorce

Kardashian, 40, has been debating the move since the summer, People reported. West, 43, reportedly considers the separation "inevitable."

The power couple have spent little time together in recent months, according to E! News. West lives in Wyoming, while Kardashian lives in California with their four children.

Kardashian and West married in 2014. Silencing doubters, the couple remained strong for more than six years, but a divorce first appeared possible in July 2020 when West tweeted about getting one. He later backtracked, and Kardashian stood by him.

Def Leppard drummer staging virtual concert

Def Leppard drummer Rick Allen is teaming with a parade of artists, including Billy Idol, Tommy Shaw of Styx and Wynonna Judd, for a virtual concert to provide assistance to musicians and industry workers in financial distress due to COVID-19.

Along with singer-songwriter wife Lauren Monroe, Allen has established the Sweet Relief Musicians Fund and on Jan. 23 will host the "Big Love Benefit Concert" and fundraiser set for 9 p.m. EST via nugs.tv. For more information and to purchase tickets to the "Big Love Benefit Concert," go to bit.ly/3s2zQPh.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Airline passenger fights after kids kick her seat

OR PORTLAND — A woman is facing charges after attacking another woman on a Spirit Airlines flight at Portland International Airport on Sunday because the woman's kids had kicked the back of her seat.

Daydrena Jaslin Walker-Williams pulled her luggage from an overhead bin and then punched passenger Nataly Hernandez several times, leaving Hernandez with a bleeding lip and lumps on her head, a probable-cause affidavit states.

Walker-Williams said she hit Hernandez "2 to 3 times in the face with her fist," according to the complaint. She told police she was upset Hernandez's children kicked the back of her seat, and said she told Hernandez "to tell her kids to stop it." The Oregonian/OregonLive reported. She said Hernandez ignored her and later "hit her on the shoulder."

Man accused of setting fire outside hospital

ND FARGO — A man accused of setting a fire outside a Fargo hospital early Wednesday has been arrested, according to police.

Officers and firefighters responded to Essentia Hospital about 2:30 a.m. where smoke had filled the lobby. According to authorities, the fire was burning in a garbage container near the entrance to the emergency department. Firefighters quickly extinguished the fire and ventilated the lobby.

Police said they arrested a 39-year-old man who witnesses saw starting the fire.

Police: Man used slur, threatened worker

NC HICKORY — A North Carolina man used a racial slur and threatened to shoot a juvenile employee at a fast-food restaurant, police said Tuesday.

The Hickory Police Department says in a news release on Tuesday that Jimmy Mott, 53, of Newton, called the management at the local Zaxby's to complain after leaving the drive-through, using the slur and threatening to shoot the worker he had dealt with as he ordered food on Sunday. The news release didn't reveal the juvenile worker's identity or his age.

Mott turned himself into police, who charged him with ethnic intimidation.

Lemur theft suspect told to stay away from zoo

CA SAN FRANCISCO — A 31-year-old man accused of stealing a lemur from the San Francisco Zoo last year has been ordered released from custody, but told to stay away from the zoo.



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

Fun for young and old

A mother pushes a child in a stroller past a mastodon sculpture outside the Denver Museum of Nature & Science on Tuesday.

Cory McGilloway made his first court appearance Tuesday after he was arrested last October for the theft of Maki the lemur, the San Francisco Chronicle reported.

The 21-year-old male lemur was discovered missing in October. Investigators found evidence of a forced entry to the lemur enclosure. A day later Maki was spotted in Daly City, a few miles south of San Francisco. The animal was in good health and transported back to the zoo.

Lawmaker wants an official state dinosaur

MA BOSTON — A Massachusetts state lawmaker is asking for the public's help to select an official state dinosaur.

State Rep. Jack Lewis tweeted Monday that he plans on filing the legislation on Jan. 15, adding that the effort is a good way for children to learn about the legislative process. But first, the Framingham Democrat is asking residents to select from one of two dinosaur species discovered in Massachusetts.

Podokesaurus holyokensis, which means "swift-footed lizard of Holyoke," was first discovered near Mount Holyoke in 1910 by Mignon Talbot, the first woman to name and describe a dinosaur, according to Lewis. The species was 3 to 6 feet in length, weighed approximately 90 pounds, and was

THE CENSUS

25 The number of years an Iowa woman could have spent in prison for defrauding charities by pretending to have cancer. Instead, Jennifer Hope Mikesell, 44, of Northwood, received a suspended sentence and was ordered to pay restitution and continue to seek treatment from a mental health professional, the Globe Gazette reported. She pleaded guilty in November to a felony charge of ongoing criminal conduct. Mikesell was arrested in December 2019 after being accused of pretending to have cancer and reaching out to local charities and individuals for donations of money, goods and services. She purportedly forged doctors' notes from providers at Mayo Clinic, where she claimed to be receiving care, according to court documents.

estimated to run 9 to 12 mph.

Anchisaurus polyzelus, which means "much sought after near lizard" was discovered in 1855 in Springfield. They were more than 6 feet long and about 60 to 75 pounds.

2 rescued from crashed vehicle after 2 days

IN SOUTH BEND — Two people were rescued Tuesday morning after being trapped inside a crashed motor vehicle in a northern Indiana ditch for two days, authorities said.

Hunters discovered the crash around 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, the St. Joseph County Sheriff's Department said in a news release. The vehicle was found along a farm lane, and the occupants said they had been there for two days, the release said.

The female driver suffered from several injuries, including a possible broken foot, it said. The male passenger suffered from

multiple unknown injuries. Both were hospitalized. The two were found conscious and alert, responders at the scene said.

2 officers arrested over apparent hotel room tryst

CT NORWALK — Two Connecticut police officers are facing criminal charges after they were found together in a hotel room while they were supposed to be on patrol.

Norwalk officers Michael Dimeglio and Sara Laudano turned themselves in at police headquarters on Tuesday and were arrested on charges stemming from the Oct. 10 hotel incident, the department announced on Facebook. The two officers were found at the Even Hotel shortly before 1 a.m. after Laudano did not respond to calls over the police radio or her cellphone, police officials said.

They were arrested Tuesday after an investigation determined that criminal charges were warranted, the officials said.

Laudano, 31, was charged with second-degree larceny, second-degree reckless endangerment and risk of injury to a child. Dimeglio, 38, was charged with second-degree larceny and second-degree reckless endangerment. Police officials did not explain the charges.

Officials: Cattle deaths caused by chemical in hay

CO COLORADO SPRINGS — About 30 cattle died in Colorado last month after ingesting high levels of nitrates on a rancher's property near Schriever Air Force Base, a veterinarian said.

Dr. John Heikkila of Choice Veterinary Service examined the animals and said on Monday that elevated levels of nitrates were found in at least one bale of hay eaten by the cattle, The Gazette reported. The rancher, who was not identified, fed the cattle the same hay for two weeks without incident before their deaths on Dec. 22, Heikkila said.

Nitrates can be found in some livestock feeds and are common in fertilizers and explosives. At high levels, they can lower the oxygen-carrying capacity of animal blood, resulting in death, he said.

Heikkila said a hay broker who sold the feed to the rancher is testing additional bales for high levels of nitrates.

Stripes SERVICE DIRECTORY

The Daily Guide to Navigating the European Business Market

Transportation

944

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- People saying Free Dog (different breeds) for adoption.

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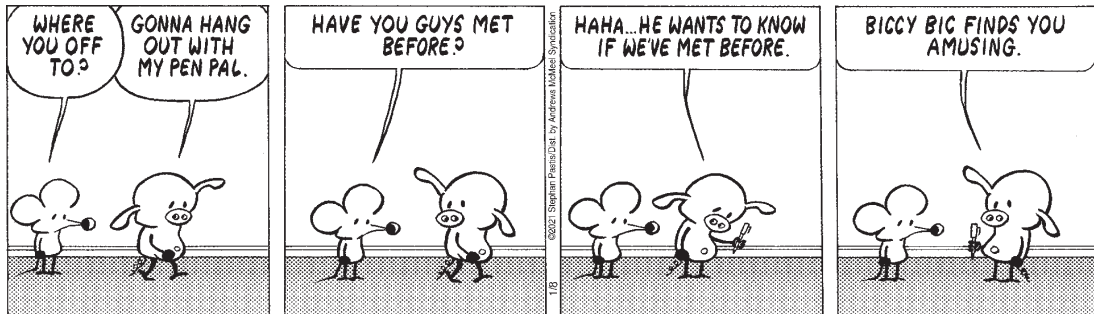
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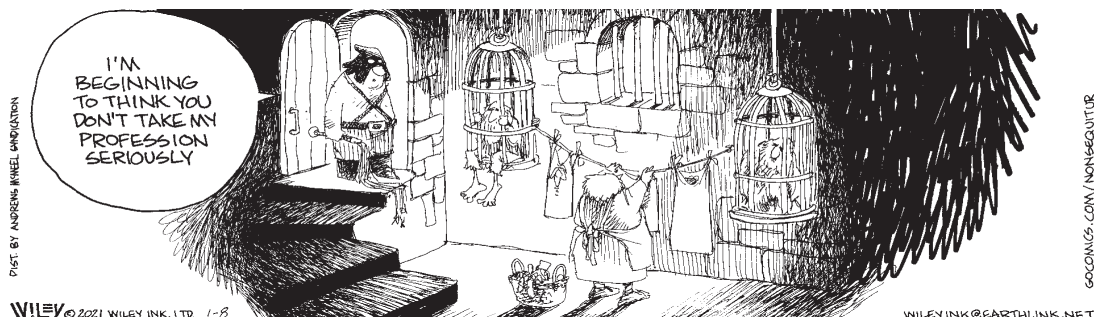
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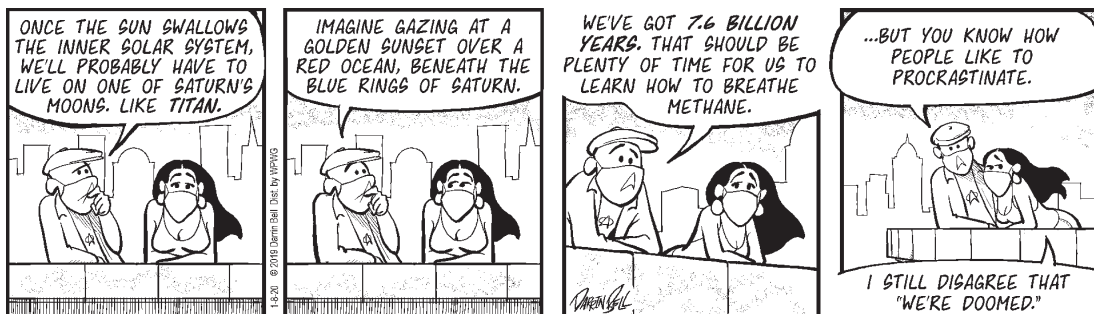
Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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48	49	50	51								52	
53						54					55	
56						57					58	

ACROSS

- 1 Lucy of "Kill Bill"
- 4 Mas' mates
- 7 Welsh pooch
- 12 Online chats, briefly
- 13 J.D. holder
- 14 Two-tone cookies
- 15 — -jongg
- 16 Coat-storage area in a restaurant
- 18 Census stat
- 19 — Haute
- 20 Lowly worker
- 22 Compass dir.
- 23 Young whale
- 27 UFO crew
- 29 Ran off to wed
- 31 Bamboo eater
- 34 Thespian
- 35 Somnolent
- 37 Previously
- 38 "Roots" author Haley
- 39 Immigrant's subj.
- 41 Opposite of "sans"
- 45 Proportion
- 47 Ms. Longoria
- 48 Hotel security measure
- 52 — Lancelot
- 53 Craze
- 54 Soccer's Hamm
- 55 Eastern path
- 56 Antlered animals
- 57 Utter
- 58 NBC weekend show

DOWN

- 1 Succotash beans
- 2 Mirror's offering
- 3 Theater worker
- 4 Treaty
- 5 Acropolis locale
- 6 Boat's back
- 7 Pepsi rival
- 8 Hockey's Bobby
- 9 Old Olds
- 10 Sticky stuff
- 11 Belief
- 17 Manitoba tribe
- 21 UPS rival
- 23 Winter quaff
- 24 Likely
- 25 Zodiac cat
- 26 Dime portrait
- 28 Spigot

- 30 Trail the pack
- 31 Unpaid TV ad
- 32 100 percent
- 33 Formerly known as
- 36 "Amen!"
- 37 "No One" singer Keys
- 40 Rose parts
- 42 Bulletproof apparel
- 43 Perrier rival
- 44 Yule tune
- 45 Some HDTVs
- 46 Fine
- 48 Apt. divisions
- 49 Feedbag tidbit
- 50 — tear (raging)
- 51 Russian jet

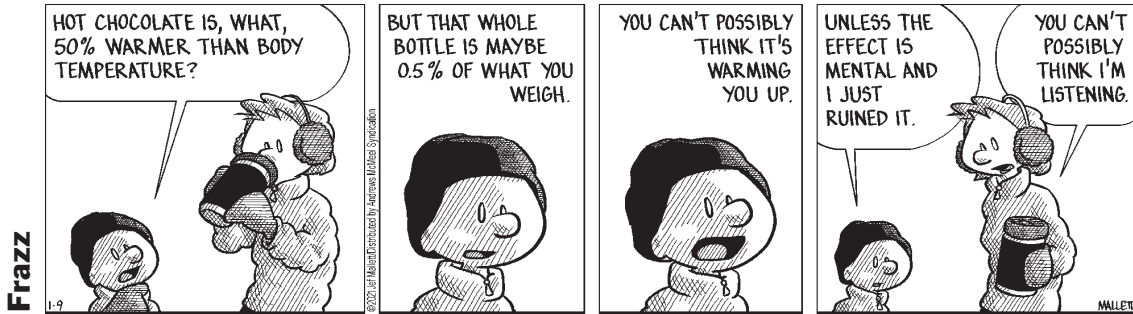
Answer to Previous Puzzle

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A	R	S	O	N		M	A	R		L	E	N			
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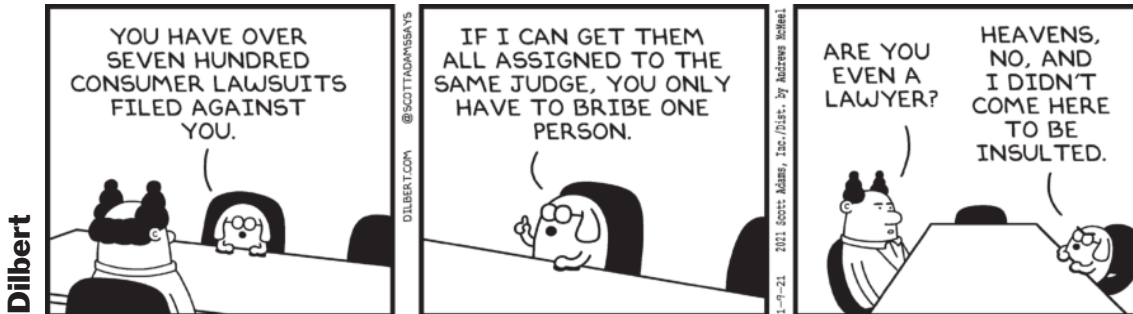
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CRYPTOQUIP

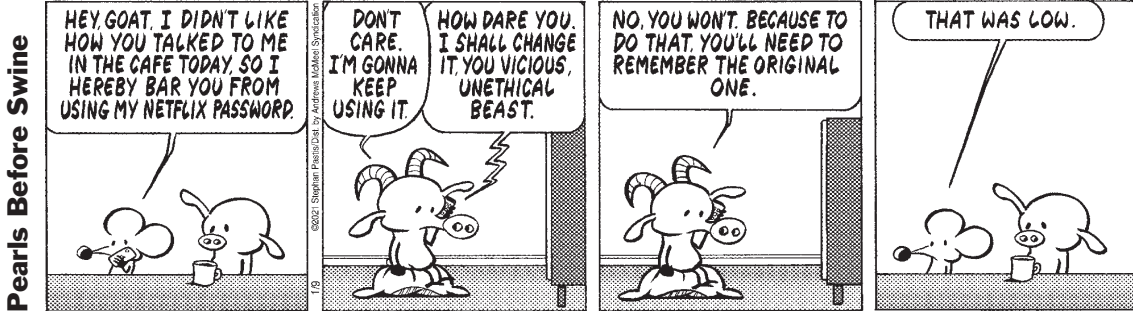
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MWWMTUYSW AET LBV SH
EQLEZH LEUWBSTP XMVXQM.
S BEIM UBM HUEYSTP YVQM.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: POPULAR SONG AND FLICK CONCERNING A PITMAN'S UNSTEADY WAY OF WALKING: "COAL MINER'S TOTTER."
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: W equals C



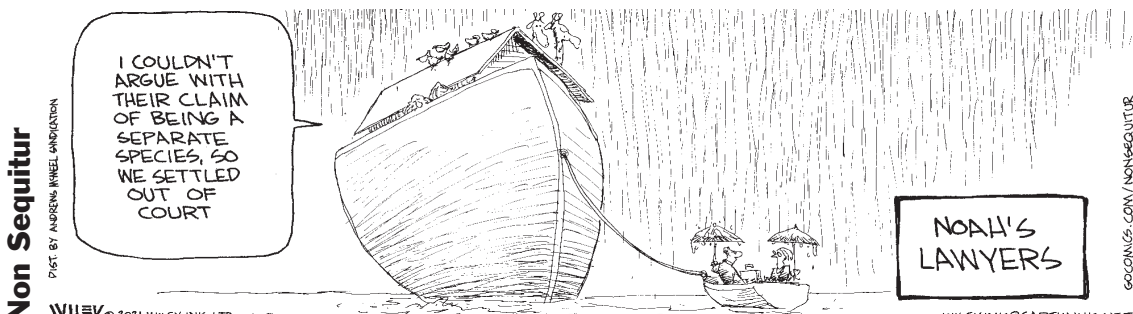
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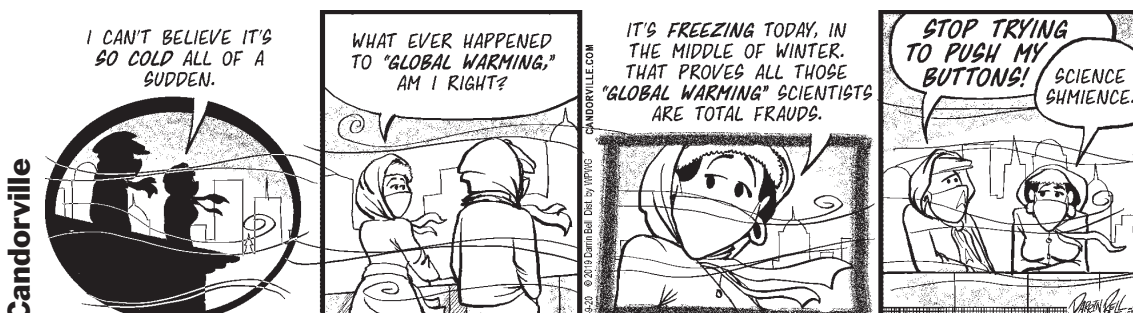
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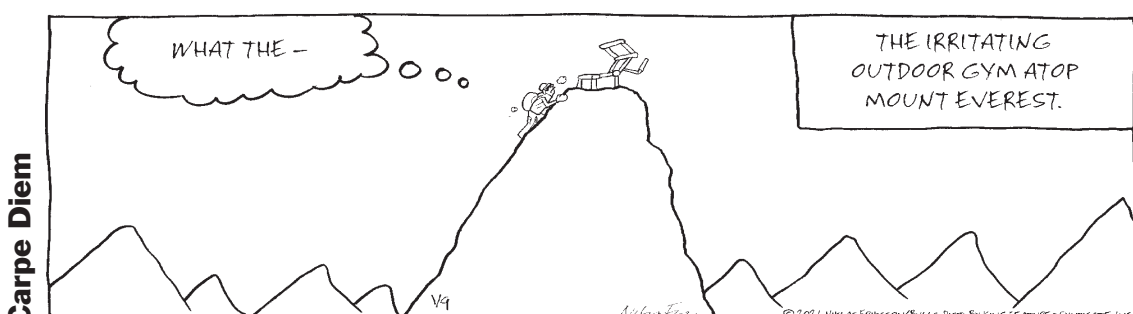
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45						46				47		
48						49				50		
51						52				53		

ACROSS

- 1 Impose
- 4 Zilch
- 8 Mama — Elliot
- 12 Fire sign?
- 13 Slanted type (Abbr.)
- 14 Queue after Q
- 15 PBS funder
- 16 Young cow
- 17 Wine label datum
- 18 Newspaper section
- 21 Frazier foe
- 22 Allow
- 23 Once and again
- 26 Conditions
- 27 Plead
- 30 Part of Q.E.D.
- 31 Bake sale org.
- 32 Pop choice
- 33 Novelist Rand
- 34 Soon-to-be grads
- 35 "Yippee!"
- 36 Moo — pork
- 37 Ecol. watchdog
- 38 In agreement
- 45 TV explorer
- 46 Read quickly
- 47 Cotillion celeb
- 48 Let fall
- 49 "Would — to you?"
- 50 Narc's org.
- 51 Fill fully

- 52 — Lang Syne
- 53 Blue hue

DOWN

- 1 Glazier's sheet
- 2 Secondhand
- 3 Popular Asian cuisine
- 4 Kidman of "The Hours"
- 5 Arcade pioneer
- 6 Painter Salvador
- 7 Farm crop
- 8 Burial chamber
- 9 Cruising
- 10 Male deer
- 11 Foolproof
- 19 Diplomacy
- 20 French article
- 23 Afternoon social
- 24 Sardonic
- 25 Author Fleming
- 26 — a Wonderful Life
- 27 Short do
- 28 "Xanadu" band
- 29 The "G" of LGBTQ
- 31 Former German kingdom
- 32 Bloke
- 34 "Thar — blows!"
- 35 Unlocked
- 36 Form
- 37 Cybermessages
- 38 Probability
- 39 Director Ephron
- 40 Jog
- 41 Rights advocacy org.
- 42 Tosses in
- 43 Nerd's kin
- 44 Online auction site

Answer to Previous Puzzle

L	I	U	P	A	S	C	O	R	G	I
I	M	S	A	T	T	O	R	E	O	S
M	A	H	C	H	E	C	K	R	O	O
A	G	E	T	E	R	R	E			
S	E	R	F	N	N	E	C	A	L	F
			E	T	S	E	L	O	P	E
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S	L	E	E	P	Y	A	G	O		
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M	A	N	I	A	M	I	A	T	A	O
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1-9

CRYPTOQUIP

LP QPM XMCCPXV GSHX
 NZMTLYQ LVGVYRVTG HX ZANV
 GP RVG PMG GSHX XGMAAPYT
 XGZHT? SVYV'X XPZCHTR!
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IN THIS MOVIE I PLAY AN ECCENTRIC MAN WHO IS ALWAYS WATCHING PEOPLE. I HAVE THE STARING ROLE.
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: X equals S

STARS AND STRIPES

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Lt. Col. Richard McClintic, Pacific commander
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Trump chose a riot as his farewell

By DAVID VON DREHLE

The Washington Post

Let the photograph of officers with weapons drawn, defending the chamber of the House of Representatives against a window-smashing mob, be seared into the memory of every American, today and for generations to come. That is the legacy of Donald Trump.

That's the note on which he chose to leave us. Some presidents give a farewell address, and a few of those have been quite good. Trump chose a farewell riot.

He summoned an angry crowd to Washington using his damnable Twitter account. He stoked them to believe that his loyal vice president had the power and the will to reverse the election results. And when Vice President Mike Pence at last found the frontier of his conscience — the line beyond which even his ambition and his debasement would not let him go — there stood America's self-proclaimed law-and-order president, inciting the crowd to march on the Capitol to stop Pence from doing his constitutionally mandated duty.

All that ensued Wednesday — the reported death of one woman, the injuries, the tear gas, the property damage, the fear, the outrage of elected officials forced to cover their heads and flee to safety — was triggered then and there. It was Trump's Riot, and characteristically, having stirred things up, Trump retired to the safety of his self-centered bubble to let others deal with the consequences.

Trump lit the fuse on Wednesday morning, pouty over his repudiation by Georgia voters. But he had been priming the explosion for months. He knew he was likely to lose in November, so he began feeding his supporters the fantasy that the election might be stolen. His media supporters — grifters and op-

portunists who use Trump to sell fake steroids and body armor and erectile dysfunction medicine — were happy to chime in.

Truth? Who needs it? "In this day and age, people want something that tends to affirm their views and opinions," chirped the veteran propagandist Christopher Ruddy, proprietor of Newsmax. A small army of self-promoting lawyers were happy to file bogus lawsuits. Invited by a judge in Wisconsin to present evidence, Trump's team called precisely zero witnesses. Asked by a court in Pennsylvania to support charges of election fraud, Trump's team revised its brief to remove the unsupportable claims. In a disgraceful phone call to Georgia's secretary of state, Trump himself promised "certified" evidence at his next rally. But the rally came and went, and Trump produced nothing.

Inevitably, some people believed it. They traveled to Washington, they cheered their president's call to battle, and they marched down Pennsylvania Avenue to attack Congress and the vice president of the United States.

There will be a lot of second-guessing of the Capitol Police and of public safety officials generally in the District of Columbia. How could they let this happen? Let's be clear: Such questions are completely off-base. No official should be blamed for failing to anticipate that the president of the United States would incite a mob to overwhelm the Capitol. We cannot accommodate ourselves to the idea that this should be foreseeable; that we should plan against it; that law enforcement in Washington must go to battle stations in anticipation of an attack by one branch of government against another.

Now, maybe they'll say he was just joking.

For Trump's apologists, that's always the last-ditch defense. He was just joking when

he said, after neo-Nazis marched with torches through Charlottesville, Va., that there were "good people on both sides." He was "a performance artist" when he accused a former congressman of murdering a staff member. He was pulling our legs when he suggested that drinking disinfectant might cure COVID-19.

Perhaps I've contributed in some way over the years, by occasionally putting his incendiary attention-seeking into the context of a life spent shilling — though my intention was to help people defend themselves against a profoundly reckless and insincere man.

The idea that the presidency could be an inside joke, an extended troll — "make liberals cry again," hardy-har-har — has been founded on a presumption that the infrastructure of American liberty and law is so solid it can withstand anything. It doesn't matter what elected leaders do or say. If the president tweets incendiary lies, well, that's just Trump. If some grasping senators want to stage a fake protest of the election, if they want to make speeches and raise money with unfounded claims of fraud — no problem! That's just politics. Their colleagues will bail them out by voting them down.

The Trump Riot is strong medicine for such disordered thinking. No cloak of invulnerability protects the American republic. Things can get worse here, just like everywhere else on Earth.

The thin line between liberty and anarchy is that frontier of conscience that Pence finally discovered, that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., finally discovered, that Donald Trump has never glimpsed.

Washington Post columnist David Von Drehle is the author of "Rise to Greatness: Abraham Lincoln and America's Most Perilous Year."

Trump's incomprehensible indifference to mayhem

By HUGH HEWITT

Special to The Washington Post

Abraham Lincoln took office in 1861 as genuine war clouds loomed, a far, far worse situation than the storming of the Capitol by lawless rioters Wednesday. Lincoln had arrived in the nation's city from Illinois by a roundabout route for fear of assassination along the way. He closed his first inauguration this way. "We are not enemies, but friends," he said. "We must not be enemies."

Lincoln was not naive. He understood the deep divides in the still-young United States but implored everyone to step back from the brink of violence. "Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection," he said. "The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

Those moderating forces, which proved impossible to summon in Lincoln's day, have been largely missing from our country for four years, since the shock of the election of President Donald Trump. Hyperpartisans have waged virtual campaigns against one another, and sometimes the virtual violence turned real. Often the police and other authorities have hung back and allowed

looting and lawlessness to go unpunished. At other times, the police themselves have been the targets of attack, some physical and much verbal.

When Trump supporters gathered in the District of Columbia this week to "Stop the Steal," it is hard to imagine that more than a tiny fraction intended violence. But some surely did, and they chose their moment with fierce intent. Congress had gathered to certify the election of President-elect Joe Biden, a ceremonial process that has in recent cycles on occasion developed a counterpoint ritual of objection and debate.

But the objectors in 2004 or 2016 did not object on behalf of a contender so indifferent to the facts of vote counts, court decisions and public opinion as Trump.

I do not believe the president intended Wednesday's riot. It has done him, and his hopes for a future political comeback, great damage. If he did not foresee what the people in the outer fringes of his support were capable of, he ought to have seen it. As it unfolded, he ought to have been quick to condemn it. And he should have done so without any sort of mention of his own grievances.

His subsequent evening tweet (since taken down by Twitter) bordered on incomprehensible indifference to the mayhem of the day and the death that is a consequence of the violence. He ought to be filled with remorse.

The president stoked emotions even as

Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, and others were set to object to the certification of some Electoral College votes and air the grievances he alleges. Before they could make their case, the mob struck.

The country is shamed. The criminals should be prosecuted. Trespassing at the Capitol and menacing elected representatives are crimes. Examples must be made so it cannot happen again.

Still, we must be friends, not enemies. Every terrorist who has menaced public officials in public places and every thug who threatens a journalist or a peaceful protester is of a piece and that piece is anti-American. Our leaders are supposed to be examples, not provocateurs. They must calm, not inflame.

Networks addicted to cringe-inducing shout-fests between Trump-Derangement-Syndrome-suffering pundits and blind-to-his-faults Trump apologists are culpable too for the atmosphere of mutual contempt.

Shame on everyone who breached the peace. And shame on those who malign those who did nothing of the sort. If we are to be friends, it has to begin with careful discrimination between those on the fringe who embrace violence and the 99% of Americans who reject it.

Hugh Hewitt, a Washington Post contributing columnist, hosts a nationally syndicated radio show on the Salem Network. He is also a political analyst for NBC and a professor of law at Chapman University Law School.

NBA ROUNDUP

Beal scores 60 in loss to 76ers

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Joel Embiid scored 38 points and the NBA-leading Philadelphia 76ers overcame a Washington record-tying 60-point performance by Bradley Beal in a 141-136 win over the Wizards on Wednesday night.

The Sixers are an NBA-best 7-1 in coach Doc Rivers' first season in Philadelphia

Beal was stuffed on a layup and missed a three-pointer inside the final minute. But the dynamic guard, who once scored 53 and 55 points in consecutive games, sank a free throw with 4.4 seconds left to reach 60. He went 20-for-25 from the floor, 7-for-10 on three-pointers and was 13-for-15 from the line to match Gilbert Arenas for the franchise mark.

Magic 105, Cavaliers 94: Former top overall draft pick Markelle Fultz suffered a season-ending tear of the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee during the first quarter of Orlando's win over visiting Cleveland.

Fultz, off to the best start of his career, was driving to the basket less than five minutes into the game when he was cut off by Isaac Okoro and his left knee buckled without contact. The Magic point guard writhed in pain on the floor for several minutes before he was helped into a wheelchair.

Fultz signed a three-year, \$50 million extension last month and was finally showing the promise that made him the No. 1 pick in the 2017 draft as he led Orlando to a quick start this season. He came in averaging a career-best 14.3 points in seven games.

Fultz was drafted by the Philadelphia 76ers as part of their lengthy rebuild but struggled for years with a tough-to-diagnose shoulder injury that ruined his jump shot. He was traded to the Magic in February 2019.

Terrence Ross scored 20 points and hit five three-pointers to lead Orlando, which beat the Cavaliers for a second time in three nights.

Celtics 107, Heat 105: Rookie guard Payton Pritchard's putback with 0.2 seconds left capped a wild finish, and Boston won at Miami in their first matchup since last year's Eastern Conference finals.

Jayson Tatum scored 27 points and Jaylen Brown had 21 for the Celtics, who wasted an early 17-point lead and a 10-point lead in the final minute before winning.

Jimmy Butler had 26 points for Miami.

Knicks 112, Jazz 100: Austin Rivers scored 23 points, including 14 straight for host New York down the stretch, and Julius Randle had 30 points, 16 rebounds and seven assists in a defeat of Utah.

The Knicks trailed by 18 in the first half but outplayed the Jazz in the second and won for the fifth



Washington Wizards guard Bradley Beal, left, shoots against Philadelphia 76ers center Joel Embiid. Beal had 60 points in a 141-136 loss at Philadelphia to tie the Wizards' team record, held by Gilbert Arenas.



Orlando Magic guard Markelle Fultz suffered a likely season-ending knee injury in a 105-94 defeat of the Cleveland Cavaliers.

time in six games. It was tied at 96 with under five minutes to play before Rivers made four three-pointers in the final 4:17.

Elfrid Payton scored 22 points for New York.

Thunder 111, Pelicans 110: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 21 points, George Hill hit the go-ahead free throws with 12 seconds left, and Oklahoma City won at New Orleans.

The Pelicans had the final possession of the game, and top scorers Brandon Ingram and Zion Williamson both touched the ball. But it was second-year reserve guard Nickeil Alexander-Walker who took the last shot from three-point range and it rimmed out.

Darius Bazley had 20 points and 12 rebounds for the Thunder, who avenged a home loss to New Orleans last week while winning for just the second time in six games.

Pacers 114, Rockets 107: Malcolm Brogdon scored a career-high 35 points and made the go-

ahead three-pointer with 2:22 to go, leading host Indiana past Houston.

Justin Holiday added a season-best 20 points for the Pacers.

Suns 123, Raptors 115: Devin Booker scored 24 points, Jae Crowder added 21 and host Phoenix made 21 three-pointers against Toronto.

The Suns hit at least 20 threes for the fourth time in franchise history. Crowder led the way with six and Cameron Johnson added four as the Suns finished 21 of 40 (52.5%) from three-point range.

Bucks 130, Pistons 115: Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 25 points and Khris Middleton added 23 as host Milwaukee rolled past Detroit for its third straight victory.

The Bucks (5-3) also beat the Pistons (1-7) on Monday night in Milwaukee and have won their last nine regular-season meetings with Detroit. The Bucks were ahead 82-56 at halftime and led by 34 in the third quarter.

Jerami Grant had 31 points for

the Pistons.

Hornets 102, Hawks 94: Gordon Hayward scored a career-high 44 points and Charlotte recovered to win at Atlanta after trailing for the first time in the fourth quarter.

The Hornets led by double figures most of the game before the Hawks claimed their first lead, 86-85, on John Collins' three-point play with 5:22 remaining. Hayward answered with a jumper and his own three-point play, and Charlotte never trailed again.

Collins led Atlanta with 23 points and 11 rebounds.

Clippers 108, Warriors 101: Kawhi Leonard had 21 points, including the tying and go-ahead baskets midway through the fourth quarter, and Los Angeles won at Golden State in the first of two consecutive matchups between the Pacific Division rivals.

Paul George returned from a one-game absence with a sore right ankle to add 21 points and 12 rebounds in the Clippers' fourth straight win against Golden State, which got just 13 points from Stephen Curry on a cold shooting night for the two-time MVP.

Kings 128, Bulls 124: Buddy Hield converted a four-point play with 38 seconds left to make up for a horrible shooting night, and Sacramento held off visiting Chicago.

Hield missed 12 of his first 14 shots and was 1-for-8 on three-pointers before hitting one from the top of the arc and getting fouled by former Kings teammate Garrett Temple. Hield sank the free throw and finished with 10 points.

First-round draft pick Tyrese Haliburton scored 15 of his season-high 17 points in the fourth quarter.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	7	1	.875	—
Boston	6	3	.667	1½
New York	5	3	.625	2
Brooklyn	4	4	.500	3
Toronto	1	6	.143	5½

Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	6	2	.750	—
Atlanta	4	4	.500	2
Miami	3	4	.429	2½
Charlotte	3	5	.375	3
Washington	2	6	.250	4

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Indiana	6	2	.750	—
Milwaukee	5	3	.625	1
Cleveland	4	4	.500	2
Chicago	4	5	.444	2½
Detroit	1	7	.125	5

Western Conference

Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New Orleans	4	4	.500	—
Dallas	3	4	.429	½
San Antonio	3	4	.429	½
Houston	2	4	.333	1
Memphis	2	5	.286	1½

Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Utah	4	4	.500	—
Denver	3	4	.429	½
Portland	3	4	.429	½
Oklahoma City	3	4	.429	½
Minnesota	2	5	.286	1½

Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Phoenix	6	2	.750	—
L.A. Lakers	6	2	.750	—
L.A. Clippers	6	3	.667	½
Golden State	4	4	.500	2
Sacramento	4	4	.500	2

Wednesday's games

Orlando 105, Cleveland 94
Indiana 114, Houston 107
Philadelphia 141, Washington 136
New York 112, Utah 100
Charlotte 102, Atlanta 94
Boston 107, Miami 105
Oklahoma City 111, New Orleans 110
Milwaukee 130, Detroit 115
Phoenix 123, Toronto 115
Sacramento 128, Chicago 124
L.A. Clippers 108, Golden State 101

Thursday's games

Philadelphia at Brooklyn
Cleveland at Memphis
Dallas at Denver
Minnesota at Portland
San Antonio at L.A. Lakers

Friday's games

Phoenix at Detroit
Charlotte at New Orleans
Oklahoma City at New York
Washington at Boston
Brooklyn at Memphis
Orlando at Houston
Utah at Milwaukee
Chicago at L.A. Lakers
L.A. Clippers at Golden State
Toronto at Sacramento

Saturday's games

Denver at Philadelphia
Atlanta at Charlotte
Miami at Washington
Phoenix at Indiana
Cleveland at Milwaukee
San Antonio at Minnesota
Orlando at Dallas
Portland at Sacramento

NBA leaders

Through Jan. 6

Scoring					
	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Beal, WAS	25	93	70	274	34.3
Curry, GS	24	57	237	28.3	28.3
Harden, HOU	24	42	149	28.4	28.4
Durant, OKC	24	38	149	28.4	28.4
McCullum, POR	24	38	149	28.4	28.4
Irving, BKN	7	22	190	27.1	27.1
Tatum, BOS	8	31	237	26.3	26.3
Brown, BOS	9	24	236	26.2	26.2
Antetokounmpo, MIL	8	24	202	25.3	25.3
Lillard, POR	8	24	202	25.3	25.3
Young, ATL	8	24	202	25.3	25.3
Doncic, DAL	8	24	202	25.3	25.3
Embiid, PHI	8	24	202	25.3	25.3
Sexton, CLE	8	24	202	25.3	25.3
Ingram, NO	8	24	202	25.3	25.3
LaVine, CHI	8	24	202	25.3	25.3
George, LAC	8	24	202	25.3	25.3
Jokic, DEN	8	24	202	25.3	25.3
Grant, DET	8	24	202	25.3	25.3
James, LAL	8	24	202	25.3	25.3

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF

NFL prospects abound in title game

By RALPH D. RUSSO
Associated Press

Former LSU linebacker Patrick Queen is a good example of how a huge performance in a national championship game can help a player boost his NFL draft stock.

Queen was a rising prospect throughout last season and capped it by being the defensive MVP of the College Football Playoff championship victory against Clemson. About three and half months later, Queen was selected in the first round by the Baltimore Ravens at No. 28 overall.

No. 1 Alabama and No. 3 Ohio State head into the national title game Monday night with a slew of future NFL players. The matchups will not only determine who wins a championship, but could also influence where some of their stars are drafted.

"You do want to look into a player's ability to play in the clutch and in the big moments because obviously when you're putting together a football team, an NFL roster, your goal is to be playing in the playoffs," said Jim Nagy, Senior Bowl executive director and a former NFL scout. "So you want to look at the consequential games. The games that really matter."

Alabama center Landon Dickerson, who is out with a knee injury, and guard Deonte Brown have already accepted invitations to the Senior Bowl on Jan. 30, Nagy said. Heisman Trophy-winning receiver DeVonta Smith,

star running back Najee Harris and tackle Alex Leatherwood have also been invited.

For Ohio State, center Josh Myers, running back Trey Sermon, linebackers Tuf Borland and Barron Browning, and defensive end Jonathon Cooper plan to take part in the Senior Bowl, Nagy said. Invitations have also been extended to defensive tackle Haskell Garrett and linebacker Pete Werner.

There are perhaps 20 players who could potentially be drafted in April after playing for the Crimson Tide and Buckeyes.

Quarterbacks

Ohio State's Justin Fields was amazing against Clemson, throwing six touchdown passes and showing off accuracy and arm strength all over the field. He also displayed poise and toughness, playing most of the game after taking a nasty hit to his side.

That came after an inconsistent and truncated season that has called into question Fields' status as the best available QB behind Trevor Lawrence.

"There's a lot of buzz around the league about (BYU's) Zach Wilson being the No. 2 pick in the draft behind Lawrence," said Dane Brugler, a draft analyst for The Athletic. "Fields, with what he did, it changed that a little bit. He's making teams kind of go back and reconsider."

The Alabama defense has had some bumpy moments, but it is still the most talented group Ohio

State has faced, starting with SEC defensive player of the year Patrick Surtain II. The junior will probably be the first cornerback drafted if he declares.

Plus, Fields will be tested by Alabama schematically.

"Give (Tide coach) Nick Saban 10 days to figure you out and to find your weaknesses, that's terrifying," said Matt Miller of NFL Draft Scout.

Alabama quarterback Mac Jones is among the second tier of quarterbacks in the upcoming draft that includes Florida's Kyle Trask and maybe SMU's Shane Buechele.

Jones has been superb, but he doesn't have athletic traits comparable to Fields and Lawrence. Jones is surrounded by top-end talent, and offensive coordinator Steve Sarkisian has done a good job of scheming receivers open and creating mismatches.

"He's a very, very difficult evaluation because how do you separate him from just an elite situation," Brugler said of Jones.

Especially on the heels of former Alabama star Tua Tagovailoa's rookie NFL season, which was solid but far from spectacular.

Wade's world

Ohio State cornerback Shaun Wade made the All-America team, but that was a generous evaluation based on reputation and last year's play when he was a nickelback and slot corner.

His move to the outside this



MICHAEL AINSWORTH / AP

Alabama linebacker Christian Harris, left, and defensive back Patrick Surtain II celebrate during a College Football Playoff semifinal. The pair is part of the best defense Ohio State will face this season.

season has been spotty at best and indicative of Ohio State's cornerback play in general. Now, he gets to face Smith, a sure first-rounder, and the gemstone of Alabama's prolific passing game.

"If I'm Alabama and Steve Sarkisian, I'm getting DeVonta Smith on (Wade's) side of the field as much as humanly possible because no one has been able to stop him," Miller said.

Brugler said Wade's future might still lie at safety.

"At the same time, if he goes out there and performs at a high level against Smith, then all of a sudden that's a different conversation," Brugler said. "But based on what we've seen from Shaun Wade this year, it just doesn't

seem like a realistic possibility."

In the trenches

Alabama defensive tackle Christian Barmore is a third-team All-American and a third-year sophomore, so he is no sure thing to enter the draft.

The 310-pounder has not played at a consistently high level that would make him a lock first-rounder. Still, Brugler said the defensive line class is thin at the top of this draft and Barmore has a chance to be best of the bunch.

Barmore will face a good test in Ohio State's interior line. All-America guard Wyatt Davis and Meyers are likely Day 2 draft picks with bottom of the first-round potential.

NOTEBOOK

Waddle practicing, status for game unclear

By JOHN ZENOR
Associated Press

Alabama star receiver Jaylen Waddle has returned to practice. Now the question is will he be able to play in the title game Monday night against Ohio State?

Crimson Tide offensive coordinator Steve Sarkisian says Waddle practiced on Tuesday, but he deferred questions on his status to coach Nick Saban, who did not address the media on Wednesday.

"We'll see where it goes from here," Sarkisian said. "Clearly we've got about a week or so until the game."

Waddle hasn't played since breaking his right ankle while returning the opening kickoff against Tennessee on Oct. 4. One of the nation's most dangerous return men, he had surgery after the game.

In his absence, DeVonta Smith went on to put up big enough numbers to win the Heisman Trophy

on Tuesday. That would put the onus on the Buckeyes to defend that formidable pair.

"I think you absolutely have to prepare as if he's going to play," Ohio State defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs said. "He's an extraordinary athlete, extraordinary receiver."

Waddle had 557 yards and four touchdowns in the Tide's first four games, while opponents mostly kicked away from him.

Waddle has made three of the program's five longest scoring catches. His career average of 19.1 yards per catch ranks second among Tide players with at least 100 receptions. He also has returned two punts and a kick for touchdowns in his career.

"I think he's getting back into it," Smith said. "Of course he's going to take some time just for him to get back comfortable with everything, but he looks good to me."

Quarterback Mac Jones agreed.

Neither player offered an opinion on whether Waddle would play.

"It'd be really cool," Jones said. "Jaylen has worked really hard to get back on the field and I know he wants nothing more than to play, but I think they're just going to make that decision downstairs."

"But it's his choice, and I feel like in watching him, he looks really good out there. So we'll see what happens."

'Good day' For Buckeyes

A day after a report raised the possibility of the College Football Playoff championship being delayed because of COVID-19 issues at Ohio State, Buckeyes athletic director Gene Smith told The Associated Press he anticipated the game will go on as scheduled.

"In the COVID world it's day-by-day," Smith said Wednesday. "Today was a good day."

AL.com first reported Tuesday that Ohio State had reached out to

CFP officials with concerns about player availability when the Buckeyes face No. 1 Alabama on Monday night in Miami Gardens, Fla. A person with knowledge of the situation confirmed those discussions to the AP, but Smith and CFP Executive Director Bill Hancock both released statements saying there was no change to the schedule.

Smith declined to provide any details about what virus-related problems Ohio State might be facing, but he did say the team practiced Wednesday.

"We're in good shape. Ready to roll," Smith said.

Ohio State President Kristina M. Johnson posted photos on Twitter showing her visiting with coach Ryan Day and the team in the indoor practice facility.

"I can't wait to join Buckeyes around the world on Jan. 11 in cheering on this very special team," Johnson wrote.

West Coast exports

The West Coast will be well represented in the national championship game among the players.

Alabama All-America tailback Najee Harris, Ohio State wide receiver Chris Olave and Buckeyes All-America guard Wyatt Davis are all from California.

Harris, for one, misses the California sunshine, but he has no regrets about his trading the West Coast for the Southern humidity — and football.

"They say a lot of West Coast guys can't play in I guess conferences like this, the SEC," said Harris, who was fifth in the Heisman Trophy voting. "So I wanted to like kill that hype, I guess, in a way and show that we can play, that West Coast people can play."

"We have a lot more guys from the West Coast playing in the SEC than before, so it's good to see a lot of guys travel across."

NFL

Defenders Adams, Dunlap found fit with Seahawks

By TIM BOOTH
Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. — When Jamal Adams and Carlos Dunlap II each made it clear to their former employers they wanted out, part of the reason was so they could experience the postseason.

For Adams, he wanted to get there for the first time. For Dunlap, he wanted another chance at a playoff run in the latter stages of his career.

Both got their wish, leaving behind the Jets and Bengals respectively, and helped the Seattle Seahawks claim their first division title in four years going 12-4 this season. And now comes part of their reward: Saturday's wild-card round playoff matchup against the Los Angeles Rams.

For Adams, it will be the first playoff game of his career, assuming he's able to play. Adams suffered a left shoulder injury in the second half of last Sunday's win over San Francisco. Seattle coach Pete Carroll said Tuesday he was hopeful Adams would be able to play, but his status wouldn't be determined until later in the week.

For Dunlap, it will be his first playoff game since 2015 with Cincinnati. But in his five career playoff games, Dunlap has yet to experience a victory.

"It's been five years. So it's been a long time coming," Dunlap said. "But these guys here have been there many times before, so they know what to do when they get here. So I'm just wanting to play my part and contribute to what they asked me to do."

Dunlap and Adams both left behind losing situations when they were traded from New York and Cincinnati to Seattle. They've each proven to be major contributors to a defense that has made a complete turn from earlier in the season. Over the final eight games of the season, no team allowed fewer points than the Seahawks.

Adams set an NFL record for the most sacks by a defensive back with 9½ in the regular season, although sacks have only been an official stat since 1982. Dunlap's arrival seemed to help ignite Seattle's pass rush. He has 4½ sacks in eight games with



STEPHEN BRASHEAR/AP

Seahawks defensive back Jamal Adams (33) and defensive end Carlos Dunlap II came to Seattle in the offseason in search of the opportunity to play in the postseason. After helping the Seahawks claim their first division title in four years, the standout defensive players will get their wish when they meet the Los Angeles Rams in Saturday's wild-card playoff round matchup.

Seattle, but his presence seemed to bring legitimacy to the Seahawks defensive front.

"The fact he comes into the building, we get credibility," Seattle defensive coordinator Ken Norton Jr. said. "He comes off the ball, now he makes everybody else across the board better on the (defensive) line."

Adams seems to be especially enjoying his first trip to the postseason, although the sore shoulder and question of if he'll be able to play may be tempering some of the ex-

citement.

"I don't want to be too happy because I don't want people to say he's dramatic or he hasn't been here before," Adams said after the win over the Rams.

Even though both players are veterans, Seattle coach Pete Carroll said he views his more experienced players going to the postseason for the first time with the Seahawks through the same prism as rookies.

He may not have individual conversa-

tions this week, but the message to the whole group is the same: Don't make the event too big.

"It doesn't mean it's always just the young guys. It can be the guys that have never had it before, and now they've been dreaming about it, and now it's this monstrous opportunity and ordeal and they don't play like they're capable because they make it into something it isn't," Carroll said. "It's just football."

Comfort: Home-field advantage not apparent without fans

FROM PAGE 48

regular season — the first winning mark since the AFL-NFL merger in 1970. Road teams were narrowly outscored 6,353-6,339, a mere two-touchdown gap.

In 2019, though the visitors managed an anomaly of a plus-36 scoring margin, home teams still went 132-123-1 for a .518 winning percentage. In 2018, according to Sportradar, the advantage for the hosts was far more clear: a .602 winning percentage and a 564-point edge.

Over the previous 10 years, home teams collected 342 more wins than the visitors and scored an average of an additional 2.19 points per game. Over the 50 seasons prior to this unprecedented 2020 scene of largely empty stadiums, the home team winning percentage was .575.

The difference was immediate-



JEFF CHIU/AP

Empty seats are seen at the San Francisco 49ers' Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, Calif. The eight teams hosting NFL playoff games this month are more than happy to be staying home with all of comfort it brings, but the actual advantage of playing there all but disappeared during this pandemic season of mostly empty stadiums.

ly noticeable. Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers was able to lure Vikings linebacker Anthony Barr offside on third-and-5 late in the third quarter of the opener at Minnesota, which had enjoyed one of the NFL's most daunting environments for visiting teams.

The no-risk throw by Rodgers after the yellow flag flew went for a 39-yard completion to Marquez Valdes-Scantling to set up a score and put the game away. The Vikings, after matching the best home record in the NFC over their first four years at U.S. Bank Stadium, went 3-5 there in 2020. Their young and struggling defense had no help from a crowd on those critical third downs, making Sunday afternoons that much easier for the opposing offense.

Even in road games, the defense was more exposed in the highest-scoring regular season in NFL his-

tory.

"It is one of the most unique years when it comes to strategy, when it comes to trying to trick people," Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger said. "Sometimes you even are trying to do dummy signals and saying dummy things just to make things happen or to trick other teams."

The Vikings lost 33-27 at home to Chicago on Dec. 20, a defeat that ultimately gave the final wild card spot in the NFC to the Bears. Minnesota had played the week before at Tampa Bay, one of the few stadiums where state COVID-19 rules allowed up to 25% capacity.

"You don't realize how much the fans are important to you until they're gone," running back Dalvin Cook said. "I think that's with a lot of stuff in life, but us on the field, we notice it. We miss the fans so much."

NFL



PHOTOS BY ADRIAN KRAUS / AP

Above: Buffalo Bills wide receiver John Brown (15) celebrates his touchdown with wide receiver Stefon Diggs (14) in a 56-26 defeat of the Miami Dolphins on Jan. 3. Below: Bills wide receiver Isaiah McKenzie hauls in a touchdown catch against the Dolphins.

Bills' wealth of depth at receiver makes foes pay

By JOHN WAWROW
Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — The Bills have such a wealth of depth at receiver, Stefon Diggs found himself playing the role of traffic controller for quarterback Josh Allen last weekend.

With Diggs double-covered running a route to the left of the end zone, he pointed to the other side, where Isaiah McKenzie was wide-open for a 14-yard touchdown catch in Buffalo's season-ending 56-26 romp over the Miami Dolphins.

"It's not like Josh needs me to point at him to tell him where to throw the ball. I'm pretty sure he saw it," Diggs said with a chuckle on Wednesday. "But it's just a natural reaction when you see a guy open like, 'Hey, hey.'"

It's been that way for a pass-happy offense for much of the season in which the Bills set a single-season franchise record with 501 points and matched the NFL single-season record with 13 players scoring a TD receiving, including one by Allen.

That depth could come in handy Saturday when the AFC East champions (13-3) host their first playoff game in 24 years by facing the seventh-seeded Indianapolis Colts (11-5).

Injuries are suddenly catching up to Buffalo, with slot receiver Cole Beasley in jeopardy of missing his second consecutive game with a knee injury, while Diggs (oblique) and McKenzie (ankle)



are also nicked up.

Diggs, who did not practice Wednesday, said he's fine. Coach Sean McDermott did not provide updates on McKenzie or Beasley, who has not practiced since getting hurt in a 38-9 win at New England on Dec. 28.

Though missing Beasley would be a concern, after he finished second on the team with 82 catches and 967 yards, both career highs, it's somewhat mitigated by how Allen has spread the ball to whomever is on the field.

In a season Diggs became the team's first player to lead the NFL in catches (127) and yards receiving (1,535), the Bills had others making significant contributions.

Rookie Gabriel Davis ranked second on the team with seven touchdowns, followed by McKen-

zie, who scored five times on just 30 catches.

And don't forget John Brown. A year after leading Buffalo with 72 catches for 1,060 yards, the outside speedster has been limited to just nine games because of ankle and knee injuries and a stint on the reserve-COVID-19 list.

On Sunday, Brown returned after missing five games to show he's ready to reestablish his presence with four catches for 72 yards and a touchdown in just one half of work.

"That was something I needed to be able to test the water and get a good feeling and get my own confidence back up," Brown said of making his first catch, a 7-yarder over the middle, on the Bills' second snap from scrimmage.

Colts coach Frank Reich is fully aware of the challenges Buffalo presents his defense, which has been better against the run than the pass this season.

"They are hot, and they deserve the respect that we are giving them," said Reich, a former NFL quarterback who spent nine seasons with the Bills, where he served as Hall of Famer Jim Kelly's backup.

"But I also know, every team, no matter how good they are, us included, you can disrupt every offense," he added, by noting the Kelly-led Bills had their let-downs, too. "They are a very good team, just like the teams we were, but we weren't flawless. Nobody's flawless."

Wilson knows the problems, headaches Rams can present

By TIM BOOTH
Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. — Patience can be difficult when at times earlier this season racking up yards and scoring points came so easily for Russell Wilson and the Seattle Seahawks.

But no team has tested Wilson's patience during his career more than the Los Angeles Rams. Or has thrown the Seahawks quarterback for more sacks or given him more headaches.

In other words, don't expect easy yards or easy points for Seattle on Saturday when the Seahawks host the Rams in the NFC playoffs.

"I mean, they do everything well," Wilson said.

Just two weeks ago, the Seahawks struggled through a 20-9 victory over Los Angeles. After an ugly first half, Seattle got a couple of big plays early in the second half and pieced together just enough offense to clinch the NFC West title.

Wilson threw for 225 yards and a touchdown and ran for another in that victory. But he was also sacked five times after being sacked six times when the teams met in November, a Seattle loss.

Throughout his career, no team has troubled Wilson like the Rams. He's 8-10 against them, the only team he has a losing record against. His passer rating of 94.5 against Los Angeles — while still excellent comparatively — is the second-lowest of any team he's faced more than four times.

He's also been sacked 72 times in 18 games by the Rams, an average of four per game.

"They've got a great defensive line. They've got really good linebackers that can run side by side. The DBs can really play," Wilson said. "They're coached extremely well. It's going to be a great matchup."

8-10

Russell Wilson's career record against the Rams, the only team he has a losing record against. His passer rating of 94.5 against the team is his second-lowest against any team he has faced four or more times.

Source: Associated Press

The big plays, the easy touchdowns that defined the first half of the season for the Seahawks and put Wilson in the MVP conversation have mostly dried up over the final month of the year. Seattle's offense hasn't been as much explosive as it's been just efficient enough. After topping 30 points in seven of the first eight games, the Seahawks have done that just once during the second half of the season.

"The thing I think that we're pleased with is the last couple of weeks, going up against some good defenses, it took us a little while to get started, but we made some adjustments, we did some things," Seattle offensive coordinator Brian Schottenheimer said. "There was never any panic, our guys were poised. They knew that we would sort through the issues."

In his last six games, Wilson topped 250 yards passing only once, a mark he achieved in seven of the first eight games to start the season. But during that six-game stretch, Wilson threw only three interceptions.

It might be boring and at times infuriating for fans. But it's how Seattle views its best chances for success, especially with a defense playing markedly better.

"We're going to mix our game, do the things that we like doing, and see if we can find a way to get enough points to win the game. Whatever it is, it is," Seattle coach Pete Carroll said.



ELAINE THOMPSON / AP

Seattle Seahawks quarterback Russell Wilson (3) tries to fend off a sack by Los Angeles Rams defensive lineman Aaron Donald (99).

NFL

Time running out for Steelers' vets

By WILL GRAVES
Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — The opportunities are dwindling.

Ben Roethlisberger knows it. Cam Heyward and David DeCastro too.

It's been a decade since the Pittsburgh Steelers have reached the Super Bowl and a dozen years since they've won it. In most places, that's hardly a drought. Not in a place where players, coaches and front office members walk past six Lombardi Trophies each day when they get to work.

The chances Roethlisberger thought would pop up repeatedly following that stinging defeat to Green Bay in 2011 during his third Super Bowl appearance in six seasons have not materialized.

Now 38, playing with a surgically repaired right elbow and four years removed from his team's most recent playoff victory, Roethlisberger is well aware of how small the window has become for the AFC North champions (12-4) heading into Sunday's first-round visit from Cleveland (11-5).

"When I was a young guy, people tried to explain to me that take advantage of this, that and the other," Roethlisberger said Wednesday. "You're thinking 'I am young; I'll get back.' It's not guaranteed."

He's not being dramatic. While Roethlisberger is under contract for 2021, he says he won't make a firm decision until sometime in the offseason.

Left tackle Alejandro Villanueva is in the final days of a deal that will expire in March. During their car rides into practice each day, Villanueva and DeCastro trade barbs, debate ideas and try to appreciate what little time remains in this chapter of their lives.

"Kind of surreal thinking this might be the last year today because of the business side of it," DeCastro said.

And there is a financial reckon-

ing coming for the Steelers. Pittsburgh is already \$21 million over the 2021 salary cap, and that's with just 35 players under contract for next season.

Wide receiver JuJu Smith-Schuster and running back James Conner will hit the open market in the spring. Outside linebacker T.J. Watt will enter the final year of his rookie deal, and there's a strong desire to lock up the Defensive Player of the Year candidate long-term, which won't be cheap.

Cornerback Joe Haden, who will sit out on Sunday because of COVID-19 protocols, has a cap hit of more than \$15 million. Roethlisberger's is \$41.25 million. Though restructuring could ease some of the pain, it can't stem all of it.

The looming changes to a franchise that prides itself on its consistency have brought an added urgency to a season that's seen the Steelers look like both a Super Bowl contender and an also-ran, sometimes in the same game.

"You don't want to be saying 'What if?' and there's countless opportunities I've missed," Heyward said. "And I don't want this to be an opportunity I missed."

Heyward made an attempt to drive it across during a meeting when he outlined the bonus money for winning each round of the playoffs, a figure that runs into the low six figures. Oh, and the chance to become the first franchise to win seven Super Bowls.

"I know it can feel overwhelming but let your work take care of it," Heyward said.

Heyward missed Pittsburgh's run to the 2016 AFC championship game because of a pectoral injury. He was on the field, however, for a divisional-round loss to Jacksonville in 2017 when the Jaguars came to Heinz Field as seven-point underdogs and stunned the AFC's second seed by racing to a three-touchdown lead and then holding on.



GENE J. PUSKAR/AP

Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger warms up before a game against the Indianapolis Colts, Sunday, in Pittsburgh.



AARON DOSTER/AP

Ravens running back J.K. Dobbins powers through Bengals free safety Jessie Bates, right, and strong safety Vonn Bell, left, on Sunday in Cincinnati.

Ravens RB Dobbins achieving star status after slow start

By DAVID GINSBURG
Associated Press

J.K. Dobbins knew his spectacular career at Ohio State provided no guarantee that he would immediately become an NFL star.

Dobbins was the first Buckeyes running back to rush for 1,000 yards as a freshman, sophomore and junior. He finished with 4,459 yards on the ground — second most in school history — and scored 43 touchdowns for the Big Ten powerhouse before leaving with one year of eligibility left.

Drafted in the second round last April by the Baltimore Ravens, Dobbins arrived at training camp fourth on the depth chart behind Mark Ingram, Gus Edwards and Justice Hill.

"My expectation was to come in and play," Dobbins said. "I'm not going to pull the rookie card and say, 'Oh, I'm a rookie. I'm just going to wait this out and be patient.' That's not me."

So, he worked hard and did his best whenever he got the chance to carry the football — which wasn't often during the first six weeks of the season. At that point, he had 25 attempts for 154 yards, which pretty much amounted to a typical Saturday afternoon for Dobbins at Ohio State.

Dobbins never got down on himself, even when he had just one carry (for 34 yards) in an October game against Cincinnati.

"That was one of the growing points of my career, because I've

"I'm going to find a way to get on this field and help this team win as many games as possible — get us to a Super Bowl, if that's possible."

J.K. Dobbins

Baltimore Ravens rookie running back

always been able to work so hard and be able to play right away," Dobbins said.

The rookie stayed the course, and his diligence and patience have paid off. Dobbins has scored in each of his past six games, and on Sunday he rambled for 160 yards and two touchdowns in Cincinnati.

He is now the featured running back for the playoff-bound Ravens, who open on the road Sunday against AFC South champion Tennessee. For Dobbins, everything turned out exactly as planned.

"As soon as they drafted me, my thought process was, 'Let's go in here, let's get better, and I'm going to find a way to get on this field and help this team win as many games as possible — get us to a Super Bowl, if that's possible,'" Dobbins said. "And that's just what I've been doing."

At 5-foot-10 and 212 pounds, Dobbins has the ability to squeeze through a tiny hole and the strength to bust a tackle or two if met at the line. He also has the speed to whisk past pursuers in the open field, a feature he put on full display during a 72-yard

touchdown run against the Bengals.

Dobbins is so slick that he's even impressed Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson, an elusive runner with his own impressive set of moves.

"Being honest, he's just explosive," Jackson said. "I'll be on the field (watching him) and I'm like, 'Bro, you are unbelievable with the ball.' Then I'm like, 'He might get hit right there,' and then he'll just do something crazy. That's why he's out there. He's just doing amazing things."

Despite the slow start and missing a game in December while on the reserve/COVID-19 list, Dobbins finished his first NFL season with 805 yards rushing, averaging a robust 6 yards per carry. He set a Ravens rookie record for touchdowns with nine, and his six straight games with at least 50 yards on the ground and a rushing TD is tied for the longest streak by a rookie since the 1970 merger.

"He's been working for his opportunity and growing and learning," Baltimore coach John Harbaugh said. "He's done a great job and he's got a great attitude."

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MICHAEL CONROY / AP

Indianapolis Colts' Darius Leonard, left, causes a fumble by Jacksonville Jaguars quarterback Mike Glennon. The Colts are among the top teams in the league in forcing turnovers.

The Reich stuff: Coach says Colts are built for playoffs

By MICHAEL MAROT
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS
From the start of training camp, Frank Reich kept insisting the Indianapolis Colts were a legitimate playoff team — and a real Super Bowl contender.

He didn't waver when the running game got bogged down early in the season or when injuries took down one key contributor after another. He continued to believe even after the Colts blew a 17-point third-quarter lead at Pittsburgh, putting Indy on the precipice of missing the postseason. And Reich remained hopeful his former team, the Buffalo Bills, could come through and help out Indianapolis on Sunday afternoon.

They did. And now, Reich insists Indy is ready to shake things up in the AFC.

"We should be loose, we should be aggressive, we should be able to play our best football game of the year because no one's going to give us a chance," he said Monday, less than 24 hours after securing the No. 7 seed with a 28-14 victory over Jacksonville. "It's the us-against-the-world mentality. If you were around the team like I am day in and day out, you'd understand where I get the confidence to think we can beat anyone in this tournament."

It's a refrain Reich has repeated frequently this season. As one of those who played on all four of Buffalo's Super Bowl teams, he has some semblance of what is

90.5

Rushing yards allowed per game by the Colts, the second-toughest average in the NFL.

Source: Associated Press

needed to win playoff games.

He has an experienced quarterback in Philip Rivers, who has played his most efficient football during the second half of the season. He sees the running game surging at the right time, and a run defense that allows 90.5 yards, the second-stingiest average in the league.

Will it be enough when the Colts (11-5) visit the AFC East champion Bills (13-3) on Saturday?

Perhaps. But Reich believes there's one more key ingredient in Indy's locker room.

"It starts with what we believe, we have the team to win it all," he said. "We've got the right players, the right coaches and the belief and confidence in each other to win it all. I can tell you on a personal note, in my 26 years in the NFL, I've been on teams that have won 11 games eight times. Six of those eight went to the Super Bowl."

What's working

The ground game. Even before Jonathan Taylor rushed for 253 yards Sunday, the Colts' runners were churning out yards at a pretty good clip. They had 575 yards in the previous four weeks and now



MICHAEL CONROY / AP

Indianapolis Colts head coach Frank Reich said he's encouraged by his team's confidence.

they're up to 848 yards. That's an average of 169.3, in their last five outings.

What needs help

Takeaways. While the Colts have been among the league's best at forcing turnovers, the pace has slowed considerably over the last three weeks. Indy has only three takeaways and no interceptions during that stretch.

Stock up

Taylor. As other rookies struggled late in the season, Taylor seemed to crank it up. Over the last six games, he's averaging 86.3 yards rushing, 4.4 yards per carry, and has scored eight TDs while becoming Indy's workhorse.

Mr. Smith goes to Washington, helps team find playoffs

By STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

If the Alex Smith story becomes a movie, Alex Smith doesn't want to see it.

"Heck no," he said, "I wouldn't watch it."

Smith is living it and already documented the long journey back from breaking his right leg and needing 17 surgeries to rehab. As inspiring as it is to teammates and coaches, his story on the field this season has little to do with the 2018 injury that looked career-threatening at the time and is more about Smith leading Washington from 2-7 to NFC East champion as a veteran quarterback who has been there before.

"Once you are out there and the whistle blows, this is a result-oriented game and you really have to be accountable to your teammates, to the coaches, to everybody in this building that's depending on you," Smith said. "At the end of the day, once you step on that field, you better be able to hold up your end."

Smith has done that and more, proving coach Ron Rivera right that the offense worked better with an experienced hand at the wheel. Five touchdowns and five interceptions in six starts don't stand out as glimmering numbers, but the 5-1 record has everything to do with the 36-year-old managing the offense in a way 2019 first-round pick Dwayne Haskins never could.

Haskins lost five of his six starts and has since been released, Kyle Allen won one of his before getting hurt and now this is Smith's team — even if the limitations from a strained right calf in his surgically repaired leg force Rivera to rotate backup Taylor Heinicke in at times Saturday night against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Rivera said, "it's something we most cer-

"He's always been a quarterback that has a really high football IQ."

Zac Taylor

Cincinnati head coach, on Alex Smith

tainly have to look at," but the Buccaneers are zeroing in on Smith.

"When Alex Smith plays quarterback, they're a heck of a football team," Tampa Bay coach Bruce Arians said. "They're an extremely well-coached team, a ton of talent on that defensive front, but Alex Smith is really the key to everything."

Arians gives Smith credit for throwing the ball so quickly he avoids sacks. Philadelphia coach Doug Pederson, who was Kansas City's offensive coordinator for three years with Smith, points to decision-making. Cincinnati's Zac Taylor praises Smith's efficiency.

"He finds a way to move the team down the field," Taylor said. "He's always been a quarterback that has a really high football IQ."

It's night and day for Washington's offense from Haskins. Rookie running back Antonio Gibson said, "Having a vet at the quarterback position changes dramatically" because Smith's presence relaxes everyone else in the huddle.

"It's a different feeling when he's back there," receiver Steven Sims said. "Everything about him is professional. It's everything you want in a quarterback."

He also wins. Smith is just the fifth quarterback in NFL history to lead three different teams to the playoffs after doing so for San Francisco and Kansas City.



DERIK HAMILTON / AP

The Washington Football Team is 5-1 this season with veteran quarterback Alex Smith starting.

SPORTS



No K? No problem

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NFL PLAYOFFS



Cold comfort

MIKE ROEMER/AP

A lonely fan watches in Lambeau Field during a game between the Packers and the Tennessee Titans in Green Bay, Wis., on Dec. 27.

Home-field advantage not what it used to be as fans vanished from stadiums in year of pandemic

By DAVE CAMPBELL
Associated Press

For the eight NFL teams guaranteed to host at least one game in the playoffs this month, the comfort of familiar surroundings sure can't hurt their quest to reach the Super Bowl.

Staying in the same time zone and avoiding airplanes and hotels ought to help players stay fresh. For the far-north teams, namely Green Bay and Buffalo, the cold, wind and potential snow could provide a timely boost against an opponent from a warmer-weather city.

Make no mistake, though: The home-field advantage that has long been part of the story of professional football all but vanished during the year of the virus. Largely empty stadiums cut off crowd noise as an energy source and strategic asset.

"It doesn't feel any different playing at home or playing away right now, said Seattle coach Pete Car-

128-127-1

Visiting teams' record for the 2020 regular season — the first winning mark since the AFL-NFL merger in 1970. Road teams were narrowly outscored 6,353-6,339, a mere two-touchdown gap.

SOURCE: Associated Press

roll, whose team normally has a leg up as much as any host with the partial roof cantilevered over the seats that helps amplify the noise at what is now called Lumen Field. "It's just evened everything out."

With the win on Sunday night over a Philadelphia team offering little resistance, Washington took the NFC East title. The victory was dually decisive, giving visitors a collective 128-127-1 record for the 2020

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BRUCE KLUCKHOHN/AP

Cutouts of Vikings fans are shown in the stands of US Bank Stadium during a game in Minneapolis in October. The eight teams hosting playoff games this month are happy to have the comforts of home, but the actual advantage of playing there all but disappeared this season.

Beal's 60 not enough for Wiz against 76ers » Page 42

